

## ON CRUISE CONTROL

I AM NOT SURE WHAT TYPE OF PICTURE IS COMING TO MIND AT THIS MOMENT. MOST OF US WOULD PICTURE THE OPTION WE HAVE ON OUR CAR, WHICH ALLOWS US TO TAKE OUR FOOT OFF THE GAS AND MAINTAIN A STEADY SPEED BY ENGAGING THE CRUISE CONTROL. IF THE DEVICE IS LIKE MINE, YOU CAN RESUME THAT SET SPEED IF YOU BRAKE OR STOP.

NOW YOU SAY WHAT HAS THIS TO DO WITH THE GOSPEL READING OR FOR THAT MATTER WITH ANY OF THE READINGS TODAY? **IS OUR FAITH ON CRUISE CONTROL? ARE OUR LIVES ON CRUISE CONTROL? ARE WE JUST “CRUISING” ALONG AT THIS STEADY SPEED IN LIFE AND NOT “SPEEDING UP” OR GROWING IN OUR FAITH?**

ABOUT A MONTH AGO THE BOOK OF **JAMES ENCOURAGED US NOT TO BE JUST HEARERS OF THE WORD BUT DOERS!!!** YOU HEARD IT A NUMBER OF TIMES – **FAITH IS A VERB WHICH MEANS THERE IS ACTION, DOING SOMETHING WITH A RESULT.** JAMES ISN'T DONE WITH US AS HE COMES AT US WITH THOSE WORDS THAT CHALLENGE US - “FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD”.

**THE THEME THROUGHOUT MATTHEW 6 IS THE PRACTICAL WAYS IN WHICH TO LIVE LIKE A DISCIPLE.** JESUS' WORDS COVER TOPICS FROM GIVING-TO PRAYER-TO MONEY-TO TODAY'S READING ABOUT ANXIETY OR WORRY IN A BELIEVER'S LIFE. THE WORDS CONTAINED IN THIS CHAPTER GIVE CLEAR DIRECTION TO LIVING OUT ONE'S FAITH.

SOMEONE ASKING ABOUT FAITH MAY SAY TO YOU “DO THESE WORDS COVER EVERY SITUATION?” WHAT WOULD YOUR ANSWER BE? IF YOU SAY “NO” THEN YOU MIGHT BE ASKED “THEN WHERE DO YOU GO?” WHEN PEOPLE ASK SUCH A QUESTION, AN ANSWER MAY BE “IF YOU ARE LIVING YOUR LIFE AS LAID OUT IN THE BIBLE YOU WILL KNOW OR IT WILL BE SECOND NATURE TO DO THE RIGHT THING”.

**TODAY'S READING ADDRESSES THE TOPIC TO ANXIETY OR WORRY.** OLDER TRANSLATIONS OF THE WORDS IN THESE PASSAGES CARRIED THE MEANING OF A COMBINATION OF ANXIETY, WORRY AND CARE. THE JEWISH PEOPLE KNEW WELL THE WORDS JESUS USED FOR IT WAS THEIR TEACHINGS FROM THE RABBIS. **A PERSON WAS TO LIVE LIFE WITH A COMBINATION OF CAUTION AND WISDOM ON HANDLING PRACTICAL MATTERS ALONG WITH A CALMNESS AND BEING UNTRoubLED.**

**HOWEVER, THE BINDING INGREDIENT IN ALL THIS WAS TRUST. TRUST TO THE JEWS MEANT HAVING A FAITH THAT WHEN LIVED OUT INCLUDED APPLYING THESE ELEMENTS TO EVERYDAY SITUATIONS OF LIFE.**

HOW MANY “HANDLES” DO YOU HAVE FOR LIFE'S SITUATIONS? **MORE IMPORTANTLY, WHAT IS THE FOUNDATION FOR THOSE “HANDLES”? ARE YOUR HANDLES “BIBLE-TESTED”?** IF WE TAKE THE TIME TO LOOK INTO AND STUDY THE BIBLE WE CAN DISCOVER THE FULLNESS OF TRUTH FOUND IN I TIMOTHY 3:16 *“All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right.”*

HERE IS A SHORT STORY ABOUT SOMEONE'S LIFE AND WHAT THE SCRIPTURE CAN TEACH US.

A young man who needed money while he was preparing for Christian service. He asked the Lord to help him. The following day he received a large check that enabled him to continue his studies. Naturally he was very happy, but when he looked at the date on the letter and saw that it had been written several days before his prayer, he was shocked. He found a scripture, Isaiah 65:24, "*And it shall come to pass that, before they call, I will answer.*" He then realized that his Heavenly Father had made provision even before he had asked for it. It's called amazing grace from a very amazing God! We are blessed and often before we realize it.

**WE BEGAN OUR WORSHIP SERVICE WITH "WE GATHER TOGETHER" AND JUST FINISHED WITH "COME, YE THANKFUL PEOPLE, COME". DID YOU JUST MOUTH THE WORDS, NOT EVEN SING OR DID THOSE WORDS COME FROM A GRATEFUL HEART AND A LIVING FAITH THAT TRUSTS GOD? IN VERSE TWO OF "WE GATHER TOGETHER" ARE THE WORDS "BESIDE US TO GUIDE US" AND "PRAY THAT THOU OUR DEFENDER WILL BE". JUST WORDS TO A "NICE" SONG WE ASSOCIATE WITH THANKSGIVING?**

**THIS THANKSGIVING TIME WE SHOULD FIND TIME TO GIVE THANKS TO GOD FOR HIS BLESSINGS AND FOR THE FACT THAT WE LIVE IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA. IT IS A NATION WITH PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES. BUT IT IS A NATION THAT CONTINUES TO BE A BEACON OF FREEDOM TO THE WORLD. THE FREEDOM OF WHICH THE HYMN SPEAKS CAN MEAN POLITICAL FREEDOM, WITH ALL RIGHTS AND LIBERTIES THAT GO WITH THAT FREEDOM. BUT IT ALSO CAN MEAN SPIRITUAL FREEDOM; THAT IS FREEDOM FROM THE BONDAGE TO SIN AND THE FREEDOM TO NOW SERVE THE RISEN LORD. "O, LORD MAKE US FREE!"**

THE SONG "*COME YE THANKFUL PEOPLE, COME*" TALKS OF THE HARVEST AND WORK IT TAKES TO GATHER IT IN, BUT THERE IS ALSO THE MESSAGE THAT EVEN IF HIS PEOPLE GATHER IT IS "*GOD OUR MAKER DOETH PROVIDE FOR OUR NEEDS TO BE SUPPLIED*". **THERE IS THAT WORD TRUST AGAIN. TRUSTING IN GOD NOT OURSELVES IS KEY TO OUR LIFE OF FAITH. WHEN WE KNOW IN OUR HEARTS WHO REALLY IS OUR PROVIDER THEN WE CAN TRULY BE A THANKFUL PERSON!**

OUR LAST SONG "*BRINGING IN THE SHEAVES*" AGAIN IS A HARVEST SONG. IT'S A VERY OLD HYMN WRITTEN IN 1874 AND WAS BASED ON PSALM 126:6, "*HE WHO GOES OUT WEeping, CARRYING SEED TO SOW, WILL RETURN WITH SONGS OF JOY, CARRYING SHEAVES WITH HIM.*" IT'S ABOUT FEELING SAD, AND DOING SOME HARD WORK, AND THEN FEELING BETTER. BASICALLY, HARVESTING BRINGS JOY, ALONG WITH FOOD, KNOWING THAT OUR EFFORTS HAVE PAID OFF AND THAT WE WILL HAVE FOOD. IT'S AN ANALOGY FOR LIFE'S UPS AND DOWNS.....SOWING SEEDS OF KINDNESS AND REAPING THE SHEAVES OF JOY!

**THERE ARE A NUMBER OF PICTURES THAT JESUS GIVES IN THESE PASSAGES THAT ARE USED TO HAVE US REALIZE THAT WORRYING IS NOT NECESSARY, BUT WE CAN NOT TAKE AND RUN WITH THAT SO FAR AS TO MEAN WE ARE NOT TO BE CONCERNED ABOUT THOSE AROUND US AND IN THE WORLD! WE CAN NOT BECOME SO HEAVENLY THAT WE ARE NO EARTHLY GOOD. WHEN JESUS TALKED TO PILATE ABOUT TRUTH AND HIS KINGDOM NOT OF THIS WORLD HE MEANT WE ARE HERE TO HELP BRING THAT KINGDOM TO OTHERS.**

WE WATCHED ANOTHER HALLMARK MOVIE AND THE UNDERLYING THEME OF THE MOVIE WAS RECAPTURING THAT **CHRISTMAS WAS ABOUT LOVE. DESPITE ALL THEOLOGY OUT THERE, IT ALL COMES DOWN TO LOVE.** REMEMBER I PETER 4:8 “ *Most important of all, continue to show deep love for each other, for love covers a multitude of sins* “ AND IN MATTHEW 22:37-40 “*Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”* **LOVE GOD THEN AND ONLY THEN CAN WE PRAISE HIM WITH A GRATEFUL HEART. THAT IS THANKSGIVING!!!!**

**BACK TO WORRYING, JESUS KNOWS THAT IF WE WORRY ABOUT THIS OR THAT, WE WILL NOT HAVE TIME OR ENERGY TO DO WHAT WE ARE MADE FOR.** THINK ABOUT THIS AND IF IT IS TRUE – WORRY WILL CLOUD OUR JUDGMENT, WORRY WILL LESSEN OUR POWERS OF DECISION AND COULD LEAD TO BEING UNABLE TO DEAL WITH LIFE. HOW MUCH DEPRESSION HAS GROWN OUT OF NOT BEING ABLE TO COPE? NOT ALL DEPRESSION IS A RESULT OF WORRY, OF COURSE. WORRY CAN CONTRIBUTE TO ULCERS AND HEARTS ATTACKS. GOD DOES KNOW OUR BODIES MUCH BETTER THAN WE DO!!! WORRY THAT WEARS OUT THE MIND WILL WEAR OUT THE BODY.

**WORRY CAN ALSO BE BLIND.** IT REFUSES TO LEARN FROM NATURE, HISTORY OR LIFE TO A POINT WHERE IT IS NOT GOOD FOR US. I REMEMBER RUNNING TRACK NOT TO START A KICK , THAT SPRINT TO THE FINISH TOO SOON OR I JUST RAN OUT OF GAS. YOUNG PEOPLE, WE WHO ARE SOMEWHAT OLDER HAVE A HUGE RESERVOIR OF LIFE LESSONS WE CAN SHARE WITH YOU, AND EVEN IF YOU SAT LONG ENOUGH TO HEAR THEM ALL ,AND THE MISTAKES MADE, LIKE US YOU WILL MAKE DIFFERENT ONES.

**WORRY IS IRRELEVANT** TO ANY CIRCUMSTANCE WE FIND OURSELVES IN. WHY? BECAUSE WORRY DOES NOT CHANGE THINGS NOR DOES IT HELP US IN COPING WITH THE SITUATION. THEREFORE **WORRY IS IRRESPONSIBLE**, BECAUSE IT TAKES UP OUR ENERGY WITHOUT USING THAT ENERGY TO APPLY CONSTRUCTIVE ACTION TO A PROBLEM.

**WORRY HAS NO PLACE IN OUR FAITH.** HERE IS A STORY THAT REALLY ILLUSTRATES THE POINT. One day German mystic Tauler met a beggar. "God give you a good day, my friend," he said. The beggar answered, "I thank God I never had a bad one." Then Tauler said, "God give you a happy life, my friend." "I thank God," said the beggar, "I am never unhappy." Tauler in amazement said, "What do you mean?" "Well, " said the beggar, "when it is fine I thank God; when it rains I thank God; when I have plenty I thank God; when I am hungry I thank God; and since God's will is my will, and whatever pleases him pleases me, why should I say I am unhappy when I am not?" Tauler looked at the man in astonishment. "Who are you?" he asked. "I am a king," said the beggar. "Where then is your kingdom?" asked Tauler. And the beggar answered quietly: "In my heart."

WHEN, IN OUR FAITH, WE TRUST IN GOD FOR WHO HE IS AND WHAT HE HAS DONE AND WHAT HE CAN DO, THEN WE KNOW THAT WE KNOW THAT WE KNOW IN HERE ( POINT TO HEART) THE MEANING OF THIS STORY I HAVE JUST TOLD.

JESUS USES THE BIRDS OF THE AIR, THE GRASS OF THE FIELD TO SHOWS US GOD TAKES CARE OF THEM, WHY NOT US? WHEN WE HAVE THAT FAITH, EVEN THE MONEY OF OUR COUNTRY SPEAKS FOR US - "IN GOD WE TRUST". DO WE? REALLY? THEN MAYBE, JUST MAYBE WE NEED OUR FAITH TO GROW, TO STRETCH OURSELVES TO LEARN, TO DRAW CLOSER TO GOD.

**ADVENT BEGINS NEXT SUNDAY** – A TIME OF PREPARING. IS THE TIME GOING TO BE JUST ONE OF RUNNING HERE AND RUNNING THERE, **WORRYING** ABOUT THIS AND THAT? **ADVENT IS A TIME NOW TO GROW. A TIME TO TAKE OUR LIFE OFF CRUISE CONTROL AND PUT OUR FOOT ON THE GAS.** AS JESUS TOLD THE STORY OF THE RICH MAN AND HIS THINGS HE HAD ACCUMULATED IN LUKE 12:20 *"But God said to him, 'You fool! You will die this very night. Then who will get everything you worked for?'*

**WILL WE BE "FOOLS" THIS ADVENT SEASON AND NOT PREPARE BECAUSE WE SAY TO OURSELVES "I CAN DO THAT NEXT YEAR" AND CONTINUE TO KEEP OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE ON CRUISE CONTROL.** WE DON'T KNOW IF WE WILL EVEN BE HERE NEXT YEAR! IN ORDER NOT TO WORRY, TURN TO GOD AND ASK FOR HIM TO HELP YOU GROW. IN VERSE 27 JESUS SAYS TO US *"Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?"*

**WE CAN INSTEAD OF WORRYING USE OUR ENERGY TO BE POSITIVE AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE!!!** YOU AND THE WHOLE FAMILY OF CENTENNIAL CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE THIS UPCOMING YEAR, BUT WE MUST TAKE OUR LIFE OFF CRUISE CONTROL AND JUST STOP SURVIVING AND LIVE FOR OUR FAITH.

**REMEMBER THE WORDS OF THAT METHODIST PLEDGE?**

**I AM BUT ONE, BUT I AM ONE.  
I CANNOT DO MUCH, BUT I CAN DO SOMETHING.  
WHAT I CAN DO, I OUGHT TO DO.  
WHAT I OUGHT TO DO, I WILL DO.**

**PUT YOUR NAME IN THERE AND ABOVE ALL ELSE DON'T WORRY, GOD WILL USE YOU SOMEWHERE IN SOME WAY. AMEN.**