

ALLOW ME TO PREFACE THE REMARKS THAT I AM ABOUT TO MAKE WITH A BIT OF A QUALIFICATION: THAT IS THAT WHILE IT IS NOT A PLEASURE TO OFFICIATE AT THE FUNERAL OF SOMEONE, THERE IS A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF HONOR AND ALSO INSIGHT IN BEING IN THIS UNUSUAL POSITION. THIS TRUTH HAS ESPECIALLY BEEN EVIDENT IN THE PREPARATIONS LEADING UP TO _____'S FUNER-AL AND MEMORIAL SERVICE.

ONE OF THE BACKGROUND RESEARCH METHODS I LIKE TO EMPLOY WHEN PREPARING FOR A FUNERAL SERVICE IS TO SPEAK WITH THE PEOPLE WHO KNEW HIM BEST. I LIKE TO JUST LISTEN TO THEM TALK RATHER RANDOMLY ABOUT THE LOVED ONE THAT IS NO LONGER PHYSICALLY WITH US,

BUT, AS THEY SPEAK OF THEIR DEAR RELATIONS, IT BECOMES QUITE EVIDENT THAT THE LOVED ONE IS STILL VERY MUCH PRESENT IN THEIR HEARTS. SOMETIMES WHEN I AM LISTENING TO THEM, AFTERWARDS THEY WILL ACTUALLY WANT TO APOLOGIZE FOR HAVING MEANDERED IN THEIR THOUGHTS. THEY WILL SAY THINGS LIKE, "CHAPLAIN, I'M SO SORRY TO HAVE WANDERED AROUND IN THIS STORY. I GOT OFF TRACK DIDN'T I?"

BUT THE TRUTH IS THAT THEY DID EXACTLY WHAT I WANTED THEM TO DO. IN THEIR MEMORIES OF LONG AGO, IN THEIR LAUGHTER AT FUNNY EXPERIENCES THAT HAPPENED WITH THE ONE THEY LOVED, THROUGH THEIR TEARS OF TIMES

THAT WERE NOT SO HAPPY, AND SOME THAT WERE
DOWN RIGHT HEARTBREAKING, THEY TELL ME OF
THE REAL PERSON BEHIND THE OBITUARY THAT
CAN BE PRINTED IN BLACK AND WHITE.

IN THIS TYPE OF PREPARATION FOR TODAY, AS
MANY OF YOU AND OTHERS WHO COULD NOT BE
HEAR TODAY TOLD ME ABOUT YOUR FAVORITE OR
OUTSTANDING TIMES WITH _____---- I WANT
TO ASSURE YOU THERE WAS NO LACK OF
MATERIAL.

IF NOTHING ELSE I CONVEY TO YOU TODAY
GETS THROUGH, LET ME STRESS THIS ONE POINT --
_____ LED A VERY FULL AND COMPLETE LIFE!

HE WAS A PERSON FULL OF LAUGHTER AS WELL
AS TEARS, ENERGETIC IN WORK AND PRONE AT

OTHER TIMES TO 'DO HIS OWN THING.' _____
COULD BE VERY AFFECTIONATE TO THOSE HE
LOVED AND HE COULD HOLD A GRUDGE THAT
DEFIED EXPLANATION.

HE RAN THE GAMUT ON ALL HUMAN EMOTIONS.
HE LOVED HIS FAMILY AND FRIENDS, AND HE
LOVED BEING LOVED BY THEM. HE LOVED THE
SIMPLE THINGS OF LIFE, BUT THERE WAS A
COMPLEXITY TO HIS SIMPLE DESIRES.

HE HAD HIS OWN UNIQUE UNDERSTANDING
ABOUT THE GIVE AND TAKE OF RELATIONSHIPS, BE
THEY FRIENDSHIPS OR FAMILIAL. WHILE HIS
ACADEMIC UNDERSTANDING MAY HAVE HAD
LIMITATIONS, HIS HEART DID NOT. HE MAY NOT
HAVE QUITE UNDERSTOOD THE COMPLEXITIES OF

FAMILIES AND HOW THEY WERE SUPPOSE TO OPERATE, BUT HE KNEW WHAT BEING AN UNCLE MEANT.

HE LOOKED FORWARD TO THE VISITS BY HIS FAMILY, BUT HE ALSO HAD HIS EXPECTATIONS OF SUNGLASSES AND WATCHES.

DO NOT UNDERESTIMATE THE VALUE OR THE DEPTH OF THOSE INTERACTIONS. WE LIVE IN A WORLD TODAY WHEN MANY PEOPLE ASSUME THAT THE WORLD OWES THEM NOT ONLY A LIVING, BUT ALSO THEY DESERVE A VERY GOOD LIFE STYLE WITHOUT ANY RESPONSIBILITY.

_____ UNDERSTOOD VERY WELL THAT IN ORDER TO GET, YOU HAD TO GIVE. WHETHER IT WAS IN THE KITCHEN AT MULBERRY WHERE HE

WOULD JUMP IN TO SET THE TABLE WITHOUT BEING ASKED, OR IN THE VISIT OF A FRIEND FROM WHOM HE WAS EXPECTING A PAIR OF SUNGLASSES, _____ SOME HOW UNDERSTOOD IN HIS HEART THAT ALL HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS ARE BASED UPON A GIVE AND TAKE AND ARE NOT ONE SIDED WITH ONE PARTY DOING ALL THE TAKING AND THE OTHER ALL THE GIVING.

THERE ARE A LOT OF PEOPLE IN THIS WORLD TODAY WHO COULD LEARN FROM HIM.

REMEMBRANCE SERVICE FOR

JUNE 10, 2006 2:00 PM

I CORINTHIANS 12:7-10

LIFE INVOLVES EXTREMES. THERE IS JOY AS WELL AS SADNESS, LAUGHTER AND TEARS, PLEASURE AND SUFFERING. IN THIS OUR GATHERING TODAY, ONE SIDE OF THAT SCALES SEEMS TO BE GIVEN A GREATER WEIGHT THAN THE OTHER. MOMENTARILY, SADNESS COVERS OVER JOY LIKE A CLOUD THAT HAS TEMPORARILY OBSCURRED THE SUN'S RAYS. TEARS RIGHT NOW ARE WASHING AWAY ANY LAUGHTER THAT MAY HAVE BEEN OURS, AND THIS TIME OF OUR GATHERING APPEARS TO MANY TO BE THE FINAL STEP ON A LONG, UPHILL ROAD OF SUFFERING.

FOR MANY OF US, THIS IS A CHALLENGING MOMENT WITH MANY FACETS. BUT I THINK THAT THE FOREMOST CHALLENGE THAT WE MUST FACE IS TO REALIZE THAT JOY, LAUGHTER AND PLEASURE HAVE NOT BEEN PERMANENTLY REMOVED OR DESTROYED.

PERHAPS IT IS DIFFICULT, BUT WE MUST REMEMBER THAT, BY GOD'S GRACE, THEY WILL RETURN. AS THE WRITER OF THE BOOK OF REVELATIONS HAS STATED, **"GOD WILL WIPE AWAY EVERY TEAR FROM THEIR EYES; THERE SHALL BE NO MORE DEATH."**

THE JOURNEY OF SUFFERING IS NOT AN EASY ONE.

_____, OUR FRIEND, OUR BROTHER,
WHOM WE COME HERE TODAY TO REMEMBER,
KNEW THIS EXPERIENCE WELL. I DO NOT KNOW IF
_____ EVER KNEW OF THIS SCRIPTURE THAT
I HAVE READ OUT OF PAUL'S LETTER TO THE
CORINTHIAN CHURCH, BUT I AM CERTAIN THAT HE
COULD IDENTIFY WITH THIS STATEMENT ON THE
PART OF PAUL WHERE HE LISTED HIS OWN
SUFFERINGS: FIVE TIMES HE WAS SCOURGED ---
FORTY STRIPES MINUS ONE; THEN BEATEN WITH
RODS THREE TIMES AS WELL AS ONE TIME HE WAS
STONED; AND THREE TIMES HE WAS SHIP
WRECKED.

BUT THE WORST SUFFERING OF ALL WAS ONE,
WHICH EVIDENTLY CAUSED PAUL SO MUCH PAIN HE

DID NOT NAME IT. IT WAS THE INFAMOUS "THORN IN THE FLESH." WE HAVE NO IDEA WHAT IT WAS, AND IT PROBABLY DOES NOT MATTER. BUT IT CAUSED PAUL GREAT SUFFERING. HE PLEADED WITH GOD FOR ITS REMOVAL, BUT GOD REFUSED HIS PRAYER REQUEST.

IT WAS NO RELIGIOUS GAME FOR PAUL; THIS WAS HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT IN SPIRITUAL WARFARE. SOMETIMES WE MAKE THE ASSUMPTION THAT PEOPLE WITH THE KINDS OF PROBLEMS THAT _____ FACED DO NOT HAVE AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE RELIGIOUS QUESTIONS, WHICH WE ARE ABLE TO ASK. AND MAYBE HE WOULD NEVER HAVE THOUGHT IN TERMS OF DETERMINISM VERSUS FREE WILL OR USED THEOLOGICAL TERMS

LIKE OMNIPOTENT. BUT LET ME ASSURE YOU HE HAD ALL TOO FULL AN UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT IT MEANT TO STRUGGLE DAY IN AND DAY OUT WITH THE PAINS AND INJUSTICES OF LIFE AS OPPOSED TO A BELIEF IN THE GOODNESS AND CARING OF GOD ALMIGHTY.

_____ IS NOT WITH US TODAY; HE CANNOT SPEAK TO US TODAY. INSTEAD, HE IS IN HIS NEW AND PERFECT BODY. YOU REMEMBER THAT LINE THAT PAUL WROTE, **"NOW I SEE THROUGH THE GLASS DARKLY, BUT THEN I SHALL SEE FACE TO FACE; NOW I KNOW IN PART, BUT THEN I SHALL UNDERSTAND FULLY, EVEN AS I HAVE BEEN FULLY UNDERSTOOD."**

WOULD NOT IT BE INTERESTING TO BE ABLE TO SPEAK WITH HIM NOW ABOUT THESE VERY SAME ISSUES. WHAT WOULD HE HAVE TO SAY TO US?

I HAVE BEEN SPECULATING ON THAT AND I HAVE COME UP WITH SOME POSSIBILITIES:

- 1) I THINK THAT _____ WOULD REASSURE US THAT GOD IS NO SADIST. THE GOD WHOM WE WORSHIP CRIES WITH US IN OUR PHYSICAL PAIN AND OUR EMOTIONAL AGONIES. JUST LIKE ANY GOOD EARTHLY FATHER, HE WANTS HIS CHILDREN TO BE HAPPY. AND GOD, THE HEAVENLY FATHER, IS WITH US IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES OF LIFE WORKING

TO BRING ABOUT GOOD. THE 'WHY?' OF GOD ALLOWING SUFFERING IS NOT ANSWERABLE FOR US IN THIS LIFE.

- 2) STRENGTH OF CHARACTER IS NOT DIRECTLY RELATED TO YOUR SUFFERING. BUT STRENGTH OF CHARACTER IS IN DIRECT PROPORTION TO HOW YOU FACE SUFFERING.
- 3) SUFFERING IS NOT AT ALL RELATED TO SIN. ANY SUCH AN UNCHRISTIAN ASSUMPTION IS THE RESULT OF SPIRITUAL IMMATURITY.

PERHAPS THE MOST IMPORTANT THOUGHT WHICH _____ WOULD SHARE WITH US, IF HE COULD, WOULD BE THIS: WE ALL NEED

SECURITY, WARMTH AND ASSURANCE. AND YOU GAVE IT TO BE. FRIENDS, STAFF AND FAMILY, YOU WERE MY RESOURCES THAT KEPT ME GOING EVEN IN THE MOST DIFFICULT OF TIMES.

CONSIDER THE WAY ISAIAH THE PROPHET STATED THIS THOUGHT:

“A VOICE SAYS, ‘CRY!’ AND I SAY, ‘WHAT SHALL I CRY? ALL FLESH IS GRASS, AND ALL ITS BEAUTY IS LIKE THE FLOWER OF THE FIELD. THE GRASS WITHERS AND THE FLOWER FADES... SURELY THE PEOPLE IS GRASS.’

THE GRASS WITHERS AND THE FLOWER FADES; BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD WILL

**STAND FOREVER. BEHOLD THE LORD GOD
COMES WITH MIGHT, AND HIS ARM RULES
FOR HIM. . HE WILL FEED HIS FLOCK LIKE
A SHEPHERD, HE WILL GATHER HIS LAMBS
IN HIS ARMS, HE WILL CARRY THEM IN
HIS BOSOM, AND HE WILL GENTLY LEAD
THEM THAT ARE WITH YOUNG."**