

HEAVEN HERE NOW – HOW

Donkey in the Ditch

“What man of you.....”. Luke 15:4

My Saturday mornings begin on Friday night when I start relishing the thought of sleeping in. A wonderful waking up to whatever I want to do or absolutely nothing. Delicious!

So, when I woke up that Saturday morning shortly after 4AM, wide awake, I was not a happy girl. Yes, I grumbled. “Father, I want to sleep in!”

But I was suddenly alert, wide awake and completely energized and did the spiritual thing: I turned on the TV. Slim pickings, so I was delighted to find “Princess Diaries” and We watched together. He loves to do everything with me, just as long as We’re together.

And We always are.

Cute movie, and suddenly He says “WHY DON’T YOU GO UP TO THE VIEWPOINT AND WE’LL WATCH THE SUNRISE TOGETHER?”

“Oh, that sounds like fun! I’ll make some hot chocolate and ”

“NO, GO NOW. GO *RIGHT NOW* AND HURRY UP.”

Well, so much for chick flick Together. He was so clear, very clear, that I grabbed my purse and ran to the coat closet, put on my coat and shoes without even stopping to put on socks. Down the stairs I flew in the pitch dark.



The viewpoint is only about three miles from home and soon I turned up the road winding to the top of the rimrock. I drove slowly through the rocks and scrub and suddenly saw two enormous creatures: huge ears sticking up startled me until the jackrabbits leapt out of the glare of the headlights.

The road ended on top in a broad, well-developed viewpoint with marked parking spots and a rustic shelter on top of the rocks. At the far end, I pulled in pointed in the direction of where the sun would rise even though the black sky showed no sign yet.

I put my purse in the trunk and the car keys in my pocket and noticed another enormous creature back at the far entry and it was slowly coming towards me. It didn't have enormous ears sticking up but in the darkness that's all I could distinguish.



So, I turned back to the east and wondered. Something about this wasn't good. I was alone in the darkness and someone was walking towards me. The person was taking their time but they were coming towards me.

"STAY."

There was a parking lot divider, an oval cement curb filled with stones, and I sauntered the few feet towards it, not looking at the person. To look busy, I bent over to examine the stones as the person got closer and closer.

I began picking up stones, turning them over in my hand and studying them.

Then he circled around me and was too close for me to pretend that I didn't see him.

“Look at these stones! Aren’t they beautiful?”

“Yes.” He had that unique French accent of an Iranian speaking English. He was dressed head to toe in black: black pants, black t-shirt, black baseball cap hiding his face, and a black hoodie pulled over his cap. He was a tall figure standing close to me looking at the stone in my hand, hidden in black and abetted by the black sky.

I believed he was Iranian, that’s all I had to go on. He was smooth, courteous, respectful, which is how I think of my acquaintances from Iran back in the day. OK, fine.



I sauntered the few feet back nearer to my car and looked purposefully towards where the sun would rise. There was a change in the darkness of the black sky, no sign of light just not so black. It’s something you feel more than see.

Then we made small talk about looking forward to the sunrise. And it occurred to me that perhaps he wasn’t Iranian, perhaps he was pretending. Hmmm. So, I spoke my few words of Farsi and he was clueless. Still polite, but clueless.

It sure wasn’t time to confront a stranger about being a fake. I just let him talk.

“Do you see the people in the camps down there?”

“Where?”

“In the camps.”

“Is there a homeless camp here?”

“No, they’re not homeless, they’re dead.”

I searched my memory for a cemetery down there and got nothing.

“Dead?”

“Yes, they’re dead and living there because they can’t get out.”

“A-ha”

“I am Father Dark Star. I serve satan. I know those are just fallen angels.

“Aha!”

“I want to blow up planes, I know it's wrong, but I want to see blood all over the place and dead people. *Blood all over the place!*”

Terrorist?

Why in the world wasn't I scared out of my mind?

He continued on, talking about the sun as god (I don't remember what he called it, but certainly he had been more than dabbling in the occult).

I listened a long time (call it gathering intelligence), then “That sun is created by Jesus, Lord of All, who makes it rise and makes it set, Who rules everything including evil spirits.

“You are not Father Dark Star.” Then I turned to face him although he was still faceless, hidden, and I held out my hands, “May I pray for you?”

“Yeah”, and he took my hands.

I don't recall all of that prayer or even much of it, it went on for more than half an hour as the sun started to rise. I do remember that after telling him that Jesus is Lord and Jesus loves him, I gave up trying to sort all this out and launched into praying in The Spirit.

Then we entered an amazing Place together, not the parking lot.

He bowed his head and made no other move and was completely at peace. He had no urgency to stop praying, he didn't budge, he was in the Presence.

I remember walking around him and snapping my fingers, sensing that things were being broken off him. I'd never seen this done and it was new to me but I sensed God was doing something. And the man stood still.

As I came back face to face, his face still entirely hidden, I said “I don't know what God's saying to you,” and I placed my hand on his belly, “but you do, don't you?”

And he nodded 'yes'.

The sun rose a glorious, piercing fire and suddenly nothing was hidden from



sight. There were no camps of dead spirits. I could see *part* of his face. I could see the view was panoramic and breathtaking view in the twilight. What an incredible picture of Jesus, The Glorious, Piercing Fire.

Then we were back in the parking lot and we were two people just chatting. We examined the porous white stone before I put it in my pocket. He asked me my name.

“Joy.”

“Ah, that is a lovely name,” still with his adopted accent.

And we parted.

Now I had seen his face. Now I still didn’t know who he was.

And now, shock showed up.

I didn’t drive home but out through the canyons carved by the Crooked River which the road follows. I took pictures of the river reflecting the canyons, in the shaded side chiaroscuro scenes of quiet waters and rippling streams and shadows and sparkles.

And - then - I- let - The - Lord - have - it!

“What were You thinking? You get me up in the middle of the night and send me up to the viewpoint to meet a maniac who wants to kill people and enjoy seeing their blood? Oh, *please!*

“And You let me tell him my name? My *real* name? You know We never do that! Where’s that ‘watchman over my lips?’

“Now he knows who I am. He wants to kill people. He loves blood and he knows my real name! This is a small town and he can find me. And he knows that *I know what he’s planning to do*. What-are-You-doing?”

Oh, I was not happy with this Plan. No, I was not.

I kept finding such beautiful, early morning country scenes that I pulled over to photographs several times, still ranting at God. Did you know that that’s OK with Him? Yes, it is. “I will pour out my heart before Him.” Not to people, to your *Father*.

I was fascinated by two herds of cattle, a large one on the left and a smaller number on the right, and pulled over hoping to get an extreme close up shot. One huge, lovable drooling cow face. Yes!

Well, the large herd on the left ran away to their far fence line. But the nice cows on the right came closer and, even though fewer, were friendly. They came right towards me to the fence. And they looked much healthier, much more *muscular*. Then they started pawing the ground and snorting and their fierce faces weren’t lovable anymore, they looked angry. They were bulls. Oh.



Just before noon I returned home. The drive had helped but I was still scrambling thoughts through my mind, and nothing pretty. Mind you I had prayed with the stranger and God had touched us but none of that rose up in my thoughts. In my shock I didn’t comprehend and respect the unfailing power of The Holy Spirit and the Plan of God. If He calls you, He will protect you there, and even if He slays me, yet will I praise Him.

I wouldn’t term it as fear, it wasn’t anxiety, it was just that God was doing something and I had no idea of what or where it would lead and He was doing it without my consent.

Did you know that your anxiety is you telling God “I don’t trust Your Plans for me, I want my plans. **I don’t think Your Plan is going to be good enough.**” *Wow.*

The stranger knew who I was and I didn’t know who he was. How could I level the playing field? I came out here because God led me and I was happy to do so to get away from the Syrian and Lebanese terrorists I had turned in a couple years prior, “the largest bust of the largest drug ring in the pacific northwest” (Sheriff Bernie Guisto).

“WHY DON’T YOU LOOK HIM UP?”

“Pardon?”

“YEAH. LOOK HIM UP ON FACEBOOK.

“Oh, yeah, right, like that’s going to work.”

And there he was, Father Dark Star.

New information, so much new but also perplexing, a handsome, adorable little boy with bright blond hair. Could this possibly be *his* childhood photo? Or was it a photo of a child representing those he hated and wanted to kill?

I could have praised and thanked and acknowledged my Father’s protection in worship but no-o-o-o-o, I stewed. What a waste of time!

I am too hard on myself.

I am an ordinary person with an extraordinary God.

Elijah called down fire from heaven then ran in fear from one woman’s threats.

Jonah was miraculously saved by God using a large fish, then complained when his shade plant dried up and withered away.

Pretty ordinary responses to an extraordinary *Father* who will continue on doing all that He pleases.

But after years of investigating real terrorists who had really terrorized me, this was too far over the line even for God. Didn’t He care about how this would affect me? It was hard to breathe again.

But it was worth it!

God knows the end from the beginning. He knows that His grace, His comfort, will get me through and that in the end I will agree with Him: it is worth it.

It was worth it for Him to sacrifice Jesus for *you*. To save you. To walk with you. That’s how He feels about you: you are worth it. In fact, “Because you are precious to Me, I have honored you and loved you.” (Isaiah 43:4) Look up the word “precious”. It means “of great value and worth.” God tells the truth about you: you are of great value and worth.

Speaking of the end from the beginning, now this stranger in the darkness has a new name: Bar



Tikvah, Son of Peace. He loves Jesus. It's been nine years and now, *it was worth it*.

Jesus runs *to us*, not away, and He is not afraid.

"As he (Jesus) was climbing out of the boat a man from the city of Gadara came to meet him, a man who had been demon-possessed for a long time. Homeless and naked, he lived in a cemetery among the tombs. As soon as he saw Jesus, he shrieked and fell to the ground before him, screaming, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of God Most High? Please, I beg you, oh, don't torment me!" For Jesus was already commanding the demon to leave him." (Matthew 8:27-29)

Jesus wasn't uncomfortable, thinking of himself, He was filled with compassion, thinking of the helpless man.

"And what compassion Jesus felt for the crowds that came, because their problems were so great and they didn't know what to do or where to go for help." (Matthew 9:36)

Here is God's heart, this is *Who God is*:

"Which of you, having a donkey or an ox that has fallen into a pit, will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day?" (Luke 14:5)

Even when it goes against the [Sabbath] rules, even when it's our own fault that we've ended up in the ditch, it is God's heart to pull us out.



Pulling a donkey out of the ditch might not be easy. The donkey may fight, the ditch may be steep, you might have to interrupt your plans and sweat a little. You might even get dirty.

It is worth it! Pull them out!

"The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love." Galatians 5:6b

"The harvest truly is plentiful [right here and now], but the laborers are few. Therefore, pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest." Matthew 9:37-38

“But as we have been approved by God to be **entrusted with the gospel**, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts.” 1 Thessalonians 2:4

You have been approved. God knows that He has made all that He is available to you to do everything He purposes.

He trusts you with The Gospel.

The Gospel: “God sent me to tell you, He loves you! He delights watching you, He never takes His eyes off you.”



Writing Now



Yesterday, the man from the Ochoco Viewpoint came to see me. It's been 11 years.

Someone's destiny depends upon your availability.

“Whatever He says to you, do it.” John 2:5