

“It’s Not About Jesus”

So, in preparation for Barack Obama’s visit to Canada this past week, I read his 1995 book “Dreams from My Father: a Story of Race and Inheritance”. It tells of his growing up in Kansas, Hawaii, Indonesia; his work as a community organizer in Chicago and a visit to his father’s homeland in Kenya.

This past week was actually not so much about Obama. Rather it was more about our response to this new President of the United States. He is, after all, more popular in Canada than he is down there. One newspaper columnist wrote this open letter to the President. “Greetings, Mr. President! Welcome to Canada! I can’t tell you how thrilled we are that you are coming up to see us, if only just for lunch. Judging by the media frenzy, your visit ranks right up there with the Second Coming. My girlfriends haven’t been this excited since the Beatles came to town (not that you’d remember them). They, too, were more popular than Jesus.” (Margaret Wentz, *Globe and Mail*, February 2, 2009, Page A1)

It’s too bad that Jesus didn’t write a book about his growing up years. All we have are these third hand accounts written forty years after his time. And worse than that, they are really not about Jesus. These gospel stories are more about the disciples and any who claim to be. So the story is about us.

So here we are—up on a mountain and immediately (Mark just loves that word ‘immediately’—he uses it 41 times) and immediately there standing with Jesus is Moses and Elijah, the great liberator and the great prophet. It would be like seeing Obama with George Washington and Abraham Lincoln.

So what do we do, we start talking about buildings. Here we are at the most significant God experience of our lives and we start worrying about buildings. Tents, booths, church buildings—it’s all the same thing, an

attempt to keep the holy in a box, lest it swallow us up.

And then everything is cloudy. Good thing there is a cloud because it protects us from seeing God—seeing too much truth in our state would be life threatening.

Also last week the CRTC (Canadian Radio and Television Commission) amid fears that Canada’s culture is being drowned in a sea of online video from around the world, are looking at setting up a \$100-million fund to support home-grown programming on the Internet. This means that your Internet connection would be increased by 3%. Small price to pay to not be swallowed up, but I doubt it would come with a guarantee.

In 251 days I will be moving into my wife’s house. I wonder if I can use 3% of our joint income to make building changes to ensure that I won’t be swallowed up? I could get that written into a prenuptial agreement. Maybe throw in a few other items too. I could continue this line of thought and ruin the whole relationship even before we are married.

The reality of the world is that we have already been swallowed up. We have culture of consumerism where our economic system is based on the belief that our personal happiness will increase proportional to the purchase of material possessions. So, the one who dies with the most toys wins.

Mark’s story of the disciples, then and now, tells of a group that never really gets it. They are almost caricatures of people who have the truth in their face and they refuse to believe it. They are people who have been swallowed up by the Roman domination system, so they are constantly trying to outdo one another to prove they are greater than their neighbour, that they have an exclusive right to God’s love, that they are more deserving.

Continued on page 2

Continued from page 1

And then suddenly, out of the cloud there is a voice, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" And they listened and they might have heard Jesus repeat the words of the prophet Isaiah, "You are precious in my eyes, You are honoured and I love you. Do not be afraid for I am with you I have called you by your name you are mine. Should you pass thro the sea I will be with you Or thro the rivers they will not swallow you up Should you walk thro fire you will not be scorched, For I am Yahweh your Saviour."

And the disciples followed him down the mountain, for that was now the most important task.