

RANSOMED HEART

LOVE GOD. LIVE FREE.

March 2010

Dear Friends,

Something I read in Thomas à Kempis years ago keeps coming back to me:

When Jesus is near, all is well and nothing seems difficult. When He is absent, all is hard.
When Jesus does not speak within, all other comfort is empty, but if He says only a word, it brings great consolation.

Isn't it true?

Those moments when we have Jesus, really have him, those are the best moments of our lives. Those times when he seems distant or hard to find can be our most desolate. To know Jesus as he really is addresses things in us we didn't even know needed addressing. Sets us free in ways we didn't even know were possible. Touches our deepest longings in ways nothing else even comes close. It is like coming home.

And so, a true knowing of the true Jesus is the greatest thing that can ever happen to us.

I'm thinking about some of the great shifts in my life. That season years ago now when I began to understand that God loves my heart, cares for my heart, yearns for my heart. I'm not sure how it happened – how does it ever happen to any of us – but I had shifted my Christian life into something very outward. Going to church. Keeping God's commands. Doing good for others. The initial joy of knowing Jesus faded into something very dry. What a joy, what an epiphany it was when I came to see that he wanted friendship with me, wanted a heart-to-heart relationship. It changed everything.

Following quickly on the heels of that awakening was the realization that life is a romance. All the things I love in this world – horses running in a field, wildflowers in very high alpine meadows, fly fishing, sunlight on water, the cry of a hawk – these are all God wooing me, calling me, speaking to my heart. Wow. The realization that God does speak, speaks intimately, that I can learn to hear his voice – it absolutely changed my life.

Then there was the new season where I came to understand Jesus is a warrior, leads us in a great battle. The freedom that began to usher in is too great to quantify. There was the awakening of a whole new side to Jesus when I learned he is our healer – comes personally into the dark memories of our past and actually brings healing and restoration. He really does restore the soul. These kinds of epiphanies are absolutely priceless.

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It follows, then, that to be mistaken about Jesus is the worst thing that can happen.

My sons are off at college now; they have chosen to attend Christian colleges. It has provided an intimate look into contemporary Christianity, and it is very, very sad what most of these students hold to about Jesus. For example, the very subtle but deadly belief that, "Jesus is committed to excellence."

What follows is a pressure to get your act together, to be excellent in all you do, “to glorify God.” It is crushing. Performance replaces relationship. There is of course the common belief that God does not speak to us personally. But as à Kempis said, “When Jesus does not speak within, all other comfort is empty.”

Quite common is the belief that to love Jesus is to dedicate yourself to a life of service, or justice. Service then becomes tyrant, and the Christian life something very hard and barren and tiring. The need too great, our resources too limited. There is the belief that everything that happens to me is directly from the hand of Jesus. Even though he taught us to pray that his kingdom come, his will be done on earth. And when you hold that there is no enemy and no battle, that everything that happens to you is “God’s will,” then you begin to doubt the heart of God because he brings such terrible things into your life. It ushers in a fatal passivity, because why resist it? Nothing can be done.

Call it the torment of misunderstanding. To get Jesus wrong is torment.

Of course, this is the battle raging through the Church. The enemy knows that if he can get us to embrace false ideas about Jesus, he can cripple us. John warns of this in his first epistle: “Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.” He urges us to recognize “the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood” (1 John 4:1, 6). And so I have been praying,

Jesus, I ask for you. The gift of you. I ask for the real you. I pray to know you as you really are. Thank you for giving me the Spirit of truth. I pray that the Spirit of truth would expose every false thing in my perceptions of you. I pray that the Spirit of truth would dismantle the spirit of falsehood in my life. I ask you for you.

I have been enjoying the Daily Reading we send out. It is so refreshing to see it as I’m cruising through my in box, pause, open it, and read. Sixty seconds and suddenly I am back to what is true, lifted out of the mud. You can sign up on our home page at www.ransomedheart.com. Look for the button that says Daily Reading. There is no charge. As I was getting ready to write you this month, I received this email:

“I am on my fourth year of digging deep into the well of the Ransomed Heart message and it is setting me so free. Free in ways I never imagined I was even bound as well as quite a few I knew about but felt powerless to change.”

That is the true Jesus, doing his real work. So plug in, friends. Be refreshed. Be re-awakened. Pick up one of our resources and let it bring you Jesus. It is the best thing that can ever happen to you.

John 

PS Oh, I almost forgot – the Love and War DVD series for couples and small groups is now available! We’re so excited. Grab a copy, and let God strengthen your love.