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HIDDEN TREASURE

(Matthew 13:44)

Eleazar felt that he was being ground to powder. He had taken his grain to the mill and seen them roll the huge stone across the grain and grind it down. He compared himself to that grain. His situation seemed hopeless. If only he could buy one of the fields down next to the Jordan where the soil was rich and productive.

When his father died he had hoped that his inheritance would enable him to buy one of those fields. But his elder brother inherited the family home and fields and his inheritance wasn't half as much as he needed. In fact, his savings were slowly being depleted. His daughter was sick and the doctors and medicine were expensive. He was a sharecropper on this sorry piece of land up on the ridge.

The first 20% of his harvest went to the landlord. Then a tithe went to the temple, and on top of that the Romans taxed his harvest without mercy. What his field produced mostly was rocks. For three years he had been moving rocks to the edge of his field. He carried them, rolled them, and used his mule to drag the large ones away. If only there were a market for rocks he would be a wealthy man.

So here he and his mule were once again plowing furrows into the hard soil. And for the hundredth time everything came to a sudden stop. Another big rock. It was hard work to dig out these big stones and drag them to the edge of the field. With a sigh he took the spade tied to the back of the mule and started digging.

Much to his surprise he saw that it was not a rock but a smooth piece of wood. He recognized that it was a type of hardwood that had not grown in that area for several generations. As he dug further, he saw the

edge of a box and his heart started beating wildly. Everyone knew that in past years when the Sabeans and the Edomites had been raiding Israel that the rich people buried their valuables to protect them. When those people died, the treasures were forgotten. The law stated that the owner of the field had claim to whatever was found in his land.

Eleazar could hardly contain his excitement.. He used his spade to prize open the top of the box. What he saw took his breath away. The box was full of treasure: golden cups, coins, and even a sack of pearls and jewels. It was a treasure beyond his imagination.

Eleazar carefully closed the box and shoveled dirt back over it. He and Mule finished plowing the field so there would be no evidence of his having stopped in the middle. As he led Mule back to the barn, he was planning what he must do.

He went home and didn't say a word to his wife. She was a good wife but he knew she couldn't keep a secret. Early the next morning he removed some stones from the fireplace and retrieved all that was left of his inheritance. It was all he owned in the world,

Then he walked to the gate of the city at the time when the judges met. He went up to Pagis, his landlord, and said, "Sir, I have inherited a little money from my father and have decided to buy that field that I've been leasing from you." Pagis could not believe his luck. What a fool this man Eleazar was to buy that useless piece of land. He said, "I don't know, Eleazar, that is a valuable piece of land." Pagis turned his head to the side and winked at his friends. They haggled for a few minutes about the price and when it was settled Eleazar put the money into Pagis' hand and it was duly recorded by the city official.

Eleazar had given everything he owned, all of his savings, all of his future, to buy that field - - - and the treasure was now his! He was

dancing and laughing as he hurried home to tell his wife and daughter.

Jesus said that the treasure He came to give was worth everything - everything that we own on this earth. Nothing compares to the treasure that Jesus came to give us: His very life, His forgiveness, His salvation, His peace, a relationship with our Creator and Father, a sure and certain hope of eternal life in heaven when this brief life is done. It is impossible to describe the value of this treasure, but it is hidden from the view of most people.

Can you see it?

Have you discovered that treasure?

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MANAGING OUR GRIEF DURING THE HOLIDAYS

- by Alice Monroe

Have a plan A/ plan B. Plan A is you go to that holiday dinner with family and friends, but if it doesn't feel right have a plan B ready. Plan B may be watching a movie you both liked, or looking through a photo album, or going to a special place you went together. Many people find that when they have a plan B in place just knowing it is there is enough.

Or you can cancel the holidays altogether. Yes, you can cancel the holidays. If you are going through the motions but feel nothing, cancel them. Take a year off. The holidays will come around again. For other people, staying involved with the holidays is a symbol of life continuing.

Try the holidays in a new way. Give yourself permission to evaluate what parts of the holidays you enjoy and what parts you don't. Remember there is no right or wrong way, you have to decide what is right for you. You have every right to change your mind even a few times. Friends and family members may not have a clue how to help you through this time of year.

It's natural to feel you may never enjoy this time of year again. They will certainly never be the same as before your loved one's death. However, in time most people are able to find meaning again in the traditions as a new form

of holiday spirit grows inside. Our friends and relatives often think they know how our holidays should look and what we should do and not do.

Remember that the holidays are some of the roughest terrains we navigate after a loss. Finding meaning in the loss is as individual as we are. We often say a part of us died with them, but finding meaning is also realizing a part of them still lives within us. These holidays are part of The Grieving Journey that we must navigate. They are usually very sad, but sometimes we may catch ourselves doing okay and even have a brief moment of laughter. Now more than ever be gentle with yourself. Don't do more than you want, and don't do anything that does not serve your soul and the meaning that still lives within you.

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SOME SCRIPTURES THAT MAKE ME SHAKE MY HEAD

Most of the teachings in the Bible either inspire me, challenge me, correct me, or rebuke me, but there are some teachings that make me shake my head.

For instance, when the Apostle James says that, "We should count it all joy when we fall into various trials," I shake my head. And I have to shake my head when he says, "We should glory in tribulations." I confess that I am not joyful in the midst of trials, nor have I reached the place where I glory in tribulations. I pray for rescue and relief in trials and tribulations.

And the Scripture that says, "For when I am weak, then I am strong" does not resonate with me. For me it should read, "For when I am weak, then I am weak." I haven't got to the strong part yet. I feel more like the baby Christian who said to Jesus, "I believe, Lord, please help my unbelief."

But I just found a Scripture, one of my new favorites, that fits me perfectly, and I am going to start claiming it. It's Isaiah 35:8 -

"Whoever walks the road, although a fool, shall not go astray."

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I BELIEVE IN SOZO

Some years ago, Bethel Church in Redding, California, introduced a counseling method that they named Sozo. Sozo is one of the tenses of the Greek word for salvation, *soteria*, an all-encompassing word that means "saved, healed and delivered."

You will recognize that this describes the ministry and teaching of Jesus. He did more than just (1) preach the Good News, He also (2) healed the sick and (3) cast demons out of people or delivered them from evil. Then Jesus passed this ministry on to his disciples (see Matthew 10; Mark 3, 6, 10 and 13; Luke 9, 10, 12 and 21; and Acts 1) He never authorized his disciples to preach the Gospel without also empowering them to heal the sick and to cast out demons. Jesus gave this same ministry to the church in Mark 16 and Acts 5.

Much of today's church does not believe this part of the Bible so they either ignore it or sometimes they preach against it. This is hard to understand because it is so clearly a basic New Testament teaching. When Jesus described why He had come to earth in Luke 4:18-19, He quoted a prophecy from the Prophet Isaiah, some 700 years before:

"The Spirit of the Lord has anointed me to preach the Good News to the poor, to proclaim freedom for the prisoners, recovery of sight for the blind, and to release the oppressed....."

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever, and He is still doing His good works through His church, (Amen, Hallelujah, Preach it, brother.)

I think I digressed for a few paragraphs, but God called me to this three-fold ministry in January of 1973, and I am going to toot this horn (blow this shofar) as long as I have breath.

THE FOUR DOORS

One of the insights of Sozo is that there are four common doors to people's hearts through which the enemy torments people by guilt, shame, pain, and temptation. Those doors are:

- (1) FEAR (2) ANGER (3) SEX
- (4) THE OCCULT

In ministering to people using the Sozo approach, the Holy Spirit is invited to reveal hidden wounds, sins, abuse, rejection, and repressed memories that have been festering in these four areas. This is a gentle, non-judgmental method of inviting Jesus to bring His healing ministry to a person.

Many churches throughout the country offer trained counselors in the Sozo pattern. There are also Sozo books available, but personal ministry and/or training is much preferable. If you need ministry, you might consider looking for someone who has been trained in the Sozo method. Just ask Bethel church, or perhaps Google can help you find a church to help..

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HEAVEN IS NOT BORING

Many people think that heaven will be boring, like a dull Church service, but instead of three hymns and a sermon you will sing 3,000 hymns and the sermon lasts till 2094. Then it starts over. What a terrible idea.

Look around at the infinite variety that God has created out of his imagination:

- A caterpillar turning into a butterfly
- The order of the solar system. If the moon were not exactly where it is to cause the tides that cleanse the oceans, life on earth would not be possible.
- The five senses: seeing, hearing, feeling, smelling and tasting.
- Dolphins and bats have built-in sonar.
- The DNA that individuates each person is so complex that a printout on letter-sized paper would make a stack 15 stories high - and that code is in each cell of our bodies.
- Plankton, goldfish, catfish, starfish, whales.
- Hummingbirds, blackbirds, redbirds, mockingbirds, eagles.
- Trees, grass, carrots, bananas, okra

And the list could go on and on. And this is a fallen world. Think what the Creator could do if he really put his mind into it.

We can't really imagine what heaven is like, but the Bible gives us some tantalizing hints so that we know that it is real and that it is what God has prepared for those who love him.

Many people spend their time worrying about their retirement which lasts a handful of years at most and never give a thought to where they will spend eternity. It is the most important question of our existence.

Are you sure you will go to heaven when you die?

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WHAT IS GOD LIKE?

Dr. Norman Gulley writes that history's greatest philosophers have wrestled with this question. God has been presented as the eternal mind (Plato), the ground of all being (Aristotle and Tillich), the universal substance (Spinoza), the final reason (Leibniz), the first cause (Kant), humanity (Compte), imminent (Schleiermacher), process (Whitehead).

All of these answers are only intellectual abstractions and of no help to us.

Philip also asked that question. Jesus answered, "Don't you know me, Philip? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father."

Jesus said, in effect: "If you want to know what God is like, then remember how I treated Judas even as he was about to betray me. Remember how I treated that woman who had been caught in sin as she was being humiliated. Remember how I treated children when they wanted to laugh, sing and play. Remember how I enjoyed good friends and a great party. Remember how I rescued you from a religion that had you all tied up in 'not's'-that I set you free from despair, that I liberated you from fear, guilt and meaninglessness. And remember that I no longer call you servants but friends,"

What is God like? God is love. God loves you. He is committed to your growth, welfare, fulfillment and ultimate happiness. God loves you personally, intimately, emotionally, eternally. God is like Jesus.

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WAITING FOR DADDY

(From my Ancient Files)

I just saw an interview with a father and mother on a TV news program following a near tragedy.

They said they went to their lake cabin for a vacation at the end of summer. While the parents were unloading the car, their three daughters, ages 12, 6 and 4, ran out on the boat dock. They heard the girls scream - the four-year-old, Sarah, had fallen into deep water.

The father ran and dove off the dock and searched for her, came up, dived again, came up, and in desperation dived a third time. He found her about ten feet down clinging tightly to the foundation of the dock. He pried her fingers loose, brought her up, held her by the feet and shook the water out of her, and amazingly she was okay.

Later, in the cabin, as the family loved on the little girl, he asked her: "Sarah what were you doing down there?" She said, "I was just waiting for you, Daddy."

Sometimes people are hoping that the Heavenly Father will come and rescue them, but they are desperately clinging to something that is killing them. Don't make him pry your fingers loose from that bad relationship, that addiction, that idol. Turn it loose, and cry out to Daddy.

God bless,

Glenn