

RANSOMED *Heart* MINISTRIES

- February 2004 Newsletter -

Dear Friends,

I went to see (for a second time) *The Return of the King* just after Christmas. (There was just too much to take in the first go-round). As I was watching this Epic unfold, I was first struck by the magnitude of the Story, the weightiness of each character's role, the cost they will have to pay, and the immense stakes at which they play.

I felt, and I saw, for a moment, what *our* Story is like again.

I mean, Christianity. Life. Reality.

Sitting there in the dark, about three-quarters of the way through the movie, in the midst of being struck by all this, I asked Jesus, "Lord, okay. I accept reality. This is what we're dealing with. What do we *need* to live in a Story like *this*?" It was a deeply earnest prayer, prayed soberly, out of an inner sense of, *I have accepted this Story. I will do my part as best I can.* And this is what Jesus said in reply:

You must know who you are.

You must know who I am.

That has been growing in my mind ever since. Yes. I mean, they aren't brand new thoughts. I have some sense of who I am. I know who Jesus is...kinda. And that's the point. "Kinda" just isn't going to see us through this Epic we've found ourselves in. The pressures are too many and sometimes too great. The doubts too frequent. The accusations too familiar.

We must know who we are.

We must know who He is.

That is where my personal devotions have been taking me since. Asking God to reveal more of himself to me. Asking him also to reveal more of who I am, and the role he has called me to play. It's proving to be a rich experience, and it is already helping. I'm sharing this because I want you to have these things as well, for I know something of your story. I know you also underestimate who you are and who God is. Life is confusing when we live like that – kinda clear on our role, kinda knowing the God we serve.

I was also struck by something else in that second round of *The Return of the King*.

It can be done.

That was the other great gift of watching this movie metaphor of the last days of Christianity, the days before the return of our King. It *can* be done. We don't need to fear the battle. We don't have to shrink back into church-as-usual. Good can win. The kingdom of God can triumph over immense darkness. It can be done. Only, we cannot do it alone.

It is the *fellowship* that prevails. Together.

I read a story several years ago, told by Ed Murphy, about a missionary to China early last century. He faced incredible spiritual opposition in this particular province, trying to bring the gospel there. He wrote home, asking for prayer. Friends prayed, and there was breakthrough. Then, as the prayer ebbed, the breakthrough stopped. Years later, someone doing research on his life put together a direct connection between the date of his letters home, the prayers of the saints, and whether the Kingdom advanced or halted in China. He was, as we are, desperately dependant on his allies. Every day.

Having said that, let me say again that every role in the fellowship is vital. Know who you are. Know who God is. And thank you for being our allies in so many ways.

With love and thanks,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to be the initials 'Jhu'.

P.S. Oh, another thing. Many folks have asked if they could offer monthly support through a direct payment made from their checking account, like they do with their phone bill or mortgage. It's taken a year, but we figured out how to do this. If that is something you've thought about, go to our website and click on *How to Contact Us*. You'll find the details there.