NOT ASHAMED

10/2/2022, WORLD COMMUNION SUNDAY

2 TIMOTHY 1:1-14

CLARENCE JORDAN FOUNDED THE KOINONIA COMMUNITY IN SOUTH GEORGIA, AN INTERRACIAL FARMING COOPERATIVE IN THE 40’S. LET THAT SINK IN....THE 1940’S. ONE DAY A TRUCK DRIVER WHO HAD BEEN DELIVERING PROPANE TO THE COMMUNITY TOLD JORDAN HE WAS QUITTING; HE’D BEEN RECEIVING RACIST THREATS FROM SOME OUTSIDE OF THE COOPERATIVE. THE MAN KNEW THAT IF HE DELIVERED TO KOINONIA, HE WOULD LOSE OTHER CUSTOMERS. CLARENCE JORDAN DIDN’T WAVER. HE CONFRONTED THE MAN AND WAS NOT ASHAMED TO ASK HIM TO SUFFER FOR THE GOSPEL. “IT LOOKS LIKE TO ME THAT YOU’RE IN A SPOT. YOURE EITHER GOING TO LOSE SOME MONEY OR LOSE YOUR SOUL.”

IT SOUNDS A LITTLE HARSH, DOESN’T IT. IS IT THAT SIMPLE? I’D SAY YES AND NO! 2 TIMOTHY, LIKE 1 TIMOTHY IS SAID TO HAVE BEEN WRITTEN BY PAUL (PROBABLY) THEY WERE BOTH LETTERS TO TIMOTHY, A FELLOW MINISTER IN THE FAITH. 2 TIMOTHY WAS WRITTEN WHILE PAUL WAS IN PRISON FOR THE SECOND TIME AND PROBABLY NOT LONG BEFORE HIS DEATH BY BEHEADING. HE WAS TRYING TO ENCOURAGE TIMOTHY TO BE BRAVE, TO NOT BE ASHAMED, TO RE-KINDLE HIS FAITH THAT HAD BEEN PASSED DOWN FROM HIS FAMILY AND PROTECT THAT TREASURE THAT IS YOUR FAITH.

A FEW WEEKS AGO I HAD TO USE UBER TO PICK UP MY CAR AT THE DEALERSHIP. AN AFRICAN REFUGEE PICKED ME UP, HE IMMEDIATELY HANDED ME A CHRISTIAN TRACT AND BEGAN TO TELL ME ABOUT JESUS. HOW BRAVE, HE WAS NOT ASHAMED! I TOLD HIM, I’M A PASTOR, SAVE THE TRACT FOR SOMEONE ELSE. DO I THINK THIS IS THE BEST GOSPEL SHARING TOOL? NO, BUT BRAVE! HE WAS WILLING TO LOSE A BIT OF MONEY INSTEAD OF HIS SOUL.

JUST RECENTLY I READ A STORY ABOUT SANDY KOUFAX AND HIS DECISION TO SIT OUT THE WORLD SERIES ON THE FIRST DAY BECAUSE IT FELL ON YOM KIPPUR, A HIGH HOLY DAY FOR JEWS. IT TURNS OUT, A LESSER KNOWN STORY IS THE PITCHER OF THE OTHER TEAM, WHO WAS ALSO JEWISH REFUSED TO PLAY THAT SAME DAY AS WELL. AGAIN BRAVE, NOT ASHAMED OF THEIR FAITH. THEY BOTH SOUNDED A BIT LIKE PAUL. A FAITHFUL JEWISH FOLLOWER WHO KNEW WHAT GOD REQUIRED OF HIM AND WAS WILLING TO RISK IT ALL. THESE 2 DIDN’T RISK IT ALL BUT THEY RISKED MONEY INSTEAD OF THEIR SOULS, RIGHT? THERE ARE A NUMBER OF STORIES LIKE THIS.....YOU REMEMBER CHARIOTS OF FIRE AND HOW THAT OLYMPIC RUNNER WOULD NOT RUN ON SUNDAY....SAME IDEA!

I WONDER HOW MANY OF US FEEL STRONGLY ENOUGH ABOUT OUR FAITH TO DO SOMETHING LIKE THAT? OR TO TELL ANYONE ABOUT WHAT CHRIST HAS DONE IN OUR LIVES? OR MAYBE IT IS NOT THAT WE DON’T HAVE A STRONG ENOUGH FAITH BUT MAYBE WE ARE ASHAMED, NOT NECESSARILY IN JESUS BUT IN JESUS FOLLOWERS. ONE OF DOUG’S FAVORITE THINGS TO DO IS TO JUST DROP THE FACT THAT I AM A PASTOR, IN CONVERSATION AND SEE WHAT HAPPENS. IT IS OFTEN LIKE A BIG OLD STINK BUG PLOPPED ITSELF IN THE PUNCH BOWL. IT IS NOT THAT I AM ASHAMED OF BEING A PASTOR BUT I AM ASHAMED OF WHAT MY FELLOW CHRISTIANS HAVE OFTEN DONE IN THE NAME OF JESUS. I HAVE TO SAY, “IM NOT ONE OF THOSE, OFTEN!” I KNOW THE COMMENT OF ME BEING CLERGY WILL ILLICIT ALL SORTS OF RESPONSES. SO MAYBE THAT’S YOU AND THATS WHY YOU ARE HESITANT.

BUT MAYBE, IT IS THE FACT THAT YOU’VE INHERITED YOUR FAITH, LIKE TIMOTHY FROM HIS MOM AND GRANDMOTHER. MAYBE YOUVE ALWAYS BEEN IN THE CHURCH SINCE YOU WERE A BABY AND JESUS HAS BECOME LIKE A COMFY PAIR OF SLIPPERS OR A SOFT BLANKET. MAYBE SOME OF YOU HAVE BEEN A CHRISTIAN SO LONG THAT YOU FORGET WHAT IT IS LIKE TO BE ON FIRE. I OFTEN FORGET WHAT IT IS TO BURN WITH THE KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE OF GOD’S GRACE AND LOVE POURED OUT ON ME, FOR ME.

PAUL WAS CONCERNED ABOUT TIMOTHY, THAT THE FIRE, THE MEMORY OF HIS FAITH WAS SO DISTANT, WAS SO SMALL, HAD SMOULDERED SO LONG THAT THERE WEREN’T MANY EMBERS LEFT AND HE WAS ENCOURAGING TIMOTHY, IT’S NOT TO LATE TO REKINDLE GOD’S GIFT. AND MAYBE, YOU GET TIMOTHY. YOU NEED SOME RE-KINDLING, SOME RECHARGING, SOME REVIVING, SOME REMEMBERING ABOUT WHO GOD IS AND WHO YOU ARE IN RELATIONSHIP TO GOD. WHO AND WHOSE YOU ARE!

THE TAIZE COMMUNITY IN FRANCE, AN ECUMENICAL FAITH COMMUNITY THAT TOOK IN ALL KINDS OF PEOPLE DURING WORLD WAR 2 TO PROTECT THEM FROM THE NAZI’S, TODAY IS A SPIRITUAL MOVEMENT FOR YOUNG ADULTS IN EUROPE. OFTEN HAVING 5000 YOUNG PEOPLE THERE TO SING CHANTS, SIT IN SILENCE, DO SERVICE, STUDY THE BIBLE. IT IS AN AMAZING AND CRAZY COMMUNITY. THEY HAVE SOME QUESTIONS THEY ASK EVERYONE WHO COMES, EVERY 18-26 YEAR OLD AND THE FEW OLSTERS THEY LET COME AS WELL:

1, HOW CAN I AWAKEN GOD’S GIFT IN ME?

2. WHO HAS BEEN A SUPPORT FOR ME IN THE COURSE OF MY JOURNEY?

3. HOW DO I UNDERSTAND THESE WORDS: GOD HAS NOT GIVEN US A SPIRIT OF FEAR, BUT A SPIRIT OF STRENGTH, LOVE AND SELF CONTROL?

I CAN IMAGINE PAUL ASKING DEAR TIMOTHY THESE QUESTIONS.....IT’S RIGHT THERE IN HIS 2ND LETTER AND HE WOULD ASK US THE SAME. FRIENDS, BE BRAVE, PROTECT THE TREASURE THAT IS YOUR FAITH, DON’T BE ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL AND REMEMBER THOSE WHO HAVE LOVED YOU, HAVE PRAYED YOU ALONG AND THE GOD WHO LOVES YOU EVEN MORE THAN THAT!

ONE OF MY STUDENT WORKERS AT DICKINSON GAVE ME A NECKLACE THAT QUOTED JOHN WESLEY: “CATCH ON FIRE WITH ENTHUSIASM AND PEOPLE WILL COME FOR MILES TO SEE YOU BURN!” FRIENDS MAY WE BE SET ABLAZE BY THE REKINDLING OF OUR FAITH.....I WANT SAY, “BURN, BABY BURN!”