

March 26, 2020

I am a people person. I thrive on interaction, collaboration, communion. But as I've grown older, situations in my life have drawn me instead to the quiet place behind closed doors where it's only me, my heartache, my questions, my most honest self ... and God.

At first, I refused to go there. I filled my days with stuff: exercise, good work, noise, the needs of others, even food and hobbies. None of these things are wrong or bad in any way ... unless God is calling you to Himself and you are using them as a way to run away. I honestly felt like a rebellious child having a tantrum before my kind and loving Father and yet, time and again, I chose to ignore His tender voice. But my heart was breaking and my fears could not be stilled by the occupation of my hands, no matter how noble or useful. So finally I sat in my chair and bowed my head and said, "Here I am, Lord". And what I encountered there in that moment, and in the many many moments since, has been the loving, just, faithful heart of my King.

These are difficult times – for some, they were difficult times before the term Covid-19 ever crossed our news screens. I can relate. For many, the world already seemed to be ending. Some of those 'many' are us within the church ... and that is okay. Confusion, fear, anger, suffering – God can handle ALL of these. He knows we are but dust; He knows better than ourselves what we are made of. What He wants above all – in the midst of all – is relationship with us! I have come to know that this alone is why Christ died, why He went to such means to remove sin from us: so we could know God and be known by Him. What freedom there is once we come and sit, broken and lost and honest before the One who has every right to crush us and condemn us, and find ourselves held and loved and forgiven instead.

I do not even pretend to know what you are struggling with today, what fears or hidden heartache you might be trying desperately to ignore. But I do know this: Your Creator loves you and He longs to meet you right where you are, to speak to your heart and give you a peace beyond anything you can even imagine. My world has not neatly self-corrected. There have been mercies, yes. Answered prayer, yes. Good news, yes. And there have been other things, hard things, that seem impossible to even speak of. I cannot actually tell you what God is doing in my world and in the world in general right now, but I do know this: He IS! And He wants to be present with each one of us. That really is more than any of us can ask or imagine. Trust Him today – as hard as that is for us humans who want desperately to be in control and do it right and prove our worthiness – just be His child today. Honestly, I think that is where it all begins. He loves you; He loves me; He IS; He has not forgotten us.

When I was asked if I would consider writing a devotional, a million different things ran through my head, ideas and resources and good teachings -- things like the book *The Art of Listening Prayer* by Seth Barnes that changed my prayer life; or The Lent Project from Biola University (<http://ccca.biola.edu/lent/2020/#day-mar-25>) that a friend got me on to that I find very inspiring; or music from Andrew Peterson or The Brilliance that is so beautiful and honest. All these things are good and I have been encouraged by them, but they are not what I have to offer. I have just my own story, my own struggle and the knowledge that the LIGHT still shines in whatever darkness we each find ourselves in. So here I am simply sharing my heart and what I know in a time where everything seems so unknowable. Perhaps, these words are not worth much but I offer them honestly. Recently, before everything in our world shut down, I went on a retreat where I had time and space to hear God's voice and just be in His presence. I wrote the following poem at the end of the weekend; I hope it encourages you today:

**No matter what the future holds  
I will bear it;  
Not because I am strong  
but because I am held.**

**No matter how my heart might break  
I will keep giving;  
Not because I am able  
but because I am loved.**

**No matter how long the darkness lasts  
I will believe;  
Not because I am sure  
but because He is faithful.**

Angela Cragg  
March 8, 2020

May the Light of the world -- the One who calls Himself our Portion and our Provision, the Author and Perfecter of our faith, our Beginning and our End – may Christ be with you today. In this moment. And forever.

Amen and amen.

Angela.