

“WHAT ON EARTH ARE YOU DOING?”

(Labor Day)----

Pentecost 12 (Sept 4) A

WHAT ON EARTH ARE YOU DOING FOR HEAVEN’S SAKE?----- (I’M SORRY---THAT’S TERRIBLE---YELLING AT YOU LIKE THAT. --- AND I DO ‘APOLOGIZE.’

-HOWEVER-----PROFESSORS OF HOMILETICS IN THE SEMINARY---- (‘HOMILETICS’ IS THE STUDY OF PREACHING)----TELL US THAT--- -‘IF YOU DON’T GET THE CONGREGATION’S ATTENTION IN---THE FIRST SIXTY SECONDS’ OF THE SERMON---YOU’RE PROBABLY NOT GOING TO GET IT AT ALL.

‘GETTING A CONGREGATION’S ATTENTION’----ESPECIALLY ON A WARM, HUMID, ‘LABOR-DAY-WEEKEND-SUNDAY- MORNING’—LIKE THIS ONE, ---IS NOT EASY.

-MOST OF US ARE TIRED. SOME MAY EVEN BE—‘DEPRESSED’--- KNOWING---THAT ‘ONE MORE SUMMER’---HAS ‘COME’---AND HAS NOW-- ‘NEARLY GONE.’

-AND YET ‘ANOTHER FALL SEASON’ –WITH ALL ITS MANY DEMANDS— IS JUST ABOUT READY TO ‘BURST’ UPON US

KNOW ANYTHING AT ALL ABOUT GREEK MYTHOLOGY?

-ANY OF YOU REMEMBER THE STORY OF-- ‘SYSYPHUS’---THE CRUEL KING OF CORINTH?

-WHEN SYSYPHUS DIED—HE WAS PUNISHED FOR ALL HIS ‘EVIL DEEDS’—(THEY DIDN’T CALL THEM ‘SINS’ –BACK IN ANCIENT GREECE.THEY CALLED THEM ‘EVIL DEEDS.’

-SYSYPHUS--(FOR ALL HIS EVIL DEEDS) ---WAS CONDEMNED---FOR ALL ETERNITY---TO ‘PUSH A HUGE BOULDER’---UP A STEEP HILL.

-AND THE CLOSER HE GOT TO THE TOP, THE MORE DIFFICULT IT BECAME-- TO PUSH THAT GIANT BOULDER.

-SO----SYSYPHUS WOULD WORK AND LABOR, SWEAT AND STRAIN--- AND-- JUST ABOUT THE TIME HE WOULD GET THAT BOULDER NEARLY TO THE TOP OF THE HILL---

-IT WOULD ‘GET AWAY FROM HIM’---AND GO ‘CRASHING DOWN’—TO THE VALLEY BELOW-----

-AND---HE’D HAVE TO ‘START’ ALL OVER AGAIN.’

-PERHAPS SOME OF US ARE FEELING A BIT --LIKE OLD SYSYPHUS MUST HAVE FELT ---TODAY---

-AS---- FOR ALL INTENTS AND PURPOSES-----THE ‘LAZY, LAZY, DAYS OF SUMMER’---ARE NOW AT AN END---THE THE ‘HECTIC FALL SEASON’--- IS READY TO BEGIN.

ON LABOR-DAY WEEKEND-----OUR THOUGHTS INSTINCTIVELY TURN TO 'WORK.'

-OH I KNOW, LABOR DAY WAS ORIGINALLY INTENDED TO BE 'A NATIONAL HOLIDAY---ON WHICH TO-- 'HONOR' -- ALL WORKING MEN AND WOMEN'---WHICH, BASICALLY, INCLUDES US AS WELL.

-OUR JOBS, CALLINGS, AND PROFESSIONS --DO 'TAKE' AND 'HAVE TAKEN' A GREAT DEAL OF OUR TIME, ENERGY AND DEVOTION---- -AND ARE-- 'THE MAIN FOCUS' OF OUR LIVES.

-EVEN THOSE OF US WHO ARE RETIRED----ARE BUSY WITH ALL KINDS OF PURSUITS-----AND NEVER FULLY-- DIVORCE OURSELVES FROM WHAT WE'VE BEEN AND DONE IN LIFE.

WHILE WE MAY NOT ALWAYS CONSIDER IT TO BE THAT----W-O-R-K IS 'A GIFT'----A 'GIFT FROM GOD.'

-ORIGINALLY----OF COURSE, ---ACCORDING TO THE CREATION STORY IN GENESIS-----IN THE--'PERFECT WORLD' GOD HAD CREATED---

-WORK WAS 'A CURSE'----AS ADAM AND EVE, OUR FIRST PARENTS--- (BECAUSE OF THEIR DISOBEDIENCE)----

-WERE 'EXPELLED' FROM THE GARDEN OF EDEN----AND FORCED 'TO TOIL ALL THEIR DAYS'---AND-- 'EARN THEIR BREAD'---BY 'THE SWEAT OF THEIR BROW'---AS HOLY SCRIPTURE SAYS.

-TODAY, HOWEVER----WORK IS 'A BLESSING FROM GOD'-----A BLESSING WE ALL WOULD DO WELL TO 'CONSIDER'---UNDER THE THEME POSED BY THE SERMON THEME ---THAT WAS --'YELLED' AT YOU SO RUDELY ---AT THE BEGINNING OF THIS SERMON--- -'WHAT ON EARTH ARE YOU DOING FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE?'

SOME OF US ---CAN REMEMBER WHEN WE WERE LITTLE-----AND OUR MOTHERS----UPON DISCOVERING OUR INVOLVEMENT IN SOME MISCHIEF---WOULD SUDDENLY 'APPEAR OUT OF NOWHERE'---- AND YELL " , RACHEL , TOM,VICKI, CARL; "WHAT ON EARTH ARE YOU DOING FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE?"

1 IT'S INTERESTING, THAT OUR LORD JESUS ---MADE IT VERY CLEAR-- THAT 'THE VERY FIRST THING' WE SHOULD BE DOING --'ON EARTH'---- -THE VERY FIRST THING WE SHOULD BE DOING--- 'IN LIFE'---

-IS--- 'SEEKING FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD!(2)'"

-"THAT," HE SAYS----IS TO BE OUR 'NUMBER ONE PRIORITY!'

-"SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS" (OUR LORD COMMANDED)---- "AND ALL THE OTHER THINGS IN LIFE YOU NEED---WILL BE YOURS AS WELL."

2. ANOTHER THING WE ARE TO BE DOING ON EARTH—THAT STANDS AT THE VERY TOP OF "GOD'S PRIORITY LIST'---- IS TO BE

**‘KEEPING THE TEN COMMANDMENTS’—GOD’S TEN COMMANDMENTS.
-REMEMBER THAT-- ‘SUMMARY OF GOD’S TEN COMMANDMENTS THAT
OUR LORD JESUS GAVE US?----
-HOW HE SAID--- “YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL
YOUR HEART, SOUL, STRENGTH AND MIND-----“
-“THAT” (HE SAID)--- IS THE FIRST AND GREAT COMMANDMENT---AND
THE SECOND IS LIKE UNTO IT----‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR
AS YOURSELF.’”**

**OUR LORD JESUS MADE IT EMINENTLY CLEAR----THAT IN OUR LIVES
HERE ON EARTH---GOD IS TO ---COME FIRST---FIRST IN EVERYTHING.
-EVERYTHING WE DO IN LIFE---EVERYTHING---IS TO BE DONE
FOR HIS HONOR, HIS GLORY AND THE EXTENSION OF HIS KINGDOM.
-‘THAT’---IS WHAT WE ARE TO BE DOING HERE ON EARTH----PUTTING
GOD FIRST.
-AND, HEAVEN ONLY KNOWS-----THAT IS NOT ALWAYS AN EASY
THING TO DO---TO PUT GOD FIRST IN EVERYTHING. DON’T ASK ME
HOW I KNOW.**

**SO MANY THINGS TODAY—COMPETE FOR OUR ATTENTION.
-‘MATERIALISM’ STANDS ---SO MUCH--- IN THE CENTER OF AMERICAN
LIFE AND CULTURE.
-FOR TOO MANY OF US---IT’S---‘GET ALL YOU CAN WHILE THE
GETTINGS GOOD!’
-WE FIND OURSELVES--- (MANY OF US)--- BURDENED DOWN WITH
OBLIGATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES—OVER WHICH WE SEEMINGLY,
HAVE NO CONTROL---AND OTHER OBLIGATIONS AND
RESPONSIBILITIES S--- THAT ARE ‘SELF-IMPOSED.’
-WE GET ‘OURSELVES’---AND ‘OUR CHILDREN’—CAUGHT UP IN A
CEASELESS ROUND OF ACTIVITIES----NOT ALL OF THEM ‘BENEFICIAL’
OR ‘NECESSARY.’
-WE ALL HAVE NEEDS THAT DEMAND TO BE MET---
-DESIRES THAT CLAMOR FOR SATISFACTION.
-AND WE WONDER --HOW DO WE GO ABOUT---‘DOING ALL THAT
IS DEMANDED OF US, ALL THAT IS EXPECTED OF US---
-IN ADDITION TO GETTING OUR OWN NEEDS MET— ‘OUR’ OWN
DESIRES SATISFIED---
-AND, --IN THE PROCESS—STILL ‘PUT GOD FIRST’ IN
EVERYTHING?
-‘THAT’S A TALL ORDER’---YOU SAY-----AND IT IS!**

**I’VE NEVER BEEN TO THE MAYO CLINIC, IN ROCHESTER,
MINNESOTA----
-BUT I REALLY LIKE WHAT I ‘HEAR’ ABOUT AND ‘READ’ ABOUT THAT
INSTITUTION.
-IN A RECENT ARTICLE----ONE OF THE DOCTORS AT THE MAYO CLINIC**

‘SUMMARIZED’ THE WHOLE ‘PHILOSOPHY’---OF THAT GREAT HOSPITAL---SAYING:

“WE TELL OUR PATIENTS HERE—THAT ONE OF THE ‘SECRETS OF OF WHOLENESS’--- ‘WELLNESS’ AND ‘HAPPINESS’----IS A ‘SENSE OF BALANCE IN FOUR AREAS:

- A SENSE OF WORSHIP**
- A SENSE OF WORK**
- A SENSE OF PLAY**
- AND A SENSE OF LOVE(2)!**

**THE REASON WHY THAT IMPRESSES ME----IS THAT IF OFFERS THE POTENTIAL---FOR ‘PUTTING GOD FIRST IN EVERYTHING’---
-AND, STILL ‘BALANCING’---LIFE’S P URPOSE, NEEDS,
RESPONSIBILITIES, OBLIGATIONS AND LEGITIMATE DESIRES.
-BECAUSE---YOU SEE---UNDERGIRDING THAT SENSE OF ‘WORSHIP,’
‘WORK,’ ‘PLAY’ AND ‘LOVE’-----
-THERE IS THE REALIZATION---THAT I AM A CREATION OF
GOD----
-PUT HERE ON THIS EARTH FOR A PURPOSE---NAMELY
TO LOVE AND SERVE HIM---AND TO ENJOY
THE GOOD LIFE HE’S GIVEN ME.**

A PERSON RECENTLY WROTE OF HIMSELF:

- “I HAVE A NAME, BUT THAT’S NOT WHO I AM.”**
- “I HAVE A SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER, A PHONE NUMBER,
AND A STREET ADDRESS---BUT THESE ARE ‘NOT MY FULL
IDENTITY.’**
- “I HAVE A FINANCIAL STATEMENT FROM THE BANK, AND A
RESUME---BUT THEY AREN’T THE WHOLE ME!”**
- “I HAVE A--- ONE-OF-A-KIND-----SET OF FINGERPRINTS, A
CERTAIN ‘GAIT’ TO MY WALK, A UNIQUE SOUND TO MY VOICE—
BUT---THESE AREN’T ME!”**
- “I HAVE A BODY, WITH A CERTAIN EYE-COLOR, HEIGHT, WEIGHT,
CLOTHES-SIZE, BUT THESE AREN’T ME---BECAUSE I’M NOT JUST
A BODY.”**
- “I’VE BEEN CREATED BY GOD---IN HIS IMAGE (NO LESS)!”**
- “I AM UNIQUE! THERE’S NO ONE ELSE EXACTLY LIKE ME HERE
ON EARTH---NOR HAS THERE EVER BEEN.”**
- “I’VE BEEN PUT HERE ON EARTH FOR A PURPOSE, AND
NOT ONLY THAT---I HAVE ‘AN ETERNAL DESTINY’—WITH GOD,
IN HEAVEN.”**
- I LIKE THAT!**

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF ‘YOUR’ LIFE?

- ARE YOU FULFILLING IT?**
- DO YOU LIVE EACH DAY WITH THE CONSCIOUS AWARENESS—**

THAT YOU ARE CHILD OF GOD----

-WITH BOTH A PURPOSE FOR LIVING AND –AND, AN ETERNAL DESTINY WITH HIM?”

-ALL OF WHICH GIVES US ALL THE MORE REASON TO ASK:

“WHAT ON EARTH ARE YOU DOING FOR HEAVEN’S SAKE?”

-“WHAT ARE YOU DOING---FOR GOD’S SAKE?”

-“WHAT ON EARTH ARE YOU DOING –FOR CHRIST’S SAKE?”

THE PROBLEM IS THAT WE DO NOT ALWAYS ‘UNDERSTAND’ THE ‘REAL MEASURE’---OF LIFE---AS GOD INTENDED LIFE TO BE.

-WITH LIFE, IT’S NOT A MATTER OF ---‘HOW LONG IT LASTS’-----

-BUT--- ‘WHAT CAN WE ACCOMPLISH, FOR HIM—IN IT---

-NOT SO MUCHA MATTER OF ‘LENGTH’ BUT OF ‘PRODUCTIVITY.’

A DYNAMIC YOUNGER MAN DIED SUDDENLY---AND HIS GRIEVING FAMILY---WANTED TO ‘MEMORIALIZE’ HIM APPROPRIATELY.

-SO, THEY HAD ENGRAVED ON HIS TOMBSTONE---THE SIMPLE WORDS:

“HE LIVED ALL HIS LIFE(2)” -----CERTAINLY A COMPLIMENT.”HE

LIVED ALL HIS LIFE.”

-WHAT WILL THEY ENGRAVE ON YOUR TOMBSTONE?

-WHAT WILL BE YOUR EPITAPH---OR MINE?

-“HE LIVED ALL HIS LIFE, SHE LIVED ALL HER LIFE?”

-OR---SHOULD IT READ--- “DIED AT 34, WAS BURIED AT 87?”

-SO MANY ARE ‘ALIVE’---BUT ARE NOT REALLY ‘LIVING.’

ANY OF YOU REMEMBER HOW, IN A ‘SIMPLER TIME IN THE CHURCH’---WE USED TO SING THE OLD GOSPEL HYMN---

“WORK FOR THE NIGHT IS COMING?”-----

-ANY OF YOU REMEMBER THAT ONE?---

-AND OLD GOSPEL HYMN WITH A ‘CATCHY TUNE’----THAT OBVIOUSLY, ‘GREW OUT OF’ ---WHAT HAS BEEN KNOWN FOR A LONG TIME AS “THE PROTESTANT WORK ETHIC?”

THAT OLD HYMN SUGGESTED THAT WE SHOULD ---‘ALWAYS BE WORKING’-----REMEMBER HOW IT GOES, ANY OF YOU?

“WORK FOR THE NIGHT IS COMING, WORK THROUGH THE SUNNY NOON. FILL BRIGHTEST HOURS WITH LABOR, REST COMES SURE AND SOON. GIVE EVERY FLYING MINUTE, SOMETHING TO KEEP IN STORE----(TALK ABOUT THE PROTESTANT WORK-ETHIC)-----

WORK FOR THE NIGHT IS COMING, WHEN MAN WORKS NO MORE!”

THE FINAL VERSE OF THAT OLD HYMN----SAYS IT ALL!-----

“WORK FOR THE NIGHT IS COMING, UNDER THE SUNSET SKIES.

WHILE THEIR BRIGHT TINTES ARE GLOWING, WORK FOR

DAYLIGHT FLIES. WORK TILL THE LAST BEAM FADETH, FADETH

**TO SHINE NO MORE. WORK FOR THE NIGHT IS COMING. WHEN
MAN'S (AN I PRESUME, 'WOMAN'S) WORK IS O'ER."**

**I'LL FREELY ADMIT, I ALWAYS SORT OF LIKED THAT OLD
HYMN WHEN I WAS A CHILD---IT REFLECTED 'THE WAY LIFE
WAS --IN A 'SIMPLER AGE.'**

-BUT-- THAT'S NOT THE WAY LIFE IS TODAY.

**-WORK IS--- 'A GIFT' FROM GOD, BUT---THERE'S A LOT MORE
TO LIFE THAN WORK!**

**-IN ADDITION, THERE'S PLAY---AND AN APPRECIATION OF ALL
GOD'S GIFTS.**

**-THERE'S LOVE---AND OUR ENJOYMENT OF AND CONCERN FOR—
OTHERS.**

**-AND, UNDERGIRDING IT ALL—THERE IS 'WORSHIP'---
WORSHIP OF GOD WHO CREATED US—AND WITHOUT WHOM, OUR
LIVES ARE NOT COMPLETE.**

**SUMMER IS---ALMOST AT AN END. THE BUSY FALL SEASON
IS--- JUST AROUND THE CORNER.**

-YET, IN ALL OUR COMING 'BUSY-NESS'---LET'S KEEP BEFORE US

-THE 'MAIN REASON'---FOR OUR LIFE AND LIVING:----

-'WORSHIPPING' AND 'SERVING,' 'LOVING AND ENJOYING' ---

**-GOD, WHO CREATED US FOR A PURPOSE----AND LOVES EACH
OF US WITH AN EVERLASTING KIND OF LOVE THAT WILL
NEVER LET US GO!**