

# RANSOMED HEART

LOVE GOD. LIVE FREE.

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June 2011

Dearest Friends,

Summer has come – O hurrah! – and with it, barbeques, fireflies, lawn chairs and summer reading. I wanted to offer my contribution by giving you this summer some snatches from *Beautiful Outlaw* (the book I wrote on Jesus, which comes out October 12!). This one is from Chapter Nine, which is entitled *Cunning*.

...But the best use Jesus makes of his cunning brilliance is with the hearts he is trying to win over. This is a far more difficult task. Let's pick back up with the story of the woman at the well; we left it too soon. There is so much more worth relishing. Remember now – single Jewish man, single Samaritan woman. She is sexually indiscreet. They are alone. He strikes up a conversation. *She* knows it's scandalous – “You're a Jew. I'm a Samaritan woman,” she adds “woman” to make the point. “How is it you ask me for a drink?” Exactly. What's a girl supposed to read into this?

She's a tough cookie, this one. A more submissive first century Palestinian woman with no legal rights would have just drawn the water and not said a word, whatever she might have been thinking. But this one, she puts up a fight. I already like her. Jesus replies,

“If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.”

A return that almost implies, “Hold your horses, there, cowgirl – you don't know what you're getting yourself into.” Her rebuttal is feisty:

“Sir,” the woman said, “you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water?”

You can almost see her – one hand on a hip, jug in the other, head cocked in that sassy way. “Where you gonna get water? You got no rope,” and you can sense the insinuated “you got no rope *Rabbi*.” Then she tosses in a bit of the racial tension:

“Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?”

Samaritans were hated because they were half-breeds. Dragging Jacob into this is a defiant, “Do you think you're better than me?” A comment that would have incensed your average Pharisee. She's picking a fight. The repartee here is worth the entire account. But wait, there's more – Jesus doesn't take the bait. His next comment is pure intrigue:

“Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.” He told her, “Go, call your husband and come back.” “I have no husband,” she replied.

Jesus is setting a trap. She throws one verbal jab after another, like a waitress in a rough cantina. He has the deftness of a bullfighter. She's snarky, then defensive; he's gracious and engaging. Then something in her attitude seems to shift – notice the piece of critical information she chooses to *hide*: “I’m not married.” Technically, that’s true. Anything else? She *is* living with a man – why doesn’t she admit that? “I’m not seeing anyone right now.” Is she coming on to Jesus a little bit, this winsome man who has continued to pursue her, alone, outside of town? Something provokes him to say, “Go get your husband.”

Now he has her right where he wants her, and he pulls the chair out from under her:

“You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.”

Snap. He’s got her.

To appreciate his style, consider it would have been a lot easier for Jesus to go about the whole conversation in a more direct manner. “Hello, I’m the Messiah. What’s your name?” “Hello, I notice you’re here midday. Is that because you are on your sixth relationship?” As he so often does, Jesus takes the indirect approach. Playful, and cunning. Very cunning. I would love to know how long that pause was, see the look on her face after he reads her the secrets of her diaries. Does she drop her bucket?

And notice – he doesn’t throw the seventh command at her. He simply tells her that he knows what she’s hiding. Most embarrassing. She actually tries one more racial/religious card, maybe to deflect the attention off her. Jesus holds his ground. He must be smiling at her now, because she doesn’t fight back after that. “I know that Messiah...is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.” This is the humblest thing she has said yet. Essentially, she’s asking, “Are you who I *think* you are?!” Jesus simply says, “Yep.” What a wonderful way of capturing this woman. The story ends with her running to tell the whole village, and in generous Jesus fashion, he stays two days with them. A Jewish rabbi hanging out with the Samaritans.

To get the full texture and zest of his cunning in these stories, weave together his playfulness with his honesty, his generosity with his fierce intention. Add a dash of his startling freedom. I love this man.

And the more we get to know his true personality, the more we *will* love him!

*O Jesus, show me who you really are. Remove every veil from my eyes, from my perceptions of you. Remove especially every religious veil, and show me who you truly are. Reveal your personality to me.*

For the One we love,

  
John