

RANSOMED HEART

LOVE GOD. LIVE FREE.

September 2010

Dear Friends of Ransomed Heart,

I just had a pretty remarkable conversation with Jesus, around a very disappointing event, the fruit of which is so important I wanted to share it with you.

First, some back story. I've been an elk hunter for fifteen years. (This is not a hunting story ladies, so hang with me.) Over the course of those years I've had so many phenomenal disappointments, you'd wonder why in the world I keep at it. But hey, I'm not alone in that. Golfers do this. And people who date. Diet. Invest money. Lead a church. Heck, we all have arenas where we experience more setback and disappointment than we do triumph. That's why this story is so important.

Last weekend I was out in the woods, bow hunting but mostly just hanging out with God, and I thought my day had finally come. After fifteen years, I was going to get the Big One. An enormous bull elk appeared 150 yards away from me on a mountain I knew no one else was hunting. I wasn't even looking for him. The opportunity came so serendipitously, I thought it was God for sure. My years of waiting were over. This was going to redeem everything.

I prayed. Hard. I did it all right. I even thought I was following that inner voice of the Holy Spirit as carefully as I could. Did I mention I was praying hard?

The bull vanished. For no reason whatsoever. Vanished. Gone. I was...heartbroken.

Now, the enemy was all over this in about six seconds. Disappointment rushes in and feelings of *not again...not again*. That old fatherless thing jumps in, that feeling like if anything good is going to happen you've got to make it happen and it makes you feel so alone. Doubts rush in about hearing the voice of God, which are about the worst doubts there are because it draws your whole relationship into question. A whole garbage truck gets dumped on me. I had to pray a long time on the way home just to get it off, and get back to myself and my true relationship with God.

Now for the huge part of the story. This isn't about elk hunting. This is about some core assumptions we make about the world.

I could tell disappointment was still holding on between me and God this week, because a friend asked me to pray for him and I couldn't bring myself to do it. I mean, why pray...it doesn't really help. Which I don't really believe, but it showed me my heart was still hurt and under a cloud and I needed to sort things out. I grabbed my journal, went out on the porch during lunch, and began to pray/have a conversation with Jesus. It went like this...

Jesus, I love you. Help me with this. Interpret this for me. [It is SO important we ask God to interpret stuff for us.]

You felt hurt by this.

Yes. I was. I really hoped that finally, finally, it would all come together. I thought it was going to be a

beautiful climax to a great week. It hurts to feel like you don't care.

You blame me.

Hmmm. Well, yes, I did. I mean, I prayed hard, over something that seems pretty "C" level in the world of prayer, and it doesn't happen.

Go on.

Well, I thought you were in it. I thought I was following your voice.

What is the pain?

Well...it hurts to feel like you don't care, like you aren't even listening. It hurts also to think I wasn't hearing from you.

So you feel betrayed.

Yes. I do. But I can't pin that on you. I think the thing that hurts most deeply is, why does something that matters deeply to me not seem to matter to you at all?

Every joy is deeply opposed.

Wait. What? It is? Really? Every joy is deeply opposed? [This is when the epiphany begins.] That changes my perspective on everything. I mean, if that's true, then You are doing so much, for all the joy we do receive. And, we are being so naive when we see joy as something that ought to come pretty easily. Like, its not really central to what's going on. Not a major point but kind of a sideshow, so it shouldn't be so hard. [Don't you feel that way about joy? Isn't this how you feel about finding someone or getting a job or just having a good weekend?] But then it is hard, and it doesn't happen, and that raises all sorts of questions, especially about you, God.

Whoa. [I am now sitting back in my chair, talking to myself.] This is huuuuuge.

Think about it, friends – what are the assumptions you are making about joy, and unanswered prayer, and God's heart towards you? Do you see joy as central to this Story, absolutely central, and therefore deeply opposed in your life – not by God, but by your enemy? Do you see how disappointment, wrongly interpreted, clouds your relationship with God? Lets in a sense of betrayal? Do you see how believing otherwise would change so much of your perspective?

Dear friends, joy *is* central and joy *is* opposed.

If your world view does not hold this at its core, you will come to some terrible conclusions about life, and the heart of God, and "what he allows," and prayer, and how much you matter to him, and a host of other things. Ask Jesus.

For Joy,



John