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Let It Be!

I have been reminded lately of a book written by Scott Peck several years ago entitled: "The Road Less Traveled". Here is the opening paragraph: "Life is difficult. This is a great truth... one of the greatest of truths. It is a great truth because once we truly see this truth, we transcend it. Once we know that life is difficult... once we truly understand that and accept it... then life is no longer difficult. Because once that truth is accepted, it no longer matters."

There is much in Peck's book that still resonates with me. But I have come to wonder about those opening words. Does it no longer matter? Once we understand that life is difficult, does it no longer matter? To the Syrian refugee returning to her homeland, seeing her village in ruins... does it no longer matter? To the man hitch-hiking along the side of a highway, a child in each hand... does it no longer matter? To the single mom in the grocery store desperately trying to make a small check cover all her needs... does it no longer matter? Certainly, one of the profound truths embedded in the pages of Scripture is that life is difficult. But nowhere do I read that once you accept that fact, it doesn't matter anymore.

In the gospel of Luke, we have this beautiful Christmas story. The angel Gabriel is sent by God to the city of Galilee to a virgin whose name was Mary. And the angel said to Mary: "Hail, thou favored one, the Lord is with you. Do not be afraid... for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus." Now, I don't know if that's exactly

the way it happened. It's a bit difficult for people in our day and time to believe in angels. It's a bit difficult for people to believe in immaculate conceptions. But to get hung up on those details of the story is to miss entirely the thrust of what the gospel writer is wanting to say. What the writer is wanting to say is that in and through Jesus of Nazareth, a gift has been given to the world... unlike any other gift the world has received. That's what the writer is wanting to say. He's wanting to say that this Jesus of Nazareth has forever changed his life... that he will never be the same again.

We get so caught up in the cultural wrappings of the Christmas season. Presents to buy. Cards to send. People to remember. There's so much to do that we often forget the real meaning of the season: that a Savior has been born. Now we seldom use that word "Savior" anymore. It seems old-fashioned and a bit parochial. And to ourselves, we might even whisper the question: "Who needs a Savior? Do you? Do I? Does anybody?" Well, I believe we do... because for Christmas to touch something deep inside of us, we have to feel just a little bit incomplete... we have to feel just a little bit empty... with a kind of emptiness that nobody can ever fill. And if we don't have within us that kind of emptiness that yearns to be filled, that kind of incompleteness that yearns for a spiritual wholeness that no one can ever give... if we don't have that... then it's hard to explain why anybody would ever need a Savior.

But if, now and then, we do feel that way... if, now and then, we do hear a voice from somewhere within the depths of our being: "Why can't I be the person I really want to be? Why can't I love other people in the way I really want to love them? Why can't I be satisfied with what I have without always wanting something more or something better or something I think will bring me greater happiness?" If ever you hear that voice from somewhere within... then maybe, just maybe, you do need a Savior. Life is difficult in so many ways... not just for the hungry and the homeless... but for all of us. And certainly, there are things we can do to make it less difficult. But there are some difficulties that seem unresponsive to anything we do to make them better. And those difficulties don't just miraculously disappear as a result of recognizing this great truth... that life is difficult.

Mary listened to the words of the "You will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus." One can only imagine her feelings after hearing words like that. Luke shares with us her response: "O God, let it be to me according to your word." Now that sounds so very passive, doesn't it? For centuries in Western culture, and even more in Eastern culture, the role of women has been a passive one. And certainly, this is true in Scripture as well. So we might be tempted to envision Mary here in much the same way... "O God, let it be to me. If that's the way you want it, let it be." But that's not how I read these words of Mary. It's one thing to be passive... it's something else

altogether to be trusting. "Let it be to me according to your word." Yes, that response does have a passive quality... but it also reveals an enormous amount of trust. And all of us today... women and men alike... all of us would discover a far deeper and more profound sense of peace in our souls... if once in a while we too would simply say: "O God, let it be. According to your word, O God, to me let it be."

There are times when we need to hear more than just the proven truth that life is difficult. There are times when we need to hear an even greater truth... "that unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior." There are times when we need a Savior... when we have done all that we can do to make something different than what it is. There are times when the last and most important thing we can do is simply say: "O God, be a source of strength to me... walk with me, journey with me... and let it be to me according to your word."

~Written by Fred Edmonds

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