

June 21, 2020

2 Corinthians 2: 14- 3:3

## A PRINCESS NAMED PALE MOON, HOW TO CLEAN UP A ROTTEN VILLAGE, AND THE PARABLE OF THE GARBAGE TRUCK

During the “stay at Home” order issued by Governor Polis, I had a lot of time to get things done around the house and to read a lot of magazines and books. I read one story about a Cherokee Indian Princess. Her name was Pale Moon. Pale Moon is not only a really beautiful name but she was also a very talented lady. She had extensive musical training as a singer. She sang traditional Indian melodies and she also sang gospel, folk, popular and classic songs. I listened to some of her singing on YouTube. She was pretty good. Her name Pale Moon was given to her by her grandfather. One time the grandfather explained to her why he named her “Pale Moon”. He said, “The pale moon gives its light so that those who walk in darkness may see. But the moon is just a reflection of a greater light, the sun. You can be like the moon and reflect the great light and the great truth to all people.” What a beautiful name. What a beautiful idea. Pale Moon reflects the great light and the great truth.

I think this is a beautiful description of our calling as Christians. God has called each of us to be a Pale Moon. God calls us to reflect the great light and the great truth that He has sent in Jesus. This is what Paul was talking about in the Scripture lesson we read for this morning. We read a portion of Paul’s Second Letter to the Corinthians. Writing to those Christians at Corinth Paul says, “You are a letter from Christ to the world.” This says to me, each of us carry a message from Christ to the world. We are a letter from Christ to our family. We are a letter from Christ to our neighbors. We are a letter from Christ to our business associated. We are a letter from Christ to the world. What kind of letter are we sending? What kind of message do we bring? I think Christ wants us to be a letter of faith and goodness and love to the world. Christ wants us to be a letter that is filled with good news. Christ wants us to be a letter that brings life.

First, Christ wants us to be a letter of faith to the world. He wants us to be so full of faith that we help others to have faith. Dale Carnegie tells about a visit with Henry Ford. Ford was 78 years old. Carnegie expected Ford to show the strains of the long years he spent building up one of the world’s largest businesses. Instead he found Henry Ford to be a man who was calm and at peace and he asked Henry Ford if he ever worried. Ford said, “No, I believe God is managing affairs and that He doesn’t need any advice from me. With God in charge of my life, I believe everything will work out for the best in the end. So, what is there to worry about?” Christ wants us to be a letter of faith.

During a drought in Africa, the villagers joined together one afternoon to pray for rain. Only one boy brought an umbrella. That is Faith.

A Canadian missionary served a territory so large that he could visit parts of it only once or twice a year. One time he stayed in a settler’s home where they had an invalid boy. The Missionary taught the little boy the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm. He taught him the first phrase of the Psalm by using one word for each finger. He taught the boy to hold on to the fourth finger, for that finger was for the word “MY.” The Lord is MY shepherd. When the missionary came back the next year, he learned that the little boy had died. His mother said, “He died in the middle of the night. We found him the next morning with his hands outside the covers. His left hand was holding tightly to the fourth finger of his right hand.” We need to remember, “The Lord is MY shepherd.” As we live our lives let us hold on to that fourth finger. Let our lives show that the Lord is our shepherd. We are all a letter from Christ to the world. We are called to be a letter of faith.

And second, Christ wants us to be a letter of goodness. Christ wants us to be so full of goodness that we help others to be good. I like the way one man put it. He said, “When God wants a great work done in the

world, He goes about it in a very unusual way. He doesn't stir up earthquakes or send out thunderbolts. Instead, He has a helpless baby born, perhaps in a simple home and of some obscure mother. And then God puts an idea into the mother's heart and she puts it into the baby's mind. And then God waits. The greatest force in the world is babies." The greatest force on the earth are people. God calls us to be a force for goodness in the world. He wants us to live the finest, cleanest and best possible life we can live.

The small town of Ars, France, lies about 20 miles from Lyons. It originated as a farming village with hard working people but by the 1820's it had become a rotten village. The churches were empty on Sundays, the bars were full every night. The people were dishonest, blasphemous and foul mouthed. A young priest named Jean-Marie Vianney received his first appointment to serve the church at Ars in about 1830. He had struggled through his studies and was given this assignment believing that no one could do any good. Vianney was a good man and he declared war against the evil in the village. He began to pray, and he presented himself as a symbol of honest and fine living. His battle against evil went on for over 35 years. By 1858 over 100,000 Christian pilgrims flooded to Ars to receive confession from the priest. The village had changed. The church was filled on Sundays and I had become a clean and wholesome village. A visitor from Paris complimented one of the citizens on the purity of the village. The citizen said, "We are no better than anybody else, but there are some things you cannot do when there is a saint around."

Each of us is a letter from Christ to the world. He wants us to be a letter of goodness. He wants us to live such a good life that those around us are inspired to be good.

Mark Twain told about a businessman who was a true hypocrite. The man made a big display of being a Christian and a church man, but he was unethical and dishonest. In his business he would do anything for a dollar. He took advantage of others. One day he said to Twain, "Before I die, I want to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. I want to climb to the top of Mount Sinai and read the Ten Commandments out loud." Twain replied, "I have a better idea. Why don't you stay right here in Boston and live the Ten Commandments?" This is our calling. We are called to live the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount right here in Grand Junction. We are a letter from Christ to the world. He wants us to be a letter of goodness.

And finally, we are called to be a letter of joy to the world. We often let the stresses and anxieties of life get the best of us. It is easy to lose our joy when we are surrounded by bad news and by people who are unkind and hurtful. But we cannot let the hurtful noises of the world cause us to lose our joy. Particularly in today's world with people marching in the streets, economic worries and the Covid Virus still alive and well. It is easy to lose our joy – to lose our sense of humor

I think of the parable of the garbage truck. A man named David Pauley was riding in a taxi in New York City. A garbage truck swerved sharply in front of the taxi and the taxi driver narrowly avoided a bad collision. Many people would have rolled down the window and yelled and cursed at the truck driver. But the taxi driver did not. He remained calm and took it all in stride, and then he explained: "Many people are like garbage trucks. They go around filled with anger, frustration and bitterness, trying to get even. As their garbage piles up, they need someplace to dump it and sometimes they dump it on you. But you can't take it personally; it has nothing to do with you. We are called to just smile and drive on." The taxi driver was right. People filled with joy do not let garbage trucks upset them. We cannot let other people's garbage steal our joy; to steal our peace, to steal our sense of humor.

We are called to be a letter of joy; to bring happiness and humor to those around us. I don't know about you but I like to be around people with a good sense of humor; people who like to laugh; people who wear their joy on their sleeves. I like to laugh. I like to hear laughter. It soothes my weary soul. I think a lot of the sickness in our world is simply because we don't have a good sense of humor. When we live

our lives uptight and on edge it can cause headaches, digestive problems, a lack of energy. We have to learn how to deal with stress properly. For me, laughter is a great medicine. It not only makes me feel better but it actually releases healing properties throughout my body.

We are born with a sense of humor – a need and a desire to laugh. Babies laugh a lot – it is part of their DNA. Children at play laugh hard and loud. Life to them is a funny adventure. But as we age, the pressures of life seem to reduce our ability to laugh. The humor is still there, we just need to release it. A mangy old dog with a bloody foot walked into a bar and snarled at the bartender, “I’m lookin’ for the man that shot my paw!”

Proverbs 17:22 puts it this way: “A happy heart is like a good medicine, but a downcast spirit dries up the bones.” One translation says: “A happy heart is like a good medicine and a cheerful mind works healing.” Notice when we are good natured and full of joy, when we take time to laugh and to play, it is like taking a good medicine. In fact, medical science tells us that when we laugh, it boosts our immune system. People who laugh regularly are 40% less likely to have heart problems. Laughter triggers the right side of the brain which helps release creativity and helps us make better decisions.

I remember one evening Winona and I sat down to watch television. My day at the office had been difficult and the pressures of the day had taken their toll on me. I asked Winona to find something funny to watch. The first thing she found was the movie, “Who Shot Roger Rabbit?” That is a funny movie. I laughed out loud for over an hour. When the movie ended, I felt great. The pressures of the day were gone and I was able to sleep well.

There is a story about a man who traveled with his wife and her mother to Israel. While in Israel his mother-in-law suddenly passed away. He was meeting with the clerk at the mortuary and the clerk told him that it would cost \$6,000 to send the body back to the U.S. for burial, but she could be buried in Israel for only \$550.00. The man thought for a minute and then said, “I want her sent back to the U.S.” The clerk said, “You must have loved your mother-in-law very much to spend so much money.” The man replied, “No, that is not the reason. I remember a story about a man who died many years ago and he was buried here, but three days later he arose from the grave and I just can’t take the chance that will happen again.”

I read a story about a doctor who treated a woman with a severe case of fibromyalgia. She suffered from pain, from lack of energy, and from fatigue. She was in poor health physically and emotionally and she suffered from depression. She had been under medication for some time but nothing seemed to work. At one meeting she was particularly depressed. The doctor asked her, “How long has it been since you have had a good, hearty laugh?” She replied, “Doctor, I have not laughed like that since I was a child.” The doctor said, “Here is your prescription. You are to get a bunch of funny movies and get some funny books to read. Your prescription is to laugh as much as you can.” Long story short, over the next four months she followed the prescription of laughing. When she returned for a checkup the doctor immediately saw that she was a changed person. She had a spring in her step and a sparkle in her eye. She said to the doctor, “I have not felt this good in many years.”

There is a healing power in laughter. When we have a joyful spirit on the inside, health and healing are flowing. Let me ask you the same question the doctor asked: “How long has it been since you have had a good, hearty laugh?” I don’t mean just a small laugh on the inside, but a hearty laugh out loud. Medical science confirms that laughter boosts our immune system, it reduces our blood pressure, we sleep better and we become more creative.

I read a story about three priests in a boat who were fishing. One of the priests said, "I have been listening to confessions of others for many years but I have not confessed my own sins. I think each of us should use this opportunity to express our greatest sin. My greatest sin is gambling. I gamble on the horses, on sports events, I gamble every chance I get." The second priest said, "My greatest sin is I cheat. I cheat on my taxes, I cheat on my golf score, I cheat!" The third priest said, "My greatest sin is I love to gossip. I gossip about anything and I can't wait to get off this boat!" Laughter is good for our soul.

Hugh Latimer, an English preacher, tells about the time he was to preach for the King of England in the Royal Chapel. A voice within him said, "Be careful what you preach because you are going to preach before the King of England." Another voice said, "Latimer, be careful what you preach today since you are going to preach before the King of Kings." Our life is our sermon. Every day we live, we are preaching before the King of Kings. We are called to preach a sermon that He will be proud of. We are called to preach a sermon of faith and of goodness and of joy. We are a letter from Christ to the world.

AMEN?