

A Beam Of Light

by Angela Buck

After this, I looked, and behold a door was opened in heaven and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me, which said, Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter. And immediately I was in the spirit.
(Rev. 4:1-2)

I have been through the valley of weeping,
The valley of sorrow and pain;
But the 'God of all comfort' was with me,
To lead me thru the tedious pathway to Heaven,
and train me for the life that awaits me there.

A beam of light came down toward me, moving me upward into the heavens. Suddenly the most wonderful feeling of being loved swept all through me, surrounding me in its powerful arms. All my disappointments, hurts, sorrows and trials seemed to fade away instantly like sunshine after a storm. A white veil parted revealing images whose faces beamed with extreme happiness. I could hardly look at them for their brightness; there was no stress,

worry, anxiety, pain or discomfort about them whatsoever. How I wished right then that this wondrous scene might never pass from me.

Suddenly a Voice said, "Soon the joy of this moment will be yours forever."

On earth, happiness, shadowed with burdens, disappointments and apprehensions of unseen tomorrows are no more lasting than a rainbow fading before our eyes while we hurriedly gaze upon it. Its beauty was only meant for a moment in time, but beyond the imperfections of this life, lies the glories of Heaven.

Passing white clouds, we came to the pure river of life, as clear as crystal. (Revelation 22:1) An angel stood there with a bright robe in his arms. He reminded me of the angel I saw twenty years before while on a bus coming back from a revival in Arkansas.

Right then I could vividly recall the harsh trial I went through, and how I fell under its cruel whip. Hot tears of humiliation fell on my cheeks, and like a whipped puppy, I fled back to Kansas City in defeat. But the God of the discouraged and downcast, reached down His big hand to me.

The Greyhound Bus I was on stopped in the middle of nowhere and a strange man got on. Suddenly an unseen hand pulled my head upward and I was looking into a face that shined brighter than the noonday sun and a window opened into my soul letting in all the light of heaven, lifting my

spirit into a glorious Presence. His Voice was soothing, like the voice of many waters, and He said to me, “Everything will be alright.” And, dear reader, when God says everything will be alright, we can be sure, everything will be alright.

But, what was this robe the angel held in his arms? It was so bright I couldn’t look directly upon it? “It is your robe.” the angel said with kindness in his voice.

“Mine?” I questioned, “But, I cannot wear it. It’s too glorious.” Sensing that the robe’s worth had not so much to do with earthly value but with how faithful I’d been while in my trials on earth, I felt unworthy to wear such a robe.

“You cannot wear it now,” the angel said, “Your trials are purifying you and when they have completed their work in you, you shall wear it. Look,” he said, “It has your name on it.”

The angel held up one corner of the robe and I could see letters etched in pure gold. But the letters didn’t make any sense, and I said, “That’s not my name.”

The angel smiled reassuringly, “It is your new name, you cannot understand it’s meaning now. Wait until God is finished with you, then you will be able to understand the meaning of your new name, and you will wear it with great joy. (Revelation 2:17) And as you go from place to place in this eternal glory, others will greet you and say, “What is meaning of your new name,” and you will know

how to answer because you have been made wise through your sufferings and trials.”

I reached out my hand and felt the robe with my fingers and wanted so much to wear it, but thinking back on all the trials I had gone through, and all that I might yet face, I drew back in fear, and wondered if I could ever wear it.

“Do you know why your robe is so bright?” he asked

Glancing at the angel and then at the robe, I shook my head no.

“One day, you shall know why,” the angel said with a wide grin, and turning his face toward the clouds, he added, “Come, there is much for you to see.

The beam became brighter and raised me higher until we were surrounded in rich jewels, diamonds, emeralds, rubies, sapphires! And the gold, it was so smooth and shiny. I could only stare in utter amazement at the beauty. Seeing how I was making over it, the angel said, “This gold is of no value to God at all.”

“But, it would probably be worth millions on earth,” I argued.

“This gold is of no worth to God at all,” he repeated.

“You’re right,” I thought. “God could speak solid gold planets into existence if He wanted to.””

Looking at me with piercing eyes, the angel said, “You are worth far more than all this gold and

all these jewels.””

“Me?” I shouted.

“Yes, you and all who love Him and have stayed true to Him through fierce trials. For the trial of your faith is much more precious to God than gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire.”
(1Peter 1:7)

Suddenly, while trying to take in the meaning of what the angel just said, clouds parted and we seemed to be looking down into a little church in the sixteenth century.

At that instant a wicked sheriff stormed into the church demanding the pastor to give him the church’s treasury. “But this is a poor church,” the pastor insisted, “We have no money, no gold, no treasure, nothing at all of value.”

“I don’t believe you.” the sheriff demanded, “Show me the churches treasury or else.”

With a sigh of resignation the pastor said, ““All right come tomorrow, and I will show you the churches richest treasure.””

The next morning when the sheriff appeared, the pastor opened the door into the sanctuary and said, “Here are the church’s treasures.”

The sheriff couldn’t believe his eyes. Standing there in that little room was a small band of battered men and women, young and old. Some with scars from the whip, some in thread bare clothes, weak in body, bent with years of toil and earthly sorrows, but who truly loved God with all their

hearts.

Staring at them with greedy eyes, the Sheriff shook his head in disbelief, then turning abruptly he walked out, muttering something under his breath.

“To an earthly minded man, what he saw was of no value at all,” the angel said, “But to the God who holds His beloved children in the palm of His hands, those ragged nobodies were of more value to Him than all the gold and wealth in the whole universe.”

Right then, hearing those words, “You are of more value than all the wealth in the universe,” my mind traced back to years before when Jesus had come into my heart and how I still held my head down, feeling that everyone was better than me. A former street woman and alcoholic whom nobody wanted, it seemed I was less than nothing. Then one day while vacuuming my carpet, Jesus said to me, “If you were the daughter of the President, wouldn’t you think you were somebody?”

“Well, yes of course I would if I were the daughter of the President.” I quickly answered.

“Would you still hold your head down thinking everyone was better than you?” He said.

“Of course not. I’d know who I was,” I replied.

Then, he said something I’ll never forget. “You are the daughter of someone greater than the President. You are the daughter of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. You are royalty. You are

a chosen vessel and don't you ever forget it!

We journeyed further, and came to a place of many crowns. I marveled at the many diamonds and rich jewels on them. Just then my eyes were quickly drawn to a particular crown. I couldn't believe it! The diamonds on this crown were so gorgeous, their sparkle seemed to throw beams of light that went all over Heaven.

"It's yours," the angel said with gladness.

"Is it really mine?" I asked.

"Remember those years in Kansas City when fiery trials raged against you so hard?" he said.

Strange, I could remember the parts where He helped me, the parts where He came to me, putting His strong arms around me, comforting me and whispering, "I am with you. Fear not." But, I couldn't seem to remember the pain of it, even though I tried hard to remember. It was like seeing myself in a fiery furnace, and clearly remembering Jesus coming to me in the hot flame, holding my hand, yet not being able to remember the intense heat of the flames.

Suddenly a Voice spoke, clear but calming, like a peaceful waterfall, "The former things shall not be remembered. And God shall wipe away all tears from your eyes." (Isaiah 65:17 & Rev.7:17)

"It was one of your hardest trials," the angel whispered.

"Yes," I admitted with my eyes still intently

on that crown, feeling there was something more to it than what I could understand right now.

We came to a green meadow with flowers everywhere in vivid colors of red, yellow and blue, softly swaying in some invisible breeze. A young woman about sixteen was there and a host of angels were gathered around her. They seemed to be fascinated by her. She appeared to have been frail on earth, but when she began telling her story, her whole being lit up with love.

“About thirty of us were gathered in a house in the woods for a church service,” she explained. “A group of soldiers came busting through the door and walked right up to the front of the room. One of them, seeing a picture of Jesus on the wall, yanked it off and said to us, “Okay you that want to live, come up here and spit on your Jesus and we will let you live.”

No one dared even move. It was so quiet, you could hear a pin drop. Everyone just stared silently at the picture, wondering what was going to happen next. Finally a deacon in the church slowly came up and spit on the picture and then he just stood there looking shamefully toward the floor. Soon another believer did the same. Then a Sunday school teacher went up and spit on the picture. She looked so sad afterwards. Some were shaking their heads, some weeping, some praying.

I couldn't believe what was happening, I looked at the soldiers and I was so scared. I had

accepted Jesus only last summer when a pastor who'd been in prison for twenty five years for his faith, was speaking at a friends house. Remembering so well how I felt that night when His great love came into my heart, I just knew I had to do something.

Slowly, I stood up and went to the front. Everyone was staring at me, and I was shaking from fear. But I picked up the picture of Jesus, and wiping the spit off with my shirt, I kissed His face. At that moment, I felt so close to Him, His love for me was so real. Looking up at the soldier standing over me, I had this overwhelming feeling to say or do something to make him see that Jesus loved him too, but all I could say was, "You can shoot me now, I'm ready to go."

For a long moment he just stood there with tears in his eyes. Then glancing around at the people, he said, "You can go now. Get out of here." As we were leaving, he stopped those who had spit on the picture, and said, "Not you. If you would deny your God that easily, you're not worthy to live." While hurrying through the woods, we heard three gunshots." She paused, and her expression saddened, and she added, "I shuddered at the fate of those three".

The angel, then adding to her story said, ""Life in the Soviet Union in those days with its poverty and brutal winters was extremely harsh. One morning trudging the nearly two miles to work, her

boots heavy with snow, and her tired legs shivering in protest, she sighed in resignation at the long road ahead. After taking a few more steps, a merciful Voice came to her from out of the grey dawn, “Are you ready now?”

“Yes,” her heart whispered, ““I’m ready,” And her frail body, crumbling to the icy ground, gave way to the eternal spirit. Snow flakes steadily fell, partially covering her pitiful remains, but it no longer mattered, she was already safe in the arms of Jesus.”

Watching her now, in this eternal place of peace and joy she seemed a delight to the angels who had gathered here, for they never seemed to tire of her story.

The angel took my hand and we moved on through a meadow filled with what seemed like mounds of glass snow flakes glistening, under an eternal light almost like the northern lights of Alaska in December, yet there was an eternal warmth here. The next instant we were in a vast space full of stars brighter than the sun, yet I could easily look upon them.

“Can you put one little star into motion?” the angel said.

“No, of course not,” I answered.

“Can you shape one single forest leaf, or paint one butterfly wing?” he continued. I shook my head, curious at his questions.

“Can you bid the sun to go down in the evening, or the moon to shine through the dark night?” the angel kept persisting.

“No, of course not,” I quickly answered.

Suddenly a dark space opened up and I could see thousands of suns, all with planets moving around them precisely in their orbits. As I looked in astonishment, the angel asked, “Do you see all this? Can you doubt the One who has done it all?”

I turned my eyes to the angel, his face was gleaming with assurance and he said, “All this is not even a drop of water in an ocean.”

And after six days, Jesus taketh with Him, Peter, James and John and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves and He was transfigured before them. And His raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow, so as no fuller on earth can white them. And there appeared unto Him Elias and Moses and they were talking with Jesus. (Matthew 9:2-4)

There appeared unto us an old saint who was slight built, almost as if a wind could blow him away, yet his long patience through the years etched deep into his soul, giving him the appearance of a large rock peaking above the ocean, dashed upon a thousand times by powerful waves, and still standing

unmoved. Looking at me with piercing eyes, he said, “Your labors for God are never, ever in vain.”

I wondered at that moment if he knew how much those words meant to me.

“Let me tell you what happened to me at the end of my journey,” he explained. “One night while laying on my bed, knowing my time to die was near, I could hear in the distance music like a choir singing. As I grew weaker their voices became louder and clearer, but I had no fear. I felt calm and peaceful, as if I was going home to rest after laboring all day in a hot field. Then I saw them,” he said, his face lighting up.

“Saw who?” I asked, all excited.

“Angels with white robes on,” he answered, his face absolutely gleaming by now. “They were coming to take me home. You see, if you wait long enough, what you desire from God will always come to pass.”

Right then I could see the angel smiling in agreement.

“Years ago, I was coming home to rest after thirty five years as a missionary in Africa,” he continued. “President Roosevelt, who had been on a hunting trip, was coming home too, and on the same ship. When we neared New York harbor, a huge crowd of people gathered to welcome the President. There was a big band with drums and trumpets and a long banner that said, ‘Welcome home Mr. President’.

Anxiously I looked around in the crowd for someone to welcome me, but there was no one. Soon the President left the ship and got into a fancy limousine. By the time the crowd left, and I got off the ship, the sun had already gone behind the buildings, and shadows darkened the empty streets.

Walking down an abandoned sidewalk a voice said to me, “See, this is what you get for all your years of labor for God. He doesn’t care for you, you’re all alone, no one cares what you’ve done for Him” I never felt so low as I did right then.

Suddenly a Voice spoke, “My son, the President is coming home, it’s only right that he should get a celebration. But you’re not home yet, just wait until you see what the angels have planned for you when you get home.”

Then the old missionary’s face lit up with a big smile, and he said, “You should have seen the delightful expressions on those angels faces when they were coming for me. They seemed to be just waiting for this moment. I wasn’t afraid at all, I just closed my eyes and heard the words, “Welcome home child of the King, you were faithful to the end, enter now into your long awaited home.” Opening my eyes I could see in the distance two very large gold gates. Angels were standing there dancing and singing joyfully.”

How happy the old man seemed while he talked with us, yet he was no longer old, no one is old here.

The angel took my hand, and we journeyed further. Clouds parted, and I could see many mansions off in the distance. Drawing closer I had an overwhelming desire to see my mansion. “Could it be possible to see just a tiny glimpse of the one that’s for me?” I begged.

The angel seemed to ignore my pleadings, and moved on in silence. “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him,” he finally said. Feeling a twinge of selfishness, I said nothing more. Yet somehow, I could feel God understood me, and loved me very much, in spite of me.

We then came to a wide river in which the waters were very swift, and it seemed while crossing I was being emptied of something, causing me to feel unworthy and undeserving of what God had prepared for me. Then suddenly, on the other side of the river, stood a huge mansion made of pure gold as bright as if it were the sun itself.

Trembling, I drew near, and could see a door made of pure gold. Just then, the door partially opened, letting out a glow that penetrated through my whole being, comforting, and reassuring me. I wasn’t sure which was greater, the joy I felt or the beauty I saw. It all seemed to fill me physically, mentally and spiritually at the same time. Like the warmth of a family close together by a blazing fire

on a cold winter night or a cool July morning surrounded by the smell of flowers, or coming home to the sweet aroma of food, and laughter, after a long day in the field.

We drew closer and joy poured into my soul like torrents of water from a thousand rivers. Oh how earth's grandeurs dwindle into nothingness in the light of even one drop of heaven's glory. Just then I dared to look inside, and it seemed almost as vast as the oceans, yet filled with warmth and fullness, as if one could never be unhappy again. The jewels, the gold, the rich beauty related more to the inner senses, the mind, heart and soul, rather than the outward senses of the body.

I started to step inside, but a strong, yet gentle hand held me back. Strange, as I stood on that threshold of immense glory, joy flooding my whole being, I experienced the same unworthiness I felt earlier while crossing the river, and right then I wanted so much to please the One who made it possible for me to be here.

Suddenly like a veil taken off my heart, I could see that much of my earthly labors for Him were mixed with bits of selfishness, envy and other self like things, and feeling hopeless I vowed to do better. Just then a comforting Voice said, "I understand your struggles, and the sincere intents of your heart and I know that you love Me."

Suddenly, glancing up, I saw a figure of a man standing inside the door almost within arm's reach.

His robe was blinding bright like snow when the sun shines on it. His face was radiant with love, unknown on earth. His eyes penetrated my heart and seemed to know everything about me, yet He did not judge me as men would judge me. His expression was full of understanding and kindness. His hands, big and secure, as if to lift the weight of the whole world off the shoulders of some wounded and bent soul, were stretched toward me.

And the wounds, still so vivid in His hands, seemed to wash away every sorrow, and deep inside me I heard the words, “A bruised and bent soul I will not break, for I desire to heal the broken hearted.” Right then, I could just picture Peter in a storm, walking on the sea to Jesus, when suddenly, he saw the violent waves, and as fear gripped his heart, he began to sink. But Jesus reached out His big hand, and said to him, “Oh thou of little faith, why did you doubt me?”

Just then His hand was so close to me. “If only I could touch Him.” Then, I felt the tips of His fingers touching my hand, and suddenly, like electricity, strength and joy surged all through me. I could say time stood still, but in Heaven there is no time. Then suddenly, it was all gone. I tried hard to hold on to what I saw, not fully grasping that someday, this would all be mine forever.

Crossing a crystal clear stream, we came to a meadow filled with lush green grass. An angel was

there carrying a handful of pearls. They looked so silky and rich, I was sure they were the costly kind, of which divers attach heavy weights to their feet, plunging deep into the ocean in search of.

Sometimes, rare and beautiful items, brought into the market are listed at almost excessive prices. Ignorant people wonder why they are priced so high. The reason is that they cost so much to acquire. The pearl that flashes so eloquently on the brides neck is so costly because it was snatched from the deep by a pearl fisher as he was lifted into the boat half dead with blood gushing from his nostrils.

The angel took the pearls from the other angel's hand and held them out to me, "These are yours," he said,. "You've earned them."

"Oh no, not me." I argued, shaking my head. "I failed God many times. Maybe more than most, and every time I've tried to do something for God, you can be sure I would be attacked, and almost always, at least partially defeated. I've known others who didn't try nearly as hard, and yet were never so defeated as me. So, these pearls just can't be mine." I insisted.

"Do you know what pearls are?" the angel said to me with a smile.

"I think so." I answered, turning my eyes away, feeling certain I didn't deserve them.

The angel grinned, as if really enjoying what he was going to say next, "A pearl is formed when a tiny foreign object, such as a grain of sand, invades

the oyster's shell," he explained. "Immediately the oyster begins to fight against the invader by secreting a solution to surround it. During this time the oyster is fighting for it's life, but in the process, a rich and costly pearl is formed. If there had been no enemy invasion, no struggle, no battle to fight, no wound, there would be no pearl."

Then, looking directly at me, he said, "These pearls represent your struggles, your valleys and your seemingly defeats.""

"But, I didn't always do the right thing when I was in a trial," I still insisted. "Sometimes, I would-----"

Right then he stopped me and said, "Do you remember when Peter walked on water to Jesus?"

"Oh no, not that same old story of failure, how Peter begun to sink when he got his eyes off Jesus," I thought.

Grinning at my obvious expression, the angel continued, "Peter was the only one in the boat who walked on water. As a matter of fact, only two people in the entire bible ever walked on water and Peter was one of them." The angel then laughed real big and added, "So what if Peter got his eyes off Jesus and began to sink. He was the only disciple who had the guts to get out of the boat and walk on water. How could the others sink? They never even got out of the boat."

Then placing his right hand on my shoulder, he said, "When you step out of your boat for God,

you're going to have battles, and even utter defeats, or so it will seem. But just when you think you're sinking for sure, His strong Arm will pick you up out of the dark waters. He's not going to let you sink no more than he let Peter sink." Then with a reassuring smile, the angel added, "And don't forget, Peter was in the midst of a great miracle when he walked on water too, so don't let a little failure stop you."

Then the angel carefully placed the pearls into my hands and said, "God is not recording your failures in His book of remembrance, He's only writing down your victories, your battles won and most of all, the reason for those battles. He's a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. He knows those times when you're struggling the hardest and that's when your love for Him is very precious to Him.'"

Oh child of God and pilgrim on earth,
wipe away your tears for the hottest
fires turn out the rarest and most
beautiful jewels. And are, in Heaven,
more the costlier and fairer.

After that I held tightly onto the pearls, almost fearing they might be taken from me, as I still wasn't fully convinced I deserved them. The

angel then, looking at me rather sternly, asked, “Did God mention failures in Hebrews 11, the faith chapter?”

“I don’t think so,” I answered, hoping the angel wouldn’t notice how I often condemned myself unfairly.

But the angel apparently ignoring my thoughts asked, “Why wasn’t failures mentioned in Hebrews 11? Abraham was so fearful of a famine that he fled into Egypt. Wasn’t that failure? He even had his wife Sarah tell Pharaoh, she was his sister. Yet it’s said of Abraham, “By faith he sojourned in the land of Promise.”

And, Sarah gave Abraham her handmaid to have a child for her because she doubted God’s promise, yet verse eleven says, ““Through faith, Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful that promised.”

Moses failed too. God told him to speak to the rock but Moses was angry and struck the rock instead. Yet again the faith chapter says, “By faith Moses when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.” And “By faith, he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king, for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible.”

David and Samson are listed there too, and

they failed God. And we know Jacob was a scoundrel in his younger years, even his name means deceiver, (Genesis 25) and he's in the faith chapter too. So why would God remember your failures?" the angel said. "Whenever the enemy brings up your failures, just remember what Jesus did for you on that cross."

The grass grew thinner while we continued our journey, and uneven rocks began to appear. Suddenly it seemed Jesus Himself was leading me up a steep hill. Vicious wolves were everywhere, snarling and showing their teeth as if to tear me into pieces. Hearing their awful growls, I could barely keep my eyes off them for fear they'd attack me.

But when I looked at them, I began to fall. Yet each time I started to fall Jesus would tighten His hold on my hand and say, "'Do not look at them or listen to them. Turn your eyes on me, and they won't harm you.'" Even though the hill got steeper, Jesus kept reassuring me. "They can not harm you as long as you hold onto my Hand, and keep your eyes on me."

Soon, we appeared to be on top of a high mountain, and the angel came and stood by me. "You do not know the many times God watched over you," he said. "Like the time you were in a church in Topeka, Kansas." Yes, I remembered, although I didn't want to remember such a dark time in my life.

“It was just a few days before Christmas,” I began to tell the angel, “We were out of money and my husband and five children and I were all sleeping on the church floor. I kept telling myself that surely God would do something before Christmas.”

I remember looking at my children curled up on mats, wondering if they’d be getting anything for Christmas. I reminded God a thousand times how he said he wouldn’t put on us more than we could bear, but still there was no answer. Christmas day came, and we had nothing. Sonia our oldest daughter, who always had such high expectations, broke down and cried. To watch my children suffer so, was just too much for me, I cried hard but silently, there was nothing I could do.

And then, as if the devil timed it just right, I received a phone call. My Father had just died and the memory cut like a knife. I could still see him. Tall and lanky, with the sleeves on his long arms rolled to his elbows, running his fingers through his thick bluish black hair that hung over his forehead in a wave. But his years of alcoholism and long time threats of suicide were finally realized. Standing there holding the phone, I felt numb. Finally I couldn’t bear it any longer.

Grabbing my coat I went outside. Snow steadily fell, and cold wind blew through my body, but I had to be alone. Holiday decorations were everywhere, sharply reminding me of our Christmas, cutting deep into the wounds. But the angel was

right. I didn't know God was watching over me and it seemed Satan knew exactly how to attack me. Noticing a liquor store sign across the street, a voice said to me, "Why not? Do it. Nobody cares."

I felt so weak and helpless right then and like a magnet drawing me, I quickly crossed the street and went in. Shelves of liquor surrounded me, like those wolves when I was climbing that mountain. Suddenly I had an overwhelming desire to buy a bottle and drink the whole thing down to the last drop."

"Do you remember what you thought next," the angel interrupted me.

"I remember thinking, "Could I really throw away what I had in God, could I, after all the things God had done for me?"

"You were unaware of the powerful force that raged against you," the angel reminded me. "And you didn't know how close you came to being destroyed. But God knew and He sent a host of angels along with Michael the arch angel to help you. You couldn't see them but they were there."

"Yes, I remember," I said. "'It was one of those times I felt the farthest from God. But strangely, right then His Spirit came mightily upon me, and instantly I was able to shake myself free, and run out of there. When I walked back to the church, I heard a Voice say to me, "Do not trust in your own strength, trust in My strength, for I will never fail you."

“Come.” the angel said. Everything got brighter and suddenly we descended downward toward a calm still place. A woman was standing there by a well. She had the look of one who had deep insight into the sufferings of others. I seemed to recognize her as the Samaritan woman who had met Jesus at Jacob’s well. (John 4)

She proudly held her head high, and seemed full of joy as she began telling us, “I was given to my first husband at fourteen, he beat me regularly, and after he died, I was left with two babies. No one wanted a woman with two children, and there was no work for women, so I married again.”

Just then I could picture a young widow, who though suffering greatly in the spring of her life, was still vibrant and hopeful, ““What happened?” I asked anxiously.

“I married three more times,” she continued. “I tried, I really did. But each husband was as cruel as the one before. Finally, I left, and ended up on the streets. By now I had five children, they were so hungry, I couldn’t bear to look at them, and no one would help us. I could hear people talking about me, every time I passed by, they whispered, and turned away. I wanted to strike out at them, but what was the use, it was easier not to say anything. Finally I knew what I had to do.”

I just stared at her. Here was a woman in whose face I saw unspeakable joy and peace, yet she had been through so much.

“I know what you are thinking,” she said. “You are wondering how a woman could let her babies die. You are wondering how I could have lived with myself afterwards. I can tell you the whole time I was doing it, and every day afterward, I cried bitterly. Yet somehow, even though I was a harlot and my life seemed hopeless, I always believed, that someday, even for me, there was a place where there would be no more sorrows. I held my babies tight to my bosom, and when their cries stopped, I carried them to the garbage dump.”

Listening to her, I wondered how she could be so happy now.

“Often as a child,” she said, “I dreamed my life would be full of happy things. Maybe a beautiful wedding, A home, happy children. Even after four husbands, I still hoped, so I married again. I cooked and cleaned and tried harder than ever to be a good wife, but it was the same all over again. Finally there was nothing left in me to hope for, so I just took up with a man.

I always went to the well about the sixth hour when no other women would be there, so I wouldn't hear their horrible whispers. Yet even in the silence, their voices condemned me, “Here comes the harlot who killed her children.”

But one day, I saw a man standing there by the well. Quickly I drew back, fearful of reproach. Then seeing His face, His eyes did not judge me. It was as if He could see through my pretense. His

kind expressions seemed to say, “I know your past, and the deep longings in your soul.”” Could it be, there was one person in the whole world who would not judge me?

Then in the gentlest voice I’d ever heard, He said, “If you only knew who it was talking to you, you would have asked me and I would have given you living water.” I didn’t know what he meant. How could he give water when he had nothing to draw it with? Yet, I longed for this water that I would never thirst again for. Standing so close to Him, I felt really loved for the first time. I never felt such love before even as a child. For who in all the world would love someone like me. Yet something in Him drew me to Him.

Feelings, long dead, came alive again, and the unbearable heaviness, so long carried was lifting away. Fresh hope, like the morning dew, came into me, and it was as if I were once again an innocent child. The Creator of all the universe loved me, cared about me, and I was no longer a condemned woman. He was for me, and who could condemn me now. He offered me living water, and I took it, and it changed me forever. I would hold my head down no more, until the day I drew my last breath.”

I could at least, in a small way, relate to her sufferings, and as we journeyed on, her story clung to me. We came to a place that appeared like springtime. Flowers were just budding, and seemed full of life, and hope, yet in a few short days, they

would fade away. Would we wish them to never be because they have only a short time to show their loveliness. No, because each life is long enough for God's purpose for it. It is true, even for the infant that lives but an hour, then smiles it's benediction, and flies away. And of the young man or woman who dies with their hands yet full of unfinished tasks. God has a wise purpose in it all.

"What is it you want to ask?" the angel said, already seeming to know.

"Do you know where my little grandson is?" I said, in almost a whisper, my voice quivering.

His smile had a calmness that took away my fear. "Come," he said. We came to a green meadow, and I could picture children happily picking the colorful flowers with their little fingers, and laughing gleefully while making bouquets.

At the edge of the meadow, water poured steadily into a river as if to wash away past tears forever. Nearby little angels playfully danced. Watching them laugh and move about, I noticed that each one was distinctly different, as if God knew them individually by name. Directly above, an eternal light beamed down on them from the throne of God, a continual reminder that God always beholds their sweet faces. (Matthew 18)

Some say time heals all wounds, yet time only makes some memories grow stronger. Somehow, I knew I couldn't pick my grandson out from among these little angels just now, but seeing

how happy they all were, and knowing he was among them, gave me comfort. And, the hope of seeing him again one day made me even more determined to faithfully finish my earthly journey, so I could return here and give him a big hug.

Soon we sat down under a tall tree. On the ground I could see a worm struggling inside a partially broken cocoon. The worm seemed uncomfortable, and anxious to get free. Finally, it broke loose and suddenly big beautiful wings fluttering back and forth, carried it right up to the top of the tree. Right then, I could almost see that butterfly looking down on us with a gleeful smile as if to say, “I’m so happy up here, I don’t want to come back down.”

“Come,” the angel said, “There’s much yet for you to see.”

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