

RANSOMED HEART

LOVE GOD. LIVE FREE.

(Late) October 2016,

Our Dear Allies,

“We could sure use some hope right now.”

I was chatting with a friend last week about the things going on in our lives and in the world, when she said this. We weren't talking about major loss, or suffering—just the way everyone seems to be facing some hard thing or another. There was a pause in the conversation, and my friend—normally a very buoyant woman—said, “We could sure use some hope right now.”

We sure could.

Hope is one of the Three Great Treasures of the human heart: “Three things will last forever—faith, hope, and love” (1 Cor 13:13). A life without faith has no meaning; a life without love simply isn't worth living; but a life without hope is a dark cavern from which you never escape. These things aren't simply “virtues.” Faith, hope and love are mighty *forces*. And hope is the cornerstone; the fate of the other two depend upon hope's resilience:

... we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus
and of the love you have for all God's people
—the faith and love that spring from hope... (Col 1:3-5)

Isn't that surprising—both our faith and our love “spring from” or “result from” our hope. But of course. Hopelessness makes it impossible to care. Without hope faith is just a doctrine gathering dust on our shelves. The highest things that make a heart worth having and a life worth living—they rise or fall upon the condition of our hope. Which makes hope the mightiest force of all (love is the noblest; hope is the linchpin.)

It would be good to pause and ask yourself, *How is my hope these days?* The answer may be startling to you.

Because it is such a very precious thing, you want to be careful with your hope. So much of the disheartening and devastation that the soul endures comes from misplaced hopes. Hope is one of your heart's greatest treasures; it is a dangerous thing to let your hope go wandering.

Now, Christianity was supposed to be the triumphant entry of an astonishing hope breaking into the world. A hope above and beyond all former hopes. An untouchable, resilient hope.

But I'll be honest—far too often what gets presented as the “hope” of Christianity feels more like a bait-and-switch. “We understand that you will eventually lose everything you love; that you have already lost so much. Everything you love and hold dear, every precious memory and place is going to be annihilated, but you get to go to this New Place Up Above!” Like a game show, where you

don't win the car and the European vacation, but you do get the luggage and the kitchen knives. This is the hope that is "the anchor of the soul" (Hebrews 6:19)???

The world doesn't believe it. And we must understand why. When you consider all the heartbreak contained in one children's hospital, one refugee camp, one war-torn city *in one day*—then multiply that by the factor of the entire human race, times history...It would take a pretty wild, astonishing, and breathtaking hope to "overcome" the agony and trauma of this world.

Enter Jesus and his "gospel." The way *he* chooses to describe the wonderful news of the kingdom of God is absolutely stunning:

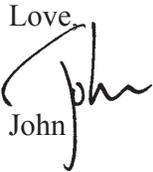
I tell you the truth: at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne...everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. (Matthew 19:28)

At the renewal of all things?! The coming kingdom means the renewal of all things? That's how Jesus understood it; that's how he described it. "The re-creation of the world," "when the world is made new" (*The Message*, NLT). A promise so breathtaking, so shocking and beautiful I'm stunned that few people even know of it. Oh yes – we've heard quite a bit about "heaven." But Jesus is clearly not talking about heaven—he's talking about the recreation of the earth we love.

We have been looking for the Renewal all our lives. It has been calling to us through every precious memory and every moment of beauty and goodness. It is the promise whispered in every sunrise. Every flower. Every wonderful day of vacation; the birth of a child; the recovery of your health. The secret to your unhappiness, the secret to your being and the answer to the agony of the earth are one and the same: we are longing for the kingdom of God. We are aching for the restoration of all things. That is the only hope strong enough, brilliant enough, glorious enough to overcome the heartache of this world. "We have *this* hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure" (Hebrews 6:19). The renewal of all things is the most beautiful, hopeful, glorious promise ever made in any story, religion, philosophy or fairy tale.

And it is real. And it is yours.

Our job is to "grab the promised hope with both hands and never let go. It's an unbreakable spiritual lifeline" (Hebrews 6:18 *The Message*). Grab hard, hold tight friends.

Love,

John

PS We are now accepting applications for the May 2017 *Become Good Soil Intensives* in Colorado and Australia. Find out more at RansomedHeart.com/BecomeGoodSoil