

RANSOMED HEART

LOVE GOD. LIVE FREE.

April 2019

Dear Friends,

Stasi and I attended the memorial service of a family friend last fall, a beautiful young man whose life was cut short in his twenties. But that is not my story to tell here. Our family needed to be together afterwards—you can't just go home after something like that—so we planned on lunch. But I simply couldn't make that transition quickly. While most of the congregation filed out of the church, I sat in my chair looking out the window, allowing my tears to continue, not requiring myself to bounce back. To rise up for the conversations I knew were waiting in the hallway outside. My soul needed God, and he was waiting right there for me in a more gracious transition.

We are so accustomed to moving pedal to the metal in our own world, the thing we overlook in the Gospels are all of the in-between times when Christ and his followers were walking from one town to another. When the record states, "The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee," (John 1:43) we project our own pace upon it, not realizing it took the boys three days by foot to get there. Three days just strolling along, talking, or sharing the silent beauty; the pauses for lunch or a drink from a well; the campfires in the evening. Christ doesn't move immediately from one dramatic story to another like we try to; there was "down time," transition time between those demands. Time to process what had happened; time to catch their breath before the next encounter.

That was the pace Jesus felt was reasonable for people engaged in important things and wanting a life with God. Time we would categorize almost as vacation time, for those are the only periods we allow ourselves a stroll, a lingering lunch, a campfire conversation. We highly progressive moderns try and keep up without any of those intervals and transitions. The things that we require of ourselves.

We go from a tender conversation with our eight year-old anxious about school, to an angry phone call with our insurance company as we drive to work, followed by a quick chat with our sister about our aging parents' "memory care unit," straight into a series of business meetings (during which we multitask by trying to bang out some email), make dinner reservations for our spouse's birthday, fit in a conversation with our boss because we can't say no, and show up late and haggard for the dinner.

And we wonder why we have a hard time finding God, receiving more of him, feeling like we're overflowing with life.

We are forcing our souls through multiple gear-changes each day, each hour, and after years of this we wonder why we aren't even sure what to say when a friend genuinely inquires, "How are you?" We don't really know; we aren't sure what we feel anymore. We live at one speed: Go. All the subtleties of human experience have been forced into one state of being.

Mercy. No soul was meant to live like this.

Your soul is the vessel God fills. God cannot fill that vessel if it is wrung out, twisted, haggard, fried. Your hands cannot receive a gift while they are still tightly clenched. Which brings us to how important transitions are. Do you allow the grace of transitions in your life—or do you simply blast from one thing to the next?

Notice that in the Gospels, it was during those transition times the disciples had Jesus to themselves; the intimacy was in those moments. God is in the mission, too; of course he is. He meets us in crisis and action. But there is a sweetness to the down time, even if it's brief. We can find more of God there.

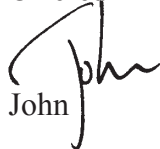
I'm suggesting you intentionally create space for transitions.

It's new for me—and so gracious to my soul—to pause after I hang up the phone and before I turn right back to email or make another call; pause after one meeting before I go into another; pause when I arrive at work after my morning commute, and pause when I pull into the driveway at the end of my day.

Simply unplugging from even 30% of our media consumption will create more room for the natural transitions in every day. If you have five minutes waiting time, don't look at your phone. Just...be. I was at the department of motor vehicles the other day, updating a car registration. Realizing it was going to take some time before I was served, I instinctively reached for my phone. Then I stopped, and simply chose to sit. Look around. Breathe a little. People watch. It was alarming to me how much discipline it took. We truly don't know what to do with "down time" any more.

"I'm allowing myself to be human again," is how a friend put it. "I sit on the porch for a few minutes; I enjoy making a meal." That's perfect. We were never meant to run at the speed of technology. You get to be human, friends.

Offered in love,


John