

CAVU

Scripture: Psalm 36:5 – 10 & 1 Kings 17:17 – 24

Let me start by re-reading Psalm 36:5 – 10 – *Your love, O Lord, reaches to the heavens; your faithfulness to the skies; your righteousness is like the mighty mountains; your justice like the great deep. O Lord, you preserve both man and beast. How priceless is your unfailing love! Both high and low among men find refuge in the shadow of your wings. They feast on the abundance of your house; you give them drink from your river of delights. For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light. Continue your love to those who know you; your righteousness to the upright in heart.*

Imagine reaching the places depicted in Psalm 36? What does it take to get to the skies? What does it take to reach the clouds? My oldest son, Major Joshua ‘Vegas’ Plocinski, is a graduate of the Air Force Academy and he is currently a jet pilot flying F-16 out of Shaw AFB in SC. Josh would say to get to a place like the one described in Psalm 36 would just takes his F-16 and the after burners! Flight for humans only comes in a few forms and there are many of us who have never felt the air on our skin at 12,500 feet above ground level which is the standard altitude for skydiving. How many of you have gone skydiving, raise your hand? (Ask them to share their experience)

Similarly, very few of us have scaled up the side of the sturdiest rock formations and mountains in the world. To reach the top of the strongest mountains takes elite training and resources and a whole lot of time! To climb Mt. Everest will take a minimum of three weeks! How many of you have been at the top of a very high mountain and looked over the places below, raise your hand?

Three times when my oldest son was in Colorado Spring at the Air Force Academy we planned to drive to the top of Pikes Peak but all three times it was a very cloudy day and a local person told us ‘*Why go to the top of Pikes Peak on a day like this, all you will see is the top of the clouds!*’ So I did not get the wonderful view from the top of Pikes Peak. Our son did and he said you could see Denver from the top!

A pilot loves to hear this acronym on the day he is going to fly – CAVU. Does anyone know what these initials stand for? C-A-V-U? Ceiling and Visibility Unlimited! Just think if you are the pilot and today you are going fly high in the air and you arrive at the airport and check the weather with the control tower and he/she tells you CAVU! How excited would you get?

My oldest son flies two to four times a week. When I ask him about CAVU – he said, *That's the best news a pilot can receive for the day of a flight. It is so peaceful up there when you have a day CAVU!* He continued to share about flying over the Great Salt Lake in Utah at Hill AFB. He said on a clam clear day, the lake was like a giant mirror that would reflect his jet and sky above. He shared flying over Augusta Georgia and the Masters golf course on a clear day. He said the course was very visible and he thought of me as he flew over. I only wish I could have personally shared in these sights, but by his telling of them, I feel I have seen it also.

So to get to the places spoken of in Psalm 36, human beings have to work really hard, spend a lot of time and resources to do it. But even then, we fail to get the full experience they have to offer because our bodies simply cannot handle them. Yet, God's loyal love for us has no problem extending us to the skies. God's faithfulness draws our eyes up past the clouds as we look for its end. God's faithfulness creates for us CAVU! God's righteousness cannot be scaled by our own strength. God's measure of holiness cannot be achieved by us because we will give up on trying because obstacles will be placed in our way and it will become impassible to us. God's righteousness creates for us CAVU!

What an apt reminder of the work of Christ on the cross on our behalf, Christ creates CAVU for us upon a cross. What a true mediator Christ is for us. Christ creates CAVU for us.

In our second scripture reading from 1 Kings, a severe and extended drought has gripped the entire region in this passage. The people are dying of hunger and thirst as the fertile land becomes a dust bowl. The drought began shortly after King Ahab entered into a marriage alliance with the King of Sidon. The Princess Jezebel married King Ahab and her father seals the deal by asking Ahab to worship their God Baal. Princess Jezebel's father wants Israel to be subservient to the patron god of Sidon. There is a great irony here – the God Baal is the god of thunderstorms and crop fertility but yet they are suffering from a severe drought and lacking in food! This calamity had been predicted by God's prophet Elijah and soon after the marriage, God sends Elijah to Sidon, the heartland of the enemy empire that God and Elijah oppose.

There, Elijah encounters a widow and asks her for water and bread. However, she is on the brink of starvation. She is the victim of an economic system that neglects the vulnerable poor. A handful of food and tiny bit of oil is all she has at home. This is the last of her food and oil. She only has enough for one final meal for herself and her son. The prophet Elijah promises her that by the power of the God of Israel, her jar of food and jug of oil will not run out until the drought ends. In an astounding act of hospitality and trust, she gives Elijah her last bit of food and oil, and miraculously the jar and jug continue to yield grain and oil!

But there is more to the story, the woman's child is weak and he soon falls ill and dies. The widow assumes it is because Elijah blames her for being the enemy. Elijah does not think this and he pleads to the God of Israel on her behalf. Elijah says – *O God, let the child's life come into him again!* And the child is revived!

What a wonderful story but we often are tempted to see individual people as merely parts of a group. This is especially true of those we perceive as enemies or immigrants. We lose sight of people different from us as a people to be feared and hated. We place blame upon them for our troubles. We do not behave like Elijah and show mercy upon them.

We all have our own stories of love and disappointment. We all have our stories of heartbreak and mercy. We are all people not to be put into a category to be feared and rejected. We are all people not to be ignored and left to die. We are all God's people who all need to be seen with the vision that is CAVU. At this time in our history, our nation needs a vision for all people that is not filled with hatred and fear but we need a vision for all people that is filled with love and compassion.

With 2019 ended, a year in which I did not have CAVU in my life. 2019 was a year that was filled with change and unknowns. I left a church I had served for 20 years as its pastor, I moved to Harrisburg PA to take care of my mom who is suffering from dementia. For most of 2019 my wife and I lived with my mother in a large house. My mom decided to move to a much small place in August of 2019 and she told us to get on with our lives, so we moved again to here, Bethany Beach, Delaware. Boy, 2019 definitely not a year of CAVU for my wife and I!

I am looking forward to 2020 and the start of our relationship as pastor and congregation. I am looking forward to serving Christ in this shared ministry. I pray for 2020 to be a year where our vision is CAVU. Let us all pray for a vision CAVU.

Let us pray:

O God, may we delight in the fact that you made your light shine with holiness through Jesus Christ. May you O God, allow us to rejoice because you have called us to a new vision CAVU. O God of compassionate mercy, give us a clear vision to see each person as your beloved child. AMEN.