

Experiencing the Presence of God

Chapter 8: His Highest Presence

September 2, 1930. - The Beauty of Immense Need -

Tip and I and God were together tonight on Signal Hill. Oh God, let me put on paper the glory that was there. The sunset was not more beautiful than at other times, but God said more in it. I suppose it was because I was trying to make this first day of my forty-sixth year high. And that I suppose is why all of us have some high days and some low ones. God is always awaiting the chance to give us high days. We so seldom are in deep earnest about giving Him His chance.

But the effort to say this colossal thing throws me into despair. It cannot be said, can it even be hinted at? There were black clouds which swiftly turned crimson and pale yellow. Now those black clouds are shooting out their fiery tongues through the darkness. Far off in the middle of the lake a long perfect waterspout stood like a colossal pillar from the clouds to the splashing water. It was the first perfect waterspout that I have seen from sea to sky. Above my head those black, angry clouds turned into glorious gold, from the hidden sun. But it was not this that made the evening wonderful. God was speaking.

I patted Tip's head as he nestled up under my arm, and told him: "We are two tiny insects in the midst of this terrifying universe. I know a little more than you do, you nice, black dog, but not much more. Compared with that gigantic being who wheels these awful spheres of fire through the sky I am as near nothing as you are. I know as little about God as you know about me, perhaps ten thousand times less. And perhaps you are wiser than I, for you are contented to be patted on the head and to hunt for fleas, while I am impatient to break loose into the universe.

Loneliness to Never Alone - Frank Laubach

September 2, 1930. – (continued)

I thought, Tip, when I was younger, that Kant was wrong when he said the three greatest moral demands are God, freedom, and immortality, but now I believe he was incredibly right. My soul at forty-six demands immortality as much as it demands God. And it demands freedom from this prison we call the world and the flesh as much as it demands immortality."

Then out of the skies there came a silent voice, "Your black clouds give the sun its chance. It is surprise, it is escape from darkness to light that makes life so rich. Your prison is also your paint box from which all the beauty you know is pouring. Lanao, where you now sit, is one of the most beautiful creations in all the reaches of space. And here you have the privilege of opening eyes to see beauty, which otherwise you would not see. It is selfish of you to desire to escape, until you can take humanity with you.

You are not Christ-like until you demand that even after you die, your soul shall stay and help others come through to the larger life. I almost fear that my nightly visions, much as I love to give them to you, are making you more selfish; hungrier to get; less eager to give. The most beautiful thing in the universe for you is Lanao stretching around this lake at your feet, for it contains the beauty of immense need. You must awaken hunger there, for until they hunger they cannot be fed. "Oh, tonight I so hunger to be able to tell what else happened. But that other thing was all emotion; a painfully sweet stretching forth of arms skyward to receive and to Lanao give."

Loneliness to Never Alone - Frank Laubach

September 21, 1930 - Symbolizing the truth -

Our search for God through narrow straits has brought a sudden revelation, like an explorer who has just come out upon a limitless sea. It is not any particularly new idea but a new feeling, which came almost of itself. Today God seems to me to be just behind everything. I feel Him there. He is just under my hand, just under the typewriter, just behind this desk, just inside the file, just inside the camera. One of these Moro fairy tales has the fairies standing behind every rock looking at the hero. That is how I feel about God today. Of course this is only a way of symbolizing the truth that God is invisible and that he is everywhere. I cannot imagine seeing the invisible, but I can imagine God hiding himself behind everything in sight. For a lonesome man there is something infinitely homey and comforting in feeling God so close, so everywhere! Nowhere one turns is away from friendship, for God is smiling there.

It is difficult to convey to another the joy of having broken into the new sea of realizing God's "here-ness." This morning our theme was "Jesus' view of prayer." It seemed so wonderfully true that just the privilege of fellowship with God is infinitely more than any thing that God could give. When He gives Himself He is giving more than anything else in the universe.

September 22, 1930 – No defeat unless one loses God -

We have got to saturate ourselves with the rainbows and the sunset marvels in order to radiate them. It is as much our duty to live in the beauty of the presence of God on some mount of transfiguration until we become white with Christ as it is for us to go down where they grope, and grovel, and groan, and lift them to new life. After all the deepest truth is that the Christ-like life is glorious, undefeatably glorious. There is no defeat unless one loses God, and then all is defeat though it be housed in castles and buried in fortunes.

Loneliness to Never Alone - Frank Laubach

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Chapter 9: Intoxicated by God

October 7, 1930 - Joy in endless giving -

It is that spirit of greed which Jesus said God hated more than any other. It is so diametrically opposite to the Spirit of God. For God forever lavishes His gifts upon the good and bad alike, and finds all His joy in endless giving. You see, I feel deeply about us all. Beside Jesus the whole lot of us are so contemptible. I do not see how God stomachs us at all. But God is like Jesus, and like Jesus, He will not give up until we, too, are like Jesus.

October 12, 1930 - Worries have faded away -

How I wish, wish, wish that a dozen or more persons who are trying the experiment of holding God endlessly in mind would all write their experiences so that each would know what he is finding as a result! The results, I think, would astound the world. At least the results of my own effort are astounding to me.

Worries have faded away like ugly clouds and my soul rests in the sunshine of perpetual peace. I can lie down anywhere in this universe bathed around by my own Father's Spirit. The very universe has come to seem so homey! I know only a little more about it than before, but that little is all! It is vibrant with the electric ecstasy of God! I know what it means to be "God-intoxicated."

How fine of these Moro boys to come and lean on one's knee, or run their fingers through one's hair - or rub the bald spots and ask why they are so! They know that we love them, but they do not realize what a gulf - at least historically - separates us. If they did, would they be so affectionate? If they knew all, if they knew the love of God in all its wondrous fervor they would!

And to think that less than a year ago we were writing about "the most difficult place under the American flag, if not in the world!" No, New York City is the most difficult place in the world, for in New York they demand ability, unusual ability, while here in Lanao, they demand only love - unusual love. And the love of God may be had for the receiving.

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Chapter 10: Redirected Passion

October 15, 1930 - The pathway of true intuition -

Has God ever struck you as the great stirrer up? One thing He seems to have determined is that we shall not fall asleep. We make or discover paradises for ourselves, and these paradises begin to lull us into sleepy satisfaction. Then God comes with his awakening hand, takes us by the shoulders and gives us a thorough awakening.

And God knows we need it. If our destiny is to grow on and on and on, into some far more beautiful creatures than we are now, with more of the ideals of Christ, that means that we need to have the shells broken quite frequently so that we can grow.

My confidence that this earth is but a brief school grows into certainty as my fellowship with God grows more tender. As a discipline this world is admirable.

Jesus and Buddha had almost the same message about this life. Buddha said, "Abolish all desire." Jesus said, "Fix not your desires upon this earth, but lay up all the desires you can for a fuller life, which begins within you now, and is endless." Many people seek other escapes. Some in prodigious work, some in reckless play, some in drugs, some in insanity - for insanity is but an escape from pitiless, crushing failure. But I wish to tell all the world that needs a better way, that God on Signal Hill satisfies, and sends through me a glow of glory which makes me sure that this is the pathway of true intuition.

Loneliness to Never Alone - Frank Laubach

December 6, 1930 – The beauty of Sacrifice is the final word in beauty -

Sometimes one feels that there is a discord between the cross and beauty. But there really cannot be, for God is found best through those two doorways. This grey-blue rolling water tinged with whitecaps, hemmed with distant green hills and crowned with colored clouds and baby-blue sky reveals God's love of beauty - and God is so lavish with his paintbrush in the tropics. He is lavish everywhere if one only has eyes to see Him at work.

But when one comes to personality, one demands more than a pretty face or even a soul that sings for joy. There is in the universe a higher kind of beauty. It is the beauty of sacrifice, of giving up for others, of suffering for others. A woman has not reached her highest beauty until she lay down her ease and chooses pain for bearing and nursing her child. A man has not found his highest beauty until his brow is tinged with care for some cause he loves more than himself. The beauty of sacrifice is the final word in beauty.

February 6, 1931 - Only doorway to the heart of God –

Tonight, lonesome and half ill with a cold, I am learning from experience that there is a deep peace that grows out of illness and loneliness and a sense of failure. These things do drive me up my hill to God, and then there comes into my soul through the very tears a comfort which is so much better than laughter.

It is "the peace of God that passes all understanding" unless one has it. God cannot get close when everything is delightful. He seems to need these darker hours, these empty-hearted-hours to mean the most to people. You and I have known that over the coffin. We have known it when we parted and our hearts were sore. We have known it when we lay in bed helpless. Is this a deep truth in the very heart of nature?

Is the cross the only doorway to the very heart of God?