

**Job 38-39**

**Philippians 2:5-11**

**July 2, '17**

**“FINDING GOD IN THE QUESTIONS”**

**IF YOU GOOGLE “FINDING GOD IN...,” YOU GET SOME INTERESTING RESULTS.**

**YOU’LL SEE THE PHILIP YANCEY BOOK – FINDING GOD IN UNEXPECTED PLACES.**

**YOU’LL ALSO GET “FINDING GOD IN *THE WAVES*” & “FINDING GOD IN *THE RUINS*,” “...IN *THE PARK*” & “...IN *THE DARK.*”**

**YOU’LL EVEN COME ACROSS “FINDING GOD IN *THE SHOWER*” & “FINDING GOD IN A *GROCERY BAG.*”**

***OUR* USE OF THOSE OPENING THREE WORDS IS FROM THE TITLE OF A BOOK THAT SERVES AS OUR FOCUS THIS MORNING.**

**THIS SUMMER, WE’RE LOOKING AT 4 BOOKS, 4 FILMS & 4 SONGS THAT CARRY A PROFOUND CHRISTIAN MESSAGE WITHOUT NECESSARILY BEING OVERTLY CHRISTIAN.**

**I RECOGNIZE THE DANGER IN RECOMMENDING A BOOK FOR SOMEONE TO READ.**

**THAT’S NOT REALLY WHAT I’M DOING WITH THIS SERIES.**

**I’M NOT NECESSARILY RECOMMENDING THAT YOU SHOULD READ THE FOUR BOOKS WE’RE USING, THOUGH I DOUBT ANYONE WOULD BE DISAPPOINTED IF THEY DID.**

**IF THERE IS ONE OF THE FOUR, THOUGH, THAT WOULD BE AN EXCEPTION, IT WOULD BE THIS ONE.**

**I THINK THE BOOK FINDING GOD IN THE QUESTIONS BY DR. TIMOTHY JOHNSON, IS A BOOK THAT I HAVE RECOMMENDED TO OTHERS MORE THAN ANY BOOK I’VE EVER READ.**

**I'VE PURCHASED MULTIPLE COPIES OF IT BECAUSE I FOUND THAT I WAS GIVING MY OWN COPY AWAY SO OFTEN THAT IT WAS JUST BETTER TO HAVE COPIES OF IT ON HAND.**

**MANY OF YOU ARE PROBABLY FAMILIAR WITH DR. TIMOTHY JOHNSON.**

**FOR MORE THAN 30 YEARS, HE SERVED AS THE MEDICAL EDITOR FOR ABC NEWS.**

**HE'S THE ONE WHO WOULD EXPLAIN VERY COMPLICATED MEDICAL NEWS STORIES AND HE WOULD ALWAYS DO SO IN A WAY THAT WAS UNDERSTANDABLE.**

**THERE WAS SOMETHING ABOUT HIM THAT JUST MADE YOU FEEL AS THOUGH YOU COULD TRUST HIM.**

**THAT'S WHY I WAS FASCINATED A NUMBER OF YEARS AGO WHEN I FIRST HEARD OF THIS BOOK.**

**LIKE MOST OF YOU, I IMAGINE, I KNEW NOTHING MORE ABOUT TIMOTHY JOHNSON THAN HIS ROLE AS A MEDICAL JOURNALIST FOR ABC.**

**AS I DISCOVERED, THERE'S A GREAT DEAL MORE TO BE LEARNED.**

**HE GREW UP IN A VERY SMALL DENOMINATION – THE EVANGELICAL COVENANT CHURCH.**

**HE ATTENDED SEMINARY AFTER COLLEGE & BECAME AN ORDAINED MINISTER.**

**WHILE IN SEMINARY, THOUGH, HE HAD SERVED AS A HOSPITAL CHAPLAIN & BECAME FASCINATED BY MEDICINE.**

**HE DECIDED TO GO TO MEDICAL SCHOOL AT THE AGE OF 29 AND HIS PLAN WAS TO BECOME A FAMILY DOCTOR & WORK IN A SMALL TOWN FOR THE REST OF HIS LIFE.**

**ONE NIGHT WHILE WATCHING THE NIGHTLY NEWS – THE HUNTLEY-BRINKLEY REPORT FOR THOSE WHO REMEMBER CHET HUNTLEY & DAVID BRINKLEY - HE HEARD A SPOKESMAN FROM THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION GIVE AN ABSOLUTELY HORRIBLE REPORT WHICH JOHNSON FOUND EMBARRASSING FOR THE MEDICAL PROFESSION.**

**SEVERAL YEARS LATER, THROUGH A VERY STRANGE SERIES OF CIRCUMSTANCES RELATED TO THAT REPORT, HE ENDED UP IN THE JOB FOR WHICH ALL OF US KNOW HIM.**

**JOHNSON’S ROLE AS A MINISTER, THOUGH, AS WELL AS A PHYSICIAN, ALWAYS INTRIGUED PEOPLE & HE SAID HE WOULD REGULARLY BE ASKED, “*SO WHAT DO YOU REALLY BELIEVE?*”**

**HE WROTE THE BOOK PARTIALLY AS AN ANSWER TO THAT QUESTION.**

**ANOTHER REASON, THOUGH, WAS BECAUSE HE REALLY WANTED TO ANSWER THE QUESTION – NOT JUST FOR OTHER PEOPLE – BUT FOR HIMSELF AS WELL.**

**HE WANTED TO REALLY GRAPPLE WITH THE BIG QUESTIONS OF LIFE & THEN DECIDE HOW HE WANTED THE REST OF HIS LIFE TO BE LIVED, BASED ON HIS ANSWERS.**

**JOHNSON INTENTIONALLY ADDRESSES – AS HE SAYS - BOTH THE *MACRO* QUESTIONS & THE *MICRO* QUESTIONS.**

**HE LOOKS AT THE REALLY BIG PICTURE OF THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE & HE LOOKS AT THE TINY PICTURE OF A SINGLE LIFE.**

**WHERE IS GOD IN THE UNIVERSE & WHERE IS GOD IN MY OWN LIFE?**

**THAT’S WHY WE USED THE TWO PASSAGES THIS MORNING FROM THE BOOK OF JOB & PAUL’S LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS.**

**THERE IS PERHAPS NO BETTER PIECE OF THEOLOGICAL WRITING ABOUT CREATION THAN WHAT WE FIND IN THE STORY OF JOB.**

**AND THERE IS NOTHING BETTER THAN PAUL'S GREAT HYMN IN PHILIPPIANS TO CAPTURE THE FULLY MEANING OF JESUS CHRIST & HIS SIGNIFICANCE IN OUR LIVES.**

**WE ALL HAVE QUESTIONS, DON'T WE?**

**WE ALL WONDER ABOUT THE BIG QUESTIONS – THE MACRO QUESTIONS.**

**WE WONDER ABOUT THE CREATION OF THE UNIVERSE – WHEN, WHERE, HOW & WHY?**

**AND WE WONDER ABOUT THE PERSONAL QUESTIONS – THE MICRO QUESTIONS.**

**WHAT IS MY PUPROSE IN LIFE?**

**WHAT DOES GOD WANT ME TO DO?**

**TIMOTHY JOHNSON SUGGESTS THAT WE'RE BETTER OFF ASKING THE QUESTIONS & SEARCHING FOR ANSWERS THAN JUST AVOIDING THE QUESTIONS BECAUSE OF OUR FEAR OF WHAT THE ANSWERS MIGHT BE.**

**CONSIDER THE ACTUAL QUESTIONS HE ADDRESSES –**

***“IS THE UNIVERSE AN ACCIDENT?”***

***“HOW DID WE GET HERE?”***

***“WHY BOTHER WITH RELIGION & THE BIBLE?”***

***“WHAT DID JESUS TEACH?”***

***“WHO WAS JESUS?”***

***“HOW SHOULD FAITH SHAPE OUR LIVES?”***

***“IS GOD IN CONTROL?”***

**WHAT'S ABSOLUTELY FASCINATING TO ME IS THE WAY JOHNSON CAN ADDRESS THE VAST SCOPE OF ALL THESE QUESTIONS IN A MERE 200 PAGES!**

**ONE OF HIS STATEMENTS THAT CAPTIVATED ME FROM THE OUTSET IS SOMETHING HE SAYS ON THE VERY FIRST PAGE OF THE VERY FIRST CHAPTER.**

**THE SECOND PARAGRAPH OF THE ENTIRE BOOK READS LIKE THIS:**

*“FOR MANY PEOPLE RELIGION PROVIDES ANSWERS (OR AT LEAST A SENSE OF SECURITY) TO THE BIG QUESTIONS OF LIFE.*

*FOR OTHERS, THE ABSOLUTE CLAIMS OF RELIGION RAISE MORE QUESTIONS THAN THEY ANSWER.*

*I HAVE LIVED ON BOTH SIDES – AND IN SOME SENSES, I STILL DO.*

*MY PATH OF FAITH HAS WANDERED THROUGH BOTH DOUBT & BELIEF, OFTEN AT THE SAME TIME.*

**AND HERE'S THE PART THAT REALLY GOT ME:**

*“DOUBT DOESN'T HAVE TO TEAR DOWN BELIEF, HOWEVER; IT CAN PURIFY IT.*

*WHEN IT DOES, THE BELIEFS ON THE OTHER SIDE BECOME MORE CERTAIN.*

*THIS IS WHY I WOULD LIKE TO AFFIRM THAT IT IS POSSIBLE TO FIND GOD EVEN WHILE YOU ARE ASKING THE BIG QUESTIONS.”*

**I THINK THAT'S THE BEAUTY OF THOSE TWO CHAPTERS IN THE BOOK OF JOB.**

**GOD STANDS IN THE WHIRLWIND AND PRESENTS JOB WITH THE MAGNIFICENCE OF CREATION & FORCES HIM TO LOOK AT**

**EVERYTHING AROUND HIM & REALIZE THAT ALL OF THIS DIDN'T JUST COME ABOUT BY CHANCE.**

**YOU CAN BRING YOUR DOUBTS TO THE SURFACE.**

**YOU CAN RAISE THE BIG QUESTIONS – AND YOU'RE FAR BETTER OFF DOING SO, BECAUSE WHEN YOU DO – WHEN YOU PRESS DOWN DEEP ENOUGH – YOU CAN'T HELP BUT SEE THE FOLLY OF A MIND THAT IS SKEPTICAL ABOUT THE DIVINE ORIGINS OF THE UNIVERSE.**

**THAT'S THE BEAUTY OF OUR DOUBTS.**

**OUR DOUBTS DON'T TAKE US AWAY FROM FAITH – THEY PLUNGE US MORE DEEPLY *INTO* IT.**

**WHAT TIMOTHY JOHNSON DISCOVERED IN HIS OWN INQUIRY IS THAT BY STARTING WITH THE BIG QUESTIONS, HE COULDN'T AVOID THE LITTLE ONES.**

***“WHAT ABOUT ME?”***

***“WHY AM I HERE?”***

***“WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO?”***

**AND THAT LEADS, INEVITABLY, TO THE ONE WHO GIVES US THE ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS LIKE THAT.**

**WE DO HAVE SOMEONE WHO HAS SHOWN US THE WAY – SOMEONE WHO HAS SHOWN US HOW TO LIVE – SOMEONE WHO HAS SHOWN US WHAT OUR PURPOSE IS – SOMEONE WHO HAS SHOWN US HOW TO TREAT THE PEOPLE AROUND US.**

**THAT'S WHAT PAUL IS TELLING US IN THIS PASSAGE IN PHILIPPIANS.**

**JESUS WAS WILLING TO EMPTY HIMSELF OF HIS DIVINITY & BE BORN IN HUMAN LIKENESS SO THAT WE MIGHT SEE WHAT IT**

**TAKES TO REACH OUR FULL POTENTIAL AS A PERSON CALLED BY GOD.**

**IN CHRIST'S PARABLE OF THE FINAL JUDGMENT, WHERE THE SHEEP & GOATS ARE SEPARATED, IT'S INTERESTING TO NOTE WHAT JESUS *DOESN'T* SAY.**

**THERE'S NO MENTION OF CORRECT THINKING.**

**THERE'S NO MENTION OF CORRECT POSITIONS ON SOCIAL OR POLITICAL ISSUES.**

**THERE'S NO MENTION OF POWER OR FAME OR WEALTH.**

**THERE'S NO MENTION OF TIME SPENT IN TRADITIONAL RELIGIOUS PRACTICES.**

**HE OFFERS NOTHING OTHER THAN THAT RESOUNDING WORD OF AFFIRMATION – *“WHEN YOU HAVE DONE IT TO THE LEAST OF THESE, YOU HAVE DONE IT TO ME”***

**I SHARED TIMOTHY JOHNSON'S OPENING PARAGRAPH.**

**LET ME SHARE HIS FINAL ONE AS WELL – THE PARAGRAPH THAT COMES AT THE END OF ALL THE QUESTIONS – BOTH BIG & SMALL.**

**HE SAYS:**

***“SO I INVITE YOU TO BEGIN WHERE THE EARLY FOLLOWERS OF JESUS BEGAN – BY FOLLOWING HIS EXAMPLE, BY TRYING TO LIVE THE WAY HE DID, BY PUTTING HIS TEACHINGS INTO ACTION AS BEST AS YOU CAN.***

***AS YOU DO, I BELIEVE YOU WILL BE FOLLOWING A PATH TO THE HEART OF GOD.***

***IT IS A WAY OF KNOWING BY DOING.***

***ULTIMATELY YOU MAY DISCOVER THAT WHAT TRULY MATTERS IN LIFE HAS LESS TO DO WITH GETTING EXACTLY THE RIGHT ANSWERS THAN WITH ASKING THE TRULY IMPORTANT QUESTIONS.”***

***I LOVE THAT STATEMENT – “IT IS A WAY OF KNOWING BY DOING.”***

**I THINK WE SOMETIMES GET IT BACKWARDS.**

**WE THINK FAITH MUST COME BEFORE ACTION.**

**I THINK THE REVERSE IS BETTER.**

**FAITH WILL FOLLOW OUR ACTIONS.**

**LIVE LIKE CHRIST & FAITH IN HIM INEVITABLY WILL FOLLOW.**

**SO, TOO, WITH COMMUNION.**

**I THINK OUR INVITATION TO THE SACRAMENT IS BETTER AS AN OPEN INVITATION – A *COMPLETELY* OPEN INVITATION.**

**I DON’T THINK WE SHOULD CONFINE IT TO THE OFFICIAL CHURCH WORDS OF *“WE INVITE THOSE WHO PUT THEIR TRUST IN JESUS CHRIST TO JOIN US IN SHARING HOLY COMMUNION.”***

**I THINK JESUS HIMSELF WOULD HAVE US SAY - *“WE INVITE EVERYONE (REGARDLESS OF TRUST IN JESUS CHRIST) TO JOIN US IN SHARING HOLY COMMUNION.”***

**EXPERIENCE HOLY COMMUNION – SHARE A MEAL WITH JESUS CHRIST & WITH THOSE WHO HAVE COMMITTED THEIR LIVES TO HIM & A LIFE OF FAITH & A LIFE OF ACTION IN HIS NAME WILL SURELY FOLLOW. AMEN.**

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