ALTITUDE ADJUSTMENT

LUKE 9:28-36, TRANSFIGURATION SUNDAY

2/27/2022

A FEW YEARS AGO DOUG AND I TOOK OUR TRAILER OUT ON A 5 WEEK TEST DRIVE TO SEE IF WE COULD BE FULL-TIME RVERS. WE HEADED OUT FROM PA TO GO OUT WEST TO SEE THE SIGHTS. WE ENDED UP STAYING IN COLORADO FOR A WHILE AT THE WORLD’S HIGHEST KOA LOCATED AT CRIPPLE CREEK COLORADO NEAR PIKES PEAK. JUST GETTING THERE WAS AN EXPERIENCE AS WE WOUND THRU NARROW MOUNTAIN ROADS AND THRU A SNOW STORM IN JUNE. WE ARRIVED AT THE 10,000 FT ELEVATION KOA AND WERE PRETTY EXCITED. THE RV SPOTS WERE ON TERRACED LOTS WITH A MOUNTAIN BEHIND THE PARK COVERED IN TREES AND IT WAS DARN COLD. WE GOT SET UP AND DOUG AND I DECIDED WE NEEDED TO CLIMB THE MOUNTAIN BEHIND US, SO WE DID. WE GOT TO THE TOP AND THOUGHT, LET’S RUN DOWN THE MOUNTAIN, SO WE DID. DID I MENTION THAT IT WAS 10,000 FEET IN ELEVATION?

I WOKE UP IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT WITH A SPLITTING HEADACHE, SURE I HAD A BRAIN TUMOR. I WENT TO THE LIVING ROOM OF THE RV SO I WOULDN’T WAKE DOUG AND DID WHAT WE ALL DO WHEN WE HAVE MEDICAL EMERGENCIES, I GOT ON MY PHONE AND GOOGLED CAUSES OF SEVERE HEADACHES. GOOGLE KNEW WHERE I WAS AND IMMEDIATELY POPPED UP; ALTITUDE SICKNESS! IT NEVER DAWNED ON ME THAT EXERCISING AT HIGH ALTITUDES COULD BRING ON HORRIBLE HEADACHES, STOMACH UPSET, DEHYDRATION. ONE OF THE MAIN SUGGESTIONS TO RELIEVE YOUR SYMPTOMS WAS TO HAVE AN ALTITUDE ADJUSTMENT, GO TO A LOWER ALTITUDE AND GRADUALLY BUILD UP YOUR TOLERANCE. WELL, HAD PRE-PAID FOR 5 DAYS THERE SO THAT WAS OFF THE TABLE, THE SECOND SUGGESTION WAS DRINK ALOT OF WATER AND TAKE IT EASY. SO I DID!

TODAY IS TRANSFIGURATION SUNDAY, THE LAST SUNDAY BEFORE WE BEGIN THE SEASON OF LENT AND WE HEAR THE STORY OF JESUS TAKING HIS CLOSEST DISCIPLES UP A MOUNTAIN TO PRAY. LET ME GIVE YOU THE “WHAT HAS GONE ON BEFORE STORY SO YOU KNOW THE CONTEXT. ANOTHER TIME JESUS WAS PRAYING WITH HIS DISCIPLES AND HE ASKED THEM, “WHO DO FOLKS SAY THAT I AM?” THEY ANSWERED, “JOHN THE BAPTIST, ELIJAH OR ONE OF THE OTHER PROPHETS.” THEN JESUS ASKED THEM, “WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM? AWWW..... A LITTLE MORE PERSONAL AND PETER, BEING BOLD AND FEARLESS, SAYS, “YOU ARE THE CHRIST SENT FROM GOD.” AND JESUS SAYS, “DON’T TELL ANYONE......THEN HE BEGINS TO SHARE WITH HIS DISCIPLES THAT HE IS TO SUFFER AND BE REJECTED BY THE ELDERS AND CHIEF PRIESTS AND BE KILLED AND BE RAISED ON THE 3RD DAY. OH, AND IF YOU WANT TO FOLLOW ME YOU ARE GOING TO HAVE TO PICK UP YOUR CROSS AND IF YOU WANT TO SAVE YOUR LIFE, YOU WILL LOSE IT......HEAVY CONVERSATION AND THEN SCRIPTURE SAYS, “8 DAYS AFTER THIS “TALK”, JESUS IS TRANSFIGURED.

SO HERE IS THE TRANSFIGURATION; THEY ARE AT A PLACE OF HIGH ALTITUDE, PRAYING AND JESUS SUDDENLY LIGHTS UP, HIS FACE CHANGES AND HE IS TRANSFIGURED WHICH COMES FROM THE GREEK WORD, METAMORPHOSIS......CHANGED.

A LITTLE ASIDE HERE; WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT METAMORPHOSIS? WHO DOES IT? WELL, WE KNOW CATERPILLARS BECOME BUTTERFLIES. FOR HUMANS IT MEANS THAT IT IS A CHANGE IN THEIR FORM OR NATURE BY SUPERNATURAL MEANS. YOU SEE JESUS HAD BEEN HANGING OUT WITH THE DISCIPLES FOR QUITE AWHILE. THEY HAD SEEN HIM DO MIRACLES, THEY LISTENED TO HIM TEACH, HE WAS THEIR LEADER, MAYBE A PROPHET AND FRIEND BUT IN THIS MOMENT, THIS TRANSFIGURATION HE WAS CHANGED, AT LEAST FOR THEM INTO THE SON OF GOD. SOMETHING TOTALLY DIFFERENT. AND NOT ONLY WAS HE SHINY AND GLOWING BUT ELIJAH AND MOSES SHOW UP AND THEY ARE SPARKLY AS WELL (THEIR GLORY) AND THEY ARE TALKING TO EACH OTHER ABOUT JESUS DEPARTURE, THE WORD COMES FROM THE GREEK WORD FOR EXODUS! SOUND FAMILIAR? THERE IS MOSES, THE ONE WHO LED GOD PEOPLE AWAY FROM PHAROAH, AN EXODUS INTO FREEDOM. IF YOU REMEMBER CHARLESTON HESTON IN THE 10 COMMANDMENTS OR THE CARTOON ABOUT MOSES, YOU WILL REMEMBER THAT HE HAD A HIGH ALTITUDE ENCOUNTER WITH GOD AND HIS FACE GLOWED AS WELL WHEN HE BROUGHT DOWN THE LAW/10 COMMANDMENTS. AND THEN THERE’S ELIJAH, WHO ENCOUNTEDRED GOD WHEN GOD PASSED BY HIM. MANY THOUGHT JESUS WAS ELIJAH COME BACK, HE WAS THE MOST FAMOUS OF PROPHETS. SO ON THE MOUNTAINTOP YOU HAVE THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS SPEAKING WITH JESUS, THE FULLFILMENT OF BOTH!

YOU KNOW PETER, JAMES AND JOHN WERE FREAKING OUT! I WENT TO A CONFERENCE ONCE AND THE DALAI LAMA WAS THERE AND PEOPLE WERE SWOONING AND SHOUTING AND FEELING GIDDY AND IN AWE. THEY WERE SHOUTING OUTLOUD HIS NAME AS IF JESUS WAS RIGHT THERE. AND I THINK THAT IS WHAT THESE THREE WERE FEELING.

SO WHAT DOES PETER, THE BOLD DO? “IT IS GOOD FOR US TO BE HERE, TO SEE THIS AMAZING SIGHT AND WHY DON’T WE BUILD SOME DWELLINGS ALSO TRANSLATED TABERNACLES (CONTAINERS FOR THE HOLY) ONE FOR EACH OF YOU?” IN OTHER WORDS, LET’S HOLD ON TO THIS AMAZING MOMENT, THIS GLORY, THIS WONDER, THIS AWE! WOULDNT YOU? IM THINKING PETER HAD A BIT OF ALTITUDE SICKNESS BUT HE DIDN’T KNOW IT. HE WAS UP SO HIGH, FEELING AMAZED, HE WANTED TO HOLD ON TO THAT THOUGHT, THAT EXPERIENCE, NOT REALIZING THAT HE COULDN’T STAY THERE, HE COUDN’T KEEP IT. NONE OF US CAN! BUT OH, DON’T YOU WANT TO BE ON THE MOUNTAIN WITH JESUS AND STAY THERE? DON’T YOU WANT TO BE ENVELOPED IN A CLOUD AND HEARING GOD’S VOICE? DON’T YOU WANT TO HEAR, “THIS IS MY SON, MY CHOSEN ONE; LISTEN TO HIM!?” YES, EXCEPT THE SCRIPTURE SAYS THAT THEY WERE TERRIFIED! THAT ALTITUDE IS INVIGORATING, INSPIRING AND CAN BE TERRIFYING!

AFTER THIS STORY JESUS TOLD THEM TO SAY NOTHING. OMG, CAN YOU IMAGINE? DONT YOU THINK THEY WANTED TO TELL EVERYONE THE EXPERIENCE THEY HAD WITH JESUS? THIS INCREDIBLE HIGH ALTITUDE EXPERIENCE? IM SURE, BUT THE EXPERIENCE WAS FOR THEM AND THEM ALONE. JESUS WANTED THEM TO KNOW WHO HE WAS SO THAT IN THE DAYS AHEAD, THEY WOULD REMEMBER THE AWE, THE TERROR, THE GLORY! REMEMBER, HE HAD TOLD THEM HE WAS GOING TO BE KILLED AND THEN RESURRECTED. THE DAYS AHEAD FOR THEM WOULD BE DARK AND SAD AND MORE THAN THEY COULD BEAR.

I BELIEVE THAT GOD GIVES US TRANSFIGURATION MOMENTS. MOMENTS WHERE WE GET AN ALTITUDE ADJUSTMENT, A GLIMPSE OF THE AWESOMENESS OF GOD, A GLIMPSE OF THE HOLINESS OF GOD, A BRIGHTNESSS. MAYBE IT IS A MOMENT IN NATURE WHERE YOU ARE BLOWN AWAY BY THE AWESOMENESS OF THE CREATOR OR A GREAT ENCOUNTER WITH A FRIEND THAT REMINDS YOU HOW BEAUTIFUL A FRIENDSHIP CAN BE OR THE GLORY OF PRAYING WITH SOMEONE, OR SEEING A SMALL PURPLE FLOWER ON YOUR MORNING RUN, OR HEARING A STORY THAT TOUCHES YOUR SOUL. THESE ARE THE MOMENTS THAT WE TREASURE, THAT ARE JUST FOR US, THAT WE TAKE INTO OUR LIVES AND OUR HEARTS FOR THE DAYS THAT ARE DIFFICULT AND DARK AND SHERE DRUGGERY AND SCARY. WHAT MAKES YOU GO WOW GOD! YOU ARE AWESOME!? I KNOW WE METHODISTS DON’T OFTEN HANG OUT IN THE GOD IS AWESOME PLACE. MAYBE THAT WOULD HAVE US RAISING OUR HANDS OR CLOSING OUR EYES OR SHOUTING OUT! SOMETIME WE JUST NEED TO SEE THE GLORY, THE POWER, THE AWE, PRAISE GOD. ST AUGUSTINE SAID THERE ARE TWO KINDS OF LOVE; UTI AND FRUTI. UTI IS LOVE OF USE. I LOVE MONEY FOR WHAT IT CAN GET ME. FRUI IS LOVE OF ENJOYMENT; I LOVE CHOCOLATE, WHICH I DO BECAUSE IT IS WONDERFUL. WE TEND TO LOVE GOD WITH UTI LOVE WHEN GOD IS SEEKING FRUI. THE WESTMINSTER CONFESSION PUTS IT THIS WAY: “OUR TASK HERE ON EARTH IS TO GLORIFY GOD AND ENJOY GOD FOREVER.” CAN YOU IMAGINE?

I THINK OF LIFE AS A SERIES OF ALTITUDE ADJUSTMENTS.....WE DONT STAY UP TOO HIGH FOR TOO LONG, IT IS TOO HARD, BUT THE MOUNTAINS, THE HEIGHTS SUSTAIN US, THE PRAISE, THE AWE KEEP GOD IN OUR HEARTS FOR THE VALLEYS WE ENCOUNTER. THIS IS MY SON, LISTEN TO HIM.