

PSALM 40:1-11 AND JOHN 1:29-39

IN ACT 5, SCENE 5 OF SHAKESPEARE'S - "MACBETH", WE HEAR A REFLECTION ON THE MEANING OF HUMAN EXISTENCE IN THE FACE OF DEATH.

"TOMORROW AND TOMORROW AND TOMORROW, CREEPS IN THIS PETTY PACE FROM DAY TO DAY, TO THE LAST SYLLABLE OF RECORDED TIME.

AND ALL OUR YESTERDAYS HAVE LIGHTED FOOLS THE WAY TO DUSTY DEATH. OUT, OUT BRIEF CANDLE!

LIFE'S BUT A WALKING SHADOW, A POOR PLAYER, THAT STRUTS AND FRETTS HIS HOUR UPON THE STAGE AND THEN IS HEARD OF NO MORE. IT IS A TALE TOLD BY AN IDIOT, FULL OF SOUND AND FURY AND SIGNIFYING NOTHING."

SINCE CREATION, OR AT LEAST SINCE SIN ENTERED CREATION, IT SEEMS THAT HUMAN BEINGS HAVE BEEN SEARCHING FOR THE MEANING OF THEIR LIVES.

OF COURSE WE DO NOT ALWAYS VOCALIZE OUR QUESTIONS LIKE: HOW WILL WE FIND THE MEANING OF MY LIFE? OR WHAT DO I WANT IN LIFE?

IN FACT MANY PEOPLE MAY NOT EVEN BE CONSCIOUSLY AWARE THEY ARE SEARCHING- AND YET WE ALL DO.

SOME PEOPLE THINK THEY FIND THE ANSWER THAT LIFE IS ALL ABOUT FULFILLING THEIR OWN HOPES, DREAMS, AND DESIRES.

HOWEVER THERE ARE OTHERS WHO SAY LIFE IS ALL ABOUT BEING A BLESSING TO OUR WORLD.

THEN THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO SAY THE MEANING OF HUMAN LIFE IS FOUND IN OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH OUR CREATOR.

ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE, HUMAN EXISTENCE TOUCHES ON ALL THREE VIEWS, BUT OF COURSE IT BEGINS AND ENDS WITH GOD.

FOR EXAMPLE- THE GOSPEL OF JOHN SUMMARIZES THE THREE-FOLD MEANING OF LIFE.

FIRST IN CHAPTER ONE -JOHN REMINDS HIS READERS ABOUT GOD AND OUR NEED TO BE RECONCILED WITH THE LORD.

HE WROTE: "IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD AND THE WORD WAS WITH GOD AND THE WORD WAS GOD....

THE WORD BECAME FLESH AND DWELT AMONG US, AND WE HAVE SEEN HIS GLORY....

NO ONE HAS SEEN GOD, BUT GOD THE ONLY SON, WHO IS AT THE FATHER'S SIDE AND HAS MADE HIM KNOWN."

NEXT- CHAPTER SIX OF THE GOSPEL TELLS ABOUT JESUS FEEDING THE 5000 WITH A FEW LOAVES OF BREAD AND FISH.

HOWEVER- BEFORE THE MIRACLE HE ASKED HIS DISCIPLES- "WHERE SHALL WE BUY BREAD FOR THIS PEOPLE TO EAT?"

HIS QUESTION SUGGESTS JESUS VIEWS IT AS OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO CARE FOR AND HELP OTHERS AND NOT ONLY BE CONCERNED WITH OURSELVES.

FINALLY -JESUS, IN JOHN 10:10, REMINDS US THAT GOD DESIRES HUMAN BEINGS TO HAVE AN ABUNDANT LIFE ON EARTH-

"...I HAVE COME THAT THEY MIGHT HAVE LIFE, AND HAVE IT MORE ABUNDANTLY."

IT SHOULD NOT BE SURPRISING THEREFORE THAT THE FIRST WORDS JESUS SPEAKS IN JOHN'S GOSPEL ARE: "WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR."

IN ESSENCES JESUS WAS ASKING-WHAT DO YOU WANT? THIS IS A QUESTION, WHICH HAS A MEANING FAR DEEPER THAN IT MAY SOUND.

NOTICE- JESUS DID NOT ASK- WHY ARE YOU FOLLOWING ME? OR WHO ARE YOU LOOKING FOR? BUT WHAT DO YOU SEEK?

IN OTHER WORDS JESUS' WORDS IMPLY THE TWO MEN WERE SEEKING SOMETHING MORE THAN JUST A NEW RABBI TO STUDY UNDER.

THE SAVIOR, IT SEEMS, IS ASKING THEM IF THEY ARE OPEN TO LEARNING WHAT GOD WOULD HAVE THEM BE AND DO, AND IF THEY ARE WILLING TO FIND THEIR PURPOSE IN HIM.

SIMILARLY, DAVID, IN PSALM 40, SPEAKS ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF FINDING OUR DIRECTION AND THE MEANING OF OUR EXISTENCE BY LOOKING FIRST AND FOREMOST TO GOD.

HE WROTE:” HAPPY ARE THOSE WHO MAKE THE LORD THEIR TRUST, WHO DO NOT TURN TO THE PROUD, TO THOSE WHO GO ASTRAY AFTER FALSE IDOLS.”

DAVID ALSO EXPRESSED THE INNER TRANSFORMATION THE LORD DESIRES FROM THOSE WHO LOVE HIM: “I DELIGHT TO DO YOUR WILL, O MY GOD, YOUR LAW IS WRITTEN ON MY HEART.”

MUCH LIKE KING DAVID RECOMMENDED HIS FELLOW JEWS PLACE THEIR TRUST IN THE LORD THEIR GOD AND OBEY HIM, SO ALSO JOHN THE BAPTIST DIRECTED THEM - TO JESUS.

HE DECLARED: “HERE IS THE LAMB OF GOD, WHO TAKES AWAY THE SIN OF THE WORLD.”

JOHN ADDED JESUS CAME AFTER HIM, YET RANKS AHEAD OF HIM BECAUSE JESUS WAS BEFORE JOHN.

JOHN THE BAPTIST, UNDERSTOOD AND ACCEPTED HIS LIFE WOULD ONLY FIND ABUNDANCE IN HIS ROLE AS MESSENGER, THAT IS WHY HE POINTED OTHER PEOPLE AWAY FROM HIMSELF TO JESUS.

THIS SET THE STAGE FOR-THE FIRST ENCOUNTER IN THE JOHN’S GOSPEL BETWEEN JESUS AND SOME OF HIS FUTURE DISCIPLES.

TWO OF JOHN’S FOLLOWERS WHO HEARD THE BAPTIST’S DECLARATION THAT JESUS IS THE “LAMB OF GOD, WHO TAKES AWAY THE SIN OF THE WORLD”, ACTED UPON IT.

THEY TURNED FROM JOHN TOWARDS JESUS, AND THEN RECEIVED AND ACCEPTED A CALL TO FOLLOW JESUS.

THE TWO RESPOND TO JESUS’ QUESTION “WHAT DO YOU WANT? BY ASKING HIM WHERE WAS HE STAYING.

WHAT THEY MOST LIKELY THEY WERE REALLY ASKING WAS TO SPEND SOME TIME WITH HIM TO GET TO KNOW HIM AND HIS MESSAGE.

THE SAVIOR’S RESPONSE: “COME AND SEE” ---WAS AN INVITATION FOR THEM TO OBSERVE AND LISTEN, TO ASK QUESTIONS, AND LEARN FROM HIM.

THIS IS NOT UNLIKE THE INVITATION JESUS, THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT CONTINUES TO MAKE TO PEOPLE THROUGHOUT THE WORLD TODAY.

HE INVITES US TO COME AND SEE- TO FIND IN HIM THE MEANING OF LIFE WE SEEK.

HE INVITES US TO BECOME HIS DISCIPLES- SO WE MIGHT HAVE LIFE BOTH NOW AND ETERNALLY LIVED IN THE FULLNESS OF A RIGHT RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD.

OUR RECONCILIATION WITH OUR CREATOR GOD BEGINS, AS THE BIBLE TELLS US, WITH JESUS DOING WHAT NO ONE ELSE COULD DO FOR US.

INDEED, NEITHER-ABRAHAM BY HIS FAITH, NOR MOSES WITH THE LAW, NOR THE PROPHETS THROUGH THEIR WORDS, NOR ALL THE PRIESTS AND SACRIFICES IN THE TEMPLE COULD EFFECTIVELY DEFEAT HUMAN SIN.

THE MAIN THEME OF TODAY’S READING AND INDEED THE ENTIRE GOSPEL OF JOHN IS THAT- IN JESUS WE ARE TO SEEK AND FIND THE SON, WHOM GOD THE FATHER SENT INTO THE WORLD.

JESUS CAME SO THAT WE MAY HAVE ABUNDANT LIFE- IN OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD THROUGH HIM, IN OUR SERVICE TO GOD AND OTHERS, AND IN FINDING PERSONAL FULFILLMENT.

AND THE KEY TO FINDING THE MEANING OF LIFE ALL PEOPLE SEEK-WHETHER THEY REALIZE IT OR NOT- IS IN CHRIST’S PURPOSE OF TAKING AWAY THE SIN OF THE WORLD.

FIRST AND FOREMOST SCRIPTURE PROCLAIMS JESUS CAME TO GIVE MEANING TO HUMAN LIFE BY DESTROYING THE GREAT BARRIER THAT SEPARATES US FROM GOD, WHICH IS SIN.

AND REMEMBER THE PROBLEM WITH SIN IS NOT JUST THAT IT VIOLATES GOD'S RULES.

SIN ALSO BLOCKS US FROM FINDING OUR WAY TO GOD, IN WHOM ALL CREATURES LIVE AND MOVE AND HAVE THEIR BEING.

THEREFORE-JESUS CAME AS: THE WORD OF GOD MADE FLESH- AS THE PRESENCE OF GOD WITH US, SO WE CAN FIND THE TRUE MEANING OF OUR EXISTENCE IN HIM.

HE CAME TO SHOW US HIS FATHER AND TO LEAD US AS OUR GOOD SHEPHERD.

HE CAME TO REVEAL TO US THE PATH OF LIFE HERE AND NOW- AS WELL AS HEREAFTER. BUT JESUS CAME TO DO EVEN MORE.

HE CAME TO TAKE AWAY OUR SIN- TO DEFEAT THE POWER OF SIN IN OUR LIVES-SO THAT WE MIGHT BE BORN AGAIN- TRANSFORMED-BECOME A NEW CREATION.

CHRISTIAN AUTHOR- C.S. LEWIS DESCRIBED GOD'S INTENTION IN SENDING JESUS AS THE LAMB WHO TAKES AWAY OUR SIN, WRITING THAT:

"GOD'S PURPOSE IS NOT JUST TO CREATE NICE PEOPLE OR TO EFFECT SOME MORAL IMPROVEMENT IN US...

RATHER GOD BECAME MAN TO TURN CREATURES INTO SONS, INTO DAUGHTERS, NOT SIMPLY TO PRODUCE BETTER PEOPLE OF THE OLD KIND BUT TO PRODUCE A NEW KIND OF PERSON...

IT COSTS GOD NOTHING TO CREATE NICE THINGS- BUT TO CONVERT REBELLIOUS WILLS COST HIM CRUCIFIXION."

OF COURSE- BEING SAVED BY GOD'S GRACE AND THE BLOOD OF CHRIST- IS ONLY THE FIRST STEP IN THE PROCESS OF CONVERSION.

WE ALSO ARE TO TRAVEL THE PATH OF LIFE JESUS REVEALS TO US BY LIVING AS HIS FOLLOWERS- UNDER THE GUIDANCE AND EMPOWERMENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

A LUTHERAN MINISTER USES A HOUSE AS A METAPHOR FOR LIFE BY DESCRIBING HOW BECOMING A CHRISTIAN CAN IMPACT OUR LIVES. HE WROTE:

"AT CONVERSION GOD COMES TO REBUILD THE HOUSE. AT FIRST YOU CAN UNDERSTAND WHAT HE IS DOING. HE FIXES THE DRAINS, STOPS THE LEAKS IN THE ROOF, ETC.

YOU KNEW THESE JOBS NEEDED TO BE DONE, SO YOU ARE NOT SURPRISED.

BUT PRETTY SOON GOD STARTS TO TEAR DOWN PART OF THE HOUSE IN SUCH A WAY THAT IT HURTS... AND DOESN'T SEEM TO MAKE ANY SENSE. 'WHAT ON EARTH IS HE UP TO?' - YOU THINK.

THE EXPLANATION IS THAT GOD IS BUILDING QUITE A DIFFERENT HOUSE FROM THE ONE YOU THOUGHT...PUTTING A NEW WING ON OVER HERE, AN EXTRA FLOOR OVER THERE

YOU THOUGHT YOU WERE GOING TO BE MADE INTO A DECENT LITTLE COTTAGE, BUT GOD IS BUILDING A PALACE. INDEED GOD IS GOING TO LIVE THERE HIMSELF."

UNDOUBTEDLY THIS PASTOR DREW HIS IDEAS FROM SCRIPTURE PASSAGES, LIKE 1 CORINTHIANS 3:16, WHICH ATTESTS TO THE TRUTH OF GOD DWELLING WITHIN CHRISTIANS, SAYING:

"DO YOU NOT KNOW THAT YOU ARE GOD'S TEMPLE AND THAT GOD'S SPIRIT DWELLS IN YOU?"

THIS METAPHOR IS USEFUL IN A NUMBER OF WAYS- FIRST IT REMINDS US OF THE TRUTH OF THE WORDS OF PSALM 40:6-7.

THERE DAVID SAID: SACRIFICE AND OFFERING YOU DID NOT DESIRE, BUT MY EARS YOU HAVE OPENED.

BURNT OFFERING AND SIN OFFERING YOU DID NOT REQUIRE, THEN I SAID- "HERE I AM, I HAVE COME...."

IN OTHER WORDS- WHAT GOD WANTS IS- FOR US TO COME TO HIM AND ALLOW OURSELVES TO BE FORGIVEN, AND ALSO TRANSFORMED BY HIS SPIRIT.

THE PROCESS OF TRANSFORMATION-REPAIRING AND
REBUILDING TAKES TIME.

IT REMINDS US TO FOLLOW THE EXAMPLE OF THE PSALMIST
AND “WAIT PATIENTLY FOR THE LORD.”

OF COURSE WE ARE ALSO CALLED TO WORK WITH GOD EVEN
AS THE SPIRIT IS TRANSFORMING US.

THE REASON WE ARE ABLE TO DO SO IS- JESUS IS THE ONE WHO
REVEALS TO US GOD BECAUSE HE IS GOD.

HOWEVER JESUS, BEING HUMAN AS WELL, ALSO REVEALS TO
US THE POTENTIAL OF OUR OWN HUMANITY.

INDEED HIS CALL TO: “COME AND SEE”- CAN BE UNDERSTOOD
TO MEAN- COME AND SEE WHO I AM AND WHO YOU CAN
BECOME BY FOLLOWING ME.

MAY WE ALL HAVE THE CURIOSITY AND COURAGE TO FOLLOW
THE ONE WHO TAKES AWAY THE SIN OF THE WORLD, AND WHO
IS - THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE.

LET US PRAY: GRACIOUS GOD, YOU SENT YOUR SON, JESUS,
WHO ASKED THE DISCIPLES, “WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR.?”

AND WHO OFFERED THE INVITATION TO “COME AND SEE”, OPEN
OUR HEARTS TO YOUR WILL, AND GIVE US THE COURAGE TO
FOLLOW.

BY YOUR SPIRIT, STRENGTHEN US TO WALK THE PATH YOU
DESIRE, SO THAT LIKE JOHN, OUR WORDS AND DEEDS POINT TO
JESUS-THE LAMB OF GOD.

WE PRAY THIS IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST, WHO LIVES AND
REIGNS WITH YOU AND THE HOLY SPIRIT, ONE GOD NOW AND
FOREVER. AMEN

SERMON SUMMERY JOHN 1:29-39

JESUS, IN JOHN 10:10, REMINDS US THAT GOD DESIRES HUMAN BEINGS TO HAVE AN ABUNDANT LIFE ON EARTH- "...I HAVE COME THAT THEY MIGHT HAVE LIFE, AND HAVE IT MORE ABUNDANTLY."

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