



Sermon December 8, 2019

“WHAT IS IT GONNA TAKE!”

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This morning I begin with trepidation... Last Sunday morning I went to celebrate Communion at LaJoya and as I walked in the doors someone pulled the Fire Alarm. At dusk, I recalled the entry code for the Door Locks, then stood there at the Security Alarm unable to remember the number. When I phoned the Security Company, I identified myself as the new Pastor and they responded “Not on our records.” When I sat down at my computer terminal, our IT Staff had done an upgrade, and the computer asked my identity; and when I typed in my name, the Computer said “Wrong”.

The words of this morning have been different for us, different from what we regularly read and recite. As much as we may pull out memorable phrases like “Let justice roll down like Waters and Mercy like an ever flowing stream”, “Prophesy to the Bones, to the Wind and Spirit, Son of Man, Prophesy” and the words of Jesus that “Remember the Lilies of the field”, or “Forgive them, they know not what they do”; the words of Prophets are rarely words of comfort but are challenge to consider different options in life. When we moved the Pulpit, I stated that this could not be a Bully Pulpit, for the Left or for the Right. The last several weeks I have named in our prayers concern for our government. How is it that for the first 150 years, in spite of all this Nation endured, only Andrew Johnson/ Lincoln’s successor was brought up for impeachment for not treating the South more viciously during reconstruction and not prosecuted; yet in our lives, each side has sought this most extreme action? I do not believe the Constitution is of any less value to us. But in this season of Advent, I hope for something different, where in a new time and reality we would not attack one another and attempt to tear apart the world of God’s Creation.

The most basic problem of the 1st Testament was the people’s desire to have a King, rather than God being Lord & Savior. They chose to make their religion and government be a reflection of their culture, a reflection of world culture; rather than striving to have their way of life, their leadership be a reflection of their Faith in God. Rather than being a beacon to the world, a light set on a hill to Call all the world to God’s Mountain; Israel chose the lowest common denominator, to be as base as everyone else. Instead of trusting God, the masses wanted a King, a Monarch, a leader like the Dictators of other Nations. Isaiah is unique among the prophets, because Isaiah was High Priest of Jerusalem as well as a Prophet. Isaiah witnessed the passing of the former King, and the rise and fall of subsequent leaders in the Monarchy, determining the whole history of kingship has been corrupt. As Wise as King Solomon, and loved as King David, all our Kings have been mortal, flawed human characters.

Remember that passage from the Book of Samuel, when Saul the First King abandoned faith in God, God sent the Prophet Samuel (who had been trained as a Priest before the building of the Temple, before the conquering of Jerusalem, before the development of the Nation), God sent Samuel to Jesse to anoint as King the son chosen by God. Six of Jesse’s sons were paraded before Samuel, and while one was strong, another handsome, one bright and another ethical, none of these were the Chosen One, and they waited until the Shepherd Boy David came in from the flocks. Isaiah’s point is that those were all the options at that time, when Samuel sought a King for Israel, and all the subsequent Kings had been descended from David; BUT these are different times, so let us return to the Lineage of Jesse for a

different Shoot. Realize that Jesse had died hundreds of years before, yet nothing is impossible for God, so even the long dead stump of Jesse could still produce a new shoot in the lineage.

What will be different about this new generation from the former lineage of Jesse? We do not seek a King, God is our King, we seek a Messiah (the Chosen One of God) to lead us in the way of God.

The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him. The Old Testament understanding of faith was not that each person had a soul! Instead, that each and every person was formed by God, and after this life we return to be with God. However, When King Saul was chosen to be Israel's king, God placed God's spirit upon Saul; AND When Saul lost faith in God and sought his own way, when Saul became enraged and fell upon the ground in fits, the Spirit of God was taken from Saul.

The difference in a Messiah, instead of a King, this individual will have the Spirit of WISDOM & UNDERSTANDING; the Spirit of COUNSEL & MIGHT; the Spirit of KNOWLEDGE & FEAR of the LORD. The first priority of the Messiah will be WANTING TO DO WHAT GOD DESIRES.

What a different world it would be if we did not see as people see, or listen as people do; but BEING CONCERNED WITH GOD'S DESIRE shall allow the Messiah to provide Justice for the Poor; Equity for the Meek; and condemnation for the wicked, by their own acts.

What then would be the difference in REALITY, if instead of Kings, Monarchies, Dictators, Human Leaders who reflect the culture; if instead we follow Messiah? Imagine the Garden of Eden. When humanity followed their own desires instead of God, all Creation was effected. IF Humanity would seek Messiah, who lives in right relationship with God and leads us to do so... The Wolf would lie down with the Lamb; the Leopard with baby goat; the Calf and the Lion; the Cow and the Bear; the Lion and Ox shall eat grass together. Perhaps even the Donkey and Elephant will get along. There will still be Snakes, but even the child shall not need to fear them.

Matthew's Gospel abruptly introduces John the Baptist, quoting Isaiah, and that all the world sought after John, who spoke words of condemnation. Luke's Gospel tells of another High Priest and HOPE in the coming of a Prophet. According to Luke, in the days of Herod the King, Zechariah was a Priest of Abijah in the rebuilt Temple, whose wife Elizabeth was a descendant of Aaron but they had no children and were long beyond the age of conception. At that time, the priests rotated by lot whose turn it was to go inside the Temple to offer the prayers of the people, and come out to tell people if God had received their offerings and sacrifices or not. Now I would confess to you that Pastors are among the deepest of believers in the power of God, but we also can be horrible skeptics. Next to Doctors, we are the worst patients. On the night in which it fell to Zechariah to offer the prayers of the people to God, an Angel appeared to Zechariah, telling him that Zechariah's Wife's greatest prayer has been to have a child and this child will bring faith in God, Joy and rejoicing to many. He will live as a Nazareen, wandering the wilderness, dressed in Camel's Hair. But Zechariah doubted. Zechariah said I am an old man, and my wife is too advanced in years. For doubting the power of God to change the world, the Angel took away Zechariah's ability to speak. When he exited the Holy of Holies, the people were waiting and Zechariah could not Forgive or Offer Assurance of Forgiveness to anyone. In due course the Bible records Elizabeth having one of the easiest pregnancies, in part because Mary came to visit, in part because Zechariah could not say a word. But when the child was born, Zechariah was given a slate on which to write and asked the infant's name, and Zechariah said "His name is John" at which his tongue was loosened.

To close out as we began, when I was interviewing at churches, I came home quite late after traveling, and my bride mumbled something about "Billy is barking". I thought this obscure, so went to sleep, until

about 3am "Bark, Bark, Bark, Woof, Woof!" I rose to look out the window to see what was the matter, and here was our neighbor, barking. The next day as I left for work, I saw Billy wheeling in the Garbage cans and asked him. Billy replied that "The neighbor on their other side has a new dog, and Billy works 3rd shift, so sleeps during the day, but the dog has been sleeping while he tried to sleep, so he barked while they slept." I asked if it would not be simpler to tell the neighbor your problem? Billy said "Oh that would be too confrontational! I will just bark and they will get the message."