A Night To Remember

have this vision etched in my mind and heart of a very long table prominently positioned in the center of a royal dining hall. It is the table of the King. Framing the grand hall are walls of rich walnut, hues of radiant light beaming from bronze sconces. Flower arrangements are intermittently placed throughout the room, bold with colors of cranberry, hunter green, mustard yellow; brown seed pods, sprigs of curly willow and evergreen shooting out in all directions. High back leather chairs, shoulder to shoulder await the invited guests. White linen table cloths crisply starched and ironed that very morning lie beneath place settings of fine china. Large red candles circled with holly form the endless centerpiece from end to end. In each corner are 18 foot high Christmas trees wrapped in thousands of white lights. Evergreen garlands scallop the mantle, wood crackling and flames dancing in the fireplace beneath. Wafting through the air is the aroma of roasted meats and vegetables. From down the hall comes a melody from stringed instruments as musicians prepare for the evening's festivities.

It is as splendid a room as any, filled with a rich overflow of warmth and expectancy awaiting the arrival of the special guests, each having received a personal invitation.



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Guests arrive in groups of three, four, six and are escorted to their designated places indicated by gold embossed name cards with exquisite signatures of calligraphy. Each sees the name before them and perhaps for the first time is ever aware of the significance of their name and individuality. A reminder, once again, "I have been summoned to this special table by the King."

These who have been seated before entrance of the other guests, are the women and children who are members of the Mustard Seed Families. There are nineteen women and forty two children who form the circle of those with whom we have walked over this year of 2019. Each has a story wrought with difficulty and loss. But those deep colors have become the most strikingly beautiful worked into the tapestry of their lives. While at one point there seemed to be no way out of deep trenches, they sit here tonight to celebrate for they are no longer bound and trapped.

You, who have invested in these lives, have also received invitations to the table for it has been because of you the Lord has enabled us to walk with them as He has incrementally worked His marvelous hand of restoration. He has made a way where there was no way; moved mountains that were impassable; brought calm into homes of chaos; provided their every need. You are here tonight to join with all of us in the celebration of the transformation and restoration of these lives.

There will be no talk tonight of the times of difficulty; of those who betrayed; no discussion of the long emotionally fraught court battles; no sharing of fleeing the tyranny of abuse in the middle of the night with children and quickly packed bags; the discomfort of displacement; evictions; cut off utilities; depression and anxiety. For tonight is an evening in which each arrives and is simply known by their chosen name regally placed before them; rather than a shameful, chiseled identity. There is no need to discuss tragedy. For that has been covered by grace. Tonight we will celebrate.

The KING arrives. He quietly and graciously moves from individual to individual, calling each by name. There is a touch of His hand on each shoulder and a leaning in for eye to eye contact. There is an obvious knowing of each to the depths of the soul. These who have lived so much of their lives as M and M's (misunderstood and marginalized) have been experiencing walking a new way: the way of Truth, in the yoke with this Shepherd King.

Over the years invitations to these families to such gatherings during this season have been for the purpose of having a meal and receiving brightly wrapped gifts from benevolent hearts. Rarely is there a lacking of the movement of even the hardest hearted adult when presented with the possibility of a child

having no gift to open at Christmas. In America there is undoubtedly an outpouring of generosity toward children living in dire circumstances.

But this night, the gathering is unique for there are no gifts under the trees and no expectation of what will be received. For tonight, each of the Mustard Seed families have come bearing small cloth bags filled with stones. They have come to honor the King; each stone an individual memorial of particular testimony of God's goodness and faithfulness.

1st Samuel 7:12 says that when God enabled the Israelites to defeat the Philistines Samuel "took a stone and named it Ebenezer, saying "thus far has the Lord helped us."

Joshua did the same upon experiencing the power of God in the Jordan being rolled back enabling the Israelites to cross over into the Promised Land. Important to note this was the grand finale of 40 years of their wandering in the wilderness. Joshua commanded them to build a memorial of stones as a public testimony of what God had done for them.

Surrounded by powerful enemies, wandering in the wilderness: these families have their own contemporary experiences of such. But God......was fighting the battle, and in due time disabled the enemy, setting these captives free. It is true that He still parts waters and moves stones today. It just looks different.

ne by one the families approach the King, bow before Him and proceed to thank Him. A stone is removed and offered to Him. He holds each in the upright palm of His hand as He intently listens.

"This is a reminder of the night we were rescued from our home, each of us with only a bag. You made a way where there seemed to be no escape." He nods for He remembers. He was the architect of that escape. The rock is engraved with *Psalm 66:6 "He turned the sea into dry land; they passed through the waters on foot – come let us rejoice in Him."*

"With this stone we remember the night you protected my infant whose father was holding her hostage until the police arrived." A beautiful white rock engraved with *Isaiah 40:11: "He tends His flock like a Shepherd. He gathers the lambs in His arms and carries them close to His heart; He gently leads those that have young."*

Another who had years and years of adversity and stuck in the revolving door of family court but now on the other side of that yesterday: "though you have made me see troubles many and bitter you will restore my life again." Psalm 71:20



The stream continues, stone after stone presented with deep gratitude to the One Who has been at work in these situations.



Psalm 66: 12 "We went through the fire and water but you brought us to a place of abundance."

"This is in memory of the nights I would awaken filled with fear of the future. An entrenched habit that has persisted for many years. I am no longer tormented."

Zephaniah 3:17 "He will quiet you with His love."

The stream continued to flow; each with a specific memory exemplified with the Living Word inscribed on each stone reflective of the forever inscription on each heart.

"The Lord is my Shepherd. I shall not want." Psalm 23:1

"Instead of your shame you will receive a double portion, and instead of disgrace you will rejoice in your inheritance." Isaiah 61:7

"I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with the bands of my kindness have I drawn thee." Jeremiah 31:3

Matthew 6:26-27 "Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?

Psalm 46:10 "Be still and know that I am God."

"For I know the plans I have for you" declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." Jeremiah 29:11-13

"Nothing is impossible with God" (Luke 1:37)

Isaiah 49: 2 "In the shadow of His hand He hid me; He made me into a polished arrow and concealed me in His quiver."

"My grace is sufficient for you." 2 Corinthians 12:9

"I sought the Lord and He answered me and delivered me from all my fears." Psalm 34:4

"You will keep in perfect peace he whose mind is stayed on You. Because he trusts in You." Isaiah 26:3

The succulent meal, heavenly music, rich desserts enjoyed by one and all were eclipsed by the richness of the flow of love and thanksgiving pouring from the hearts of each who approached the King, testifying of His faithfulness. It was apparent the King treasured each stone. Each of us left with a deeper love and faith. We will never be the same.

Perhaps this is a glimpse of what is written in Isaiah 25:7:

"On this mountain The Lord Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine – the best of meats and the finest of wines. On this mountain He will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples.......He will swallow up death forever."

Thank You For Sowing Into The Kingdom

All of us at Mustard Seed.





In the darkest hour when I cannot breathe. Fear is on my chest. The weight of the world on me. Everything is crashing down. Everything I have known. When I wonder if I am all alone....

I remember I remember. You have always been faithful to me. I remember. I remember even when my own eyes could not see. You were there. Always there (with me)

I will lift my eyes even in the pain. Above all the lies I know you can make a way.

I have seen giants fall.

I have seen mountains move.

I have seen waters part because of you

I can't stop thinking about your goodness.



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