

CHRISTMAS EVE 2009

DANCING WITH THE STAR

THE DANCE CRAZE HAS RECAPTIVATED AMERICA. MANY ENJOY WATCHING GREAT DANCERS PERFORM LEAPS AND BEND LIKE PRETZELS, DOING THINGS THAT IF WE TRIED THEM WE WOULD END UP IN TRACTION. WE ALSO LIKE TO WATCH THOSE CELEBRITIES LIKE DONNIE OSMOND DO THEIR BEST TO COMPETE. DESPITE ALL THAT, AND EXCLUDING ALL THOSE CRAZY KIDS THAT LIKE DANCE HALL MUSIC AND LINE DANCERS, WE DON'T DANCE MUCH ANYMORE. ALTHOUGH WE ALL DESCEND FROM TRIBES THAT DANCED, ALTHOUGH EVEN THE BIBLE SAYS "DAVID DANCED BEFORE THE LORD", WE DON'T DANCE MUCH ANY MORE.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT I WAS THINKING WHEN I SAID TO MY WIFE ONE YEAR, "HONEY, THIS IS YOUR GIFT. YOU CAN CHOOSE WHATEVER YOU WANT TO DO, EVEN IF IT IS SOMETHING I HAVE SAID 'NO' TO". DID I THINK SHE WOULD PICK BALLROOM DANCING? NO. SO I THOUGHT I COULD DANCE? NO AGAIN. BUT I HAD A GREAT TIME, PROBABLY FOR THE WRONG REASONS.

I HAD WHAT I CALL A KINGDOM OF GOD EXPERIENCE. JESUS SAID THAT ALL PEOPLE WHO BELIEVE IN GOODNESS WILL JOIN HIM AT THE HEAVENLY PARTY, WHERE HE WILL BE THE HOST. I BELIEVE THAT IN HEAVEN THERE WILL BE A PARTY WITH DANCING AND SINGING. I MAY HAVE HAD A GLIMPSE OF THAT, PROVIDING YOU BELIEVE THAT WE WILL STILL HAVE SOME OF OUR QUIRKS WHEN WE LEAVE THIS WORLD.

I WAS A BAD DANCE STUDENT. PICTURE THIS. THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN TEACHING US, A SMOOTH DANCER HIMSELF, GETS ALL THE GUYS ON ONE SIDE OF THE ROOM. ALL THE LADIES WENT WITH HIS WIFE. THEN IT HAPPENED AND I COULDN'T STOP LAUGHING. PICTURE THIS. MEN FROM EVERY ETHNIC DESCENT, ASIAN MEN, BLACK MEN, HISPANIC MEN, AND SOME OF US WHITE GUYS..NOT ONE OF US COULD DANCE. IMAGINE A DIVERSE GROUP OF STIFF "FRANKENSTEINS" CAREENING INTO EACH OTHER LIKE ROUGUE ELECTRONS. THE LEADER WOULD SAY LEFT AND FOR SOME REASON ONLY HALF OF US WOULD DO THAT. IT WAS CRAZY. BUT WE HAD FUN.

MAX LUCADO WRITES: “AN ORDINARY NIGHT WITH ORDINARY SHEEP AND ORDINARY SHEPHERDS. AND WERE IT NOT FOR GOD WHO LOVES TO HOOK “EXTRA” ON THE FRONT OF THE ORDINARY, THE NIGHT WOULD HAVE GONE UNNOTICED. THE SHEEP WOULD HAVE FORGOTTEN, THE SHEPHERDS WOULD HAVE SLEPT THE NIGHT AWAY. BUT GOD DANCES AMIDST THE COMMON. AND THAT NIGHT HE DID A WALTZ.”

THE ANCIENT FATHERS OF THE CHURCH USED A WORD TO DESCRIBE THE TRINITY...IT IS PERICHORESIS. IN GREEK IT MEANS “CIRCLE DANCE”. THE KIND MEN AND WOMEN DO IN THE MIDDLE EAST. I SAW THEM THIS YEAR AND THEY STILL JOYOUSLY TWIRL AS FAMILIES AND FRIENDS. THE THREE ASPECTS OF GOD—FATHER, SON, HOLY SPIRIT—INTERPENETRATE WITH ONE ANOTHER, INDWELL WITH ONE ANOTHER—THREE YET ONE. THEY ARE NOT STATIC. THEY ARE MOVING. THEY ARE MOVING ETERNALLY, THEY ARE MOVING TOWARDS THE FUTURE, WHEN THE SON SHALL RETURN TO EARTH. THEY DANCE FOREVER.

LIKE THEM, TONIGHT WE ARE “DANCING WITH THE STAR”. ONE MOMENT WE SEE THE LIGHT OF THE FATHER. NEXT GOD COMES TO US AS A SON, A BABE IN THE MANGER,. NEXT GOD COMES AS THE HOLY SPIRIT, ANGELS LIGHTING UP THE SKIES, SINGING “GLORIA”. GOD AS A GUIDING STAR CALLS THREE WISE MEN. SUDDENLY THE ORDINARY BECOMES A DELIGHTFUL EXPLOSION OF GOD COMING TO US. IT IS THE DANCE OF LIFE. JESUS IS CALLED IN SONG THE “LORD OF THE DANCE”. IT IS CALLED THE DANCE OF INTIMACY, OF RELATIONSHIP.

WE ALL TO SOME DEGREE ARE IN THIS DANCE WITH GOD AND WITH EACH OTHER. SOME TIMES WE ARE SO CLOSE IN LOVE WITH EACH OTHER AND AT OTHER TIMES, FEARING INTIMACY, WE PULL APART. LOVE THREATENS US, BECAUSE IT MEANS THAT WE WILL HAVE TO CHANGE FOR THE BETTER AND FOR ANOTHER PERSON, WHEN WE ARE ADDICTED TO THE WAY WE ARE, EVEN IF THAT WAY IS NOT PARTICULARLY HELPFUL OR HEALTHY.

CHRISTMAS TELLS US THAT WE HAVE A GOD WHO HAS COME AS CLOSE TO US AS OUR BREATHING. HE HAS BECOME ONE OF US TO SHARE OUR COMMON LOT. THIS IS NOT AN ABSTRACT ENERGY. THIS IS NOT IMPERSONAL FORCE. THIS IS NOT A STATIC OLD GUY GOD WITH A WHITE BEARD. I N OUR FAITH, WE SING, GOD IN THREE PERSONS, BLESSED TRINITY.

GOD IS A PERSON! THAT MEANS RELATIONSHIP. THAT MEANS “DANCING WITH THE STAR” TONIGHT.

DON'T BE THAT GUY WHO WAS ALWAYS AROUND IN THE SIXTIES. REMEMBER HIM? HE WOULD BE OUT THERE SOMEWHERE DANCING BY HIMSELF, TWIRLING AROUND OBLIVIOUS TO OTHERS. DON'T BE THAT WALLFLOWER EITHER, WHO IS TOO EMBARRASSED TO DANCE, FEARING REJECTION. WHAT IF GOD, MY SPIRITUAL PARTNER SAYS NO? DON'T BE THAT ARROGANT PARTNER, THE LOTHARIO WHO SEES ALL RELATIONSHIPS IN TERMS OF SOME KIND OF CONQUEST. DON'T BE THAT PERSON WHO IS TOO SELF-CONSCIOUS TO GET OUT THERE AND HAVE A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD, TO DANCE WITH THE STAR.

HERE IS OUR CHRISTMAS PROBLEM. WE EITHER SENTIMENTALIZE IT SO THE AFFECT IS SHORTLIVED. OR WE TRY TO PURCHASE JOY, WHICH, IN ANY CASE, MAKES IT IMPERSONAL AND OBJECT-ORIENTED. WE DON'T GET INTO THE DEPTH OF MEANING THAT COMES WITH SAYING “GOD HAS BEEN BORN AS ONE OF US TONIGHT”. THE OTHER ISSUE IS THAT WHEN WE DO THINK ABOUT IT WE DO SO LIKE SCIENTISTS OR PHILOSOPHERS. WE BROOD OVER HARD AND UNANSWERABLE QUESTIONS, WE LIVE IN OUR DOUBTS AND FEEBLE IDEAS. FAITH IS A DIFFERENT KIND OF TRUTH. IT IS FOUND IN A DEEP RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD.

TONIGHT LET US DANCE WITH THE STAR. THAT MEANS TO RESTORE OUR SPIRITUAL IMAGINATION AND OUR HOLY INTUITION AND TRULY RELIVE THE BIRTH. WE CAN ONLY DO IT BY GETTING INTIMATE WITH THE GOD WHO INCARNATED WITH JESUS CHRIST. IT MEANS TO HAVE A LIVING, HEALTHY, PRAYER-FILLED, LOVING RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LIVING GOD WHO HAS COME AS JESUS. IT MEANS TO BE GOD'S DANCING PARTNER IN FINDING MEANING, IMPROVING LIFE, AND BETTERING THE EARTH. IT MEANS BELIEVING THE MOST INTIMATE OF BELIEFS.....GOD HAS ALSO BEEN BORN WITHIN US. AMEN.