

WHOSE BUSINESS?

LUKE'S GOSPEL GAVE US THE MOST COMPLETE ACCOUNT OF THE CHRISTMAS STORY FROM ZACHARIAS AND ELIZABETH TO THE SHEPHERDS' VISIT. NOW LUKE JUMPS AHEAD IN TIME, TWELVE YEARS, TO TODAY'S READING WHERE JESUS WITH HIS PARENTS ARE GOING TO THE FEAST OF THE PASSOVER. AFTER THE CELEBRATION HIS PARENTS JOIN A CARAVAN, MOST LIKELY OF RELATIVES AND EXTENDED FAMILY GOING BACK HOME UNAWARE JESUS IS NOT WITH THEM.

WOMEN AND CHILDREN WERE USUALLY UP FRONT IN SUCH CARAVANS FOR SAFETY AND MEN IN THE BACK FOR PROTECTION. MARY PROBABLY THOUGHT JESUS WAS WITH HIS FATHER AND THE OTHER MEN AND JOSEPH LIKELY THOUGHT HE WAS UP WITH MARY AND THE REST OF THE CHILDREN. NOW HERE IS WHERE IT GETS INTERESTING - **A WHOLE DAY JOURNEY HAD GONE BY BEFORE MARY AND JOSEPH REALIZES JESUS IS NOT WITH THEM! CAN YOU IMAGINE WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TODAY? SO NOW THEY HAVE TO GO BACK A DAY'S JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM, CHECKING WITH RELATIVES AND FRIENDS. ALL THIS TAKES THEM THREE DAYS, THREE DAYS BEFORE THEY FIND HIM IN THE TEMPLE!!! TODAY MARY AND JOSEPH WOULD HAVE BEEN CHARGED WITH CHILD ABANDONMENT AND BEEN IN JAIL.**

WHEN MARY AND JOSEPH FINALLY DO FIND HIM, JESUS LIKE MANY YOUTH GIVES AN ANSWER TO HIS PARENTS' QUESTION THEY REALLY DON'T UNDERSTAND. EVEN SO JESUS WENT HOME WITH THEM AND "CONTINUED IN OBEDIENCE TO THEM" GROWING IN WISDOM AND STATURE. IN VERSE 51 IS AN INTERESTING STATEMENT - "his mother treasured all these things in her heart". EARLIER IN VERSE 19 WHEN THE SHEPHERDS CAME TO SEE THE BABY JESUS AND TOLD OTHERS WHAT THEY HAD BEEN TOLD BY THE ANGELS "Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart".

YOU WONDER WHAT EXACTLY HAD THE ANGEL TOLD MARY AND WHAT ALL SHE KNEW ABOUT THIS CHILD OF HERS, WHO WAS THE SON OF GOD. WHAT KNOWLEDGE HAD GOD THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT GIVEN MARY? BY DEFINITION TO PONDER IS TO CONSIDER DEEPLY AND THOROUGHLY. I IMAGINE KNOWING YOU ARE RAISING THE SON OF GOD WOULD MAKE YOU STOP AND THINK FOR SURE! APPARENTLY, SHE NEVER TOLD THE DISCIPLES ALL WHAT SHE KNEW, BECAUSE IT IS NOT WRITTEN ANYWHERE FOR US TO READ ABOUT. THERE IS SOMETHING THAT WE CAN LEARN FROM THIS EARLY EVENT IN JESUS' LIFE, AND USE IT IN OUR OWN LIVES/.

JESUS, EVEN AT THIS EARLY AGE KNEW HE WAS TO BE ABOUT THE FATHER'S BUSINESS BY BEING IN HIS FATHER'S HOUSE. HE WAS ASKING QUESTIONS AND LISTENING TO THE SCRIPTURES TO ATTAIN KNOWLEDGE. MY QUESTION IS AS WE LIVE, DO WE KNOW WHERE WE SHOULD BE AND WHERE OR WHAT IS OUR "BUSINESS?" ARE WE SEEKING AND LISTENING FOR TRUTH?

CHRISTMAS HAS JUST BEEN CELEBRATED AND WE LIKELY AT SOME TIME HAD TO ENDURE A BORING CONVERSATION WITH A FAMILY MEMBER OR FRIEND, SMILED AND ATE WHAT WAS SERVED EVEN THOUGH YOU JUST KNEW THAT AUNT ROSE' MASHED POTATOES WERE LUMPY, THE VEGGIES OVERCOOKED, AND THE PIE WAS MORE LIKE A SOUP AND HAD TO EATEN WITH A SPOON. MAYBE MORE THAN A FEW OF THE CHRISTMAS COOKIES WERE BURNT. BUT, IT WAS CHRISTMAS AND YOU SURVIVED!!!

NOW THAT IT IS PAST HOW WILL THE UPCOMING DAYS LOOK? THAT WE REALLY DON'T KNOW, BUT AS A DISCIPLE OF JESUS WE DO HAVE KNOWLEDGE OF HOW TO LIVE! THESE COMING DAYS. IT IS

DIFFERENT WAY TO LIVE FROM OTHERS AND BY GOD'S GRACE WE WILL. **WE HAVE TO BE THAT LIGHT ON A HILL THAT LIGHTENS THE DARKNESS, WHICH PEOPLE ARE WALKING IN.** JUST BECAUSE THE LIGHTS OF CHRISTMAS HAVE BEEN TAKEN DOWN FROM OUR HOUSES, THE TREE LIGHTS TURNED OFF FOR THE LAST TIME, AND CANDLES BURNED DOWN UNTIL THEY NO LONGER CAN LIGHT, **DOES NOT MEAN OUR "LIGHT" IS SOMEHOW TURNED OFF AND WE LIVE LIKE EVERYONE ELSE.**

THE LIGHT OF CHRISTMAS, JESUS CHRIST, SHOULD NOT BE SOMETHING WE CAN TURN ON AND OFF WITH THE SEASONS. CHRIST NEVER TURNED HIS LIGHT OFF UNTIL HE HAD DIED ON A CROSS. THAT IS OUR EXAMPLE OF OUR TEACHER, WHO WE FOLLOWED AS WE BEAR HIS NAME – CHRISTIAN!!! WE MUST BE ABOUT THE FATHER'S BUSINESS AND BE THAT LIGHT.

LIGHT AS WE KNOW WHEN RUN THROUGH A PRISM THAT LIGHT CAN BREAK INTO MANY COLORS. THIS EXAMPLE IS EXACTLY WHAT OUR LIGHT SHOULD BE. WHEN JESUS DWELLS WITHIN, AND HIS LIGHT COMES THROUGH OUR PRISM AND BREAKS INTO COLORS, PEOPLE SHOULD SEE AND SENSE FROM US I CORINTHIANS 13:4-7 *"Love never gives up. Love cares more for others than for self. Love doesn't want what it doesn't have. Love doesn't strut, Doesn't have a swelled head, Doesn't force itself on others, Isn't always "me first," Doesn't anger easily, Doesn't keep score of the sins of others, Doesn't revel when others make a mistake, Takes pleasure in the truth, Puts up with anything, Trusts God always, Always looks for the best, Never looks back, But keeps going to the end."*

THOSE ARE THE "COLORS" OF OUR LIGHT THAT WE MUST SHINE TO THOSE AROUND US. QUITE A LIST, YES, BUT BY THE GRACE OF GOD WE GO!!! REMEMBER WHEN WE LISTEN TO VERSES LIKE THIS GOD DOES NOT EXPECT PERFECTION, HE DESIRES OBEDIENCE, AND WHEN WE SLIP UP, HIS DESIRE IS FOR US TO SEEK FORGIVENESS AND MOVE ON. IF GOD FORGIVES US, THEN WHY CAN'T WE FORGIVE OURSELVES? IS IT THAT SMALL VOICE WE HEAR FROM THE DEVIL TAUNTING US, TRYING TO GET US TO FEEL UNWORTHY AND NOT AS "GOOD" AS OTHERS? JESUS DIED ON A CROSS SO THAT **WE ARE WORTHY IN GOD'S SIGHT AND WHEN WE WON'T FORGIVE OURSELVES WE CANCEL OUT WHAT CHRIST DID FOR US ON THE CROSS.** WE MUST REMEMBER EACH DAY JESUS HAS CONQUERED DEATH AND ANYTHING AND EVERYTHING THE DEVIL CAN COME UP WITH - WE WIN AND HE LOSES!!!

THE WAY IN WHICH WE LIVE EACH DAY GOES A LONG WAY TO WHETHER WE ARE GOING ABOUT THE FATHER'S BUSINESS OR OUR OWN. I SUGGEST **THREE POSSIBLE WAYS THAT WE LIVE OUR LIVES** AND ANY OTHER WAY IS JUST A VARIATION OF ONE OF THESE THREE.

THE FIRST WAY WE LIVE IS **ONE-DIMENSIONAL. THIS IS A LIFE THAT IS SELF-CENTERED WHERE YOU ARE THE CENTER OF THINGS.** MANY PEOPLE CAN FALL INTO THIS CATEGORY. NO MATTER WHERE THEY ARE, THEY **TAKE CENTER STAGE AND EVERYONE ELSE IS SECONDARY.** THEY ARE THE SUN AND EVERYONE ELSE REVOLVE AROUND THEM. WHENEVER ASKED A QUESTION IT "REVOLVES AROUND THEM AND IS IN THEIR TERMS. WHEN ONE ASKS SUCH A PERSON "HOW WAS THE WEDDING?" THIS ONE-DIMENSIONAL ANSWER WOULD GO SOMETHING LIKE THIS "THE ORGANIST PLAYED MY FAVORITE SONG, THE MINISTER WAS LONG AND BORING AND IT WAS NOT MY FAVORITE FOODS".

HERE IS A SHORT STORY ABOUT HOW THE ONE-DIMENSIONAL PERSON LIVES. A young man goes in the store and asks the sales clerk for a very special valentine card. After looking around for quite awhile finds one. The cards says "to the only girl i have ever loved". The young man says "that's wonderful" "i'll take four" AS DISCIPLES THIS IS NOT THE WAY WE SHOULD LIVING OUR LIVES.

REMEMBER THE VERSES FROM ROMANS 12:3 *“Because of the privilege and authority God has given me, I give each of you this warning: Don't think you are better than you really are. Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves, measuring yourselves by the faith God has given us.”* WORDS OF WISDOM LIKE THIS CAN KEEP US CENTERED IN CHRIST NOT OURSELVES.

THE **TWO-DIMENSIONAL WAY OF LIVING IS NOT MUCH BETTER**. IN FACT WE COULD LOOK AT IT ANOTHER WAY AND **CALL IT POLITICAL LIVING**. WHY? BECAUSE YOU ARE AWARE OF THE PEOPLE AROUND YOU AND YOU MOTIVATE EACH OTHER. HOWEVER THERE ARE ALWAYS TRADE-OFFS. THE WORDS THAT COME TO MIND ARE **“I WILL IF YOU WILL”**. WE PARENTS HAVE OPERATED IN THIS MANNER AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER. **WE CAN EXPECT CERTAIN BEHAVIOR AND WITHHOLD APPROVAL IF WE DON'T GET IT**. EVEN JESUS' PARENTS MARY AND JOSEPH SHOWED SIGNS OF THIS IN VERSE 48 WHEN MARY ASKS *“son, why have you treated us this way? Your father and i have been anxiously looking for you?”* AND THE UNSPOKEN WORDS LIKE MANY PARENTS - **“AFTER ALL WE DONE FOR YOU”**. IT CAN HAPPEN WITH HUSBAND AND WIFE, EMPLOYEE AND BOSS OR EVEN BETWEEN US AND GOD! REMEMBER IN ROMANS 6:1 *“What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?”* **DO WE TRY “TRADE-OFFS” WITH GOD AND KEEP ON SINNING KNOWING HIS GRACE IS THERE? NOT THE WAY A DISCIPLE HONORS THE TEACHER.**

THE LAST WAY OF LIVING IS **THREE-DIMENSIONAL**. HERE IN TODAY'S READING JESUS DEMONSTRATES THIS WAY OF LIVING. **HE OBEYS HIS EARTHLY PARENTS BY GOING HOME WITH THEM, BUT SHOWS US THAT THERE IS A THIRD PARTY, GOD, HIS HEAVENLY FATHER IS AT THE CENTER OF THE RELATIONSHIP. IT IS ONLY THEN CAN WE DO GOD'S BUSINESS OF HELPING OTHERS WHEN WE KNOW HIM.**

KNOWING GOD AND IT IS HARD THING TO DO, THAT IS **TRUSTING GOD. IF AND WHEN WE TURN OVER CONTROL TO HIM THEN A BURDEN IS LIFTED. WE ARE FREE TO FOLLOW IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF OUR TEACHER AND BE THAT DISCIPLE.** WE COME TO A JOY OF DOING HIS WORK, HIS BUSINESS IN OUR LIVES. **TOO MANY TIMES KEEPING CONTROL WORRIES ROB OF US OF THE JOY GOD SO DESIRES US TO HAVE.**

I HAD FRIEND WHO RAN A FOOD BROKERAGE FOR YEARS WITH A JEWISH PARTNER. HE HAD REALLY TURNED OVER HIS BUSINESS TO GOD. CHUCK IN THE TIME I KNEW HIM NEVER REALLY WORRIED ABOUT THE BUSINESS, BUT WENT ABOUT DOING GOD'S BUSINESS AND HIS BUSINESS PROSPERED. EVEN HIS PARTNER MARVELED AT CHUCK'S RELIANCE ON GOD AND THE WORK CHUCK DID IN LOCAL MISSIONS. **CHUCK TOLD ME ONCE “GARY, THE BUSINESS IS IN GOD'S HANDS AND BELIEVE ME WHEN I TELL YOU THAT I HAVE MORE ENERGY TO DO HIS BUSINESS BECAUSE OF IT”**

WE CAN TAKE FROM TODAY'S STORY, THE FACT THAT WE CAN LOSE TRACK OF JESUS IF WE DO NOT KEEP OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM VIBRANT. WE MUST LIVE A LIFE WITH JESUS AT OUR CENTER. WHEN WE LET THE THINGS OF THIS WORLD “PILE UP” OUR VIEW IS BLOCKED AND WE LOSE SIGHT OF JESUS. WE WILL NOT LIVE IN THE “FULLNESS OF CHRIST” THAT IS REFERRED TO IN NUMEROUS VERSES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

JESUS AFTER THIS EVENT AT THE TEMPLE IN THE ENDING VERSES THEY TELLS us *“Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and men”*. WHEN WE ARE ABOUT DOING GOD'S BUSINESS WE WILL DISCOVER FAVOR WITH GOD AND MEN. **THIS IS THE MEANING WE CAN TAKE FROM JESUS AND HIS TEMPLE EXPERIENCE. TRUSTING THE FATHER AND HAVING HIM AT THE CENTER OF OUR LIVES, NOT LIVING A SELF-CENTERED LIFE IS REAL LIVING – DAY IN AND DAY OUT. AMEN.**