

# RANSOMED HEART

LOVE GOD. LIVE FREE.

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July 2011

Dear Friends,

Now we are entering the height of summer. I must confess, it is my favorite time of year. I know some folks who prefer fall, even winter, but for me the joys of summer are the best of all. Our flowers are bursting, the hummingbirds are zooming around, and the crickets in the evenings bring such happiness as we sit on the deck in the cool breeze after a hot day. I think what I love most of all is the absolute abundance of LIFE summer ushers in. It is a picture of the Kingdom, and it is also a picture of what Christ comes to do in us.

May I remind you - Jesus is not merely someone we respect; he is not merely a figure for devotions. Jesus is our life. We need Jesus like we need oxygen. Like we need water. Like the branch needs the vine. He is the missing essence of your existence. Whether we know it or not, we are desperate for Jesus.

To have Jesus, really have him, is to have the greatest treasure in all worlds. To have his life, joy, love, and presence cannot be compared. To know him as he is, is to come home. A true knowledge of Jesus is our greatest need and our greatest happiness. The purpose of your being here on this planet, at this moment in time, comes down to three things:

1. To love Jesus with all that is within you. This is the first and greatest command. Everything else flows from here.
2. To share your daily life with him; to let him be himself with you. On the beach, at supper, along the road—just as the disciples did.
3. To allow his life to fill yours, to heal and express itself through yours. There is no other way you can hope to live as he did and show him to others.

Love Jesus. Let him be himself with you. Allow his life to permeate yours. The fruit of this will be . . . breathtaking. Now for the best news you will ever receive. You get to. You are meant to have this Jesus, more than you have each new day, more than you have your next breath. For heaven's sake—he is your next day, your next breath. You are meant to share life with him—not just a glimpse now and then at church, not just a rare sighting. And you are meant to live his life. The purpose of his life, death, and resurrection was to ransom you from your sin, deliver you from the clutches of evil, restore you to God—so that his personality and his life could heal and fill your personality, your humanity, and your life. This is the reason he came. Anything else is religion.

So, the best thing you can do is simply begin to love Jesus. Just love him. It will open up your heart and soul to experiencing him, and to receive his life. Just begin to make a practice of loving Jesus. As I'm driving in my car, I will simply tell him, "I love you." Not once, like a sneeze, but over and over again: "I love, I love you, I love you." It turns my whole being

toward him in love. When I wake up and the sunshine is pouring through the window, I'll say, "I love you." I'll look at a photograph of some fond memory, or some beautiful place, and I'll say, "I love you." A breeze will caress my face ever so gently, and I'll turn into it and say, "I love you." Anytime something makes me laugh. When I see a chipmunk or a wave, when I enjoy a movie. I love you, I love you, I love you.

Find a few worship songs that lift your heart. Linger with them, play them over and over, and simply tell Jesus you love him. Put them on your iPod; play them in your car. The more you practice this, the richer it becomes. When you smell coffee in the morning, say, "Jesus, I love you." When something makes you smile. Over a great bowl of noodles. When you read a passage in a book that moves you, or answers a question. Taking a hot bath. Watching your children play. Walking by a florist shop. When someone is kind. After the rain makes the city lights glisten in the streets downtown. When you hear a piece of music you love. Say, "Jesus, I love you. I love you. I love you."

Six days before the Passover, Jesus arrived at Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, "Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages." "Leave her alone," Jesus replied. (John 12:1-7)

Here is another beautiful snapshot of Jesus' personality. There is something so humble and gracious about his ability to receive this. He's very moved, and he silences Judas for rebuking her. The story was recounted for our benefit, to help us love him. "Do I bring something to your heart, Jesus?" You do. Don't let those religious crows with all their squawking shame you away from this by their false reverence, making you think this diminishes the all-sufficiency of God. Look at Jesus. In the very moment Christ most admits his divinity (allowing himself to be worshipped by Mary), he reveals his desire for intimacy with us. This is what Jesus chose—this is how he acted with his friends.

So, I am making a practice of loving Jesus. Loving him for who he really is. The Jesus who gave us the oceans and the rivers. Who gave us laughter. Who served up 908 bottles of wine to Cana. And this one shift has changed my life in ways nothing else can even compare to.

Happy summer

  
John