

Six blind men enter a room with an unknown object.

Their task is to figure out what it is,

based upon their personal experience with the object.

Unbeknownst to them, it is an elephant.

So they all enter the room.

The first blind man touches the elephant's leg and concludes that the object was a tree trunk...stout and sturdy...

The second blind man touches the elephant's stomach and says...no, no, no!

It is flat... it is a wall!

The third blind man strokes the elephant's ear...and says "You are both wrong!

It is a soft, large leaf stirring in the wind"

The fourth man cries out as he touches the elephant's tail:

"You fools! it is simply a piece of rope!"

The fifth man touches the elephant's tusks and quietly asserts,

"it is a spear!"

The sixth man touches the elephant's trunk and declares...

"Be very careful my friends, what we have here, is a very large snake"

And then! all of them got into a great argument over who knew the real truth of what the object in the room truly was....

Almost six years ago, I had the wonderful opportunity to go to the Holy Land on a woman's retreat...

As we journeyed through the cities and countryside,

I will tell you that I have never seen so many guns.

In Jerusalem, at almost every corner, there were young men and women waiting for a bus, with these rather large rifles slung over their shoulders because military service is mandatory for both women and men directly out of high school..

As we drove into Bethlehem & later into Jericho we had to pass through check points at the entrance for each city. As we stopped and showed our credentials we noticed a machine gun on a tripod pointing at the flow of cars entering and leaving the city....

As we drove through desert, the hillsides were dotted with guns pointed down on the highways

In Israel, it is law that school field trips must be escorted by two armed guards, or the children can not go to the park or to the zoo or to the museum....

This ancient land, has long been a battlefield.

As I'm sure you know, the Jews and the Samaritans hated each other.

To the Jews, the Samaritans were traitors...a people who used to be Israelites but who had sold themselves out to the conquering nations.

So, they were no longer welcome into Jerusalem to worship at the Temple.

In our reading today, the woman has an important question for Jesus.

Where is the true Temple, the true place of worship?

Is it where her people worship on Mt. Gerizim or

is it where his people worship in Jerusalem?

Jesus says to her: "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem...the hour is coming and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him.

God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth."

Those words were written over 2,000 years ago...and yet...

**When I think of all the killing, and not only in Israel, but throughout the world,
and throughout all of time when people have killed, ostracized, slandered, belittled,
condemned others to hell who do not believe as they do....
where and who are the true worshippers?
and What is Truth?**

**Billions of people throughout the centuries have claimed to know,
THE Truth, capital T...
as if it were a singularity...a neatly packaged set of beliefs or facts
that belonged to a particular place or a particular people.
but like our 6 blind men in the opening story...
in fact, each of us can only know our particular perspective,
our particular point of view.
None of us can know the entirety of Truth, capital T...
for, in Truth... it is so much larger than we.**

**We human beings, are part of a living, evolving story that none of us created.
We are limited, finite creatures who live on a beautiful, magnificent, life giving planet.
We are beings that have been born with awareness and curiosity.
We have been given the ability to love and the ability to destroy.
Yet, Earth is only one planet out of billions of planets and stars in the Milky Way galaxy
and our galaxy is only one of billions of galaxies!!**

**Who do we think we are???
How can anyone, ourselves included,
possibly be so arrogant to claim to be the only ones who know and possess Truth...
capital T)?**

How different would the world be if:

religious people, scientists, business experts, and even the atheists

**if each of us would be willing to acknowledge that our beliefs, our life's perspectives,
our truths are our truths, small t...**

limited to our living in a particular place at a particular time

looking through a particular lens of life....

How different would the world be if:

religious people, scientists, business experts, and even the atheists

if each of us would be willing to acknowledge

that the other may know something about Life, that I do not...

that they might have some experience of Ultimate Truth that I haven't experienced,

that they might have a perspective to see something differently and truthfully

than the way that I see it...

Perhaps, if each of us could develop that kind of deep humility,

we would be closer to what Jesus told the Samaritan woman:

'the hour is coming and is here now,

when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth"

**Truth, with a capital T is so much larger than our small and limited human minds
could ever possibly comprehend or grasp...**

Truth with a capital T, can be touched with our hearts: lightly, ever so lightly, I believe....

but it can never be owned or legislated,

it can never be contained or confined or commanded....

possessed or owned...

Touching Truth with our hearts, lightly, ever so lightly...

perhaps...we just might finally begin to understand

**what Jesus meant when he said
that the hour is coming when we will worship the Father
neither on this mountain or in Jerusalem...**

**Touching Truth with our hearts,
perhaps we just might finally begin to understand
When Jesus said that God is Spirit.
he meant that God is owned by none yet present to all...**

**Perhaps... humbly acknowledging this Truth,
we just might finally stop killing, ostracizing, slandering, belittling,
and condemning others to hell...**

**Perhaps...humbly acknowledging this Truth,
we just might *FINALLY* put away the guns and take down the check points
and let the children play free and without fear...**

**Perhaps... then, we would not be blind men arguing about the elephant in the room,
but we would celebrate the hugeness of the Truth
which stands among us all...**

and then, perhaps.... we could humbly whisper, Thank you....Amen.

