

### 3-1-20 OVERCOMING THE RAT RACE OF LIFE - PERSPECTIVE MATTERS --- AND IN THE END, IT'S A CHOICE ---- OUR CHOICE

John 3:16-17, Jeremiah 29:11-13; Isaiah 43:1-2; & Zephaniah 3:17

Last Sunday, I had the joy of being in Washington, DC. The weather was spectacular – a beautiful, sunny and comfortable spring day.

Linda was in meetings ... Kirsten, who is in the Graduate MBA program at Georgetown, was studying for mid-terms and finals.

I had several hours to myself ... so, I began to walk ... I walked along 23<sup>rd</sup> Street until I came to the LINCOLN MEMORIAL.

Whoaaa ... the LINCOLN MEMORIAL is a remarkably oversized and majestic monument that looks down upon the Washington Monument.

I had forgotten how big it is in its grandeur as it presides over the Mall & the Reflecting Pool towards the Washington Monument and then beyond to the Capital. Everything paled in size and comparison.

I climbed the steps and gazed upon Lincoln perched in what seemed like a mighty throne ... I took a deep breath ... and my spirit calmed ... so much contentiousness and seeming disarray immanes from our nation's capital ... yet, when you're there ... when you walk the streets of Georgetown --- the oldest of the DC neighborhoods --- having survived so much history ... and then to experience the Lincoln Memorial ... well, I regained a perspective that our country ... our nation ... is more than I often remember ... and that it has survived and thrived in the midst of sooooo much.

And this is true of our faith ... the wonder and grandeur of the Kingdom of Heaven is so much more than ANY capital in this world ... AND we need to remember that as Christian Believers --- we are CITIZENS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD --- BOTH IN THIS WORLD AND EVEN MORE, IN THE WORLD TO COME.

**PERSPECTIVE MATTERS** --- and last Sunday, my PERSPECTIVE was RESET --- no longer centered upon me and my feelings and my perspectives ... BUT UPON THE PERSPECTIVE of our country's roots ... our country's heritage ... and our country's history ...

My spirit was calmed – both in terms of our country, BUT EVEN MORE, in terms of the KINGDOM OF GOD, The KINGDOM OF HEAVEN. How much more is the Kingdom of God than any of the kingdoms of this world ... how much more can we find strength for the day in remembering the things of God ...

- a. **in God's nature and God's purposes ...**
- b. **in God's love for his children ...** and
- c. **in God's desire for us to know and enjoy Him** -- to live in the fullness and abundance of His care and His provisions for us.

**I began to think about the 'Rat Race of Our Lives' & all that robs us of the PROPER PERSPECTIVE of GOD and HIS PURPOSES and HIS WAYS ...**

As I prayed and thought ... my heart turned towards some of our 'joy robbers' ... things that steal God's joy & confidence from us .... And I thought of things **that we embrace and that we allow to color our PERSPECTIVE** ... such as:

- + SHAME & GUILT
- + CONDEMNATION – both SELF-CONDEMNATION & the CONDEMNATION IMPUTED UPON US BY OTHERS

TOO OFTEN, we feel condemned by our own expectations and by the judgments of others ... we lose sight of GOD's LOVE and GOD's NATURE ... HOW WE ARE IN GOD's PERSPECTIVE ... Consider these Scripture references from the Bible:

***"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart."*** Jeremiah 29:11-13

- God DID NOT CREATE ALL OF CREATION (including you and me) for ANYTHING LESS than GOD's BEST!
- God's PLAN was for us to CARE FOR & ENJOY His created planet that we call earth ... and for us to care for one another
- God's plan was for us to KNOW GOD, ENJOY GOD ... and to WALK WITH HIM as Adam and Eve walked with Him in the Garden.

BUT, HUMANITY, CHOSE ITS OWN COURSE --- SELF-WILL versus GOD's WILL ... and the world's balance & order were broken ... HOWEVER, we are reminded in John's Gospel:

<sup>16</sup> *For God so loved the world that he gave us Jesus, SO THAT who so ever believes in Jesus shall not die in spirit but live as was intended from the beginning.* <sup>17</sup> ***For God did not send Jesus into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.*** John 3:16-17 (paraphrased)

IT WAS NOT AND IS NOT GOD's intention to CONDEMN US BUT TO GIVE US ABUNDANT LIFE so that we might live WHOLE and BALANCED LIVES (**John 10:10**). Jesus is GOD INCARNATE, ***"The way, the truth & the life"*** (**John 14:6**) AND JESUS DOES FOR US, WHAT WE CANNOT DO FOR OURSELVES:

- + JESUS OVERCAME THE POWER OF SIN (Can you do that?)
- + JESUS OVERCAME THE POWER OF DEATH (Can you do that?)

God knew that SELF-CONDEMNATION, the CONDEMNATION OF OTHERS, & EMBRACING FEELINGS of GUILT & SHAME WERE PROBLEMS ... SO GOD REACHED OUT & EXTENDED HIMSELF ... NOT WAITING FOR US ... BUT EXTENDING HIMSELF TO OFFER US A WAY TO RESTORE WHAT WAS LOST --- **TO RESET OUR INNER SOUL & INNERMOST BEING ...**

- TO SHOW US THE WAY
- TO OFFER US THE WAY

**SO THAT WE MAY CHOOSE** TO REGAIN THE PERSPECTIVE THAT WAS INTENDED FROM THE BEGINNING ... Being reminded that GOD has PROVIDED FOR OUR REDEMPTION --- OUR RESTORATION ... and that GOD LOVES US ... that GOD IS WILD ABOUT US ... AND THAT GOD KNOWS US BY NAME – IS QUITE INCREDIBLE!!!!

THE GOD OF GODS ... THE GOD OF HEAVEN & EARTH ... CARES ABOUT US and KNOWS US BY NAME!!!!

But now, this is what the Lord says—

“Do not fear, for **I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; and you are mine.**

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and  
When you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you.  
When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned;  
the flames will not set you ablaze. **Isaiah 43:1-2**

**AND IN THIS ... GOD WILL BE WITH US ... LIFE WILL NOT SWEEP US OVER ... AND WE WILL NOT BE BURNED BY THE FIRES OF LIFE ...**

One of my favorite and most encouraging verses from the Bible are the words from the prophet Zephaniah:

*The Lord your God is with you,  
the Mighty Warrior who saves.  
He will take great delight in you;  
in his love he will not rebuke you,  
but will rejoice over you with singing.”*  
**Zephaniah 3:17**

IMAGINE:

GOD IS WITH YOU  
GOD TAKES GREAT DELIGHT IN YOU  
GOD SINGS CELEBRATIONS & BLESSINGS OVER YOU

JESUS CAME TO REMOVE THE CONDEMNATIONS THAT WE SEEM SO QUICK TO EMBRACE AS OUR IDENTITY ... RATHER THAN CONFESSING OUR HUMANNES & MAKING PEACE WITH GOD ... WE ASSUME THE GUILT & SHAME OF THIS WORLD ... RATHER THAN THE EMBRACE OF GOD ...

KEY = **SPIRITUAL BREATHING** ---- TO BREATHE OUT our CONFESSIONS and THEN to BREATHE IN THE GOODNESS'S OF GOD i.e. TO CONFESS OUR SINS & foolish embraces & indulgences AND THEN to BREATHE IN THE RESTORING SPIRIT OF GOD.... **(1 John 1:9)**

As I regained a REFRESHED PERSPECTIVE in my walk to the grandeur of the Lincoln Memorial ... I encourage each of us **to CHOOSE TO BE REFRESHED** in our PERSPECTIVE OF GOD as we REFLECT upon GOD ALMIGHTY ... His love and care for us as His beloved children and the words of the Living Word of God, the Bible, that have been shared today.

**PRAYER:** Gracious & loving God, YOU ARE the God of new beginnings. You created us to be whole, unique, abundant-living children. Too often we allow too many things to DISCONNECT US FROM YOU, including the crippling feelings of condemnation, guilt and shame. May we be REFRESHED IN OUR PERSPECTIVE OF YOU AND as we walk this journey of life, PLEASE HELP US to LET GO of all that we cling to, even though we know better, and HELP US to GRAB HOLD of all that You offer to us ... Your POWER, YOUR STRENGTH, YOUR VISION, YOUR HEART for a BETTER WORLD ... Please TEACH US & help us to LEARN YOUR ways... without guilt or shame or condemnation ... lifted up with wings like eagles. THANK YOU GOD in the precious & mighty name of Jesus. AMEN

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### 3-1-20 The Practice of Confession

A key element of the journey to wholeness is authenticity or vulnerability. When we are seeking wholeness, we drop any pretense and take the brave, vulnerable step toward authenticity. The practice we'll focus on this week is confession. Instead of different daily exercises, you're invited to write a prayer of confession at the end of each day this week. Be vulnerable with God about when you lost your temper or were impatient with someone that day. Note when you felt yourself hiding behind a shinier version of yourself instead of letting your true self show through, and confess that too. The practice of being honest with ourselves and honest with God propels us on our soul reset journey.

By: Junius Dotson, *SOUL RESET – breakdown, breakthrough and the journey to wholeness*, UPPER ROOM BOOKS, Nashville 2019, page 124.