

Walking with Jesus – a Reflection

Prayer

O God,

You know how busy I must be this day. If I forget You, please do not forget me.

Jacob Astley (His battle prayer at Edge Hill)

Story

Here is a story so, please sit comfortably and I will begin ☺ ...

'A Surprise Visit'

I was just about to put the cakes in the oven when the doorbell rang. "That's funny," I thought. "Its 2'o clock and I'm not expecting anyone, or any deliveries." I dusted my hands on my apron as I went to the door.

It was a sunny day but, as I opened the door, a wondrous brightness flooded into the hall, so much so that it took me a few seconds to see who was there. I heard a cheery "Hi" first, and then I could see who it was.

"Jesus!" I said. "My goodness. Oh, please come in. I wasn't, I mean, I just, er ... please come in. It's so lovely to see you."

"Thank you," He said. "And it's always lovely to see you. Sorry to appear unannounced."

"No problem. I'm sorry, I'm in my muck. I would've dressed up if ..."

"No need. You are lovely as you are."

"Do come through," I said, ushering him into the lounge. "Here, have a seat – this is the most comfortable chair."

"It's ok. I can see you're busy in the kitchen so I'll come and join you there if I may?"

"Of course. I was just about to bake the cakes."

"Pretty good timing then," he smiled, cheekily, sitting himself at the kitchen table.

I put the cakes in the oven and found my fingers were all of a tremble.

"Would you like tea or coffee?" I asked.

"I would love a coffee please. And caffeinated please, as I have a lot to achieve today."

I went to get out the posh cups and saucers but Jesus said, "I'd love the chunky mug with the monkey on it if I may? I've always loved monkeys. I created them to be such characters and they just make me smile. So, how are you? What's new?"

I resisted the temptation of saying, "Well, you should know," but then remembered what God wants more than anything is for us to take time to talk to Him. I suddenly realised that my day, like so many others, was jam-packed with doing stuff and tazzing about so much that I hadn't even factored Him in. I hadn't even said a prayer yet that day. He'd had to bring this home to me and actually come in person. He must have seen me standing there with the kettle suspended in mid-air whilst the penny dropped because He gently asked if I was ok.

"I'm sorry Jesus," I spluttered. I looked at him, feeling very ashamed of myself. I saw He had tears in His eyes but He looked at me with such love that I just melted.

I knew he could read all my thoughts but He just said, "Isn't this nice though – just you and me? And hopefully sometime soon a cup of coffee?" He smiled.

"Coming right up," I said, wiping tears from my eyes. "Do you fancy sitting in the garden? It's gorgeous out there."

"Good idea," he said, taking the coffees and leading the way. "Oooh, those cakes smell delicious."

"Would you like a biscuit while you're waiting? Sorry, I've only got the 'basics' range. If I'd known I'd have got 'Taste the Difference'."

"He turned and rolled His eyes. "A 'basics' one is just fine. Now, please may we go and sit in that comfy new swing seat you have and watch my world go by?"

I was about to ask how He could possibly know about that, but then realised He knows everything about me, even how I spend my chill-out time. And that thought really made me cringe, as there are a lot of things that I'm embarrassed about that I would rather He didn't know. "Ah well," I thought. "It's pointless trying to hide and dust things under the carpet with Him. I might as well be honest and be myself." And with that thought, I just relaxed.

We sank into the comfy cushions and sat in quiet companionship, swinging gently in unison on the seat, each with a biscuit in one hand and our coffee in the other. I felt like I'd known Him for years. It wasn't at all awkward. I was just wondering whether it was good behaviour to dunk when I noticed Jesus doing just that, so I joined in. We looked at each other and smiled.

We just sat and watched His world go by. I can't put into words how good it felt.

The Sunflowers swayed gently in the breeze. . A big Bumblebee drifted past and landed in the Lavender. A Blackbird hopped about on the grass. A Robin landed on a tree, looked at us, and started singing us a song.

"What a beauty," I said and Jesus nodded.

A butterfly fluttered by.

"Thank you for creating butterflies Jesus. They are so beautiful."

"My pleasure. My Father is a great artist, and has a brilliant imagination. Some people wonder why we made the Cabbage White, but see how lovely it looks flying against the greens and other colours in the garden."

"You are right, and it's a lovely shape. I often wonder Jesus, you have created so many wonderful things – flowers, plants, trees, animals, birds, rivers, oceans, countries, places, marvellous inventions - you name it – do you have favourites? Oh! My cakes!!"

I jumped off the seat, leaving Jesus swinging rather briskly to and fro, and flew into the house.

When I returned with the cakes – thankfully unburnt and looking decent – Jesus was sitting calmly in the seat and thoroughly engrossed in studying a Dragonfly on his knee. It appeared to be looking straight at him and it sat there for ages. "It took us a while to get the colours just right on these," He mused.

"You did a perfect job," I said. "They are glorious creatures."

"These cakes look very tempting," He said, taking one and getting stuck in. "Yum – Blueberries – your favourite."

"Yes," I beamed. "Oh, I've forgotten the plates."

"Who needs plates? We're outside and the birds will enjoy any crumbs".

We tucked in together and then He said, "It's good to see your grandma's plate come out. Your Grandma Alice was a wonderful lady."

I looked at Him in surprise. I could feel the tears coming again. I had adored her and it was so nice to talk about her as there aren't many left now who remember her.

"What I particularly liked about her was how she always did little things to cheer up people's days," He said. We talked about her at length and it was as if she was here again and beside us. He told me all sorts about her early life that I never knew. It certainly explained a few things about my Mum. I felt a peace I'd never felt before. "And she was a great cook," He went on. "It obviously runs in the family." And he helped himself to another cake.

Another cake later, and some more coffee, we went for a walk around the garden. He marvelled at the flowers and complimented me on my runner beans, in full flower, and soon to be producing a good crop. I asked him all sorts of things I wanted to know. He had a habit of getting to the bottom of how I really feel. I found myself sharing with Him some of the things that worry me. At one point, I fell to my knees and wept at the sorrow and fear of it all, crying also with the complete relief that I could let it go and share it with someone who cared and completely understood. He knelt down and took me in His arms and held me, softly speaking comforting words, but mostly just being there. When my sobs had subsided, He stood and held out His hand and gently lifted me up.

“Time for another cuppa I think. Do you?” He asked.

He made the tea this time – He knew exactly where to find everything, and then we went into the lounge. We talked about all kinds of things, and we laughed and laughed. He was so funny. It was a real tonic and great to let go. I can still feel the joy bubbling inside me even now.

He remarked on the photos of my family and friends, and it made me realise I needed to get in touch with them more often. He also made me realise that some of them have a good reason for being how they are, and that I should be more kind and tolerant.

He showed me a photo He kept in His wallet.

“That’s me!!” I cried, in amazement.

“You bet,” He said. I carry it with me all the time. If I had a fridge your photo would be on that too, and in all my photo albums. And I talk about you all the time cos I’m so proud of you.”

I just sat there blushing, and speechless.

How amazing that He loves me that much. He knows all the nitty gritty of my life, even that I have a new swing seat, and that my favourite fruit is Blueberries. Wow.

I asked Jesus what else He had to do that day. He said he was going to call on people who know him quite well, but also on some who don’t know him at all. “A lot more walking to do. That’s why I’m wearing these.”

I looked down at his snazzy trainers.

“Better wearing these,” He said, “If I wore my sandals it would put people off and they wouldn’t take me seriously.” He grinned and thanked me for a lovely afternoon.

Before He left, Jesus looked at me and said, “James 4:8; Matthew 6:33; Luke 4:18.”

“Love you lots,” He said. “Love you this much.” And he stretched out his arms as wide as they would go. Then he gave me a big hug, and left. He turned and waved from the gate and smiled. What an incredibly amazing smile He has! You just can’t help but smile back. I don’t think I’ve stopped smiling since. I waved until He was out of sight, yet it also felt like He hadn’t left.

After He’d gone, I felt sad but I knew he hadn’t really gone, because He is always with me. I felt magnificent. I felt so good inside and really energised. I rushed to my Bible and looked up the verses he’d left me with –

‘Come close to God and He will come close to you’. (James 4:8)

‘Seek first God’s kingdom and what God wants. Then all your other needs will be met as well’. (Matthew 6:33)

‘ “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.” ’ (Luke 4:18)

It isn’t easy, but I am trying to live this out every day. It’s a challenge. But, the good thing is, I know I don’t have to do it in my own strength. He’s there with me and we are a team.

When he visited, I realised the longer I spent time with Him, the more I felt I knew Him. I really felt good in His presence. And, since then, it has been so much easier to tune back into Him, and lovely just sharing the everyday things. He makes the ordinary extraordinary and I realise now how truly blessed I am.

(Sue Moore – July 2020)

Reflection

Write down the things that strike you about this story. Are there particular things that hit home?

How welcoming are you to others in how you treat them? If you have a visitor, do you give them the nicest things, or the grotty old mug with the chip in it?

Think about someone you know who has a ministry of hospitality, and what their gifts and talents are.

Do you see God in others?

If God is in all of us, does that make a difference to how we view them, care for them and understand them?

If we are all God's creations, should we care for and respect one another more? Even those who annoy us, and who have opposing views and beliefs to us?

How do you normally relate to Jesus and how do you worship Him?

- has the story made you see Him in a new light?

- have you realised something new about God's character that wasn't revealed to you before? And, if so, what difference will this make to how you relate to Him and worship Him and serve Him?

Jesus relates to people where they are. Do we do that or do we expect them to conform to our ways and to our church structures?

If Jesus called round to see you, would you recognise Him?

If Jesus came to see you:

- which questions would you ask Him? What would you want to know?

- what would you tell Him?

- what would you hide from Him?

God knows us personally. He knows our individual family trees. Do you find that a comfort?

Have you felt God with you at a time of bereavement? How did He help you and are there ways you have been able to use this experience to help others?

What do you think Heaven is, and where is it?

How does it make you feel that God loves you SO VERY MUCH? So much that he has your photo in his wallet and on his fridge 😊

And how will you respond to Him in return?

In what ways could you spend more time, and more effective time with God?

- in your personal devotions (James 4:8)

- in your priorities and attitudes and how you live your life (Matthew 6:33)

- in the practical ways you serve God and others? (Luke 4:18)

Is God calling you to something new? Take some time to think and pray about this, either now, or at another time.

Ponder the fact that you are unique; God has created you as you and nobody else has the specific set of skills and gifts as you have. So, there is something specific only you can do. Think what that might be. Sometimes we cannot see the gifts in ourselves so, maybe ask a trusted friend about this.

I have deliberately not given the second character in the story a name. Read the story again as if you are that person and jot down what you feel.

Give Thanks

Give thanks and praise that God loves you, that He knows you completely, inside and out, that He cares about everything you do, even the tiniest things that happen in your life. Give thanks that you know Him and resolve to get to know Him better, and share him with others.

Prayers

Thank You God that, like that butterfly which dances freely about,
bringing beauty and joy,
so Your Holy Spirit is moving in my life,
sprinkling love and peace,
and radiating light and joy as it flows.

Help me to walk in Your Spirit and truly live the abundant life you came to bring, always giving glory and honour to You. Amen

(Sue Moore)

O High king of heaven, great Father of love,
breathe Your breath round me down from above.

O High king of heaven, with Your Son here below,
walk by my side through life's ebb and flow.

O High king of heaven, great Spirit of might,
pierce my spirit and fill me with light.

O High king of heaven, look down from Your throne;
guard me and guide me, for I am Your own

(Pat Robson)

Blessing

Lord Jesus Christ,
be near me to defend me,
within me to refresh me,
around me to preserve me,
before me to guide me,
behind me to keep me on the right path,
and above me to bless me. Amen

(Anonymous, 10th Century {adapted})

Sue Moore (July 2020)