

DEAR FRIENDS... ESPECIALLY LILLY AND AIDEN...

MARTIN LUTHER HAS HELPED YOU TO KNOW THE BIBLE AND TO CLING TO THE GRACE YOU HAVE IN JESUS. HE TAUGHT THAT PRIDE IS THE ROOT OF ALL SIN. PRIDE IS THE DESIRE TO BE LIKE GOD RATHER THAN TO LIVE IN HUMBLE GRACE.

THE CRAZY NOTION THAT WE CAN BE LIKE GOD, STARTED WHEN EVE GOT THE BIG CON-JOB FROM SATAN. GOD KNOWS WHEN YOU EAT THE FRUIT YOUR EYES WILL BE OPENED AND YOU'LL KNOW GOOD AND EVIL LIKE GOD.

SINCE THEN, PRIDE HAS TAINTED EVERY SINGLE THOUGHT, EVERY DEED, EVERY SINGLE LIFE; WE STINK WITH PRIDE. WE RISK OUR SOUL FOR ATTENTION, POSSESSION AND PLEASURE. IN THE END, WE WASTE OUR TIME AND FACE HELL.

PRIDE OFTEN FORGETS ABOUT OTHERS IN A DEVIL-MAY-CARE SELFISHNESS THAT WANTS TO CLAIM ONE OR MORE OF GOD'S ATTRIBUTES – TO BE ALL-POWERFUL, ALL-WISE, OR ALL-RIGHTEOUS.

WE SEE THE PRIDE OF POWER IN JULIUS CAESAR, NAPOLEON AND HITLER. THEY TRIED TO ACHIEVE GOD-LIKE POWER BY POLITICAL AND MILITARY FORCE. THE POET, SHELLY, REVEALED THE FUTILITY OF SUCH POWER IN HIS POEM ABOUT THE EGYPTIAN KING, OZYMANDIAS.

I MET A TRAVELLER FROM AN ANTIQUE LAND
WHO SAID: TWO VAST AND TRUNKLESS LEGS OF STONE
STAND IN THE DESERT. NEAR THEM, ON THE SAND,
HALF SUNK, A SHATTERED FACE LIES, WHOSE FROWN,
AND WRINKLED LIP, AND SNEER OF COLD COMMAND,
TELL THAT ITS SCULPTOR READ THOSE PASSIONS WELL.
THEY YET SURVIVE, STAMPED ON THESE LIFELESS THINGS. ON THE
PEDESTAL THE WORDS APPEAR: 'MY NAME IS OZYMANDIAS, KING OF KINGS:
LOOK ON MY WORKS, YE MIGHTY, AND DESPAIR!
NOTHING BESIDE REMAINS. ROUND THE DECAY
OF THAT COLOSSAL WRECK, BOUNDLESS AND BARE
THE LONE AND LEVEL SANDS STRETCH FAR AWAY.

OZYMANDIAS, THE GREEK NAME OF THE 11TH RAMESES, REALLY DID HAVE A STONE CARVED FOR HIMSELF. YET, IN SPITE OF HIS PRIDE AND ACHIEVEMENT, HE WOULD NOT BE REMEMBERED WITHOUT SHELLY'S POEM, UNMASKING HIS USELESS EGO. THE DREAM OF POWER, EVEN IN SUCCESS, DOES NOT MAKE ONE GOD.

THE PRIDE OF WISDOM IS JUST AS FLEETING. IN EVERY COMMUNITY, BUSINESS, AND UNIVERSITY THERE ARE A HANDFUL OF PEOPLE WHO ARE QUITE CERTAIN THAT THEY KNOW IT ALL.

ARISTOPHANES EXPOSED INTELLECTUAL PRIDE IN HIS SATIRICAL PLAY, 'CLOUDS.' IT WOULD BE A GREAT PLAY FOR AMERICANS TO PONDER. IT SHOUTS TO THE AUDIENCE THAT INTELLIGENCE IS LIMITED; STUPIDITY IS NOT. CONGRESS IS CONSIDERING THE FREEDOM TO CHOOSE ONE'S GENDER - MIND-BOGGLING!

THE PRIDE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS IS SCARY. REMEMBER HOW JESUS DEALT WITH THE PHARISEES? THEY THOUGHT THEY WERE SOMETHING SPECIAL; HE TOLD THEM OTHERWISE. TO LOSE HUMILITY IS TO LOSE YOUR SOUL.

2 IT WOULD BE EASY, AS LUTHERANS, TO FEEL A CUT ABOVE BECAUSE WE LET SCRIPTURE INTERPRET SCRIPTURE...BUT, BECAUSE FAITH COMES WITHOUT ADDING OUR IDEAS TO SCRIPTURE OR IGNORING THE TOUGH PARTS, WE CONFESS THAT SIN HAS CUT US ALL DOWN; WE CAN ONLY RELY ON CHRIST'S RIGHTEOUSNESS.

JESUS EXPLAINS THAT BEING FIRST OR GREATEST IN GOD'S KINGDOM MEANS BEING A SERVANT, A SLAVE! TO GET OVER YOURSELF YOU'VE GOTTA SPEND TIME WITH CHRIST. HE HUMBLER HIMSELF AND GLADLY BECOMES YOUR SERVANT.

BEFORE YOU MAKE EXCUSES ABOUT ONLY BEING HUMAN AND FIGURING JESUS HAD THE ADVANTAGE OF ACTUALLY BEING ALL-POWERFUL, WISE AND RIGHTEOUS...CONSIDER THIS: JESUS WAS FLESH AND BLOOD, JUST LIKE YOU.

HE PATIENTLY LED HIS DISCIPLES THROUGH THEIR GOOFY IDEAS AND SLOW UNDERSTANDING. HE HEALED PEOPLE ALL DAY LONG WHILE HE TAUGHT THE NOISY AND PUSHY CROWDS ABOUT SIN AND GRACE.

HE TOOK THE VERBAL AND PHYSICAL ABUSE OF IGNORANT AND VENGEFUL MEN, SUFFERING WORSE THAN A SLAVE. THEN, HE WILLINGLY SURRENDERED HIS LIFE TO THOSE PROUD OF THEIR STUPIDITY!

HE DID THIS SELFLESS DEED, CLOTHED IN THE SAME FLESH AS YOU. HE FELT THE WRATH OF GOD FOR YOUR SIN. HE DID IT TO GIVE YOU HEAVEN. GRACE IS AMAZING; HUMBLE GRACE IS BEYOND UNDERSTANDING – BUT, NOT BEYOND FAITH.

THE DISCIPLES FETCHED A DONKEY FOR HIM. A WOMAN ANOINTED HIM WITH EXPENSIVE PERFUME. THE BAPTIST INTRODUCED HIM TO OTHERS: *AMONG YOU STANDS ONE WHOSE SANDAL I'M NOT WORTHY TO UNTIE. LISTEN TO HIM.*

AIDEN: YOU'RE LEARNING HUMILITY THROUGH GOLF; APPLY THE LESSONS TO LIFE. LILLY: YOU'VE LEARNED THAT TRUSTING JESUS DOESN'T MEAN EVERYTHING GOES YOUR WAY. BOTH OF YOU: LIVE THE FAITH THAT YOU CONFIRM TODAY, BECAUSE IT'S TRUE; NOT BECAUSE IT'S EASY. THE HOLY COMFORTER ASSURES YOU OF PARDON SO YOU FIND POWER, WISDOM AND RIGHTEOUSNESS IN JESUS.

AS ISAIAH STOOD BEFORE GOD, HE SAID: *WOE IS ME! I HAVE UNCLEAN LIPS.* WHEN CALLED INTO LEADERSHIP, MOSES SAID: *LORD, I'M SLOW OF TONGUE.* ST. PAUL WROTE: *I'M THE LEAST OF THE APOSTLES; I PERSECUTED THE CHURCH.* GOD GAVE EACH OF THEM WHAT THEY NEEDED TO DO HIS WORK.

YOU SHARE THE LIFE OF JESUS WHEN YOU SERVE HIM. AS FLESH AND BLOOD, HE LEARNED OBEDIENCE THROUGH SUFFERING AND BECAME THE SOURCE OF SALVATION TO ALL WHO OBEY HIM. YOU OBEY JESUS AS YOU WEAR HIS HUMBLE LOVE INTO HEAVEN AND AS YOU SHARE HIS HUMBLE LOVE ON THE WAY THERE.

LILLY, AIDEN: WE WANT YOU TO HAVE GREAT LIVES. *WHOEVER WOULD BE GREAT IN GOD'S KINGDOM, MUST BE A SERVANT.*

I WISH YOU WOULD HAVE KNOWN BARB HECKMAN BETTER; SHE SERVED JESUS SO NATURALLY. HER THANKFULNESS FOR HIS GRACE WAS EVIDENT IN HER KINDNESS AND SERVANT-HEART. SHE BELIEVED THAT WORSHIP WAS A CONVERSATION BETWEEN GOD AND HIS PEOPLE; AND SHE RECEIVED THE FLESH AND BLOOD OF JESUS AS HER VERY OWN. THAT IS THE HEART OF FAITH.

MAY THE FATHER'S LOVE ENCOURAGE YOU TO LOVE; MAY THE SON LEAD YOU IN HUMBLE SERVICE; AND MAY THE SPIRIT COMFORT YOU OUT OF YOUR PRIDE. AMEN.