

God's Masterpiece

We have just watched another snow fall come through our winter days and then a picture come across my path that spoke to me about God's hands in creation and our lives.

We all have or have had hair on top our heads at one point in our lives, but did you know God even knows how many hairs you have on your head. -Luke 12:7

Have you ever walked on a beach and tried to count each grain of sand? God's thoughts for you and me are so precious and are so numerous that they are like grains of sand. -Psalm 139:17-18

Look up in the sky on a clear night and try to count the stars. God knows each of them by name. Isaiah 40:26

When you look at the constellations and see Orion's Belt or the Big Dipper and are in awe remember it was God who hung each star in the sky -Psalm 8:3.

Each day we can see God's hands in everything around us. Job 12:7-10 says it best, "But ask the animals, and they will teach you, or ask the birds of the air, and they will tell you. Speak to the earth, and it will teach you, or let the fish of the sea tell you. Every one of these knows that the hand of the Lord has done this. The life of every creature and the breath of all people are in God's hand."

So, when I see the snow fall and see each snowflake and the detail God puts into each snowflake where not one is alike, I think about us His creation, created in His image and how important we are to Him. Ephesians 2:10 "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."

What makes us each different and unique? It's our talents, it's who we are and what we do. I read once 'that the only people who should be pastors are those who cannot be content doing anything else.' Also, those who write are those who cannot not help but write. What about you? What has God called you to do that makes you unique that you cannot help but do.

Maybe you cannot help but hug people (I love giving hugs). Can you not help but bake? Can you not help but draw, grow beautiful flowers, cuddle babies, sing, read, organize, adopt a stray animal, get someone to laugh? If you see a piano can you not help but play or a crooked picture just begs you to straighten it. Are you a natural leader that will step up when the time is needed? What about praying, can you not help but pray for others, be an intercessor prayer warrior?

Only so much can be taught but it's God's hand in creating you that has made you unique and only you can not help but help where God has called you in your gifts. Have you been given perfect pitch, maybe an eye for color? Maybe you are good with numbers or can somehow get people to work together when no one else can. Maybe you are great with children or can cook a mean bowl of chili.

All this may seem small to you but when you give your abilities to God, they can accomplish so much for His kingdom. The detail God has put in each flower that blankets the earth or how He takes care of even the smallest animal. The time He put in placing each tree, each star, each grain of sand, each snowflake that falls, each stripe on a zebra or spot on a giraffe, He has put so much more in you and in me. "Why are people even important to you (Lord)? Why do you take care of human beings? You made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor." -Psalm 8:4-5

Did you catch that? We are crowned with God's glory, we are His children, "Know that the Lord, He is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture." -Psalm 100:3

Knowing we are His family we should find hope that He will be with us and take care of us as His family. When we are sad His hands will hold and comfort us, when we are happy, He will laugh and rejoice with us. When we are scared, He will be by our side walking with us and protecting us. Like the world around us, we too are part of His creation, His crowning glory, - "You will be like a beautiful crown in the Lord's hand, like a king's crown in your God's hand."
-Isaiah 62:3

Today, be like the snowflakes and use your gifts God has given you and let your uniqueness shine like the stars in the sky. Show Jesus through you and do what you cannot help but do.

Psalms 139:14 "I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful; I know that full well."

Our Daily Crouton

Jesus tells us in John 6:35, “I am the bread of life, whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”

When Jesus spoke those words, He was not speaking about the physical food we eat, He was talking about so much more. In the desert when facing temptations from Satan, Jesus said, “Man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”

Jesus is The Word and He longs for us to spend time with Him in scripture, actively listening, seeking God’s words for us. Along with prayer we need to spend time daily reading the Bible.

Not just snippets here and there but quality time. Time, we call our ‘quiet time’. Let’s take a brief moment to look at what quiet time with Jesus in the Word might look like and think about your ‘quiet time’ with Jesus. Do you quickly read through your Bible passage or verse for the day to check it off your list? Do you skim over familiar verses or stories because you already know them? How have you been spending your time with Jesus or have you been making any time for Him lately?

It’s called ‘quiet’ for a reason. This time is to tune out the noises of the world around you, have all distractions away from you and listen. In this noisy world it is hard to hear the promptings of the Holy Spirit and Jesus’ calling. So, we take ‘quiet’ time to actively listen, slow down and hear.

‘Time’, because study, prayer and worship all take time. Slow down and really read the words that are living and powerful. Spend ‘time’ in the Word, soak it up, let God’s words sink deep into your heart. Colossians 2:7 says, “Keep your roots deep in Him (Jesus) and have your lives built on Him. Be strong in the faith, just as you were taught, and always be thankful.”

To keep your roots deep you have to spend time nourishing them and really reading God’s word. If they are familiar verses or stories you know so well, ask God to show you something you’ve never seen before. As we grow older, we see things differently so we will always see something new even in those familiar verses. If you’re on a reading through the year plan, take out your highlighter and really read the verses or chapters you have been given for the day. Again, take the time and ask God to show you something you’ve never seen before, even in those wonderful begot chapters.

In your quiet time talk with our Savior, let Him know what you see, what you don’t understand and what you’re needing to for the day. Ask Him to help you see how the words can pertain to your life today, your situations you might be in and how you can bless someone else with the things you learned. Be still and listen for God’s leading.

Jesus is the Bread of Life and will fill us spiritually to go through our days just like food fuels our bodies. Don’t just take a crouton and move on, enjoy the entire loaf. Turn your quiet time into quality time and let your roots go deep with Jesus.

John 15:5 ““I am the vine, and you are the branches. If any remain in me and I remain in them, they produce much fruit. But without me they can do nothing.”

The Scapegoat

There are times in parenting we have had to say no to our children knowing they would be upset or mad at us. For me this has always been hard because I treasure my happy children. I have been so thankful my hubby isn't like that and can shoulder the temporary anger from them. Because of this, many times, he has said, "Go ahead and tell them it was because I said no and let them be mad at me not you."

My husband is willing to be the scapegoat and take all the blame to keep my feelings protected and to keep my relationship strong with our kids. I have had to be the bad guy too and they have been upset with me, but it's nice to have someone else willing to step in and say, "It's okay, I'll take the fall for you."

Kids have used each other as scapegoats, especially siblings when no one wants to get in trouble. Adults have also been known to use each other when a prank is pulled by a group or, like I said, in parenting.

We are first introduced to a scapegoat in Leviticus and the Israelites. During this time many things were done through ceremonies or rituals. A form of living God had established with them through Moses. Like the temple and forgiveness of sins. There were times when a community would find a goat to be designated to be cast into the desert to carry away the sins of that group. The high priest would symbolically lay the sins of the people on its head and then the goat would take them away into the wilderness. Thus, becoming the scapegoat, taking the blame for others although innocent of any wrongdoing.

Since then we do not have to do this with goats because the ceremonies have been done away with by someone much more innocent than a goat.

This definition says it best. A scapegoat is a person or group made to bear the blame for others or to suffer in their place.

I cannot read that without feeling so thankful for the God I serve. He sent Jesus to this world to be our scapegoat, my scapegoat. Jesus came innocent of all wrongdoings and suffered on the cross to take the blame for my sins, your sins. Undeserving but done out of love He bore the pain on the cross so we could be forgiven and have the promise of salvation. He said, "It's okay, I'll take the fall for you."

As grateful as I am that my hubby is willing to allow the kids to be upset with him over me, I am so much more humbled and thankful for what Jesus did for me. In understanding that, I daily want to live my life serving Him and showing how thankful I am. I want to share with others what a promise we have through Jesus. He did not have to be my scapegoat; He chose to be because He loves me. So, I choose Jesus because I love Him and when the days of persecution come, I pray I can say, "I will choose Jesus always and I know my future is with Him."

May your day be filled with many blessings as you tackle the many things ahead of you and may God always live in your heart and life.

2 Corinthians 5:21 "Christ had no sin, but God made him become sin so that in Christ we could become right with God."

However, God...

Sometimes I wish I could pack up myself, say goodbye to responsibilities and retreat to a cabin in the woods by a lake. Leave my phone, T.V., internet and job behind for a time of refreshment, refocus, and to replenish.

Life could be simple, and all distractions gone. I could find the time I need to grow my relationship with God. Maybe start a prayer journal, pray for hours, dig deeper into the Bible without interruption. Can you imagine the peace and quiet?

After all, there is so little time in my day now to spend quality time with God. Between work, bills, family and projects due, I'm lucky to find blocks of time to set aside for God.

So, what do we do? We schedule God in. "Okay," we say. "I can spend a few hours in church each week. I'll give you prayer meeting twice a month. Of course, I'll say a quick prayer when I eat and if I don't fall asleep, I'll pray before bed and try to in the morning if I'm not running late. I'll pencil you in."

Our prayers might also include, "Lord, I'm your servant, wherever you send me I will go or whatever you ask of me."

-Then the Lord puts that one person in our path or asks too much of our time. I suppose we need to change our prayer to however, Lord. "I'll do it Lord, however, could you make it another time, a little easier, a more agreeable person and my liking". -Patsy Clairmont

We believe God's time is important and should be holy and set apart from our everyday schedules. So how do we find that time with everything else that needs to be done in the day?

We may believe that, but God doesn't. He knows we have to live with schedules, appointments, family and responsibilities. He doesn't want to be your afterthought, pushed to a blocked-out time, or just when it's convenient. He wants to be part of your entire day, infused in with all your plans. There doesn't have to be a designated time of the day to glorify God. Yes, we can have our special time set aside but spend the entire day with Him. When we let Him in, He can be our strength, His patience and love can be shown through us.

When we talk with God throughout our busy days, we will probably find many more times for quiet reflection. Our 'however's' will become 'whatever' because we will know God will help us through anything, He gives us, and He will help us juggle life and service for Him.

Today let's choose to put God in our schedule throughout the day not just blocked times. Let your 'however' become 'whatever'. Let your prayers be, "Take me Lord as wholly Thine. I lay all my plans at Thy feet. Use me today in Thy service. Abide in me and let all my works be formed in Thee." -Steps to Christ

Isaiah 6:8 "Then I heard the Lord's voice, saying, "Whom can I send? Who will go for us?" So I said, "Here I am. Send me!"