

# RANSOMED HEART

LOVE GOD. LIVE FREE.

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April 2012

Dear Friends,

I was sitting in the airport in Colorado Springs back in January, waiting to catch a flight to Houston, on to Buenos Aires, when the gate agent made an announcement: “Those of you travelling on flight xyz to Houston, that flight is going to be about an hour late.” My heart took a nosedive; my connection was barely more than that. I knew if I missed my second flight I’d be stuck in Houston overnight, which would set off a whole line of dominos wrecking havoc on my travels. I began to despair.

At that moment Jesus said, *Look at me.*

I turned my heart’s attention towards Jesus, and as I did I could feel my anxiety begin to ease up. *I have this*, he said, and a peace flowed in. Then, like Peter, I just had to have another look at the waves – I turned my attention back to all the implications of missing my connection. “But...what if...” My heart plummeted. I caught myself, and turned back towards Jesus; the peace returned. It was so obvious I had to repeat it a few more times – look at the “facts” of my situation, and despair; look at Jesus, and my heart was well.

There are so many things I could write about this month, but lets turn our attention to Jesus right now:

Then Jesus entered and walked through Jericho. There was a man there, his name Zacchaeus, the head tax man and quite rich. He wanted desperately to see Jesus, but the crowd was in his way - he was a short man and couldn’t see over the crowd. So he ran on ahead and climbed up in a sycamore tree so he could see Jesus when he came by. When Jesus got to the tree, he looked up and said, “Zacchaeus, hurry down. Today is my day to be a guest in your home.” Zacchaeus scrambled out of the tree, hardly believing his good luck, delighted to take Jesus home with him. Everyone who saw the incident was indignant and grumped, “What business does he have getting cozy with this crook?” Zacchaeus just stood there, a little stunned. He stammered apologetically, “Master, I give away half my income to the poor - and if I’m caught cheating, I pay four times the damages.” Jesus said, “Today is salvation day in this home! Here he is: Zacchaeus, son of Abraham! For the Son of Man came to find and restore the lost.” (Luke 19:1-10)

I *love* this story. It is so unexpected, and funny, and so...whimsical. Here’s this short guy – picture Danny DeVito – who frankly is a bit of a traitor and a swindler. Though a Jew, he has sided with the Roman occupation forces, extracting Caesar’s taxes from his countrymen and skimming a little off the top for himself. Jesus is passing through town; the little man tries to get to the front of the row but the crowd shoves him back. So, he runs ahead of the caravan and...climbs a tree?! In his full-length Armani robe? Why does Zacchaeus find Jesus so compelling? He “wanted desperately to see Jesus.” Fascinating. Apparently, he’s either heard stories about this man (from fellow bill collector Matthew maybe?). Or he’s seen him from a distance before, and now he simply must get a closer look.

The next moment is as rich as the Gospels get: Jesus pauses under the tree and looks up. O, to have seen the expression on Jesus' face – the twinkle in his eye, the slight grin behind the serious command. He knows what this is going to do to the little pirate's world. "C'mon down, Zacchaeus." (How did he know his name?!) "I'm having lunch at your house." (He invites himself over?!)

O, the beautifully disruptive ways of Jesus. Disruptive both for the crowd ("What business does he have getting cozy with this crook?") and for the little extortionist, too. Zacchaeus' reaction is so utterly extravagant we never see it coming: "I give away half my savings to the poor." What?! Have you been around money people much? Let me remind you that it is a *fool* and his money who are soon parted; the rich and clever are never separated from theirs. On the spot Zacchaeus cuts his lifestyle, his portfolio and his retirement *in half*? Then he goes on to promise a total change of life?

Wow.

This is what it's like to look at Jesus, turn our attention towards him. It is *life-changing*.

A dear friend wrote me last week to say she was on her third time (!) through *Beautiful Outlaw*, and it continues to lift the veils and bring her more and more of Jesus. Today I was in line (again at the airport) and a guy stopped me to say how much he was loving the book; he was taking pictures of certain choice pages and texting them to a friend! A couple weeks ago another woman wrote to tell me she's leading a group through our *Outlaw* DVDs, and several women in the group – Muslims – are asking a lot of great questions about this man.

O friends, I hope by now you've had a chance to read *Beautiful Outlaw*. I hope that you've had the chance to share it with your friends. But I know how life works – it pulls us downriver and we forget. I know how the enemy works, too – Jesus is the *last* thing he wants you looking at, talking about, telling others to come have a look. So let me suggest this:

If you haven't read *Beautiful Outlaw* yet, you must; you will fall in love with Jesus (again).

If you have, try listening to the audio book this time around. I did the reading myself, and it is filled with the color and passion I was able to bring by telling the stories.

Lead a small group through the DVDs; what a gas to introduce your friends to Jesus!

There is nothing better in the world than knowing Jesus as he really is. Whatever got you distracted, whatever waves have captured your attention, time to turn your gaze back towards him. Go climb your own sycamore. He'll look up and find you, too.

With love,



John

PS...just a quick note to let you know the lottery for our August 16-19 Wild at Heart Boot Camp will be held Thursday, June 7 thru Tuesday, June 12. For more information about the August Wild at Heart or to signup for a reminder please visit [www.ransomedheart.com](http://www.ransomedheart.com) and click on events.