

RANSOMED HEART

LOVE GOD. LIVE FREE.

August 2011

Dearest Friends, Compadres,

Allow me to continue to talk about Jesus. I mean, once we get going on this man, its hard to stop. We've glimpsed his playfulness, cunning, generosity and more. About Chapter Eleven in the new book, *Beautiful Outlaw*, I carry on with this thought:

We've been running to and fro in the Gospels, picking up one treasure, then dashing off to find another, like children on Christmas morning. Now I want to look at a moment from Jesus' life that is recorded in the Old Testament, in the book of Daniel. This honest prophet – who spent his adult years an exile serving the Babylonian courts – was given a number of startling glimpses into the future. Here is, in my opinion, the most dazzling of them all:

In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed. (7:13-14).

The coronation of Jesus.

Perhaps the most joyful, certainly the most triumphant moment in history, second only to the resurrection. For now the glorious kingdom will come, the eternal summer romp of men and angels. His crowning ensures the triumph of a kingdom of laughter and beauty and life, forever. But it was a long and circuitous road to that throne. No king has ever taken such a humble path. His first step is a staggering *descent* – the Son of God becomes a son of man.

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient... (Philippians 2)

“Humbled himself?”

Humility hardly begins to describe the Incarnation.

That's like saying it would be a humble thing for you to become a goldfish, to live in the bowl, in a fishy world, trying to help those other fishies become something more like Phoenixes. It boggles the mind. The eternal Son of God, “Light of light, very God of very God...one substance with the Father,” spent nine months developing in Mary's uterus. Jesus passed through her birth canal. He had to learn to walk. The Word of God had to learn to talk. He who calls the stars by name had to learn the names of everything, just as you did. “This is a cup. Can you say cup? Cuuup.”

For ages upon ages, his generous hand fed every creature on earth; now it is he that has to be fed, spoon fed, drooling most of it down his chin like any other toddler. The Son of God doesn't even know how to tie his shoes. Someone had to teach him how to tie those sandals John the Baptist said none of us were worthy to untie. "The rabbit goes around the tree and down through the hole...like that. Now you try it." Picture seven year old Jesus in the shop out back, learning from Joseph how to use a hammer and saw. He who hung galaxies in such perfect poise, like a hundred billion mobiles, has to be shown how to nail two boards together.

I take my shoes off. The humility of this is beyond words.

Remember – Jesus wasn't faking it when he took on his humanity. Think of the implications. He who never tires, never slumbers accepted the need for sleep. Every night. How deep was the exhaustion that kept him dozing right through the gale, waves crashing over the boat? Jesus ate, every day, breakfast, lunch and dinner; he needed to. He had to trim his toenails. He who clothes the lilies of the field with greater glory than Solomon's splendor had to do his laundry, squatting riverside, rinsing the dust from his worn garments like any other peasant.

What about the humility of simply getting from here to there by means of *walking*?

We read that Jesus "left Judea and went back once more to Galilee" and don't pause to wonder – how far was that? More than *one hundred and twenty miles*. A four to five day journey on foot, pushing sunup to sundown. When was the last time you walked four days straight? We pass right over phrases like, "Jesus went up to Jerusalem" as though it happened quick as we read it, like he ran across the street for a quart of milk. Bethany to Cana is roughly seventy miles; back down to Jerusalem is another forty-five plus. Jesus is making these trips all the time. He who once rode "on the wings of the wind" is now getting around only as fast as his two sore feet will carry him. Hours and hours, for days and months upon end, just...walking.

God – who is in all places at all times – has to get from one place to another like a guy who can't even come up with bus fare. The beauty of this is enough to make me weep.

The more we discover Jesus for who he really is – freed from the religious veils, all the goofy images – the more we *will* fall in love with him! And the more we will experience him for ourselves, which is the best hope of all. *Beautiful Outlaw* is almost here (it comes out October 12!). Meanwhile, I pray you find Jesus this month, and that he finds you.

As his friend,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the name 'John' written in a cursive, flowing style.

John