

## Being the Beloved

What if the season you find yourself in is not a temporary interruption, but a transitional disruption? You know what a transition is, right? It's the turn of the page. It's the space before the next chapter begins. But in God's plan, transitions are also times of catalytic growth, times of deep heart-healing work. But I can tell you this with the greatest of certainty, "He has a next chapter for you. You know what that means right? Your story is unfinished.

Regardless of what you might think about the story of your life, listen, if you are a Jesus-apprentice, you have the very spirit of God in you. You are a citizen of the Kingdom of heaven with full access to the God who is your Father. You are not just a citizen, you are family. The power that raised Jesus from the dead, resurrection power is available for you. Jesus is not only with you, and for you, you are in Him. You have a hope that gives birth to expectancy for this life and well beyond this life. I'm telling you, you are being shaped by glory for good and all of creation is cheering you on.

Because a turn of the page is coming.

Some of you, that's all you needed. But you needed it up front.

You can go now.

For the rest of you, there is still more. He is what I want you to know. God is all-in on you. The old devotional writers would say, "You are His beloved." But what that means is that He is all-in on you. He always has been. While it starts long before time began, we first enter the story at the point of creation. Right? In the book of beginnings, Genesis 1, the refrain of Creation is that God looked at what he had created and said, "That is good."

God is creatively good. He never does anything halfway. He is not a "just get by" kind of God. He pours His whole being into what he does. Look at creation. Billions of stars? Did we really need billions of stars or do we have billions of stars because God poured his whole being into creation? And it's not only the huge galaxies which God calls good. Did you know that on a clear day the human eye can easily see an elevated object 40 miles away? That same eye, within a single second can refocus on a bug that lands on your arm. In fact, Lynn's (my wife) eyes can see bugs that aren't even there. Our eyes can differentiate between a 1000 shades of color. Our sight is so remarkable that Darwin, after studying the eye, wrote, "To suppose that the human eye, with so many parts all working together, could have been formed by natural selection seems, I freely confess, absurd in the highest degree."

When God created the world, he didn't do just enough to get by. He's not average or mediocre. He doesn't settle. He went all in for creation. And think about this, everything God can imagine, he can create. You have never had a trial that he cannot creatively use for good. For any problem you can imagine, he can create a solution and when it comes to you he's pouring his whole heart and soul into the masterpiece that he calls you.

You are his crowning masterpiece of creation. After creating trees to paint with in the fall and fish in the ocean that are every color of the rainbow, black holes in galaxies that we haven't yet even discovered. After everything God created, he stepped back and roared with laughter, "THAT IS GOOD." But it was only after creating people that God stepped back, looked at all he had done and said, "Now that's very good!" Superlative.

Think about this...it's not just the eyes, the average human heart pumps over 1,000 gallons a day. It beats 2.5 billion times in a lifetime. The lungs contain 1,000 miles of capillaries. DNA contains about 2,000 genes per chromosome 1.8 meters of DNA are folded into each cell nucleus, which is about 6 microns long. This is like putting 30 miles of fishing line into a cherry pit. And it isn't simply stuffed in. It is folded in. Change the fold, change the cell. Did you know that when an average adult rides a bike for 1 hour at 10 mph, we use the amount of energy contained in 3oz of carbohydrate. A car this efficient would get 900 mpg.

Such good stuff from an all-in God, but as amazing as our bodies are...our body is nothing more than the wooden frame for God's masterpiece. God's greatest masterpiece is not the amazing way that your body works together. It is not the color of your hair or the shape of your hips or your tan-toned abs. God's great work of art is your heart. God's great masterpiece is the stories that are written as you live life fully alive. You are a masterpiece in progress.

We so need this truth to saturate our souls.

God is all-in on you. You are what God does. That's what Paul says in Ephesians 2:10. You are God's masterpiece, his workmanship created in Christ. You are what God does. Let that soak in. Your heart, your life is the workmanship of God. And when God does anything, He goes all-in. He did it in the creation of the world and he does it in the continuing creation of our lives.

From creation to the Kingdom, Jesus is also all-in for you. He is. Jesus is the story of God. All-in is the story of the Kingdom. Listen to Jesus' words in Matthew 13:44 (NIV). "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field."

Can I give you a slight twist on the story? Imagine the scene. He walks alone on a hot afternoon, walking stick in hand. Boots covered with dust; clothes stained with sweat. Pressing matters at home, keep him from taking a rest, and leave him looking for a short-cut. He veers off the path thru a field. As he walks he trips over an uncovered tree root. That's embarrassing! Luckily no one's around to see him fall. As he pushes himself up, he notices the reflection of a slice of sunlight, something buried between the roots of the old tree. He pokes, scratches and forces his hand into a crevice -- feeling something hard, but hollow.

He starts digging. 30 minutes later he can draw it out; a small chest, buried for decades. Heart racing, palms sweating, pressing matters forgotten, he breaks the rusty lock and opens the lid, revealing treasure, so much treasure. It's filled with precious stones and gold coins. He tries to imagine the story that led to this buried treasure. He closes the lid, re-buries the treasure, marks the spot and turns for home. Only now, it looks like he's walking on air. He occasionally breaks out into skipping; like a little kid. He's thinking, "I can't believe it. Such amazing treasure. What do I do? I can't just take it, that's stealing. I know. I'll buy the field. Can I afford it? Hmm, my car, my computer, my tv, I'll do a garage sale. But that won't be enough for this field. I can sell all my football cards, cash in my retirement fund. Will that be enough? Probably not, I'll liquidate everything I own and then I'll make an offer.

From that moment on, his life changes. His friends, even some of his family can't quite understand what he's doing, this field that he wants to buy just doesn't seem to be all that special. Just another field, surely not worth all you have? Perhaps there's more to life, than this field. Until the day comes when, he has what he needs. He pays the price and the treasure is his.

We all know that Christ is the treasure above all treasures. He is worth everything you have. We go all-in because what we gain is of infinitely greater value than what we give. The only logical response to Jesus is the all-in response. But I'll never forget, the time I was listening to this description of the Kingdom and I sensed Jesus saying, "This is what I did."

I gave up everything. I went all-in for you.

You are Heaven's treasure. You were bought with a price, Paul says. He loves you. Do you know that? You matter to God. For some of us that's good news. It warms your heart. You just needed the reminder. For some of us, God's love is something we've thought about, something we have believed in from a distance. It's something we have watched others experience. You have heard that God loves people. You have preached it to others. You have counseled someone with those very words. But it's been so long since you felt it. Maybe you have never really experienced it.

It's one thing to watch it from a distance, it's another thing to know it up close. During this last season of life, one of the scriptures that has encouraged me a great deal is Paul's words in Ephesians 1:3-5, I especially like it in the Living Bible. Paul writes,

Long ago, before God made the world, God chose us to be His very own, through what Christ would do for us; He decided then to make us holy in His eyes. Without a single fault we stand before Him covered in His love. His unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into His own family by sending Jesus Christ to die for us. He did this because He wanted to.

The cross of Christ is the want-to of God. Because of the all-in want-to of God, we are covered in his love. His love is dripping off of you. One night this year, Lynn (my wife) asked me "What's God been doing in your heart." I told her that sometimes I find that I can't pray for more than a few minutes at a time because there's such an intensity to the way God grips my heart and squeezes the tears out my eyes and it's not my tears, not my heart, my heart isn't that big. I just keep getting this sense that he's giving me a small taste of his heart for the world, his heart for his kids. His heart for you. I don't even know you, but I know that's his heart for you.

Before all of creation, you were in his heart. It's been his unchanging plan to adopt you by sending Jesus to die for you. And not only adopt you, but transform you. When he looks at you, he sees you without fault. His eyes are not filled with disappointment, but delight. Paul calls it being covered in his love. Let that settle in. You are covered in his love. We give our ears and our hearts to so many distracting, condemning, shaming voices. Let the Father's voice of love fill your heart. His heart is for you. His hand is with you. Because He wants to. You are not a have-to task on his to do list. He doesn't love you with a chip on his shoulder and frustration in his eyes. He wants to. You are relentlessly pursued by a lavishly gracious, greatly merciful, fiercely faithful, persistently loving God.

You are loved...just because. If you are in Christ, you have a gotcha day. The adoption papers are signed. You are not just another broken failure trying to earn love. You are his kid. You have a forever family. Hear his whisper right now. Daughter... Son...I love you. You are relentlessly pursued with an indiscriminate love. You are family. Loved just because. Just because. I'm praying that those words soak into your soul.