

Update 32 - written November 10, 2014

How many of us would truly invite Jesus to come into our lives, walk with us for one week, and change anything He wanted?

Do we understand just how disruptive He would be? Jesus would turn everything on its head....

Authenticity means allowing Jesus to walk into our lives and mess it up however He wants and to regard that as good thing.”

from 'Authentic Faith' by Gary Thomas

Down in the lower field of our farm there is a stick that is woven into the wire fence. My brother put it there one day as we were going on a walk. Still weak from surgery it was smart to have someone to lean on so Matt was with me. He poked that stick into the fence to mark how far I had walked that day - a celebration of the furthest so far. Now days I easily pass the wooden marker alone - tromping onward to explore distance spots. But, seeing that stick still makes me smile inside and remember a little big victory in my life.

Something like that has happened in my heart. I would have never written the script this way but when I invited Jesus in I handed the script for my life over too. Or at least I should have. To be honest there is a time or two or ten or more I have wanted it back. Eagerly I write, erase, white out and scribble over....only to hand the wad back and ask Him to take it again. But those hard times I brought on myself are easier to understand and swallow. It is tougher....so much tougher...to accept 'a mess' when I've earnestly sought to do His will and life blows up anyway. I never felt condemned by God for my tears but I also knew I wasn't to stay there.

Thanks to not receiving what I deserve and being given what I could never earn....somewhere along the way I moved on. God's mercy and grace have taken me past grief. It is not that I don't think about the ministry or miss my friends. It's not that I don't pray for Ukraine, Russia and their people. It's not that I don't wonder about my future and the 'what next.' I do. Even though I have spent 13 Sundays talking about trust and obey, every Monday it's a challenge to walk my talk. Yet grief is past, marking a little big victory in my life.

“If the Lord sets you to guard a lonely post in perfect stillness from all active work, you ought to be just as content as to be in the midst of the active warfare.

It is no virtue to love the Master's work better than the Master's will.”

Hannah White Smith

I realize that I haven't written for awhile but I truly think you would tire of my joys. Like....how fun it is to speak in English (and how well you understand me and speak English in return!) How freeing it is to be able to drive. The luxury of being able to walk outside and not be watched; have to keep my voice down, be on alert for danger or carry a heavy bag. Of being able to walk outside and hear quiet, smell the warm dirt, hear the song birds and see the patterns of sun patches on the forest floor. The gift of being able to be a part of the life of my family. Enjoying the beauty of the Northwest. Then there is the food! I gained 10 lbs when I first arrived back because the food was so amazing. Thankfully I've got that under control now. But, color still captures me. Bright blue, pink, yellows lure me. Something as common as a work glove or fabric or a pretty

display of vegetables at Safeway can arrest my attention. It seems I am still color hungry.

Fall was busy but oh so fun. I really do enjoy helping the Body of Christ understand how God has used them to fulfill His plan in Ukraine. God has blessed me with all great churches and returning to say thank you is easy. A blessing of an extended furlough has been the ability to say 'yes' to additional invitations as well as linger a little longer at the more distant points I traveled to. Next Sunday marks the end of a chapter. Meaning my reporting to all my supporting churches will be finished. It's an awkward dangling feeling to be done but not know where to put your foot down next. Done here but can't go back there. But I believe God wants me to keep Him first and simply serve where I am today. Easier said than done but a good place to start. For the past 5 years I have been interested in expanding my specialty area and become certified in feet and nail care. While my interest may be a cause of concern (or just sound weird) to some, I figure wherever I end up, there will be feet there that need caring for. So I've decided to use this gift of time to spend the winter working towards that certification.

Nearly everyday I read the news about Ukraine. As discouraging and sad as it is, there is so much bad happening in the world that Ukraine hardly makes the paper or TV now. I called one of my very best friends this morning on Skype and listened as she talked at length about the various responses to the war. She lives in Ukraine about an hours drive south of the fighting. While there is a heavy pro-Ukraine military presence in their city due to the port and roadway system, their town is 'peaceful'. I say that tongue in cheek because when I greeted her I asked 'How are you?'" She said answered only half joking, "We didn't get shot today so all is good!" The city's location lends itself to be a staging area for the front. Practice gunfire by automatic weapons and tanks are heard everyday

She told me much. How in large their city did not want to be a part of Russia...yet find themselves in the blood path the creeps south towards Crimea. How their city is filled to the brim with refugees who are currently lodged but in houses meant for only summer use. What will happen when the temps drop below freezing? Those folks who's income completely depended on tourism this summer made nothing. The winter ahead for them looks bleak. How evangelistic opportunities of all kinds are presenting themselves and how so many churches are helping in the Name of Christ and, sadly, how other churches are scared to reach out.

She spoke of blessings. How a hurricane that had gone through their town in late September, toppling 3,000 trees. Overwhelmed with the cleanup, the city told it's citizens to take all the wood they wanted. Her husband took 1 ton out to her parents who live in the village. They are now set with wood for the winter. She spoke of how God has provided work for both she and her husband allowing them to pay their utility bills, put food on the table as well as be able to help their neighbors in need. Many families in their church have given away all their extra clothing to the refugees. The safe drinking water in this city must be purchased and one man of the church has taken it on himself to provide drinking water for 5 refugee families for free. I told Era of my hope to visit in the spring but it only brought a fleeting smile. I understood. When life is such that just getting though today occupies your all thoughts and energy....thinking about something 5 months in advance is hardly possible. As the Lord leads, please continue to pray for Ukraine - that God's perfect will be done in and through this nation....and that they would have a mild winter.

I will be sharing again next Sunday on Nov. 16 at Turner Christian Church. They are located in Turner, OR at 7871 Marion Rd. SE **NOTE:** this is a change in dates. The service starts at 6pm

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