

“MISPLACED PERHAPS.....BUT NEVER LOST”
A SERMON BASED ON THE OLD TESTAMENT
PROPHET EZEKIEL (34:11-16, 20-24) AND PRESENTED AT
ORLEAN UMC ON NOVEMBER 23, 2014

ONE OF MY ----AND I AM SURE THAT I SPEAK FOR EILEEN
HERE AS WELL -----MOST TERRIFYING MOMENTS IN ALL
OF OUR YEARS TOGETHER WAS THE TIME WE LOST OUR
SON.....

WE WERE BEGINNING A GREAT DAY AT THE B&O TRAIN
MUSEUM IN BALTIMORE ---- A GREAT PLACE FOR KIDS
AND GROWNUPS WHO LIKE TRAINS -----IT SEEMS THAT
PARENTS AND GINEEN WENT ONE WAY----ONE
DIRECTION -----IN THE MUSEUM --- BUT JAMES HAD
DECIDED TO GO ANOTHER -----

**IT WAS A SPECIAL EVENT DAY AND THE MUSEUM WAS
PACKED WITH KIDS AND FAMILIES AND STROLLERS
JUST EVERYWHERE -----**

**AND THERE WAS NO QUICK END TO OUR TERROR AS WE
SAW NO IMMEDIATE SIGNS OF JAMES -----**

**A HOST OF VISIONS FLOODED OUR MINDS --- ALL BAD ---
ALL SCARY ----ALL FRIGHTENING ----ALL REMINISCENT
OF OTHER STORIES ABOUT OTHER FAMILIES WITH
SIMILAR STORIES TO SHARE ----STORIES THAT
SOMETIMES HAD UNPREDICTABLE OUTCOMES -----
SOMETIMES HAPPY ONES AND SOMETIMES TRAGIC
ONES**

**EILEEN AND I ---- AS JAMES' PARENTS -----MADE EYE
CONTACT WITH ONE ANOTHER THAT SPOKE VOLUMES --
--AND THEN WE WENT OUR SEPARATE WAYS TO
SEARCH----I KNOW THAT SILENT PRAYERS WERE SAID ---
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**WE WERE KEPT FROM "LOSING IT" IN SHEER PANIC
BECAUSE WE HAD TO SPRING INTO ACTION --- WE HAD
TO DO SOMETHING ---WE HAD TO FIND OUR SON -----
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**A FIND HIM WE DID ---- EILEEN FOUND HIM UPSET AND
VERY CONCERNED -----BUT VERY SAFE AND WELL
CARED FOR IN THE MUSEUM'S SECURITY OFFICE-----**

**WE WERE ALL RELIEVED---GRATEFUL --- THANKFUL AND
EMOTIONALLY DRAINED**

**THIS EPISODE REMINDED ME THAT THERE IS SOMEONE
GREATER THAN OURSELVES WATCHING OVER US -----
ALWAYS WATCHING OVER US --- IN GOOD TIMES AND IN
BAD -----**

**ALTHOUGH IT APPEARED --- CERTAINLY TO US AT THE
TIME --- THAT JAMES WAS LOST --- THE TRUTH IS HE
WAS NEVER LOST -----GOD WAS THERE
WITH US ---- THROUGH HIS SON AND THE HOLY SPIRIT
THAT TOUCHED US THAT DAY AND LED US AND
COMFORTED US AND HEALED US OF OUR FEAR AND
TREMBLING AND PERHAPS EVEN SAW THE LAUGHTER
AND RELIEF AND EXPERIENCED OUR DEEP SIGHS OF
JOY AND SHARED THE TEARS OF JOY THAT FELL THAT
DAY**

**THE MESSAGE OF EZEKIEL THE PROPHET WAS THAT
THE PEOPLE OF GOD ARE NEVER LOST.....**

***"AS SHEPHERDS SEEK OUT THEIR FLOCKS WHEN THEY
ARE AMONG THEIR SCATTERED SHEEP, SO I WILL SEEK
OUT MY SHEEP."***

**GOD IS LIKE A GOOD SHEPHERD, CARING FOR HIS
FLOCK..... REGARDLESS OF THEIR SITUATION GOD
ALWAYS KNOWS WHERE THEY ARE.**

**SOME PEOPLE WILL SAY, "BUT WHERE IS GOD WHEN I
AM HURTING OR SCARED? -----WHERE IS GOD WHEN I
CAN'T FIND MY WAY? -----WHERE IS GOD WHEN I AM
SURROUNDED BY DARKNESS?"**

**FIRST, WE HAVE TO ADMIT THAT WE ARE LOST.
UNFORTUNATELY OUR PRIDE AND/OR STUBBORNNESS
PREVENT US FROM LETTING OTHERS KNOW THAT WE
NEED HELP..... IN THE BOOK, CHICKEN SOUP FOR
THE WOMAN'S SOUL, CATHY DOWNS, SHARES THE
STORY OF HER FATHER. HE WAS AN OLD-FASHIONED
COUNTRY PREACHER..... HE COULD SPOUT
VERSES FROM THE BIBLE IN HIS LITTLE BAPTIST
CHURCH AND MAKE HIS LISTENERS TREMBLE.**

**ONE AFTERNOON, CATHY, AND HER FATHER WERE
DRIVING DOWN A DIRT ROAD TO VISIT SOME ELDERLY
LADIES IN THE CHURCH. CATHY HAD JUST RECEIVED
HER NEW THIRD-GRADE READER.**

AS SHE WAS READING SHE CAME TO A WORD SHE DID NOT KNOW. SHE HELD THE BOOK UP TO HER FATHER SO HE COULD SEE IT..... HE MUMBLED SOMETHING ABOUT NOT BEING ABLE TO READ AND KEPT ON DRIVING..... SHE SPELLED THE WORD, BUT HER FATHER SAID NOTHING..... ANGRILY, CATHY SAID, "CAN'T YOU READ?"

HER FATHER PULLED THE CAR OVER TO THE SIDE OF THE ROAD AND TURNED OFF THE IGNITION. "NO, CATHY, I CAN'T READ." -----HE REACHED FOR HER BOOK AND ANNOUNCED THAT HE COULDN'T READ ANYTHING IN THE BOOK. -----PAINFULLY, HE BEGAN TO DESCRIBE HIS CHILDHOOD, HOW HE SPENT HIS TIME WORKING ON THE FAMILY FARM NEVER HAVING TIME TO GO TO SCHOOL.

SINCE HE HAD TWO HANDICAPPED BROTHERS, HE HAD TO DO MOST OF THE CHORES AND BECAUSE HE HAD SPENT SO LITTLE TIME IN SCHOOL, HE EVENTUALLY DROPPED OUT..... *UNFORTUNATELY HE NEVER LEARNED TO READ.*

HE SEEMED ASHAMED AND SADDENED NOT BEING ABLE TO HELP HIS CHILDREN WITH THEIR LESSONS.....

CATHY LISTENED AS HER FATHER SHARED THE DARKNESS OF HIS CHILDHOOD..... SHE FINALLY ASKED, "BUT, FATHER, HOW COULD YOU SAY ALL THOSE SCRIPTURES IN CHURCH?" HE EXPLAINED THAT HER MOTHER HAD READ THE BIBLE TO HIM AND HE MEMORIZED ALL THE IMPORTANT VERSES.

CATHY VOWED AT THAT MOMENT TO TEACH HER FATHER HOW TO READ..... AND.... BEFORE HE DIED..... HE HAD READ THE ENTIRE BIBLE..... CATHY WAS SO INSPIRED BY HER FATHER SHE CHOSE A CAREER IN TEACHING.

GOD ALWAYS FINDS US BUT WE MUST BE WILLING TO RELEASE OUR PRIDE AND CRY OUT FOR HELP..... GOD WILL HEAR OUR CRIES OF DESPAIR AND PAIN..... PRIDE HOLDS US BACK..... EMBARRASSMENT DOES TOO. SOMETIMES FOLKS ARE ASHAMED OF THE FACT THAT THEY MUST RELY ON OTHERS FOR ASSISTANCE.....

SINCE WE LIVE IN A SOCIETY WHICH PRIDES ITSELF ON "SELF RELIANCE" WE ARE CONDITIONED NOT TO REACH OUT AND DEPEND ON OTHERS WHEN WE CAN'T FIND OUR WAY.

NOT ONLY DOES GOD FIND THOSE WHO ARE LOST, GOD PROVIDES A SAFE HAVEN FOR THOSE WHO ARE RESCUED.....NOTICE THE "I WILL'S" OF THE LORD ON BEHALF OF HIS SHEEP:

- **"I WILL SEARCH THEM AND SEEK THEM OUT**
- **I WILL DELIVER THEM**
- **I WILL BRING THEM OUT**
- **I WILL GATHER THEM TOGETHER**
- **I WILL BRING THEM IN**
- **I WILL FEED THEM**
- **I WILL CAUSE THEM TO LIE DOWN**

- **I WILL BIND UP THE BROKEN**
- **I WILL STRENGTHEN THE SICK**

GOD RESURRECTS US FROM OUR PLACES OF DARKNESS AND GIVES US BACK OUR LIVES.

THE STORY IS TOLD ABOUT A WOMAN WHO WAS A SCHOOL PRINCIPLE IN NEW ORLEANS AT THE TIME OF HURRICANE KATRINA—SHE AND HER FAMILY LEFT NEW ORLEANS TWO DAYS BEFORE THE HURRICANE STRUCK -----ALL THEY TOOK WITH THEM WAS A FEW CHANGES OF CLOTHING, THINKING THEY WOULD RETURN IN A FEW DAYS..... UNFORTUNATELY THEIR HOME WAS COMPLETELY FLOODED..... THEY LOST EVERYTHING, INCLUDING TWO AUTOMOBILES.

**THERE NOTHING TO RETURN TO. THEIR HOME WAS A
TOTAL RUIN.....A TOTAL LOSS**

**TO MAKE MATTERS WORSE THE SCHOOL SYSTEM WAS
COMPLETELY SHUT DOWN. NOT ONLY DID THEY NOT
HAVE A HOUSE, BUT ALSO SHE HAD NO JOB.....NO
MEANS OF EMPLOYMENT ---**

**THE FAMILY TEMPORARILY STAYED IN BATON ROUGE
WHERE MANY OTHER HURRICANE ESCAPEES HAD FLED-
---- THERE THEY SET UP TEMPORARY SCHOOLS AND
THE FORMER SCHOOL PRINCIPLE GOT A JOB IN THE
SCHOOL LIBRARY.**

**THEY HAD LOST EVERYTHING, BUT THE DISASTER
TOTALLY TRANSFORMED THEM. THEY STILL HAD EACH
OTHER AND THEY DECIDED TO MAKE A NEW LIFE FOR
THEMSELVES IN BATON ROUGE.**

***WITH GOD WE ARE NEVER LOST. GOD IS THE GREAT
SHEPHERD WHO WATCHES OVER US. GOD LEADS US TO
SAFE PASTURES, AWAY FROM THE DARKNESS.***

**JESUS UNDERSTOOD HIMSELF AS THE "GOOD
SHEPHERD." AS WE READ EARLIER THIS MORNING
FROM JOHN'S GOSPEL -----JESUS SAID:**

***"I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD, I KNOW MY OWN AND
MY OWN KNOW ME AND THEY KNOW MY VOICE."***

WE CAN'T EXPECT TO BE FOUND IF WE AREN'T LISTENING. THE VOICE OF JESUS IS A FAMILIAR ONE, BUT WE ARE SO DISTRACTED AND BUSY LISTENING TO OTHER VOICES, WE DON'T ALWAYS HEAR THAT FORGIVING, COMFORTING, REASSURING VOICE OF HOPE.

WHEN HOWARD HENRICKS WAS GROWING UP HE HAD A REPUTATION OF BEING A TROUBLEMAKER IN THE CLASSROOM..... AS A FIFTH GRADER HE WAS FEELING VERY INSECURE, UNLOVED AND ANGRY AT LIFE..... ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS HIS TEACHER, MRS. SIMON, SAID TO HIM, "HOWARD, YOU ARE THE WORST BEHAVED CHILD IN THIS SCHOOL."

IT WAS A DIFFICULT YEAR FOR YOUNG HOWARD AND THE WORDS OF HIS TEACHER WERE STUCK IN HIS HEAD. BUT, SOMEHOW HE MANAGED TO BE PROMOTED TO THE SIXTH GRADE.

THE NEXT FALL HOWARD WAS SITTING IN A NEW CLASSROOM WITH A NEW TEACHER, MISS NOE. SHE WAS TAKING ROLL CALL AND WHEN SHE CAME TO HOWARD'S NAME SHE SAID, "HOWARD HENRICKS, I'VE HEARD A LOT ABOUT YOU," LOOKING AT HIM AND SMILING..... BUT THEN SHE CONTINUED, "BUT I DON'T BELIEVE A WORD OF IT." -----FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HIS LIFE, HOWARD BELIEVED IN HIMSELF..... HE HAD A HEARD A VOICE OF HOPE AND ENCOURAGEMENT.

FROM THEN ON HOWARD WAS GREATLY INTERESTED IN HIS SCHOOLWORK AND HE WORKED AS HARD AS HE COULD FOR HIS NEW TEACHER..... IT WAS A LIFE CHANGING EVENT THAT LED HIM FROM THE DARKNESS TO A SAFE PASTURE.

HOWARD HENRICKS WOULD BECOME A PASTOR AND --- FOR OVER FIFTY YEARS --- A PROFESSOR AT DALLAS THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY -----HE WAS A FREQUENT SPEAKER AT PROMISE KEEPER EVENTS AND THROUGH SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS – RADIO ---TAPES –FILMS --- THE SIXTEEN BOOKS HE AUTHORED AND COAUTHORED ---COUNTLESS JOURNAL AND OTHER ARTICLES AND HIS WORK AS CHAPLAIN TO THE DALLAS COWBOYS ----HIS REACH WAS WORLD-WIDE -----HE MINISTERED IN PERSON IN MORE THAN EIGHTY COUNTRIES

**HENDRICKS DIED IN 2013, BUT WHAT A LEGACY HE
LIVED AND LEFT-----**

***“I’VE HEARD A LOT ABOUT YOU.....BUT I DON’T
BELIEVE A WORD OF IT”***

**NOT ONLY IS GOD THE GOOD SHEPHERD, GOD PLACES
GOOD SHEPHERDS IN OUR MIDST. AND IT IS PEOPLE OF
FAITH WHO MODEL THEMSELVES AFTER THE GOOD
SHEPHERD AND BECOME GOOD SHEPHERDS
THEMSELVES.**

**PRAISE GOD AND MAY IT BE SO FOR YOU AND FOR
ME....AMEN**

