

**"THERE COMES A TIME....."**

**A SERMON BASED ON THE OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY FROM THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY (34:1-12) AND PRESENTED FOR ORLEAN UMC ON MAY 2, 2021----THE FIFTH SUNDAY FOLLOWING EASTER SUNDAY**

**THIS MORNING WE WRAP UP A SHORT MINI-SERIES OF SERMONS FROM THE OFTEN OVERLOOKED ---- BUT VERY IMPORTANT --- BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY.....**

**DEUTERONOMY IS ONE OF THE FIVE BOOKS COMPRISING WHAT WE COMMONLY REFER TO AS THE TORAH...THE INITIAL FIVE BOOKS OF THE HEBREW BIBLE ....**

**DEUTERONOMY IS THE ACCOUNT OF ISRAEL'S  
COVENANT WITH GOD RENEWED ----A COVENANT  
THAT WOULD GUIDE ISRAEL TO GOD'S  
BLESSINGS THROUGHOUT THE REMAINDER OF  
THEIR HISTORY AS A NATION.....**

**DEUTERONOMY IS ALSO A BOOK OF STORIES  
THROUGH WHICH ONE MIGHT BENEFIT FROM  
EXPLORING THE LARGE, STILL-RELEVANT LIFE  
THEMES WHICH HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED IN THE  
STORIES.**

***THERE COMES A TIME, THOUGH, WHEN ALL  
THINGS MUST COME TO AN END AND TODAY IS  
THAT TIME FOR MOSES AND THE EXODUS.***

**IT HAD ALL STARTED MORE THAN 40 YEARS  
BEFORE WHEN GOD SPOKE TO MOSES OUT OF  
THAT BURNING BUSH IN THE MIDDLE OF  
NOWHERE, CALLING MOSES TO GO BACK TO  
EGYPT TO LIBERATE THE HEBREW SLAVES AND  
BRING THEM OUT TO A PROMISED LAND  
FLOWING WITH MILK AND HONEY TO WHICH GOD  
WOULD LEAD THEM..... NONE OF IT WAS EASY.  
GOD LED THEM OUT WITH MIGHTY SIGNS AND  
WONDERS, MAKING A WAY FOR THEM THROUGH  
THE SEA ON DRY LAND..... THERE WAS MANNA  
IN THE DESERT, WATER FROM ROCKS, A LAW TO  
BRING ORDER TO THE NEWLY CONSTITUTED  
PEOPLE.**

**THERE WAS GRUMBLING AND REBELLION FROM THE PEOPLE, AND A REFUSAL TO GO INTO THE PROMISED LAND WHEN THE SPIES CAME BACK WITH A FEARFUL REPORT ABOUT THE ENEMIES WHO WOULD HAVE TO BE CONQUERED..... AS A RESULT, THE LORD DETERMINED THAT THE GENERATION WHICH LEFT EGYPT WOULD NOT ENTER THE PROMISED LAND, SO THEY WANDERED FOR 40 YEARS IN THE WILDERNESS. MOSES ALSO WAS NOT TO BE ALLOWED TO ENTER THE PROMISED LAND.**

**TODAY'S STORY IS PERCHED ON THE EDGE BETWEEN TWO EPOCHS AND IS A VERY POIGNANT, BITTERSWEET MOMENT. THE EXODUS JOURNEY IS ENDING, AND THE TIME FOR MOVING IN AND CONQUERING THE PROMISED LAND IS AT HAND. THE TIME HAS COME FOR MOSES TO GO THE WAY OF ALL THE EARTH. BUT FIRST YAHWEH LEADS HIM UP ONTO ANOTHER MOUNTAIN, MOUNT NEBO. IT IS AN AMAZING SITE, WITH AN AMAZING VIEW. YOU CAN LOOK ACROSS THE JORDAN VALLEY AND SEE THE EXPANSE OF THE PROMISED LAND.**

**THE LORD SAID TO MOSES, “THIS IS IT. THIS IS THE DESTINATION TOWARDS WHICH YOU HAVE BROUGHT THESE PEOPLE, THE LAND I HAVE PROMISED TO YOUR DESCENDANTS. YOU WILL NOT BE GOING INTO IT, BUT I WANTED YOU TO SEE IT.”**

**THEN MOSES DIED AT THE AGE OF 120, AND THE IMPLICATION IS THAT YAHWEH HIMSELF BURIED HIM IN A NEARBY VALLEY. NO ONE KNEW OR KNOWS EXACTLY WHERE HE WAS BURIED. THE PEOPLE WEPT AND MOURNED FOR MOSES FOR 30 DAYS BEFORE MOVING FORWARD INTO THE PROMISED LAND.**

**NOW THE TENDENCY IS FOR PEOPLE TO THINK IT WAS UNFAIR FOR MOSES NOT TO GET TO ENTER THE PROMISED LAND AFTER ALL HE HAD DONE TO GET THEM THERE..... BUT I PERSONALLY THINK IT MAY HAVE BEEN ONE OF GOD'S TENDER MERCIES FOR MOSES AND A NECESSARY PROVISION FOR THE HEBREW PEOPLE AS THEY PREPARED TO ENTER THIS NEW EPOCH..... I CAN'T IMAGINE MOSES AT THE AGE OF 120 MAKING A GOOD ADJUSTMENT TO BECOMING A MILITARY COMMANDER, WHICH WAS GOING TO BE THE NEW AND NEEDED AND NECESSARY PRIMARY ROLE OF LEADERSHIP AS THEY ENTERED THE PROMISED LAND AND DID BATTLE WITH THE INHABITANTS OF THE LAND.**

**THE VIEW FROM MOUNT NEBO WAS PEACEFUL  
AND BEAUTIFUL; THE REALITY ON THE GROUND  
AFTER THEY CROSSED THE JORDAN WAS QUITE  
DIFFERENT.**

**MOSES GOT TO SEE THE DESTINATION AND WAS  
ABLE TO IMAGINE WHAT IT WOULD BE LIKE FOR  
HIS DESCENDANTS TO HAVE A PLACE OF THEIR  
OWN TO LIVE AND WORK IN FREEDOM AND TO  
WORSHIP THEIR GOD IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH.  
MOSES GOT TO DO THAT PART....AND EVEN  
MORE.....**



**AFTER HE GUIDED ALL THOSE PEOPLE ALL THOSE YEARS IN THE WILDERNESS TO THEIR NEW HOME, HIS FRIEND YAHWEH TOOK HIM BY THE HAND AND GUIDED HIM TO HIS ETERNAL HOME. I DON'T FIND ANYTHING TO REGRET IN THIS STORY, AND A GREAT DEAL TO LEARN.**

**THE FIRST REMINDER FROM THIS STORY IS ABOUT OUR OWN MORTALITY. AT SOME POINT OUR EARTHLY LIFE IS GOING TO END, AND WE ARE NOT GOING TO HAVE ACCOMPLISHED EVERYTHING WE WOULD LIKE TO ACCOMPLISH.**

**WE WILL BE ON SOME SORT OF MOUNTAIN OR IN  
SOME SORT OF VALLEY, AND THE GOAL WILL  
SEEM TO STILL BE OFF IN THE DISTANCE  
SOMEWHERE, BUT IT WON'T MATTER. GOD WILL  
TAKE US BY THE HAND AND GUIDE US TO A  
BETTER DESTINATION..... AND IN ADDITION,  
THE WORKPLACE THAT WE THINK WILL FALL  
APART WHEN WE LEAVE OR RETIRE WILL IN  
REALITY KEEP PERKING ALONG AND PERHAPS  
BE GUIDED INTO A NEW CHAPTER OF ITS  
EXISTENCE THAT WE COULD NEVER HAVE  
TAKEN IT TO.**

**THE CHILDREN WE THINK WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO MANAGE WITHOUT US WILL NOT ONLY BECOME INDEPENDENT BUT WILL AMAZE US WITH THEIR ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND THEIR WISDOM. THE PASTOR THAT YOU HAVE LONG KNOWN WILL PERHAPS BE REPLACED BY ONE EVEN BETTER WILTH EVEN FRESHER AND NEWER IDEAS.....**

**THERE IS AN OLD SAYING THAT THE JOURNEY IS THE DESTINATION, AND THAT IS A GOOD BASIS FOR A LIFE PHILOSOPHY. WHEN YOU ARE HIKING AND YOU SEE THE TALLEST PEAK BEFORE YOU, THAT SEEMS LIKE THE DESTINATION.**

**BUT WHEN YOU ARRIVE ON THE TOP OF THAT  
PEAK THE TRAIL GOES ON AND THERE ARE  
OTHER PEAKS AND VALLEYS BEFORE YOU THAT  
REMAIN TO BE TRAVELLED. SO THE  
CHARACTERISTICS WE NEED TO DEVELOP ARE  
PATIENCE, ENDURANCE, PERSEVERANCE, AND  
FINDING CONTENTMENT AND JOY ALONG THE  
WAY.**

**OBVIOUSLY THE SECOND REMINDER FROM THIS  
STORY IS THAT THE PEOPLE WE LOOK TO IN  
OUR LIVES FOR STABILITY, GUIDANCE AND  
LEADERSHIP WILL NOT ALWAYS BE THERE.**

**THE TIME WILL COME, SOONER OR LATER, FOR THEM TO STEP ASIDE FROM LEADERSHIP OR TO GO THE WAY OF ALL THE EARTH AS MOSES DID. THIS IS A MAJOR CRISIS TO DEAL WITH IN LIFE, WHETHER IT IS A PARENT OR SPOUSE OR EMPLOYER OR PRESIDENT OR WHATEVER.**

**THIS HAS SOME IMPORTANT IMPLICATIONS FOR US. FIRST, WE MUST LEARN TO LIVE WITH THE KNOWLEDGE THAT THIS WILL HAPPEN IN OUR LIVES, NOT JUST ONCE BUT NUMEROUS TIMES. WE HAVE TO PREPARE OURSELVES FOR THAT.**

**THE NEXT LEADER WILL NOT BE THE SAME AS  
THE LAST ONE AND THERE IS NO POINT SITTING  
AROUND AND GRUMBLING ABOUT THAT ALL THE  
TIME. AND WE HAVE TO PREPARE FOR THE  
FACT THAT WE MIGHT BE CALLED TO LEAD.  
YOU MIGHT BE THE NEXT PATRIARCH OR  
MATRIARCH OF YOUR FAMILY. YOU MIGHT BE  
ASKED TO PLAY AN IMPORTANT LEADERSHIP  
ROLE IN YOUR WORKPLACE. YOU MIGHT FEEL  
LED TO RUN FOR LOCAL OR NATIONAL OFFICE.  
YOU MAY WELL HAVE TO SET UP AND HELP  
YOUR CHURCH PREPARE FOR TRANSITION IN  
THIS PULPIT.....**

**WE HAVE A GREAT DEARTH OF PEOPLE WHO ARE WILLING TO BE LEADERS, WHO ARE WILLING TO PUT THEMSELVES IN THE POSITION OF BEING LOOKED AT AS A ROLE MODEL, WHO ARE DEVELOPING THEIR GIFTS AND TALENTS TO DO SOMETHING BEYOND BEING A COG IN A MACHINE.**

**AN INTERESTING NOTE IN THIS PASSAGE IS ABOUT A SPECIFIC PERIOD OF MOURNING FOR MOSES. A NUMBER OF SOCIETIES SEEM TO HAVE HAD SOMETHING ALONG THIS ORDER. 30 DAYS WAS SET ASIDE AS A TIME OF GRIEF AND MOURNING.**

**I WONDER IF THERE MIGHT BE A LOT OF WISDOM TO THAT. WE TEND TO SAY THAT GRIEF IS DIFFERENT FOR EVERYONE AND IS PROCESSED ON DIFFERENT TIME FRAMES FOR EACH ONE. I THINK THAT IS TRUE, AND THE INTENSITY AND LENGTH OF GRIEF IS DIRECTLY RELATED TO THE DAILY IMPORTANCE OF THE DECEASED IN YOUR LIFE. BUT LOTS OF US WORK BETTER ON A SCHEDULE AND WITH A DEADLINE, SO WHAT IF WE SET FOR OURSELVES THIS EXPECTATION THAT AFTER 30 DAYS IT IS TIME TO JUMP BACK INTO LIFE AND RESUME NORMAL ACTIVITIES?**



**THAT DOES NOT MEAN GRIEF IS GONE, IT MAY NEVER BE GONE, BUT IT GETS US ON A SCHEDULE FOR GETTING BACK INTO A ROUTINE, WHICH SOME PEOPLE NEVER DO. THEY ARE PARALYZED ABOUT GOING BACK TO CHURCH; BACK TO A FAVORITE RESTAURANT; TO A MOVIE; YOU NAME IT, AND DAYS TURN INTO WEEKS AND WEEKS TURN INTO MONTHS AND MONTHS CAN TURN INTO YEARS. MAYBE THE 30 DAY GUIDELINE COULD HELP AVOID SOME OF THAT.**

**ALL OF THIS LEADS TO THE NEED FOR HUMILITY  
IN HOW WE THINK ABOUT OUR OWN PLACE IN  
THE UNIVERSE AS WELL AS THE PLACE OF  
THOSE WE ADMIRE AS LEADERS IN OUR LIVES. I  
WANT TO CLOSE WITH THREE EXAMPLES FROM  
THE NEW TESTAMENT WHICH HELP US THINK IN  
THIS MANNER.**

**IN PAUL'S FIRST LETTER TO THE CORINTHIAN  
CHURCH HE GIVES TWO ANALOGIES OF  
LEADERSHIP. HE WAS WRITING TO PEOPLE WHO  
WERE ARGUING ABOUT FOLLOWING DIFFERENT  
LEADERS, BUT I THINK IT IS APPLICABLE TO  
TODAY'S CONVERSATION.**

**IN THE FIRST HE WROTE, “I PLANTED, APOLLOS WATERED, BUT GOD GAVE THE GROWTH. SO NEITHER THE ONE WHO PLANTS NOR THE ONE WHO WATERS IS ANYTHING, BUT ONLY GOD WHO GIVES THE GROWTH. THE ONE WHO PLANTS AND THE ONE WHO WATERS HAVE A COMMON PURPOSE, AND EACH WILL RECEIVE WAGES ACCORDING TO THE LABOR OF EACH. FOR WE ARE GOD’S SERVANTS, WORKING TOGETHER; YOU ARE GOD’S FIELD, GOD’S BUILDING.”**

**THE SECOND IS A BUILDING ANALOGY. HE WRITES, “ACCORDING TO THE GRACE OF GOD GIVEN TO ME, LIKE A SKILLED MASTER BUILDER I LAID A FOUNDATION, AND SOMEONE ELSE IS BUILDING ON IT. EACH BUILDER MUST CHOOSE WITH CARE HOW TO BUILD ON IT.”**

**THE LAST ONE IS THE WONDERFUL SECTION ON FAITH IN HEBREWS 11 AND 12. THE WRITER TALKS ABOUT THE HEROIC FIGURES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT, FROM ABEL TO NOAH TO ABRAHAM AND THE PATRIARCHS, THE JUDGES, AND OF COURSE MOSES.**

**THE WRITER SAYS, ECHOING THE EXPERIENCE OF MOSES ON MOUNT NEBO: “ALL OF THESE DIED IN FAITH WITHOUT HAVING RECEIVED THE PROMISES, BUT FROM A DISTANCE THEY SAW AND GREETED THEM. THEY CONFESSED THAT THEY WERE STRANGERS AND FOREIGNERS ON THE EARTH, FOR PEOPLE WHO SPEAK IN THIS WAY MAKE IT CLEAR THAT THEY ARE SEEKING A HOMELAND.**

**ALL OF THESE, THOUGH THEY WERE  
COMMENDED FOR THEIR FAITH, DID NOT  
RECEIVE WHAT WAS PROMISED, SINCE GOD HAD  
PROVIDED SOMETHING BETTER SO THAT THEY  
WOULD NOT, APART FROM US, BE MADE  
PERFECT.”**

***WE HAVE OUR ROLE TO PLAY IN THIS STORY,  
TOO, AND THEIR ROLE WILL NOT BE COMPLETED  
WITHOUT OUR DOING OUR PART.***

**“THEREFORE,” HE CONCLUDES, “SINCE WE ARE**  
**SURROUNDED BY SUCH A GREAT CLOUD OF**  
**WITNESSES, LET US ALSO LAY ASIDE EVERY**  
**WEIGHT AND THE SIN THAT CLINGS SO**  
**CLOSELY, AND LET US RUN WITH**  
**PERSEVERANCE THE RACE THAT IS SET BEFORE**  
**US, LOOKING TO JESUS THE PIONEER AND**  
**PERFECTER OF OUR FAITH, WHO FOR THE SAKE**  
**OF THE JOY THAT WAS SET BEFORE HIM**  
**ENDURED THE CROSS, DISREGARDING ITS**  
**SHAME, AND HAS TAKEN HIS SEAT AT THE RIGHT**  
**HAND OF THE THRONE OF GOD.”**

**IT'S A GOOD THING FOR US TO HAVE DREAMS**

**AND TO SET WORTHY GOALS FOR OUR**

**LIVES.....BUT MOSES COULD TELL US THAT**

**SOMETIMES THE TRIP ITSELF IS MORE**

**INTERESTING THAT ITS DESTINATION.....**

**PRAISE GOD AND MAY IT BE SO FOR YOU AND**

**FOR ME.....AMEN**