

A QUIET COFFEE MORNING

I GET UP EARLY AND ENJOY A quiet, coffee morning because I miss God. Something in me wants to be with my Maker. I want to sit beside Him and hear His voice. So I open up His Word to Matthew 5 where Jesus teaches about life to this great big crowd of people, and I listen to Him talking.

He speaks.

Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him.

MATTHEW 5:1

Just one verse. That's all I need for now. This is Jesus talking to me. His words nourish my heart, and I think about what

He means. *He saw the crowds . . .* when Jesus looked out into a crowd of people, He didn't *just* see a sea of faces. He saw each individual person standing there with all their soul-ache. He knew where each one had come from, all they'd been through, and He looked deep into every single heart. They could hide behind each other if they wanted, but they couldn't hide all their insides from Him. Not from the God who sees past all the skin into what makes us who we are.

Then I think about the crowd in my own heart. I mean, don't we all carry a crowd of people around in our heart? I look inside and I see a myriad of people who I love and pray for, and I carry them with me and wonder if God sees them. He does. He sees and knows—*intimately* knows—each heart and He aims to speak into their life.

I ponder more of His words. *He went up on the mountain . . . He sat down.* This God who made the mountains, now humble like us, was climbing up all the dirt and rocks so He could look out into all the faces. He sits down. God sits down. He's not too busy. He's not too rushed. He doesn't have too much to do. This is His important thing. To sit and speak words that help and heal whoever will sit still enough to listen. And all their lives these people had missed God. Something deep inside

them had always wanted to be with Him and now here He was. So they sat a while and spent time with the One who could see past the facade right into all their brimming ache. They were hungry and His words fed them. They were soul-shattered and His words made them whole.

The disciples came to Him. Am not I His follower, too? So I come to Him on a quiet coffee morning and sit at His feet. Because I miss God and I want to be with Him. He's my Maker and He's also my friend.

And this Jesus, He still looks out across the world and sees the crowds of people. And in a sea of faces, He still knows the heart behind each one. He still sits and speaks words that nourish and bring life to whoever will stop long enough to listen.

“Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!” The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.

PSALM 46:10–11



WHAT GOD IS LIKE

SOMETIMES MY HUSBAND, BRENT, SCOOPS UP OUR daughter and cradles her on his lap. He gently lays Hope's little head down on his chest and holds her close . . . just because. Just because he's her daddy and she's his little girl.

And that's what God is like.

Sometimes Hope picks up her doll and takes her for a stroll. She wraps her little blanket around her and tucks in all the sides, just so. She feeds her and rocks her and gives her a kiss—smudgy cheeks and all—because she loves her baby doll.

And that's what God is like.

Sometimes my son Gideon notices when someone is sad. He knows what it feels like to have a hard time, and in his concern

he wants to make it better. So he says things like, "Don't be sad. I'll take care of you." He means it with all his heart.

And that's what God is like.

When my littlest guy, Samuel, sees his brother or sister nearby, he squeals with a raucous delight. He's so happy they exist. And when their face is anywhere close to his, he reaches out, takes hold of their cheeks, and pulls them in.

And that's what God is like.

Sometimes in the night, I wake up and look over at Brent and enjoy him here with me. I lie quiet. I watch his chest rise and fall with each new breath. And I smile, thankful.

And oftentimes I get up to go peek at little ones asleep in their beds and marvel at the beauty of their faces, full of peace and rest. My heart fills up with delight and I love them immensely, because they're mine. I know without a doubt I'd lay down my life for my children.

And that's what God is like.

*Anyone who does not love does not know God, because
God is love.*

1 JOHN 4:8

*So we have come to know and to believe the love that God
has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides
in God, and God abides in him.*

1 JOHN 4:16

HUNGRY STILL

TODAY I WATCH THE SKY MOVE. TURBULENT clouds swirl and eddy across the marvelous deep above me. Something about it reminds me of the underside of a seashell. The way the ripples and whirls curve under and smooth out all fluid-like.

And when I look up at the sky, I think of big things. High things. Long things. Like eternity and never-ending life. I imagine one of those clouds peeling back so I can see through to the other side. To forever. To the God I can't stop longing for.

On this stormy July morning, I attest to this—I entered this world with a ravishing hunger. A yearning for something. Someone who will awe me. Undo me. Overwhelm me with His breathtaking beauty. And the purpose of this craving is

to drive me to the Source of deepest satisfaction. To my chief delight. To *Him*. So I may know Him. Touch Him. Taste Him. Be filled up to the brim and overflowing with Him—Him in all His heart-stirring wonder.

And if I was made to be filled up with God, then it makes sense why everything else leaves me empty. I can never get enough of all the stuff of the world. Never enough clothes. Or money. *Things*. Never enough entertainment. Always needing something—one more possession that will surely make me happy at last. But I'm left disappointed because it's all so fleeting, so temporary. Like the one cloud already spreading thin. I can barely trace the outline. Like this earthly existence—this one life we've been given that we think is all there is. How quickly it passes, spreads thin, and then is gone.

So I lean forward. I take steps toward Him: to the One who one day these very eyes will see. My heart leaps when I think of the reality of this. And when I look over the horizon, I barely catch a glimpse. His kingdom light bleeding through, seeping into my here and now. I worship. And I am filled.

He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart.

ECCLESIASTES 3:11

*My response is to get down on my knees before the Father, this magnificent Father who parcels out all heaven and earth. I ask him to strengthen you by his Spirit—not a brute strength but a glorious inner strength—that Christ will live in you as you open the door and invite him in. And I ask him that with both feet planted firmly on love, you'll be able to take in with all followers of Jesus the extravagant dimensions of Christ's love. Reach out and experience the breadth! Test its length! Plumb the depths! Rise to the heights! Live full lives, **full in the fullness of God.***

EPHESIANS 3:14-19 THE MESSAGE





WHEN YOU'RE NOT EXACTLY A SUPERHERO

GIDEON WAKES UP WAY TOO EARLY, AND I groan. I'm not mentally prepared yet for all the loud, and I was desperately hoping for some more quiet. Quiet to think. Quiet to pray. Quiet to read and meditate. Quiet to soak in God and let Him fill all my empty, aching places. But not this morning. Mr. Tasmanian was alert, alive, and enthusiastic. So I roll my eyes and brace myself for another rambunctious-boy-energy whirl of a day.

He can't help it. He's a curious little fella and he's got all these questions. I mean, he *needs* to know the life cycle of a corn stalk and where the milk truck *actually* goes after it leaves the

barn, and where we're going after breakfast, and then what we're doing right after that. I repeat an awful lot of "I don't know." We stir pink cream of wheat because he wants to color it red but instead it turns out pink. I look up at the clock and it's not even eight. I'm already worn out. This could be one of those grueling days.

Then he asks to go upstairs and pat Hope's back, which is actually code for, "I want to wake up Hope so she can play with me," which actually turns out to mean, "I don't want Hope to actually *play* with me, I want her to stand supportively next to me and cheer me on in all my endeavors." I refuse to let him go pat her back. He cries. I could cry, too.

The house is a wreck again and I have this hilarious mental picture of myself. Basically, I'm standing in the living room in some overly tight spandex, looking a lot like a superhero. Only I don't have any superpowers or any superhuman strength—just a hopeful disposition I could conquer this place with my vacuum and squirt bottle and my flapping cape. It helps, this mental picture, and I grin because I'm a superhero on the inside, making everything right again.

Brent hugs me before he leaves for work and prays for us and for this day, and I don't ask God for superpowers but for a new





heart . . . a *thankful* one. The cloud lifts. And I've still got my flailing shortcomings, but I remember that's the point of Jesus. His righteousness covering all my sins. Today is another gift, and when God sees me, He's looking out through the lens of His perfect Son, so I am pure and I'm spotless and it's like I'm new all over again. I don't need a lot of quiet time to remember that.

I can hear Gideon singing, "He's got the whoooole world, in His hands . . ." and I sing it, too. He's got me. Always got me. And He's got all this world, including all the mess. And He's making something good again today. So I take one step at a time, breathe in grace and exhale thanks. All this noise becomes a joyful melody and all this commotion a dance. Thankfulness. It is good medicine.

Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.

PHILIPPIANS 2:14-15