

RANSOMED  
HEART  
ministries

Summer 2006

Dear Friends,

When praying about what to write to you this summer, it came to mind to share this story. (It's a sneak peek from my new book, *The Way of the Wild Heart*, coming in October).

“To say that I had come to the mountains, alone, to be with God, would sound as though I'd come of my own accord, making the journey seem noble and austere. But that would not be honest. I came to the mountains because I was *summoned*. Exhausted from months of battle and hard labor, I needed to get away, knew that I needed to get away, yet somehow could not bring myself to do it. You know how that is – you find yourself on the treadmill, hating it, but accustomed, even addicted to it, and getting off seems like an inconvenience, even if it will save your life. Thank God, something deeper in me was being called – a longing that is hard to describe, a compelling ache for Beauty. That is how God drew me.

The great danger for the Warrior is not defeat, but success, for what the evil one does to a good Warrior – if he cannot take him out, cannot keep him from entering the battle at all – is to then bury him. Dog pile. Make it all about battle. Make it constant. One battle after another, as David faces because of Saul's jealousy and then because his enemies learn he is the man to contend with. Like Jesus, who has to duck out of town because word has gotten out and everyone has come to the door with some need or another (Mark 1:29-37).

We must not let the battle become everything.

So for several years I have made a practice of withdrawing to some remote place to be with God, usually for three days. Up till now my mode has been to backpack into wilderness in order to assure solitude and all that it brings. But this year I was just too tired to hike up any mountain like a pack mule. So I chose a place I could drive to, up a long four-wheel drive road, hoping that would place me high enough in the mountains to be where my heart comes alive. When I finally pulled over and parked, I was in a broad mountain meadow surrounded by glacial peaks, wildflowers in full bloom, the sun so hot because there is so little atmosphere left up there to filter it.

I took my fly rod and walked out to the middle of the meadow, stood there for a moment, gave a deep sigh and let it all go, all that I had left behind, in order to allow all this beauty some room to come in. The warmth, the smell of meadow grasses and wild mint, the sound of the little stream, the peaks all round – I stood there for some time to let the encompassing beauty enfold me. Then I began to fish.

The stream there runs about five to seven feet wide, making its way through the meadow rather whimsically, in no apparent hurry to be anywhere. The brook trout that live in that stream are tiny, about six inches long, delicate little creatures with green backs wormed criss-cross with patterns the color of moss, red fins rimmed with white, and dozens of lavender spots along their

sides within which a bright pink dot lies. As Hopkins says, “Glory be to God for dappled things, For skies of couplecolor as a brindled cow; For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim.” I caught a few, and held them in the glacial waters, amazed at their beauty and life, then returned them to make it through another winter. “Little poems” is what I called them. Living flashes of beauty.

Having lost a fly in the bushes, I knelt down to tie on another, found myself kneeling in shallow water which rippled over a shelf of stones and pebbles on the inside of a bend in the creek. The water here was flowing only three inches deep – just enough to wet the stones into fullness of color, as you’ll notice how a stone will leap to life when you wet it, as even the streets look their best after a rain. The pebbles beneath me spread out in a mosaic made of a thousand small granite stones. Purples, browns of many hues from tan to chocolate, yellows, black, white, ground to utter smoothness by the glaciers, laid out like a Byzantine mosaic. Each stone was dappled, being granite, and together they made a dappled pattern, which was in turn dappled by the rippling waters rippling sunlight over them. I could have gazed at the fluttering mosaic all afternoon. It was captivating, and soothing, and intriguing – all the things that gentle, intimate, flowing beauty offers.

I was still kneeling in the shallow water, and as I looked down, my eye fell upon one small stone in particular, as if it were somehow illuminated, which is not quite right because it was one of the darker stones in the mosaic, almost black, so it could not have stood out for its brightness. But those of you who have had this experience will know what I mean, when in a crowd of people one face stands out to you almost to say *look at me*, or when you are reading a passage and one sentence causes you to stop and linger while all the rest of the page fades into the background but for that phrase. The stone was in the shape of a heart.

A kiss from God. A love note. I was being romanced.”

I share the story because I hope that you are in a place this summer to be aware of how God is romancing you – and that if you *aren't* in that place, you will stop and pray, *O Jesus – I need to know your heart toward me again. Open my eyes. Show where you are romancing me.* I’m trying to do that myself, and I know the thousand reasons to let the Romance slip away. We mustn’t.

In closing, things are going well here at Ransomed Heart. We begin the Captivating film project soon. A new CD set called The Hope of Prayer will be out soon, too. Lots of good things going on. And may I ask that you consider us in your support this month – we do need your financial friendship and we’re very grateful when you are able to help in that way. We are in some need just now. Ask God what he’d have you do – we’ll trust that.

John

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the name 'John' written in a cursive, flowing style.