

**I Corinthians 1:18-24**  
**July 22, '18**

**“YES!”**

**A TELEPHONE CALL FROM A JOURNALIST, SHORTLY AFTER MIDNIGHT ON THE FIRST DAY OF APRIL OF 1953, WOULD BE A CALL THAT WOULD – IN MANY WAYS – SIGNAL A RELATIVELY SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN THE ENTIRE WORLD.**

**THAT WAS APRIL FOOL’S DAY & THE MAN WHO RECEIVED THAT CALL TOLD THE REPORTER HE DIDN’T THINK IT WAS AT ALL A HUMOROUS JOKE THAT HE WAS MAKING, ESPECIALLY AT THAT HOUR.**

**HE WAS RIGHT – THE REPORTER WASN’T JOKING & IT WASN’T IN THE LEAST BIT HUMOROUS.**

**WE’LL GET TO THAT CALL, BUT FIRST WE HAVE THESE WORDS OF THE APOSTLE PAUL BEFORE US.**

**HE’S WRITING TO THE BELIEVERS IN THE CITY OF CORINTH.**

**THIS IS PAUL’S SECOND LETTER TO THAT CHURCH.**

**HIS FIRST LETTER TO THE CORINTHIANS INCLUDED HIS BEAUTIFUL POEM ABOUT LOVE – FIRST CORINTHIANS 13 – *“LOVE IS PATIENT AND KIND...SO FAITH, HOPE, LOVE ABIDE – THESE THREE. BUT THE GREATEST OF THESE IS LOVE.”***

**JUST TWO CHAPTERS BEFORE THAT, PAUL GIVES US THE FIRST RECORDED ACCOUNT OF THE INSTITUTION OF THE LORD’S SUPPER – WORDS YOU HEAR FROM THIS PULPIT EVERY TIME WE SHARE HOLY COMMUNION – *“FOR I HAVE RECEIVED FROM THE LORD THAT WHICH I ALSO DELIVERED UNTO YOU..”***

**AND THEN, JUST TWO CHAPTERS *AFTER* THE ONE ON LOVE, WE FIND THE FIRST ACCOUNT OF THE RESURRECTION WHEN THE GREAT**

**APOSTLE SAYS, “DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY. O DEATH, WHERE IS THY STING? O GRAVE, WHERE IS THY VICTORY?”**

**YES, PAUL GIVES US SOME OF THE MOST PROFOUND & MEMORABLE WORDS IN THE ENTIRE BIBLE WHEN HE’S WRITING TO THE CHRISTIANS IN CORINTH.**

**THAT CHURCH, THOUGH, WAS THE ONE WITH WHOM HE HAD A RELATIVELY STRAINED RELATIONSHIP.**

**THERE WERE QUESTIONS ABOUT HIS INTEGRITY & HIS SINCERITY – QUESTIONS ABOUT THE VALIDITY OF HIS MESSAGE & HIS CALL FROM GOD.**

**IT IS THOSE PERSONAL QUESTIONS ABOUT HIM THAT SERVE AS THE BASIS OF THE WORDS WE’VE READ THIS MORNING.**

**PAUL WANTED TO VISIT THE CITY OF CORINTH.**

**IN FACT, HE HAD PROMISED THEM THAT HE WOULD.**

**BUT CIRCUMSTANCES HAD PREVENTED SUCH A VISIT & PAUL WAS HEARING RUMBLINGS THAT PEOPLE WERE THINKING HE NEVER REALLY PLANNED ON GOING THERE, BUT WAS JUST SAYING WORDS TO APPEASE THEM.**

**THIS PASSAGE IS HIS RESPONSE, IN WHICH HE BASICALLY SAYS - “I’M NOT SPEAKING OUT OF BOTH SIDES OF MY MOUTH. I’M NOT SAYING ‘YES, I’LL VISIT YOU,’ WHEN I REALLY DON’T INTEND TO.”**

**HE SAYS THAT HIS CALL IS FROM GOD & HE IS AS SINCERE IN HIS “YES” AS GOD IS.**

**HE SAYS THAT IN JESUS CHRIST, THE ANSWER WASN’T “YES” WHEN HE MEANT “NO.”**

**IN JESUS CHRIST, THE ANSWER IS ALWAYS “YES.”**

**ISN’T THAT A WONDERFUL WORD?**

**“YES.”**

**THINK OF THE MANY TIMES YOU LONG TO HEAR A “YES” FROM SOMEONE.**

**IT CAN BE AS EASY & SIMPLE AS “CAN I HAVE A RIDE?” TO AS DEEP & PROFOUND AS “DO YOU LOVE ME?”**

**IN BOTH SCENARIOS, WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR A “YES.”**

**LET’S GO BACK TO THAT JOURNALIST’S LATE-NIGHT APRIL FOOL’S DAY PHONE CALL.**

**THE RECIPIENT OF THAT CALL WAS SWEDEN’S DAG HAMMARSKJOLD BEING TOLD THAT HE HAD JUST BEEN ELECTED THE NEW SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS.**

**THE FIRST SECRETARY-GENERAL HAD RESIGNED & WHEN THE UNITED NATIONS HAD INITIALLY BEEN CREATED LESS THAN A DECADE BEFORE – AFTER THE CONCLUSION OF WORLD WAR II – THEY HAD FAILED TO CREATE A METHOD OF SUCCESSION OR A PROCESS BY WHICH TO CALL A NEW LEADER.**

**THIS WAS THE BEGINNING OF THE COLD WAR BETWEEN EAST & WEST AND NONE OF THE CANDIDATES PUT FORTH WAS ACCEPTABLE TO EITHER SIDE.**

**THE ONLY REASON HAMMARSKJOLD WAS ELECTED WAS BECAUSE HE WAS RELATIVELY UNKNOWN.**

**THE RUSSIANS CONSIDERED HIM – IN THEIR WORDS – “HARMLESS.”**

**THE UNITED STATES DELEGATE WAS TOLD THAT HAMMARSKJOLD “MAY BE AS GOOD AS WE CAN GET.”**

**OVER THE NEXT DECADE, AS HE LED THE UNITED NATIONS, DAG HAMMARSKJOLD PROVED HIMSELF TO BE MORE THAN EITHER SIDE HAD BARGAINED FOR.**

**HE WAS A MAN WHO STOOD UP TO THE WORLD'S SUPERPOWERS & NEVER WAVERED IN HIS COMMITMENT TO THE VALUES OF THE UNITED NATIONS CHARTER.**

**THE HALLMARKS OF HIS SERVICE WERE INDEPENDENCE, IMPARTIALITY, INTEGRITY & MORAL COURAGE.**

**DAG HAMMARSKJOLD DEALT WITH ONE WORLD CRISIS AFTER ANOTHER AS SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS.**

**TIME AFTER TIME, HE WAS THE ONE RESPONSIBLE FOR TAKING US AWAY FROM THE BRINK OF NUCLEAR WAR.**

**AT ONE POINT IN HIS TENURE, THE SOVIET UNION DEMANDED HIS RESIGNATION.**

**NIKITA KHRUSCHEV & ALL THE SOVIET DELEGATES AND SURROGATES ENGAGED IN ONE OF THEIR INFAMOUS SHOE-SLAMMING, DOUBLE FIST-POUNDING EPISODES.**

**THE UNITED NATIONS & THE ENTIRE WORLD WATCHED & WAITED TO SEE HOW HAMMARSKJOLD WOULD RESPOND TO SUCH A FORECFUL DEMAND FROM A SUPERPOWER FOR HIM TO STEP DOWN.**

**WITHIN HIS BRIEF RESPONSE, HAMMARSKJOLD SAID, *"I SHALL REMAIN IN MY POST. IT IS VERY EASY TO BOW TO THE WISH OF A BIG POWER. IT'S ANOTHER MATTER TO RESIST."***

**WITH THOSE WORDS, ONE OF THE MOST MOVING MOMENTS IN THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED NATIONS TOOK PLACE, WITH LONG, THUNDEROUS APPLAUSE FROM THE DELEGATES OF MOST NATIONS DROWNING OUT THE FIST-POUNDING SOVIET & EASTERN BLOC NATIONS.**

**DAG HAMMARSKJOLD SERVED THE UN DURING THE DE-COLONIZATION OF AFRICA & HE WAS LOOKED UPON SKEPTICALLY BY BOTH THE UNITED STATES AND THE SOVIET UNION.**

**EVERYONE WANTED THEIR OWN WAY.**

**IT WASN'T JUST NATIONS – IT WAS POWERFUL CORPORATIONS,  
WHOSE BUSINESS INTERESTS WERE AT STAKE.**

**HAMMARSKJOLD NEVER WAVERED IN HIS COMMITMENT TO  
JUSTICE FOR THE POWERLESS & DISENFRANCHISED IN THE FACE OF  
ENORMOUS OBSTACLES.**

**IN FACT, IT WAS THAT SAME COMMITMENT & PASSION FOR  
JUSTICE THAT LED TO HIS DEATH.**

**HE WAS ON A PEACEKEEPING MISSION IN THE CONGO WHEN HIS  
PLANE CRASHED ON SEPTEMBER 18, 1961 & HAMMARSKJOLD WAS  
KILLED.**

**THAT CRASH WASN'T AN ACCIDENT BUT IT HAS NEVER  
DETERMINED WHO WAS BEHIND IT.**

**IT MAY HAVE BEEN THE SOVIETS.**

**IT MAY HAVE BEEN THE AMERICANS.**

**IT MAY HAVE BEEN ANY NUMBER OF THOSE CORPORATE  
BUSINESS INTERESTS WHO BROUGHT DOWN HIS PLANE.**

**THERE WERE SEVERAL ITEMS FOUND IN HAMMARSKJOLD'S  
SUIT POCKETS AT THE CRASH SITE.**

**SOME WERE THINGS HE ALWAYS CARRIED WITH HIM – A COPY  
OF THE NEW TESTAMENT & PSALMS & A COPY OF MARTIN BUBER'S  
CLASSIC OLD TESTAMENT THEOLOGICAL STUDY, I AND THOU.**

**HE ALSO HAD A BOOK OF POEMS, SOME COPIES OF AMERICAN  
NEWSPAPER CARTOONS MOCKING HIM AND, INEXPLICABLY, A SCRAP  
OF PAPER WITH THE FIRST VERSES OF THE ROCK & ROLL SONG “BE-  
BOP-A-LULA” BY GENE VINCENT.**

**SHORTLY AFTER HAMMARSKJOLD'S DEATH, SOMETHING ELSE  
WOULD BE FOUND IN HIS HOME.**

**IT WAS A DIARY – A SPIRITUAL DIARY OF SORTS – THAT CONTAINED HIS THOUGHTS, PRAYERS, POEMS & REFLECTIONS.**

**THE FIRST ENTRY WAS FROM 1925 WHEN HE WAS 20 YEARS OLD. THE LAST ENTRY WAS FROM AUGUST, 1961 – THE MONTH BEFORE HIS DEATH.**

**INCLUDED ON THE FRONT WAS THIS INSCRIPTION WRITTEN TO A FRIEND – *“IF YOU FIND THIS WORTH PUBLISHING, YOU HAVE MY PERMISSION TO DO SO – AS A SORT OF ‘WHITE BOOK’ CONCERNING MY NEGOTIATIONS WITH MYSELF – AND WITH GOD.”***

**THAT BOOK WAS GIVEN THE TITLE MARKINGS AND IS ONE OF THE MOST INFLUENTIAL, SPIRITUAL MEMOIRS OF THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY.**

**I HAD MY FIRST COPY AS A TEEN-AGER SHORTLY AFTER IT WAS PUBLISHED.**

**I HAVE TURNED TO IT AGAIN & AGAIN OVER THE YEARS FOR REFLECTION & INSPIRATION.**

**I FIND IT TO BE A DIARY OF MY OWN OF SORTS, BASED ON PARTICULAR PASSAGES THAT I HAVE MARKED WITH ONE, TWO, THREE OR FOUR STARS AT VARIOUS TIMES IN MY LIFE.**

**WHEN YOU CONSIDER WHO DAG HAMMARSKJOLD WAS AND WHAT HE STOOD FOR & THE COURAGE HE MAINTAINED THROUGHOUT HIS LIFE IN THE MIDST OF THE MOST TRYING CIRCUMSTANCES IMAGINABLE, HIS ENTRIES IN MARKINGS TAKE ON GREAT SIGNIFICANCE.**

**CONSIDER JUST A FEW – *“LIFE ONLY DEMANDS FROM YOU THE STRENGTH YOU POSSESS. ONLY ONE FEAT IS POSSIBLE – NOT TO HAVE RUN AWAY.”***

**AND THIS - *“NEVER, FOR THE SAKE OF PEACE AND QUIET, DENY YOUR OWN EXPERIENCE OR CONVICTIONS.”***

**AND THIS - “GOODNESS IS SOMETHING SO SIMPLE: ALWAYS TO LIVE FOR OTHERS, NEVER TO SEEK ONE’S OWN ADVANTAGE.”**

**BUT NOW THE QUESTION IS – HOW DOES THIS RELATE TO THE PASSAGE FROM PAUL WE’VE READ THIS MORNING?**

**WHAT DOES THIS HAVE TO DO WITH THE POWERFUL “YES” OF GOD THAT WE FIND IN JESUS CHRIST?**

**I THINK IT WAS FROM MARKINGS THAT I FIRST FELL IN LOVE WITH THE WORD “YES.”**

**IT SEEMED AS THOUGH IT MATERIALIZED ON EACH PAGE & WITH EACH ENTRY.**

**I REMEMBER LOOKING FOR IT & REJOICING IN ITS EVERY APPEARANCE.**

**HIS “YES” ALWAYS MADE ME SMILE, ALWAYS MADE ME HAPPY, ALWAYS CHALLENGED ME TO LOOK BEYOND MYSELF.**

**HERE ARE JUST A FEW OF HAMMARSKJOLD’S MARKINGS ENTRIES THAT USE THE WORD “YES” –**

**THE FIRST ONE - “TO SAY YES TO LIFE IS AT ONE AND THE SAME MOMENT TO SAY YES TO ONESELF.”**

**A SECOND ONE - “YOU DARE YOUR YES - AND EXPERIENCE A MEANING.**

**YOU REPEAT YOUR YES – AND ALL THINGS ACQUIRE A MEANING.**

**WHEN EVERYTHING HAS A MEANING, HOW CAN YOU LIVE ANYTHING BUT A YES.”**

**AND A THIRD AS A VERSE IN A POEM –**

**“ASKED IF I HAVE COURAGE**

**TO GO ON TO THE END,**

**I ANSWER YES WITHOUT**

***A SECOND THOUGHT.”***

**AND, FINALLY, ONE THAT, IN MY EARLIEST COPY OF MARKINGS RECEIVED THE MOST STARS OF ALL – “*TO BE FREE, TO BE ABLE TO STAND UP AND LEAVE EVERYTHING BEHIND WITHOUT LOOKING BACK – TO SAY YES.*”**

**DAG HAMMARSKJOLD WOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ACCOMPLISH WHAT HE DID WITHOUT A STRONG BIBLICAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE “YES” OF GOD THAT IS FOUND IN JESUS CHRIST.**

**THE “YES” OF GOD IS SO POWERFUL WITHIN OUR OWN LIVES. IT STARTS WAY BACK IN THE GENESIS STORY OF CREATION.**

**GOD CREATED THE HEAVENS & THE EARTH AND SAID, “YES.”**

**YOU KNOW HOW THAT GOES – YOUR NUMBER COMES UP, YOU SINK THE PUTT, YOU CONVERT THE SPARE AND YOU SAY “YES.”**

**THE CASSEROLE COMES OUT EXQUISITELY, THE STITCHED ALTERATION IS PERFECT, THE CROWN MOLDING CUT FITS LIKE A GLOVE AND YOU SAY “YES!”**

**THAT’S REALLY WHAT GOD DOES IN CREATION – IN EVERY STEP OF THE PROCESS – INCLUDING YOU.**

**GOD LOOKS AT YOU AS PART OF THE DIVINE CREATION AND SAYS “YES!”**

**YOU AREN’T AN ACCIDENT.**

**YOU WERE MEANT TO BE - BY GOD.**

**IN CREATING YOU, IN CALLING YOU INTO BEING, GOD SAYS – “*I WANT YOU TO EXIST. YOU ARE PRECIOUS IN MY SIGHT.*”**

**GOD LOOKS AT YOU AND SAYS, “YES!”**

**AND BECAUSE GOD SAYS “YES” TO YOU, YOU CAN SAY “YES” TO OTHERS.**



**WHEN YOU ARE CALLED UPON TO GIVE OF YOURSELF TO MAKE SOMEONE ELSE'S LIFE JUST A LITTLE BIT BRIGHTER & A LITTLE BIT LIGHTER, YOU HAVE THE POWER TO SAY "YES."**

**IN MY YEARS HERE, I'VE SEEN IT OVER & OVER AGAIN, FROM SO MANY OF YOU.**

**YOU WERE CALLED BY GOD & YOU SAID "YES" TO SOME FORM OF SERVICE & SACRIFICE.**

**THIS PAST WEEK, ON OUR MISSION TRIP, THIS MESSAGE WAS ON MY MIND A GREAT DEAL.**

**I COULDN'T HELP BUT THINK OF THE MANY "YES'ES" I HEARD FROM THE 11 OTHER PARTICIPANTS ON THAT TRIP.**

**WE SAID TO RON, "WE HAVE TO HAVE SOMEONE WHO WILL BE WILLING TO DRIVE THE BUS A TOTAL OF MORE THAN A THOUSAND MILES & RON SAID "YES."**

**WE SAID TO PATSY, "SOMEONE HAS TO CUT DOWN THAT ENTIRE VINE GROWING ALONG THE FENCE AND PATSY SAID "YES."**

**WE SAID TO EMMA SUE, "WE NEED SOMEONE WHO CAN TIE UP THESE TOMATO VINES EVEN TIGHTER & STURDIER THAN THE ONES THAT ARE THERE NOW & EMMA SUE SAID "YES."**

**WE SAID TO ALEX, "SOMEONE HAS TO LEARN HOW TO HANG A WALL IN THIS DILAPIDATED HOUSE, AND ALEX SAID "YES."**

**WE SAID TO BARB, "DO YOU REALLY THINK IT'S A GOOD IDEA TO EVEN ATTEMPT TO JOIN THIS TRIP ON THE VERY DAY YOU HAVE A MEDICAL TREATMENT AND BARB SAID "YES."**

**WE SAID TO DONNA, "WE NEED A SIXTH PERSON WHO WILL SPEND THE ENTIRE DAY WORKING WITH THE YOUTH ON HOUSE CONSTRUCTION AND DONNA SAID "YES."**

**WE SAID TO MARY, “DO YOU THINK WE NEED TO WORRY ABOUT MAKING THIS GARDEN ENTRANCE SPOTLESS BY SWEEPING AWAY EVERYTHING ON THE ENTIRE SIDEWALK AND STREET AND MARY SAID, “YES.”**

**WE SAID TO TREY, “WE NEED SOMEONE TO MAKE SURE THIS TRIP IS ORGANIZED & OUR YOUTH ARE KEPT ACTIVE AND SAFE AND TREY SAID, “YES.”**

**WE SAID TO ANNIE, “ARE YOU SURE YOU WANT TO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR PREPARING A MEAL FOR EVERYONE & ALSO TAKE CARE OF EVERYTHING WE’VE FORGOTTEN TO DO AND ANNIE SAID, “YES.”**

**WE SAID TO MADDIE, “WE’VE GOT TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO COVER THIS GAPING HOLE IN THE FLOOR OF THIS OLD HOUSE SO THAT NO ONE WILL FALL THROUGH AND MADDIE SAID, “YES.”**

**WE SAID TO DANIEL, “SOMEONE HAS TO LEARN, FROM SCRATCH, HOW TO CONSTRUCT A WINDOW FRAME AND DANIEL SAID, “YES.”**

**IT TOOK A WHOLE LOT OF “YES’ES” TO MAKE EVERYTHING COME TOGETHER, BUT IT DID.**

**SO IT IS IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH.**

**IT TAKES A WHOLE LOT OF PEOPLE WILLING TO SAY “YES” TO ENABLE EVERYTHING TO COME TOGETHER.**

**WE ANSWER “YES” TO GOD AND TO ONE ANOTHER BECAUSE GOD HAS OFFERED US GOD’S OWN “YES” IN OUR LIVES – A YES OF LOVE, ACCEPTANCE, CHALLENGE, MERCY & GRACE.**

**SHORTLY BEFORE HIS DEATH, ONE OF DAG HAMMARSKJOLD’S FINAL ENTRIES IN MARKINGS SUMS UP HIS LIFE OF SERVICE, COURAGE, INTEGRITY & COMMITMENT – “I DON’T KNOW WHO – OR WHAT – PUT THE QUESTION. I DON’T KNOW WHEN IT WAS PUT. I DON’T**

***EVEN REMEMBER ANSWERING. BUT AT SOME MOMENT I DID ANSWER  
YES TO SOMEONE – OR SOMETHING – AND FROM THAT HOUR I WAS  
CERTAIN THAT EXISTENCE IS MEANINGFUL AND THAT, THEREFORE, MY  
LIFE, IN SELF-SURRENDER, HAD A GOAL.”***

**OUR EXISTENCE IS MEANINGFUL WHEN, IN SELF-SURRENDER,  
WE ANSWER “YES” TO THE ONE WHO CREATED US – TO THE ONE WHO  
LOOKS UPON US WITH JOY AND SAYS, “YES.” AMEN.**

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