

My God Encounter

Each August over many years, it has been a month of vacation. All the summer class activities have ended, and now there are a few weeks to take a break before the fall schedule starts once again. This year's trip was to Yosemite National Park in California. The trip was a five and a half day drive across country. Folks ask (this hasn't been my first trip like this over the last few years) why do you drive? My answer is simple, I can't see God's creation from this unique perspective 40,000 feet in the air.

Leaving from Hampton, which is pretty much at sea level, flat as a pancake, traveling towards Charlottesville where the rolling hills/mountains really begin to form and then onto to the Shenandoah chain of mountains. Then onto the really rolling mountains of Tennessee etc., you get the picture? A really changing landscape and before you know it, the flat plains of Oklahoma and Texas (where the road is relatively straight and seems to never end) and then crossing into California through the Mojave Desert (oh my God, you don't want a car breakdown there). Then here we go through the Sierra Nevada mountain range, a brutal drive up and down, then upside down it seems, again, you get the picture?? Yet through it all, God's handiwork is absolutely AMAZING. Even though it was a challenging drive, all of it was absolutely beautiful, desert and all.

So here I am in Yosemite and Matthew 6:6 comes to mind: "But thou, when thou pray, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret; and thy Father who seeth in secret shall reward thee openly". You see prayer can take many forms. I entered "my closet" the day I left for my trip and over that five and a half day drive, I didn't listen to any music, no radio, no playlist, nothing but silence. I only sound being my car moving through the air and the sounds of the tires rolling on the pavement. So it was just me and God and guess what, I definitely felt His presence visually as well as prayerfully in the solitude. GOD'S PRESENCE WAS SUFFICIENT!

One of my first stops in Yosemite was Mariposa Grove. This is where we find the largest concentration of giant Sequoias. The father or mother of them all is the "Grizzly Giant". This tree is 2000 plus years old, I mean this tree was perhaps a sapling when Jesus walked the earth, a monster of a tree, I mean REALLY big. How was this tree and the others able to withstand the ravages of mother nature these thousand's of years? Here we go again with this God thing. You see, He created them

for sure, but He did not abandon them. Even though these trees tower thousands of feet into the air, didn't He know there would be lightning strikes, drought, bugs etc.? He did and He provided for them. These trees, for all practical purposes, are bug proof. The thick outer layer of bark thickens each year, so the poor little insects have a difficult task of damaging the tree. Did you know that they are virtually fire proof? Through the years their lower limbs fall off and before you know it, the so called "lower limbs" are hundreds of feet about the forest floor plus that outer bark for protection. Drought, no problem, the heavy snows of winter blanket the area and when spring arrives, the snow melt provides hundreds, if not, thousands of gallons of water that sees them through a dry season. Hear we go with another scripture that comes to mind, Matthew 6:26: "Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?"

Now, why am I saying all of this?, here's the kicker!! On the way to the grove, others and I arrived by shuttle bus and at the entrance, we disembarked and had to walk approximately 2 miles round trip to see the grove. Once I made my way to the trees etc., (I tell you it was grueling going up some challenging inclines, it looked as if I was panting going up while everyone else seems like they were coming down, but that's another story) I decided to head back to the shuttle area. So here I go meandering down the dusty trail and I soon discovered that I was all alone, like where is everyone, did I take a wrong turn? I couldn't see no one ahead or behind and then my mind started to wander, oh oh! Suppose a lion jumped from behind that next rock like the lion in the "Wizard of Oz" in front of Dorothy and the Scare Crow?? Somebody would be in trouble, so I dismissed that thought real quick. Then I decided to take it all in as a blessing, just maybe it was suppose to be this way. I slowed my pace, quieted my breathing because they were the only two things I could hear and so I simply sat down on a rock and closed my eyes. You see, I simply stopped and listened to God in His special place. I heard the sounds of God, the breeze moving through the foliage, the birds, yes even the insects, the absolute quiet in this forest and the sense of calm that "God got this". As omnipotent, and awesome a God He is, why should I have to worry about anything of the world. The world makes so much noise and I can understand why Jesus went into the wilderness, that quiet place, that closet to refresh, to put everything back into perspective and to remember who is in control. In God's place, there are no "isms", i.e. racism, individualism, getting even with them "ism", etc. For me, I don't need "Social Justice" a man construct, with all its pitfalls that tells of all the bad stuff that a special group of men, especially in this country, have perpetuated through the years and what needs to be done to fix it.

“Just follow me and I’ll set you free” approach that is especially spawned by the “poli-trick-cians”, self serving men and women, in many cases with few exceptions, who want control over other lives if you just do as they say and everything will be alright. I wonder, is there any “God” in them or is it just about them, do they pray for God’s guidance in what they do like us regular folk or do they view themselves as God’s with answers to our woes? No, I thrive in “God’s Justice” and when I have God’s Justice, why do I need Social Justice? God’s Justice encompasses all of that, why do I need a substitute? God’s Justice is absolute, it talks about redemption, grace and mercy. God’s kingdom is one of hope and salvation that doesn’t leave you holding your head down with no relief in sight. God’s Justice is SUFFICIENT, I need no other. Of course, this in one man’s opinion.

As a final thought, this experience has taught me that God is in control. He has legions of angels serving Him both night and day and when all is said and done, when this mortal body dies, who will I see face to face? Who will have the final word on my eternity? It won’t be Joe Biden, Barack Obama, Donald Trump, Black Lives Matter folk, Anthony Fauci or others. It will be God with two simple questions, did you love Me and did you love thy neighbor? This says it all, nothing else matters. Thanks be to God for meeting me in my closet.