

Devotionals Archives 2008-2009

September 25, 2009

Cast Your Blessings

Cast your bread upon the waters,
for after many days you will find it again.

Give portions to seven, yes to eight,
for you do not know what disaster may come upon the land.

If clouds are full of water,
they pour rain upon the earth.
Whether a tree falls to the south or to the north,
in the place where it falls, there will it lie.

Whoever watches the wind will not plant;
whoever looks at the clouds will not reap.

As you do not know the path of the wind,
or how the body is formed [a] in a mother's womb,
so you cannot understand the work of God,
the Maker of all things.

Sow your seed in the morning,
and at evening let not your hands be idle,
for you do not know which will succeed,
whether this or that,
or whether both will do equally well.

- Ecclesiastes 11:1-6

Solomon, the writer of Ecclesiastics, presses upon us to give freely to the Lord and to others. To give is to let go, without reservation and without obligation. Like giving to a person in need, whether in food, clothing, assistance or even in the emotional needs of acceptance, mercy and forgiveness. We are to give liberally. Because we have much, God expects much from us (Luke 12:48). God is rich in mercy to all of us, even thou we are sinful and unworthy. He delights to give to his children. So we can delight in giving to others. Give in a way where you do not expect a return. We do not know what each day brings, nor do we know our ending days. So give as God gave to you. Give to bless others and you will experience how God will work through you in the moment. This is how we are to be a spiritual blessing. In prayer and in spirit, the Lord works through us to be a blessing to people.

We live in a world where we are so quick to take, but not to give. Why is this? Is it our human nature to have and to hold? Is it our sinful nature that compels us to always want more? I like to think about an analogy of bird seed. Last year my wife Heather, fell in love with feeding the birds on weekend mornings. She bought a large bag at the grocery store and was excited in sharing the bounty with the our cute feathery friends. All the while, we had a few tragedies that had challenged our livelihood.

You too may have experienced similar situations. There are times when we wonder how God will pull us through. The beauty of this story, is found in the lesson of bird seed. As God freely gives to the birds who neither work nor toil, so he gives freely to us. I remember very clearly, that when times were down, we never went without. And why are we never without? Because His presence and provision is always with us and goes beyond our human capacities. God delights in making all things possible as He has the power to do so.

A few months later we were hit with a hurricane. It was a very tough season. Knowing that God was sustaining us through this time, we choose to give to another family that was in need. I remember very clearly, when Heather and I were packing some goods, she also packed along the rest of the bird seed left in the bag with a feeder. The lesson of bird seed taught us much about the liberty of God and how we too are to give liberally. There is always enough left to give and to give freely. After many days we will find it again. This is what it means to cast your bread upon the waters.

Question/Reflection

What is God calling you to give right now? To whom are you to give this to? How can your giving be translated into an act of worship to God?

Encouragement

"Accustom yourself to the wonderful thought that God loves you with a tenderness, a generosity, and an intimacy which surpasses all your dreams. Give yourself up with joy to a loving confidence in God and have courage to believe firmly that God's actions towards you is a masterpiece of partiality and love. Rest tranquility in this abiding conviction."

- Abbe Henri de Tourville (1903)

July 8, 2009

Emotions and Worship

The Bible says "rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn;" In worship, how does God guide our emotions to make confession unto Him?

It is amazing to comprehend how God has put us together. We are complex people with complex emotions. When we read the Bible we see a wide range of emotions that are experienced in the lives of Moses, David, Job, Jesus, the apostles, as well as the commoners, blind and crippled. Just the same, we experience sadness, joy, tears and laughter in our daily lives. God built us with emotions as a response mechanism. In the right context, it is healthy to release our emotions rather than to explode or implode them. We see the damaging effects when our emotions are mishandled. However, turning our emotions over to the Lord can have a significant effect in our relationships. Even more so, God is able to guide our emotions that deepen our walk and worship in Him.

Moses inquires of the Lord in how to live rightly, "Moses quickly bowed to the ground and worshiped and said, "If now I have found favor in your sight, O Lord, let my Lord go among us, for we are a stiff-necked people; pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for your inheritance." (Ex. 34.8-9)

David is in deep anguish, "Why are you depressed, O my soul? Why are you upset? Wait for God! For I will again give thanks to my God for his saving intervention." (Ps. 42.5)

The blind and the crowd responds to the Lord's healing power, "Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus, praising God. When all the people saw it, they also praised God. (Lk. 18.43)

Jesus laments over the death of Lazarus, ""Where have you laid him?" he asked. "Come and see, Lord," they replied. Jesus wept." - Jn. 11.34-35

Paul cries out to the Lord for relief, "But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." (2Cor. 12.9)

When is the last time that you uttered or cried out to God in any of these expressions? Really. The Lord has a loving way in guiding our emotions as we respond to Him. This in itself is an act of worship. When we biblically examine our emotions, we find our need for God. He desires to hear our deepest needs as he directs our spirits to His will. We find that we are accepted, loved and known. We experience the wonderful work of his healing and comfort. As we are filled with consolation and/or joy, we respond back to God in praise.

Releasing our sorrow, pain as well as our delight and thrill, enables us to see God in an intimate and broader context. He reveals Himself as the loving Father, the merciful Savior and the Wonderful Counselor. Our understanding of God is enlightened when we see Him beyond our typical songs and ceremonies. In fact, our worship is transformed into a lifestyle of praise and honesty. When we view God standing over us in our daily lives, we witness His warmth and consolation. In Him, our worship and relationship grows deeper until the Day that we are joined with him forever.

May 19, 2009
What About Mii?

Ever hear this statement directly or indirectly in the church? What about in a worship service? In a worship team? It happens more than we think or would like to. It's easy. We invest our hard work and time into what we do. From long ago, we establish values, priorities and systems. We have things the way we like it. We have our favorites. We have our special spots and places. Then someone comes in and changes everything. What we once treasured is now in disarray. The items that we own and worked so hard for are now left to tarnish. So we think.

I often reflect on how so many things changed in my life. It seems like rugs were pulled out from underneath me and I had to learn a whole new game all over again. Comfortable and soft things used to be. Why all this change now? I mean, what about me??? We are only human to ask such questions. But do we find or more importantly, take to heart, the answers that can soothe our souls?

When Jesus came to Israel, the people were seeking for a King. Like, this wasn't new. They dreamt of the day when God would deliver them from Roman exile. They envisioned a royal, radiant and triumphant king to appear with great stature and prestige. Daily, the people worked, suffered and longed for the day of the King. But what did they get? A baby, born in a stall with dirty animals by a carpenter family with little-to-no money, no home and no appearance of any kingship. Let's just say that the Israel's world was rocked. Surely, the people wondered and said: "What about our deliverance? Who's going to save us? What about me!?" Little did they know, the Lord came to save them, but not in the way they expected nor predicted.

On this side of heaven, our expectations are viewed in earthly terms. We fail, we fall, we miss the big picture that God is painting. In our churches, homes and jobs, it's easy to get comfortable and hold on to our treasured spaces. However, these treasuries turn into something else - idolatry. We may not admit it, but we know it's there, whether we like it or not.

What's another unexpected picture? Jesus overturning the tables in the temple. He was angered by the selling of offerings and indulgences in the church. Do we not still have this problem today? In our churches and homes, what do the precious tables look like? What treasuries are they displaying? What about my _____ or _____? "What about me?"

In our churches and in our ministries may give all up to Him. It is the Lord's church, not ours. All belongs to Him. If we are truly allowing God to direct our hearts and lives, then our preferences and what we treasure really do not matter. Even as we claim to do the

"Lord's work," we can easily be deceived and not even realize it. When we unite ourselves with the Lord, we are in one Spirit, also one with each other in Christ. Paul says to us in 1 Corinthians: "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body" (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

It is the Holy Spirit who wants to come in and change the things that we worked so hard for. What we have is really given by God - he owns it all. He has his purposes, but God is far more interested in your heart rather than what you possess. He is more in love with who you are, rather than what you have (or would like to have). Truly, the Scripture is right when He says, where your treasure is your heart will be also (Mt. 6:21). Do you treasure Him? Do you treasure/trust him enough to have God overturn the tables in your life? Are you willing to let go? Are you really able to say, right where you are right now - it's not about me Lord - it's about You? Let's take it a step further and say to Him, "Lord I belong to you, you do what you will and I will follow."

February 25, 2009
Worship and Obedience

The Scriptures say that God's mercies are new every morning (La. 3:22-23). We experience the freshness of God each day because He is working within us. God constantly brings us to new places as His desire is to mold us into the image of Christ. How do we respond to his call when part of us wants to move ahead, yet we want to stay in what is familiar?

A response is found in Deuteronomy 12, where Moses is recording God's instructions for worship. The Lord is about to bring Israel into a new land. They are just about to cross the Jordan, where God is commanding them to take action as they occupy this new territory. The property is being controlled by a people who worship false idols and pagan gods. Moses listens carefully to God's prior instructions, where He outlines the "blessings and cursing." If the people obey, they will be in the blessings of God; if they disobey Israel will fall outside of the Lord's hand.

There is a distinctive choice between obedience and sacrifice. We can choose to obey God on his terms, even when we don't think it makes sense. Obedience involves trust and faith. This was the attitude that God desired for Moses and the people. This

opportunity involved two other things: change and growth. Change takes courage and growth takes nurturing.

The Lord said to Moses:

Det. 12:2

Destroy completely all the places on the high mountains and on the hills and under every spreading tree where the nations you are dispossessing worship their gods.

12:3

Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones and burn their Asherah poles in the fire; cut down the idols of their gods and wipe out their names from those places.

When God brings us to a new place in our growth, he does not desire for us to remain in the old (2Cor. 5:17). He does not want us to even worship in the way “things were,” but rather, He wants us to focus on “what is,” and who He is. When we cling on to the former things, we cannot embrace the newness that God desires to give us. He is a God of blessing not defeat. His nature is to give not take. His character is to love not refuse.

The Lord did not want any reminders of the old ways and disobedience in worship, nor did he want the Israelites to fall into the temptation of worshipping other gods. The people had to destroy the former things so they may not be reminded nor tempted to evil, but they were to inherit the full blessings of God.

There are no two ways about it. God calls us to grow and be formed into the image of Christ (Eph. 2:10). We cannot move forward while looking back or holding onto the past. You are a new creation in Christ, the old is gone the new has come. Now, go in the direction of His voice.

What land or blessing has God called for you today? What are the old sacred “things” that God is tugging at you to destroy in order to obey Him? May our worship be pure and pleasing to Him through the act of obedience.

“If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened;” - Ps. 66:18

January 29, 2009

Home Free

As of last week, we experienced a loss in our family. We had to put down our family dog Cookie. She was a sun-ray of joy to all of us. If you ever have lost a pet, you know, that it is like losing a family member. Cookie, was unique, vibrant and full of life. We had her for six wonderful years. She passed quickly due to nasal and lymphoma cancer. The last days were very difficult in seeing her in this condition. However, the way she carried

on with life, you never knew the pain she experienced. She appeared always happy, as if she never had a bad day. She will always be remembered in this state. One interesting story I'd like to share with you is of her last day. As hard as it seems to write, it is always good to release the pain to heal.

My wife, Cookie and I were driving back from the State University Pet Medical Hospital. We were on the way to put her down at our local Vet. My wife was driving as I was in the back seat holding our dog. Cookie was doing 2 of her most favorite things. Lying besides her daddy and holding her favorite toy of them all: the drumstick. In retrospect, she would take this out of my hand every time I played the drums. She ran around the house. She would not give me the drumstick back. I will never know if she really liked my playing. But I think she did because I was playing her song. Cookie stayed awake for the entire ride to the Vet. We were all in tears, even our head vet was red-eyed as Cookie breathed her last. She loved unto the very end. It's like she stayed awake and strong joust for these last few moments to say goodbye.

Funny thing. Animals never complain. Always patient. Always faithful. When you have the chance, read Genesis 9:9-10. There is a reason why we were not created to be alone, nor will we arrive alone when we enter into our final Rest. Life is precious. Every second, every minute counts. Our bodies are just shells. Our spirits are forever alive and make the person of who we are. It's amazing how attached we become to animals. How we humanize them in our minds and how they become our best friends - it is fascinating. I believe it's because we see a bit of ourselves in them. I believe they too see a bit of themselves with in us.

My wife and I left after our final goodbye of Cookie. Our crying turned into laughter. We re-lived sweet and funny memories. We remembered how she always loved chasing ducks at our favorite duck pond. Next, we agreed to take one more walk around that same duck pond. As we were driving, my wife leaned over and shared an idea. She told me that in her mind she could see Cookie with God. She began to wonder. Along the way to Heaven, God let Cookie stop at the same duck pond to chase and catch one more duck, one last time. We laughed until we cried again. Finally, she said it would be if the event became true: finding a dead duck at the pond.

We arrived at the famous duck pond. Got out the car and walked down the path. The graveled walking trail led the way to the waters. The hills had a misty, yet green appearance. The wind was billowing across the lake. Children were off playing in the distance. Down between the grassy banks, in the middle of an open space, guess what we saw? A dead duck.

I went down to confirm the site. Sure enough, it was a dead duck. It looked about two days old, but it was the real deal. Heather and I were astounded. Cookie finally got her duck. I don't know about you, but we were amazed not just at the sighting of the duck alone. We were stunned at what Heather verbalized earlier from the car ride. Either way, we both got what we loved. A duck and a wealth full of sweet memories to last a lifetime. Now she is home free. It's a weird way to view life through the lenses of a dog. When

we do, we can see that there are only the simple things in life that become more important than the rest. When we set our minds on being Home with the Lord and being Free in Christ - there is nothing better.

“We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord,” (2 Corinthians 5:8).

January 15, 2009

Your Treasures

The New Year is a time of great beginnings, aspiration and vision. In a way, this time reminds me of spring cleaning. We shed the old year and put on our best for the new to come. We value and prize our dreams and ambitions with great expectation. Recently, I set out all my plans and to-do lists only to find the enormity of their demand. My initial thought was to dive right in and swim as much as possible. Along the way, I grew tired, faint and directionless. I realized that I was swimming up stream instead of with the current. Here's the danger, it's only been 15 days into the New Year. So what's the problem? It's found in where I am placing my value. This alone will cost precious time, energy and more time. For something to be a value it must require attention.

If you like me, you want to overachieve more than what is actually necessary. I like to get-it-all-done when I can and as much as I can. Here's another problem. Along the way, I pass up what is truly important. You see, the things we value and treasure really aren't what we really need. Sometimes what we think we need are someone else's' dreams, expectations or self inflicted demands. Maybe the old tapes playing in our minds relentlessly compel us to obey. You must do this. You should do it that way. You don't want to end up like this do you? Ok. Stop and think. Right now, what do you really value. I mean, what really calls out to you in the middle of the night. What cries for relief? If there was an open field or sky that had your remedy, what does it look like? Who would be standing there? What are the true things that really make you happy or that are truly important - to you - not someone else? Have you really considered this alone between you and God?

The concerns of this life are crafty and lead us to believe in a lie that says we must have it all. But when we don't get it all, we aren't happy. When we do get it all, there is always something more to have. This chasing of the wind was exactly Jesus' point when he said: "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal," (Matt. 6:19-20). Re-evaluate what you treasure in this life and in this New Year. It's great to have the plans in our hearts as long as the Lord directs our steps. When we lean on His understanding and treasure what is right, true and life-worthy we are truly

free. In the good and bad, we are able to see what truly matters most. "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. " (Matt. 6:21).

November 14, 2008

The Character of Water

Remember English class and discussing character literary types? A couple in particular are flat characters and catalyst hero characters. These are people who do not change much throughout the story line as they spend their time helping others. Usually, these character types suffer a major flaw. Their character usually remains the same with little internal change. Most often, they struggle with obsessive compulsive tendencies. Examples would be Johnny Depp from Pirates of the Caribbean, The Old Man and The Sea, Tom Hanks in Castaway and Russel Crowe in Master and Commander. They feel that money, power and success is never enough. They are on a long quest were the journey never ends. They are trapped in time over a past failure and have trouble moving on. These characters become aloof to the outside world. They are locked into an unchanging state of mind on a never ending pursuit. Their goal is elusive, even though they feel entitled to win.

We can relate with these internal struggles, which is why we grow so fond of these characters. The danger we face is similar to what we find in our favorite actors and actresses. The fear of letting go and the fear of defeat.

We find ourselves in various mental battles. Our focus drifts away from God. We become dry. The battle gets so tough that we are left wounded, stranded and broken. In this condition, it is easy to dwell on the negative. We become too tired and disoriented to stand up. We are frail and thirsty. When the light shines, we want to close the door because our eyes are growing dim. How can we be refreshed, even when we may not feel like it?

Today I stumbled on the passage from Isaiah 43: 15-21. It says:

18 "Forget the former things;
do not dwell on the past.

19 See, I am doing a new thing!
Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?
I am making a way in the wilderness
and streams in the wasteland.

20 The wild animals honor me,
the jackals and the owls,
because I provide water in the wilderness
and streams in the wasteland,
to give drink to my people, my chosen,

21 the people I formed for myself
that they may proclaim my praise.

How can we forget the former things and see the newness of God? Easy to say/read - hard to do. However, after reading this passage, my thoughts turned to the observation of water.

Water is used to nurture crops, satisfy thirst and refresh what is dry. We use water to wash, cook and clean as well as for transportation. In modern times, we've learned how to channel water to conduct power and energy.

In the biblical reference, water is likened to the Holy Spirit. Water conveys re-birth, forgiveness and the action to renew and restore. In the Creation, water was used to shower the earth. It was also used to provide a boundary. In Exodus, God used water as a defense as well as to display His miracles. Water provided relief and comfort to the Israelites and prophets. Water is a symbol and reference of the Holy Spirit. It is used for baptism to signify re-birth and used by Jesus and the apostles to heal, wash and nourish.

The water of God's Holy Spirit can help wash, clear and restore our eyes to see His work. He gives us streams in the wasteland to provide for our daily needs. He uses the current of water to direct our paths. He carries us on waves of grace, while we rest besides waters of peace. He satisfies our souls with good things so we may give Him praise. Like the blind man who was healed by Jesus, we go out with joy giving Him thanks. He rescues and restores; heals and forgives. The Holy Spirit gives us a never ending drink of his merciful love.

You know when I reflect on these truths, I soon forget my OCD tendencies and troubles. I am changed by the power of His Spirit and supply. This is why He reminds us in Phil. 4:8-9 and is my prayer for all of us today:

8 Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. 9 Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

October 7, 2008
My Heart's Not In It.

I remember waking up for school, zipping into my clothes and dashing off to the bus stop. My thoughts along the way told me that I did not want to be late, yet I did not want

to go to class. First period was science at 7.40a. Arrrrgh! I did not feel like having my brain squeezed and stretched, only to become a cerebral plastic man. Coasting through the morning with my white powdered donuts and chocolate milk was so much more appealing. You know, going through the motions is much easier. Then the all too familiar pop quiz would rear its head. Guess what? The test wasn't on the color, maker and distributor's name of my packaged treats. By the time I spelled my name on the form, I lost all conciseness. And yes, even drooled a bit. Suddenly, I found myself in Dumbville and missed the last ride out. By the time I got home after the long day of I-don't-what-to-do, my mom asks me how my day went. Before, I could elude the subject of my science class experience, she inquired if there were any tests? You know, it's really funny how teachers and parents talk about you until you are the last one to find out! I was busted. Ok, a show of hands to indicate who's been here before. That figures. I don't feel alone and neither should you!

The truth is, I was a really good student. I actually graduated on an advanced degree plan apart from the strategic executive summary of Dolly Madison donuts. The action of my teacher flagging down my parents was a truth telling fact. I was not being my normal self. Even more so, my heart was not in it. During that period of my life, I was facing tough measures of depression and hurt. Events from my past childhood in combination with my inability to move ahead was costing my emotional health and mental balance.

It is far too easy to let past events imprison you. Events can be simply expressed in day-to-day motions, where your heart is not in it. On the other side of the island, depression can manifest itself in peculiar ways. Simple things become a task, routine becomes draining and the idea of fun is less than desirable. What's even more easy to feel? God is far away, or maybe we feel that we are far away from God.

Remember when your favorite pet or a friend that you knew, had a furry family friend that was hit by a car? For me, it was devastating. Our first reaction was to find and rescue our pet, while placing our hands around them for comfort. The animal's first reaction? To run, hide and bite.

When our heart is not in it, what ever it may be, it's easy to bite the people we love and even God. Unlike animals, we have the ability to reason and process. More times than some, this is harder in the moment. Usually the people we are close to are often the same ones to first experience our bites. This comes out in the form of emotions, excuses and blame, we've seen this in the Garden.

Whenever I feel that my heart is not in it, down from my recent/past events and/or far away from God, I am only human to experience these emotions. But God...He is closer than we realize. He is stronger than our weaknesses. He our shelter in the storm.

Have you cried out? That's right, cried out to God in the midst of pain. Releasing our pain has a great deal in our ability to process. Like a fresh wound, it needs to bleed, in essence this is what it means to grieve. No doubt, we don't like feeling pain, nor do we

want others to know our struggles. So why do we hide from God? Maybe because we feel like that poor little animal - injured and helpless. Think about the Garden again.

We walk together on this road, wearing different shoes but towards the same destination. The Bible says that in every way we're troubled but not crushed, frustrated but not in despair (2Cor. 4.8). We have hope, which is why we are not crushed nor in despair. It is a tragedy for those who have no one to help them up. For those in a relationship with Jesus Christ, we carry the love, rescue and comfort of God. We can strive all our lives to put our hope in a man or substance. Yet this is false hope, that will never, never yield Life that brings true healing, fulfillment and peace. This kind of fulfillment God gives never runs dry and never fades. Everything else in life is temporary and futile. It is amazing to be loved by God, who comforts us in all our tribulations (2Cor. 1.4). He is the God of all comfort and life.

When you feel like your heart is not in it, or far away, this is when He is the closest. Let Him find you. Where you are. Just like playing hide and seek when we were kids; He will find you if you ask Him to. You have everything to gain and nothing to lose. May the God of all comfort be with you now. It's my prayer for the both of us that we are found in the canopy of His care.

“This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him And saved him out of all his troubles.”
- Ps. 34.6

September 30, 2008
What In The World?

Most people do believe in God, but like the early Israelites, because we cannot see Him, it's harder to reconcile the peace of God in a world of hate. Therefore, the world rejects God and defaults to finding hope in man through temporary solutions. On the contrary, faith is the evidence unseen. We do witness God's love and compassion through the Word and see his effects through people, events and prayers. This world is definitely in pain and we see horrible events around our country and world. But as a people, where is our hope? Who is more constant and unchanging? What is the power that saves us? When does our fear turn into faith? How do we find hope, peace and love in a world of chaos? These are some of the questions I was asked by an atheist's friend. Yes, a friend. If we are true disciples we are lovers of both our neighbors and strangers. My friend was bombarded by the hurt, evil and destruction seen in this world. He actually told me he wanted to shut out the world, move on an island and build a bomb shelter.

His whole point was to save yourself because no one nor God will. I was stunned by his emotion. I was not stunned by his reasoning. I felt that he was right in the first half of his sentence - not putting your hope in people. The destruction of our world is horrible and does appear void of hope – especially trying to find that hope in a man. I shared with

him how I understand why he feels the way he does. I see the same spread of hurt and violence that bothers me as well. I mentioned that sometimes, I want to build a shelter away from the evil of the world myself.

My friend was obviously hurting and was trying to resolve the matters in his terms, by running away and to hide. He was shutting off the world by cutting-off himself. But there was a bigger thing that bothered me. He was really running away from God – not the world.

True, if we take the world at face value, it offers us nothing eternal. All the turmoil we see on the earth is enough to hide our eyes and turn away. It is impossible in our own attempts to save the world from its problems. People for eons have been trying to “save the world,” or make a “change” but no human ever has resolved all of humanity's issues – ever! When trying to resolve one problem, we move to another only to find that our previous repair has been breached. This is like going through one broken band-aid after another, until our supply is empty. I could (still can) see why my friend felt so strongly in his reasoning and emotion.

A curious thing happened. A change in the air was experienced. You could feel the winds of fury dying. A clearing was taking place, like a beacon in the stormy night to a stranded sailor. I listened to this man; his voice began to change. He quieted his tone. The sails of his anger were coming down. He whispered to me in a still small voice that said: “thank you.” I was stunned again. I asked him why. He explained by saying that he just needed someone to listen. He needed someone to validate his feelings, rather than to disagree and argue.

He was afraid that he might appear “ungodly” or “crazy,” in the perspective of other people. I sided with him in letting him know that it's only human to experience these feelings. When we get older, somehow we become too adult to “feel,” and shrug-off our emotions because either we were told by somebody else: “we shouldn't feel that way,” “you're a grown up,” or the hollier-than-thou statements like: “you should pray more, read your Bible and act holy.” While the later statements reflect things we do to grow in our relationship with God - they are good, but in the moment of pain they are not as helpful. Sometimes (more than others) we need to grieve. Look at Job when he lost everything. He was miserably distressed. Oh, and look what happened. His friends came around the corner, insisting and questioning that he was in some sort of sin that caused this calamity. Is that really the way to treat a friend? But we do this, even to strangers.

God has built us with certain emotions. The beauty, is how our emotions are guided back to His presence by the His gentle hand. He rescues, restores and renews our entire being. In receiving His care, we find peace, healing and love from the hurt in the world and the hurt within ourselves.

Back to my friend. His experience and fears only reinforced his anxiety and reactions. Here's the fact: my friend was only reflected how others were treating him (like Job's

friends). People can be very cruel. Another truth is: God is very angry over sin and the ways of the world – shutting Him out, casting him aside. See, I began to understand that the more we truly listen to people, we are truly loving them. Empathy and compassion or actions and reflections of God's love. People see the invisible hand/love/care of God as He is working through you. God is truly revealing himself. Isn't this what Jesus meant, when he said "they will know us by our love?" (Jn. 13:35).

Many times people claim: "where is God? If He were here, why doesn't he defeat the Devil and all of evil now." Again, it's human to question. It's faith to see that God is here as He works through His people. No the people who claim to be His and act like Job's friends, but the ones who live in complete honesty, sincerity and frailty whose difference is the authentic love of Christ working living in them. We do not understand the ways of God. He never asked us to understand, He asked us to trust Him. Unlike our earthly fathers who have failed us, God has never failed us, even when it came to His own Son's death and Resurrection. As a people, we have failed each other and God. I am thankful, that God does not reject us in the way the world does.

Where and how do we find the love of God?

- 1 I will extol the LORD at all times;
his praise will always be on my lips.
- 2 My soul will boast in the LORD;
let the afflicted hear and rejoice.

- 3 Glorify the LORD with me;
let us exalt his name together.
- 4 I sought the LORD, and he answered me;
he delivered me from all my fears.

- 5 Those who look to him are radiant;
their faces are never covered with shame.
- 6 This poor man called, and the LORD heard him;
he saved him out of all his troubles.

- 7 The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him,
and he delivers them.
- 8 Taste and see that the LORD is good;
blessed is the man who takes refuge in him.

Where do we find Life and acceptance in Christ?

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." Jn. 16:23