

"HOBSON'S CHOICE"

Oct. 29, '89

Isaiah 42:1-9
Acts 10:34-43

"HOBSON'S CHOICE" IS A FIGURE OF SPEECH THAT DESCRIBES ANY SITUATION FOR WHICH THERE ARE NO ALTERNATIVES. IT DERIVES FROM AN ECCENTRIC LIVERY STABLE OWNER WHO LIVED IN 17th CENTURY CAMBRIDGE, ENGLAND, AND WHO INSISTED, AS "AN UNBREAKABLE RULE" THAT CUSTOMERS SEEKING TO RENT A SADDLE HORSE FROM HIM "MUST EITHER TAKE THE ANIMAL WHO HAPPENED TO BE TETHERED NEAREST THE LIVERY STABLE DOOR- OR TAKE NONE AT ALL" (HOBSON'S CHOICE, HAROLD BRIGHOUSE)

KNOWING WHAT TO DO WITH "HOBSON'S CHOICE" WHEN IT IS IMPOSED UPON US, AS ONE DAY IT CERTAINLY WILL BE, IS BOTH THE KEY TO SUCCESSFUL LIVING AND THE SPECIAL GENIUS OF ANY TRULY VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN LIFE.

LET US START WITH SUCCESSFUL LIVING. SUCCESSFUL LIVING, SOONER OR LATER DEPENDS ON KNOWING WHEN YOU CAN DO NOTHING MORE ABOUT CHANGING YOUR LIFE, BUT MUST ACCEPT IT AS IT IS. THAT IS OF COURSE AWFULLY HARD FOR MOST OF US TO SWALLOW. AFTER ALL WHO OF US WOULD WANT TO LIVE KNOWING THAT OUR LIVES COULD NOT BE MADE BETTER OR THAT ALL WE COULD HOPE FOR IS WHAT WE ARE GIVEN OR THAT OUR ONLY DEFENSE AGAINST SORROWS, FAILURES, AND TRAGEDIES IS THE CERTAINTY THAT ONE DAY "THIS TOO WILL PASS"?

JUST THE SAME, MUCH OF LIFE CANNOT BE CHANGED. FOR SOME, IT IS THE KNOWLEDGE THAT THEY ARE NEVER GOING TO BE A CONCERT PIANIST OR A PROFESSIONAL HOCKEY PLAYER. FOR OTHERS IT IS THE FINAL CERTAINTY THAT THEY WILL NEVER MOVE INTO THAT JOB THEY HAVE ALWAYS COVERTED. FOR STILL OTHERS, IT IS NOT BEING ABLE TO BRING BACK A DEAD CHILD WHOM ILLNESS OR ACCIDENT HAS STOLEN. AND FOR PRACTICALLY ALL OF US, SOONER OR LATER, IT IS FACING UP TO THE FACT THAT WE ARE GROWING OLDER, OR THAT WE ARE NOT GOING TO GET OVER SOME ILLNESS.

DO WE THEN CONTINUE TO ACT AS THOUGH WHAT IS NOT AND NEVER CAN BE IS? DO WE RAIL AGAINST THE UNFAIRNESS OF LIFE AND SINK EVER MORE DEEPLY INTO BITTERNESS? OR DO WE, WHEN THERE IS FINALLY NOTHING ELSE WE CAN DO, ACCEPT "HOBSON'S CHOICE" THAT OLD NAG TETHERED NEAREST THE LIVERY STABLE DOOR AND RIDE OUT INTO WHATEVER MAY YET BE THE REST OF OUR LIVES?

TAKE THE PROPHET JOB. WHERE THE APOSTLE JAMES EVER GOT THE IDEA THAT JOB WAS A PATIENT MAN (James 5:11) ESPECIALLY WHEN THINGS WERE GOING BADLY FOR HIM, IS BEYOND ME. IN JOB

I WANT YOU TO KNOW, BRETHREN, THAT MY IMPRISONMENT HAS REALLY SERVED TO ADVANCE THE GOSPEL, SO THAT IT HAS BECOME KNOWN THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE PRAETORIAN GUARD HERE IN ROME...YES, AND I SHALL REJOICE. FOR I KNOW THAT THROUGH YOUR PRAYERS AND THE HELP OF THE SPIRIT OF JESUS CHRIST THIS WILL TURN OUT FOR MY DELIVERANCE...FOR I HAVE LEARNED IN WHATEVER STATE I AM, TO BE CONTENT. I KNOW HOW TO BE ABASED, AND I KNOW HOW TO ABOUND: IN ANY AND ALL CIRCUMSTANCES, I HAVE LEARNED THE SECRET OF FACING PLENTY AND HUNGER, ABUNDANCE AND WANT. I CAN DO ALL THINGS IN HIM WHO STRENGTHENS ME. (Philippians 1:12-14, 19-20; 4:11-13)

JIM KLOBUCHAR'S COLUMN OF OCTOBER 12, 1983 in the old MINNEAPOLIS STAR AND TRIBUNE COMES TO MIND HERE. IT WAS ABOUT ANOTHER GREAT FOOTBALL PLAYER WHO WAS ALSO IN SUPER BOWL IV, THE MINNESOTA VIKINGS" STRONG SAFETY KARL KASSULKE, KASSULKE MADE THE CLUB IN 1962 AND FOR THE NEXT TEN YEARS WAS THE CLASS OF THE LEAGUE AT HIS POSITION. A VICTIOUS TACKLER A BRILLANT PASS DEFENDER ON AND OFF THE FIELD, HE WAS THE VIKINGS RESIDENT WILD MAN. BUT IN 1973, THE SAME YEAR JIM TYGER RETIRED THAT ALL ENDED. KARL KASSULKE BARELY SURVIVED A FRIGHTFUL MOTORCYCLE ACCIDENT THAT LEFT HIM PARALYZED FROM THE WAIST DOWN.

THAT WAS YEARS AGO, AND A LOT HAS CHANGED SINCE. DESPITE BEING CONFINED TO A WHEELCHAIR, KARL KASSULKE BECAME AN ASSISTANT COLLEGE FOOTBALL COACH, SOLD EQUIPMENT FOR ASSISTING DISABLED PEOPLE IN AND OUT OF AUTOMOBILES, MARRIED A WONDERFUL WOMAN, ADDED A 6 YEAR OLD SON TO HIS FAMILY, AND HAS ACQUIRED SOMETHING THAT MAYBE ONLY HIS FRIGHTFUL ACCIDENT WOULD EVER HAVE MADE POSSIBLE - THAT PRECIOUS ABILITY, THE THE SPECIAL GENIUS OF EVERY TRULY VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN LIFE: TO SEE GOD'S GOODNESS EVERYWHERE AT WORK FOR HIS SAKE AND IN THE WORLD AROUND HIM. SO KLOBUCHAR, IN THAT 1983 COLUMN, QUOTES KARL KASSULKE AS SAYING: "HONEST TO GOD. I'M IN THIS WHEELCHAIR BUT I FINALLY FOUND WHAT LIFE IS ABOUT AND I AM CONTENT...I SAID CONTENT, AND I'M SERIOUS. PLAYING FOOTBALL AND RAISING THE ROOF KEPT ME GOING. I AM TO BE WHERE I AM TODAY...YOU SEE BEING IN A WHEELCHAIR IS JUST AN INCONVENIENCE, BUT NOT KNOWING GOD IS A HANDICAP." *Just say night now, before I go to sleep, I remember myself in the*

LIFE, LIKE HOBSON, SOONER OR LATER SETS BEFORE EACH OF US AN INESCAPABLE CHOICE: EITHER TAKE THE LIFE YOU HAVE AND LIVE IT OR TAKE NOTHING. EVEN SO, A TRULY VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN LIFE IS ALWAYS RIGHT THERE, WAITING TO BE HAD BY ANYONE WHO LIKE THE APOSTLE PAUL OR KARL KASSULKE, FINALLY COMES TO UNDERSTAND THAT THOUGH BEING IN A WHEELCHAIR FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE IS "AN INCONVENIENCE, NOT KNOWING GOD IS A HANDICAP." AFTER ALL, "IN EVERYTHING" IF WE WOULD ONLY LOOK AROUND US, "GOD WORKS FOR GOOD WITH THOSE WHO LOVE HIM. AMEN.

12 and 13, WE FIND POOR, PENNILESS JOB GRIEVING OVER THE DEATH OF HIS ENTIRE FAMILY, ABANDONED BY HIS FRIENDS, OUTCAST FROM HIS HOME AND CITY, AND SLOWLY DYING. WHAT IS GOING ON IN HIS HEAD? HERE IS HOW PATIENT JOB HIMSELF PUTS IT TO A WELL MEANING SOUL WHO WAS TRYING TO GET HIM TO ACCEPT THE ONLY LIFE, MISERABLE AS IT WAS THAT HE WAS EVER LIKELY TO HAVE: "I KNOW THAT WITH GOD ARE ALL WISDOM AND MIGHT, IF HE TEARS DOWN, NONE CAN REBUILD. IF HE SHUTS SOMEONE IN NONE CAN OPEN THE DOOR. I KNOW THE TENTS OF ROBBERS ARE AT PEACE AND THOSE WHO PROVOKE GOD ARE SECURE. YES! I HAVE SEEN ALL THIS. I HAVE AND UNDERSTOOD IT. WHAT YOU KNOW, I ALSO KNOW, BUT STILL I WOULD SPEAK TO THE ALMIGHTY! STILL I DESIRE TO ARGUE MY CASE WITH GOD"

THAT BRINGS TO MIND THE SUPER BOWL, AND THE SAD STORY OF A VERY GOOD AND DECENT MAN NAMED JIM TYLER. HE CAME OUT OF OHIO STATE U. IN 1961 - BY EVERYBODY'S CONSENSUS AN ALL-AMERICAN. FOR THE NEXT 13 YEARS HE PLAYED OFFENSIVE TACKLE FOR THE KANSAS CITY CHIEFS. SOME PEOPLE THINK HE MAY HAVE BEEN THE GREATEST OFFENSIVE TACKLE EVER TO PLAY THE GAME. IN ANY CASE THOSE 13 YEARS WITH THE KANSAS CITY CHIEFS INCLUDED 180 CONSECUTIVE GAMES (the club record) ELECTION TO ALL-PRO NINE TIMES, WITH TWO SUPER B OWLS AND ONE SUPER BOWL VICTORY.

ACTUALLY, SUPER BOWL IV MAY HAVE BEEN HIS FINEST HOUR. ON JAN. 11, '70 THE KANSAS CITY CHIEFS PLAYED THE MINNESOTA VIKINGS FOR THE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP IN PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL. ALL THAT AFTERNOON, PLANTED IN FRONT OF QUARTERBACK LEN DAWSON, JIM TYLER TOOK CARE OF "PURPLE PEOPLE EATERS," WHICH WAS AT THE TIME, THE BEST DEFENSIVE LINE IN FOOTBALL. MEANWHILE LEN DAWSON BY A SCORE OF 23 to 7, WAS TAKING CARE OF THE REST OF THE VIKINGS. AFTER THE GAME ALMOST EVERY REPORTER COVERING THE STORY WROTE THAT JIM TYLER WAS THE ESSENTIAL DIFFERENCE THAT HAD GIVEN THE KANSAS CITY CHIEFS THE VICTORY.

BUT EVEN JIM TYLER COULD NOT GO ON FOR EVER. HE RETIRED IN 1973 AND THAT IS WHEN THE TROUBLE BEGAN. HE HAD A LOVELY WIFE WHO WAS THE PRINCIPAL JOY OF HIS LIFE, MORE FRIENDS THAN HE COULD COUNT, AND A GOOD INCOME. BUT THAT APPARENTLY WAS NOT ENOUGH. ON ONE SAD DAY IN 1980 THIS GOOD DECENT MAN WENT HOME AND SHOT HIS WIFE, AND THEN HE SHOT HIMSELF. HE DID THAT, NOT BECAUSE OF ANYTHING MOST PEOPLE WOULD HAVE CONSIDERED UNBEARABLE, RATHER, SINCE HE COULD NO LONGER PLAY PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL, HE COULD NOT OR WOULD NOT ACCEPT

WHAT THE PASSING YEARS HAD LEFT HIM AND GET ON WITH THE REST OF HIS LIFE.

THE SPECIAL GENIUS OF A TRULY VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN LIFE IS WHAT "HOBSON'S CHOICE" IS REALLY ALL ABOUT: THAT PRECIOUS ABILITY TO FIND THE GOODNESS OF GOD, IN WHATEVER SORT OF LIFE GOOD, BAD OR INDIFFERENT - YOU AND I MAY HAVE TO HAVE TODAY.

OUR LIVES ARE ALWAYS FILLED WITH SO MANY MORE BEAUTIFUL THINGS THAN WE EVER FIND IN THEM. EVEN THE MOST HOPEFUL AND HAPPIEST EYES, EARS, AND MENTAL CAPACITIES ARE CAPABLE OF PICKING UP ONLY THE VAGUEST IMPRESSION OF THE INEXHAUSTIBLE BLESSINGS WITH WHICH GOD CONSTANTLY SURROUNDS US. THE SPECIAL GENIUS OF A TRULY VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN LIFE IS, THEREFORE, NOTHING MORE COMPLICATED THAN A DISPOSITION TO SEEK ALWAYS THE EVER-LASTING GOODNESS GOD IS FOREVER TRYING TO BRING OUT OF OUR LIVES EACH DAY,

GOD DOES NOT CAUSE MOST OF WHAT HAPPENS TO US. JOB WAS DEAD WRONG ABOUT THAT. GOD DOES NOT KEEP LITTLE CHILDREN FROM BEING RUN OVER BY AUTOMOBILES OR SEE THAT ROBBERS AND MURDERERS ALWAYS GET CAUGHT OR GUARANTEE THAT GOOD PEOPLE WILL BE PROTECTED FROM THE MISFORTUNES AND DISEASES THAT AFFLICT THE REST OF THE HUMAN RACE. WHAT GOD DOES SAY IS THAT HE WILL BE WITH EACH OF US IN OUR TROUBLES AS WELL AS OUR JOYS. IF WE KEEP BELIEVING IN AND LOOKING FOR "THE GOODNESS OF GOD IN THE LAND OF THE LIVING, HE WILL BRING FORTH PERFECTLY MARVELOUS MIRACLES OF HEALING, RECONCILIATION, RENEWAL, AND EVEN RESURRECTION, RIGHT OUT OF THE VERY WORST DAYS OF OUR LIVES.

CONSIDER THE APOSTLE PAUL. THERE IS NO MORE POWERFUL TESTIMON IN THE ENTIRE BIBLE THAN HIS WITH RESPECT TO THE PERSONAL BLESSINGS THAT COME OF WATCHING, IN GOOD TIMES AS WELL AS BAD, FOR "THE GOODNESS OF GOD IN THE LAND OF THE LIVING." THERE WERE ALL THOSE YEARS WHEN THE APOSTLE TOOK GOD TO TASK DAILY FOR THAT "THORN IN THE FLESH", WHAT MOST SCHOLARS NOW THINK MAY HAVE BEEN RECURRENT MALARIA. BUT IN THE END, AS HE WROTE TO THE CORINTHIANS, HE SAW THAT GOD, WHO CERTAINLY DID NOT CAUSE THE AFFLICTION, HAD BROUGHT FROM IT A WONDERFUL BLESSING: THE HUMILITY THAT CURBED HIS PRIDE, WHICH OTHERWISE WOULD HAVE DESTROYED HIS MINISTRY. LIKEWISE, PAUL REPORTS OUT OF HIS IMPRISONMENT IN ROME, WHICH AT THE TIME APPEARED TO BE AN UNMITTIGATED DISASTER, HOW GOD HAS BROUGHT FORTH A MARVELOUS HARVEST OF BLESSINGS FOR HIMSELF AND THE WHOLE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.