

SEEING THE LIGHT

LAST WEEK WE TALKED ABOUT PREPARING FOR THE LIGHT IN THIS ADVENT SEASON. **THIS MORNING I WANT TO FOCUS IN ON SEEING THE LIGHT**, BECAUSE IF WE PREPARE FOR THE LIGHT AND MISS **SEEING** THE LIGHT IT IS NOT GOOD.

DID YOU EVER NOTICE THROUGHOUT THE BIBLE **THE MANY TIMES LIGHT IS MENTIONED AND BLINDNESS IS USED IN THE CONTEXT OF HEALING – PHYSICALLY OR SPIRITUALLY?** WE MUST ASK WHAT MESSAGE IS GOD SENDING US? AFTER ALL HE SENDS THE MESSAGE OVER AND OVER AGAIN!!! **ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS ARE ALL ABOUT LIGHT AND SIGHT WITH LIGHT OVERCOMING THE DARKNESS. WITH SIGHT THERE IS A RENEWAL, AS WE LIKE TO SAY “SEEING THINGS IN A DIFFERENT LIGHT”.**

THE PROPHECY OF ISAIAH ANNOUNCES THAT **THOSE IN DARKNESS WILL SEE A GREAT LIGHT** AND THE ANOTHER PROPHECY WE HEAR READ AT ADVENT TELLS OF THE MINISTRY OF THE MESSIAH THAT **HE WILL HAVE THE BLIND TO SEE, THE CAPTIVES SET FREE FROM DARKNESS.** THERE IS ALSO A PROPHECY IN ISAIAH 61:1 THAT THE MINISTRY OF THE MESSIAH ON THE “SPIRITUAL SIDE” IS TO TELL THE DOWN AND OUT **GOD IS ON YOUR SIDE AND HEALING INSIDE IS JUST AS IMPORTANT AS THE HEALING THAT WOULD TAKE PLACE ON THE OUTSIDE,** IN FACT, INNER HEALING IS VERY IMPORTANT TO GOD.

MANY TIMES IN THE BIBLE WE HEAR OF HEALING, BLESSINGS, OR RICHES, BUT THE WORDS ARE TALKING ABOUT THOSE INTANGIBLES NOT THE EARTHLY POSSESSIONS. **A PERSON CAN BE “RICH” AND POSSESS NO MONEY.** HE PROMISES TO BIND UP THE BROKENHEARTED, PROCLAIM LIBERTY TO THE CAPTIVES OF SIN AND DEATH, AND WITH GRACE FREE US FROM ANY PRISON WE FIND OUR SELF IN WHETHER OF OUR OWN MAKING OR NOT.

SEEING THE LIGHT IS THE NEXT STEP AFTER PREPARING FOR THE LIGHT. IT'S LIKE TAKING A COURSE IN SCHOOL AND THEN COMES THAT DAY WHEN ALL THAT STUDY AND PREP WORK MAKES SENSE AND THE “LIGHT GOES ON”!! THAT IS EXACTLY LIKE IT IS WHEN WE HAVE PREPARED FOR THE COMING OF JESUS CHRIST. **THE HOLY SPIRIT IS ABLE TO OPEN OUR SPIRITUAL EYES LIKE THAT DAY ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS AND HIS DISCIPLES NOT BY ANY NATURAL MEANS KNEW WHO THEY HAD BROKEN BREAD WITH!!!** ALL OF SUDDEN THEY WERE SPIRITUALLY AWARE THAT THE PROPHECIES OF THE MESSIAH WERE REAL AND THEY UNDERSTOOD EVERY WORD OF IT. THE MINISTRY, THE DEATH, THE RESURRECTION, ALL OF IT. AND WHERE DID IT BEGIN? WOULDN'T THAT BE AMAZING TO HAVE SUCH UNDERSTANDING, MIGHT NOT NEED MINISTERS ANYMORE!

WITH THE PROPHECY AND PROMISE OF A MESSIAH, ADVENT FOCUSES ON THE MESSAGE AND THE BIRTH SHOUTS OUT HE IS HERE!!! WE CANNOT JUST SAY IT WITH WORDS, BY THE GRACE OF GOD WE KNOW IT IN OUR HEART AND OUR SPIRITS. THERE IS A VERSE IN I JOHN 4:13 “*And God has given us His Spirit as proof that we live in Him and He in us.*” THE HOLY SPIRIT HELPS US IN OUR WEAKNESS SO THAT WE MAY PRAY IN GOD'S WILL. BUT, BUT IT STARTS BACK AT ADVENT, PREPARING FOR THE

LIGHT, AT THE BIRTH SEEING THE LIGHT, THEN WITH THE POWER OF RESURRECTION AND HOLY SPIRIT WE CAN **WALK IN THE LIGHT AND BE THE LIGHT!!!!**

I HAVE SAID AGAIN AND AGAIN THAT OUR FAITH, OUR RELIGION IS ALL ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS!!! OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD, THE FATHER, WITH HIS SON, JESUS CHRIST AND WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT, SO THAT WE CAN LIVE WITH EACH OTHER AND BECAUSE WE LOVE GOD WITH ALL OUR HEART, MIND, BODY AND SOUL THEN WE CAN LOVE OUR NEIGHBOR AS OUR SELVES. A LIFE LONG STRUGGLE WITH UPS AND DOWNS, BUT BY THE GRACE OF GOD GO WE. **THERE ARE NO SHORTCUTS ON THIS SPIRITUAL JOURNEY. THE JOURNEY INVOLVES PREPARATION, PLANNING, AND PRACTICE, PLENTY OF IT!!!** IT IS NOT SOMETHING THAT COMES TO US NATURALLY.

SEEING THE LIGHT, THAT IS THE LIGHT OF CHRISTMAS, WHICH IS CHRIST, SHINES FOR ALL OF US. WE DON'T HAVE TO JOIN SOME EXQUISITE CLUB. IT IS NOT UNLIKE WHEN WE DECORATE OUR HOUSE WITH CHRISTMAS LIGHTS. **THE LIGHTS ARE OUT THERE FOR ALL TO SEE THAT PASS BY, SO IT WILL BE WITH CHRIST, THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD – HE IS THERE FOR ALL OF US TO SEE.**

THROUGH THE RECENT EVENTS OF SANDY GILKISON'S PASSING THE LIGHT OF CHRIST WAS THERE. THE FAMILY TOLD ME SANDY LOVED CANDLES, AND SHE WAS A LIGHT THAT SHONE TO AND THROUGH HER FAMILY IN MANY WAYS AS THE CHILDREN TOLD ME. BUT, I SAW IT IN ALL HER FAMILY TOWARD EACH OTHER. **SANDY MAY HAVE LEFT US, BUT HER LIGHT IS IN EACH AND EVERY ONE OF THOSE FAMILY MEMBERS.** THAT WAS HER LEGACY SHE LEFT TO THEM. JUST LIKE GOD, SANDY DIDN'T GIVE HER LIGHT TO ONE AND NOT ANOTHER. SHE SAW HOW GOD SO FREELY GIVES TO ALL OF US AND SHE DUPLICATED IT.

SEEING THE LIGHT GIVES LIFE TO US. JUST LIKE WHEN WE TURN THE LIGHT ON IN A DARK ROOM. WE CAN SEE WHERE THINGS ARE AND AVOID TRIPPING OR BUMPING INTO THEM. IT IS EXACTLY THAT WAY ON THE SPIRITUAL SIDE TOO. SEEING THE LIGHT WE ARE AWARE OF THOSE THINGS THAT CAN TRIP US UP OR CAUSE US PAIN. **WE ARE GIVEN ADVENT TO PREPARE FOR THE LIGHT AND SEE THAT LIGHT IN A NEW WAY, MAYBE EVEN SEEING THAT SPIRITUAL BUMP OR OBSTACLE THAT HAS PREVENTED US FROM MOVING FORWARD ON OUR JOURNEY.** IT COULD BE LIKE AN OLD GRUDGE OR REFUSAL TO FORGIVE, BECAUSE NOW IN SEEING THE LIGHT WE REALIZE MAYBE WE WEREN'T RIGHT AFTER ALL OR MAYBE EVEN WRONG!!! MAYBE WE CAN NOW SEE THAT OLD GRUDGE LOOKS VERY DIFFERENT IN A NEW LIGHT AND IT IS JUST NOT WORTH HOLDING ANYMORE. WE HAVE HEARD IT MANY TIMES - "LIFE IS JUST TOO SHORT". WE DON'T KNOW WHEN HE WILL CALL US HOME. HOW MANY TIMES HAVE HEARD "SO AND SO NEVER TOLD ME THEY LOVED ME" OR "THEY NEVER FORGAVE ME FOR THAT MISTAKE THAT DAY"? THAT IS THE THE VERY THING THAT CAN HOLD US IN DARKNESS AND PREVENTS US FROM SEEING THE LIGHT. I HAVE HEARD SUCH EXPRESSIONS IN THIS CHURCH AND HOW IT HAS BRED NEGATIVITY. WE ARE ALL IN SOME TYPE ON DARKNESS. WHY? BECAUSE THE BIBLE TELLS US IN ROMANS 3:23 - *"that we have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God"*. **SIMPLY SAID SIN CAUSES A DARKNESS IN OUR LIVES AND DIMS OUR SPIRITUAL VISION THAT WE MAY NOT SEE THE LIGHT IN ITS FULLNESS.**

SEEING THE LIGHT NOT ONLY GIVES US NEW LIFE, BUT NEW PURPOSE. GOD CARES NOT WHAT YOUR AGE IS OR YOUR ABILITIES, ALL GOD DESIRES IS YOUR WILLINGNESS TO BE AVAILABLE TO HIM. SERVING IS NOT SOMETHING WE DO ON OUR "TERMS", BUT WE DO IN SPITE OF. AM I SAYING YOU NEVER SAY "NO"? **CERTAINLY NOT, IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO SAY "YES" TO ALL WE ARE ASKED TO DO BY OTHERS, BUT WHEN GOD CALLS, I BELIEVE WE CAN AND SHOULD MOVE THAT CALL UP THE PRIORITY LIST TO THE TOP!!!**

CAN GOD FIND AND USE SOMEONE ELSE? FOR SURE, BUT **HE WANTS YOU OR ME.** THERE IS SOMETHING ELSE TO THIS CALL TOO. **IF WE DON'T ANSWER HIS CALL,** THEN WE HAVE MISSED SOMETHING GOD HAS INTENDED FOR US TO DO IN ORDER TO GROW. **UNLIKE US, WHO DO NUMEROUS THINGS WITHOUT A REAL PURPOSE, WHEN GOD GIVES A CALL IT IS FOR A PURPOSE, NOT JUST "BUSY" WORK!!!** WE CAN ALL RECALL TIMES IN OUR LIVES WHEN GOD WAS CALLING AND WE MADE EXCUSES OR EVEN MAY HAVE IGNORED HIM, BUT YOU KNOW THE GREAT THING ABOUT GOD IS HE **NEVER, EVER** GIVES UP ON HIS CHILDREN AND WE ARE ALL HIS CHILDREN!!!!

THE BIG QUESTION IS ALMOST ALWAYS "HOW DO I KNOW HE IS CALLING?" IF WE HAVE PREPARED FOR LIGHT THEN SEEING THE LIGHT WE WILL KNOW. AND YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE PERFECT IN ORDER TO HEAR GOD CALLING OR DO WHAT GOD ASKS OF YOU. **ANOTHER AMAZING THING ABOUT GOD IS HE CALLS US RIGHT WHERE WE ARE AT THAT MOMENT. YOU NEVER BECOME USELESS TO GOD. OH, THE PURPOSE MAY CHANGE, BUT HE WILL USE YOU.**

THE WONDERFUL THING IS THAT ONCE WE SEE THE LIGHT, THE DARKNESS CAN NEVER PUT OUT THE LIGHT OF CHRISTMAS IN US – JESUS CHRIST, BECAUSE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT GUIDING US. **PLANTS GROW BECAUSE OF THE LIGHT FROM THE SUN. WE GROW BECAUSE OF THE LIGHT FROM HIS SON.** IN PROVERBS 4:18 *"the way of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn which shines brighter until the full light of day"*. ONCE WE HAVE SEEN THE LIGHT, JESUS CHRIST, AND TRAVEL OUR SPIRITUAL JOURNEY IN LIFE JESUS GROWS BRIGHTER EACH DAY. WE ARE RENEWED IN SPIRIT AND THERE IS NO WAY FOR THE DEVIL TO PUT THAT LIGHT OUT THAT IS WITHIN EACH OF US.

SEEING THE LIGHT MEANS AS WE PREPARE FOR THE BIRTH OF CHRIST, OTHERS WILL ONLY SEE JUST ANOTHER JEWISH BABY BEING BORN: EXPECT FOR THE PART ABOUT AN UNWED MOTHER AND WANDERING FAMILY IN HIDING FROM THE GOVERNMENT. **YET, WHEN WE LOOK A LITTLE CLOSER, WHEN WE ADJUST THE FOCUS OF OUR SPIRITUAL EYES, WHEN WE LOOK AT IT FROM A SLANT, WE BEGIN TO SEE BEYOND THE OUTER LAYER OF WHAT IS IN FRONT OF US.**

WHAT DO WE SEE WHEN WE STAND AND **LOOK BEYOND THE COVER OF THE BOOK?** A STORY PACKED FULL OF GOD'S UNEXPECTED MOVEMENTS, SURPRISES, AND GRACE. **THE ADVENT SEASON THEN IS A TIME TO PRACTICE THIS KIND OF SEEING, BEYOND WHAT WE USUALLY SEE.**

AS WE STRING THE TREES WITH LIGHTS LET'S REMEMBER TO LOOK BEYOND ALL THAT AND REMEMBER THAT GOD'S UNEXPECTED MOVEMENTS OF GRACE ARE ALL AROUND AND RIGHT BEFORE US, WE MAY JUST HAVE TO READJUST OUR FOCUS TO SEE THE LIGHT.

It was Christmas Eve 1946, King George the Sixth, reigned over Great Britain. They had been bombed; they were broke and barren of any hope of the future. That Christmas Eve night he got on the radio to make an address to his nation. These were that last known words he spoke to his nation before his death..."I said to the man at the gate of the future, 'Get me a light that I might walk safely into the unknown.' He said to me, 'Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the hand of God, and it will be better than the light and safer than the unknown.'"

WHEN WE PREPARING FOR THE LIGHT THIS 2015 ADVENT SEASON, THEN GOD WILL BE THERE WITH US SO THAT WE MAY SEE THE LIGHT, HIS SON JESUS CHRIST IN A NEW AND FRESH WAY. IT IS GOD'S PROMISE TO US.

MANY TIMES, WE SEE JESUS IN THE FELLOWSHIP OF BELIEVERS. WE SEE JESUS IN A WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT WE SEE JESUS IN A LISTENING EAR, OR IN A SHOULDER TO CRY ON WE SEE JESUS IN THE PRESENCE OF OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST. WE SEE JESUS IN THE BREAD AND WINE OF COMMUNION. **WHEN WE SEE JESUS WE ARE REFRESHED AND RENEWED IN OUR STRUGGLES, OUR CELEBRATIONS, AND OUR LIVES OF SERVICE. THIS IS WHY IN ADVENT WE ARE FOR PREPARING FOR THE LIGHT SO WE CAN SEE THE LIGHT NO MATTER WHERE IT IS SHINING. AMEN.**