

SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME - JANUARY 19, 2014

I KNOW THAT EVERYONE WILL BE VERY INTERESTED TO KNOW THAT ON THURSDAY I FINALLY COMPLETED LISTENING TO THE LIFE OF WINSTON SPENCER CHURCHILL.....

WHEN I RETURNED THE CD'S FOR THE THIRD VOLUME OF THE WORK I TOLD THE LIBRARIAN I DESERVED A GOLD STAR OR SOMETHING..

THE THIRD VOLUME WAS OVER 40 CD'S AND THE FIRST TWO VOLUMES WERE OVER 30 EACH....

I'VE BEEN LISTENING TO HIS LIFE SINCE THE SUMMER....

AND HONESTLY COULDN'T WAIT TO GET IN THE CAR AND DRIVE SOMEWHERE BECAUSE IT WAS SO INTERESTING....

AND ON THURSDAY WHEN I CAME TO THE END OF HIS LIFE...

I WAS GENUINELY SAD.....

IT WAS LIKE I WAS LOSING A GOOD FRIEND

NOW, I KNOW THIS IS ANCIENT HISTORY FOR MOST EVERYONE -

INCLUDING MY SELF - SINCE HE DIED IN 1965 AT THE AGE OF 90

IT IS VERY INTERESTING TO NOTE THAT IN 1963 HE WAS DESIGNATED AS

ONLY THE SECOND PERSON TO GIVEN HONORARY USA CITIZENSHIP.....

THE OTHER BEING LAFAYETTE.....

ONE THING THAT BECAME REAL CLEAR TO ME.....

WE MIGHT AT TIMES CONSIDER THE STATE OF THE WORLD TO BE

PRETTY BAD NOW....

HOWEVER, HIS LIFE MADE ME REALIZE THAT THE WORLD I WAS BORN

INTO IN 1942 WAS MUCH, MUCH WORSE....

BASICALLY, THE WHOLE WORLD WAS LITERALLY AT WAR - EVERYONE

PRETTY MUCH EVERYWHERE WAS TRYING TO KILL EVERYONE ELSE.....

WE CAN GIVE THANKS TODAY FOR RELATIVE PEACE IN OUR WORLD....

WHICH BRINGS ME TO THE REASON I EVEN BRING THIS UP TODAY....

THE TITLE OF THE BOOK WAS: THE LAST LION

A LION - THAT IS A GOOD DESCRIPTION OF HIM.....

HE WAS TREMENDOUSLY OUTSPOKEN, AGGRESSIVE AND UNAFRAID.....

IN THE DEFENSE OF ENGLAND AND DEMOCRACY.....

I BELIEVE MOST PEOPLE WOULD EVEN SAY HE WAS ARROGANT....

CERTAINLY A FIERCE, FIERCE OPPONENT OF HITLER AND NAZISM AS

WELL AS COMMUNISM IN THE MID 20TH CENTURY....

THE LAST LION IS A FITTING IMAGE FOR HIS LIFE....

LEADERS AND RULERS THROUGHOUT HISTORY HAVE SEEN THE

SYMBOLIC VALUE OF THE LION....

AND IT IS THE FAVORITE SYMBOL OF KINGDOMS AND NATIONS (NOT TO

MENTION ATHLETIC TEAMS) ADORNING BANNERS, FLAGS AND

SHIELDS.....

MONARCHES HAVE SEEN THE LION AS THE EPITOME OF POWER,

STRENGTH AND GRANDEUR.....

EVIDENTLY LIONS USED TO ROAM AROUND THE PALESTINE AREA IN

BIBLICAL TIMES BUT HAVE BEEN EXTINCT IN THAT AREA SINCE

MEDIEVAL TIME....

I COULD SEE HOW THE WARM, MOIST JORDAN VALLEY WOULD HAVE BEEN ATTRACTIVE TO LIONS, BUT EVIDENTLY THERE WERE ALSO PLENTIFUL IN THE HIGHLANDS OF JUDEA AND SAMARIA... OF COURSE, THEY WERE A MENACE BOTH TO HUMANS AND TO THEIR FLOCKS OF SHEEP.... KILLING A LION WOULD HAVE BEEN EVIDENCE OF A PERSON'S CUNNING AND PROWESS.... A BADGE OF COURAGE, CERTAINLY..... HAVE YOU HEARD THE PHRASE "THE LION OF THE TRIBE OF JUDAH"..... THAT WAS COMMON IN OLD TESTAMENT TIMES IN ANTICIPATION OF A MESSIAH, A SAVIOR.... ISRAEL WAS EXPECTING A LION OF A MAN... MUCH LIKE WINSTON CHURCHILL... AND IT IS UNDERSTANDABLE, ISN'T IT? THEIR WORLD WAS A JUNGLE OF OPPRESSION, EXILE, FOREIGN OCCUPATION (BABYLONIANS, GREEKS, ROMANS), AND, OF COURSE, POVERTY... THEY DREAMED OF A JEWISH KING - LIKE THE KING OF THE JUNGLE. ISRAEL WAS EXPECTING A LION..... SO WHAT THEY GOT - WAS SURPRISING, TO SAY THE LEAST... ALMOST LIKE A CRUEL JOKE.... WHAT THEY GOT WAS A LAMB..... CAN YOU IMAGINE ANYTHING MORE DISAPPOINTING....????

YOU ASK FOR A LION AND YOU GET A LAMB!!!

THE LAMB HAS ALWAYS BEEN COMMONPLACE IN PALESTINE....

I CERTAINLY SAW QUITE A FEW OF THEM WHEN I WAS THERE...

IN BIBLICAL TIMES, LAMBS OUT NUMBERED LIONS A MILLION TO ONE

IN THE MIDDLE EAST THE SHEEP WAS, AND STILL IS, WHAT THE COW

WOULD BE FOR US, ESP. IN THE WEST...

THEY ARE A PART OF THE LANDSCAPE....

USEFUL FOR THEIR WOOL, THEIR SKIN AND THEIR FLESH, THEY WERE

INDISPENSABLE....

SHEEP WERE FOOD, CLOTHING, AND OTHER THINGS THAT MADE THEM

ESSENTIAL....

YOU COUNTED YOUR SHEEP TO DETERMINE YOUR ECONOMIC STATUS

OF COURSE, FOR THE JEWISH PEOPLE IN BIBLICAL TIMES THE LAMB

WAS ALSO PART OF THE SACRIFICE AS AN OFFERING TO GOD.....

BUT WHEN IT CAME TO THEIR HIGHEST HOPES AND DREAMS, WHEN

THEY LOOKED FOR A MESSIAH, THEY WANTED A LION....

THE LION IS EVERYTHING THE LAMB IS NOT....

THEY ARE OPPOSITES....

ONE REPRESENTS POWER AND STRENGTH....

THE OTHER REPRESENTS UTTER HELPLESSNESS...

WOOD ALLEN SAYS IT WELL, "THE LION AND THE LAMB WILL LIE DOWN

TOGETHER, BUT THE LAMB WON'T GET MUCH SLEEP"

WE AREN'T REALLY ANY DIFFERENT THAN THE JEWISH PEOPLE OF

BIBLICAL TIMES ARE WE???

WE STILL PREFER LIONS TO LAMBS....

CERTAINLY OUR CHURCH WAS NEVER MEANT TO BE KING OF THE JUNGLE....

ALTHOUGH, HISTORICALLY, IT CERTAINLY HAS ATTEMPTED TO BE THE KING OF THE JUNGLE AND ALWAYS STRUGGLES WITH THAT TEMPTATION...

FORTUNATELY, WE NOW HAVE A LEADER, WHO UNDERSTANDS THAT... HE WANTS A CHURCH THAT IS POOR AND FOR THE POOR....

WE ALL WANT TO BE THE KING OF THE JUNGLE, THE QUEEN OF THE JUNGLE.....

CAN WE ACCEPT A LAMB AND SEE THE VALUE OF A LAMB....

OUR GOD CHOSE TO BE A LAMB RATHER THAN A LION-. THAT IS AMAZING HOPEFULLY, THAT WILL INFLUENCE THE WAY WE SEE OUR GOD....

OUR GOD IS A SURPRISING GOD.....

AND A GENTLE GOD, A GOD WHO IS WILLING TO BE VULNERABLE... THE LAMB OF GOD.....

OF COURSE, HE COULD BE A LION IN AN APPROPRIATE AND CARING MANNER WHEN HE NEEDED TO BE....AND SO DO WE....

LION ENERGY IS CERTAINLY IMPORTANT ALSO IN OUR LIVES....

IN FACT, LION ENERGY - STRENGTH - IN DIFFICULT SITUATIONS WILL ENABLE US TO BE LAMBS IN WAYS THAT ARE HEALING THAT ARE ULTIMATELY TRANSFORMATIVE AND REDEMPTIVE.....

MARTIN LUTHER KING, WHO WE WILL BE REMEMBERING THIS COMING WEEK, AND HIS NON-VIOLENT LEADERSHIP IS A GOOD MODEL FOR US IN THIS REGARD...

OR AS ST. FRANCIS DE SALES SAID:

THERE IS NOTHING SO GENTLE AS REAL STRENGTH, NOTHING SO STRONG AS REAL GENTLENESS....

THAT DESCRIBES WELL THE LAMB OF GOD.....

THAT IS OUR CHALLENGE....

AS WE APPROACH THE ALTAR THIS MORNING AND THE LAMB OF GOD

LET US PRAY THAT WE WILL EXPRESS STRONG GENTLENESS AND A GENTLE STRENGTH.....