

# *A Night To Remember*

**I** 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.



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.

One 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*





*“Remember”* Lauren Daigle

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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Encompassing Hope and Care For Families.