

There are No Ordinary Things

Something isn't right here. It fell and it broke.

There is a microscopic virus winding its way through our cities. It's not concerned with race or sexual orientation or borders or age. It cuts down the just and the unjust. It brings death to our door and to our phones and TV's.

A little toddler is missing in East Tennessee. You've probably seen the public announcements. A bright smile and chubby cheeks. Authorities are searching ponds.

7000 miles from here your brothers and sisters are beaten and starved in North Korean labor camps. Their families are tortured and killed en masse. Constant stress. Constant threat. Constant. All the time. Constant. Think of it.

Just north of there in China, body organs are stolen/harvested from still vibrant people to extend the decadent lives of those who deal out death and rule a country that is busy selling us plastic objects. Camps and fear are used to break wills and hearts. Your brothers. Your sisters.

The Stock Market – that source of 'security' rises and falls like a ship on the sea. It shows itself for what it truly is; nothing more than a numeric representation of a world bouncing about like a pinball. For this people kill themselves.

Cancer, heart disease, strokes, diabetes, Alzheimer's attack our bodies and break our spirits. Even in this miraculous age of medicine, our own DNA attacks us and we are left with tubes and drips and trips and cuts and stitches. The best doctors are bad carpenters.

Our jobs ask more and more from us. Don't slip, don't miss, be perfect. Don't say that; do say this. Smile and take it. Take that call. Answer that email. Send that letter. File that paper. Fill out this form. Have you started that? Are you finished yet?

Who among us hasn't lost friends or family in car accidents? We hear stories of someone taking the time – just an instant – to text LOL. All the time that is needed to plow a ton of steel into the flesh and bone within that unseen car. The lives that remain behind are shattered for the rest of their existence.

Wars unceasing. In the pursuit of land or in the hatred of ethnicity or belief, organized killing using inventive methods sweeps people from their homes and too often leaves them in mass graves. We are capable of great mayhem.

Clouds of locust wash over east Africa and lays waste to a year's supply of food. All that will be left is aching hunger.

The news is bad and it's getting worse. Bad news sells. Men and women with exquisitely coiffed hair, makeup and elaborate sets gravely tell us the next bad thing. Then "Here's Jim with the weather – looks like a storm is brewing...". Cut to Jim standing in the storm...

The heart cries out for mercy. We cannot bear this load. We cannot bear this load. Where are You?

Ps 38: O Lord, all my longing is before you; my sighing is not hidden from you. My heart throbs; my strength fails me, and the light of my eyes—it also has gone from me. My friends and companions stand aloof from my plague, and my nearest kin stand far off. Those who seek my life lay their snares; those who seek my hurt speak of ruin and meditate treachery all day long. But I am like a deaf man; I do not hear, like a mute man who does not open his mouth. I have become like a man who does not hear, and in whose mouth are no rebukes. But for you, O Lord, do I wait;

And yet... *There are no ordinary things...*

The sun rose this morning. A little earlier than yesterday. Spring is coming. Crocus's are just under the snow layer. They can feel the change. They will take their chance and break the brown ground with sheer color. They feel the call of their Maker through a sphere of hydrogen explosions 93 million miles away. You could neatly fit 1.3 million earths within the sun.

Peepers – the ever hopeful chorus of spring. They fill lowlands with a song of pure expectation. They are making ready for the Kingdom come.

Take the time to look at the trees – closely. Come behold the wondrous mystery. Who can explain the miracle of trees? The everyday, ordinary miracle of forests and life teeming with wonder? Each one living and dying - giving glory to their maker.

Clouds float overhead. Literally tons of water that glide across our heads and homes. Infinite in shape and form. God's hand nourishing the parched land. God's hand of power and might in towering displays of light and fire.

The wind blows. From where does it come? To where does it go, Nicodemus?

Small-pox and polio are vanquished. No more iron-lungs or leg braces. No more. Children – run and feel the freedom from fear. God wills it.

Ps 103: Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

In a few minutes we will sit down and share a meal in freedom and peace. When we thank Him for the bounty of blessings, let us do it with sincerity. It has not always been so. Be grateful. Generations past would be awestruck by the blessings we so casually disregard.

And we have the Word. It binds us together. Through it, we are joined across miles and continents and generations. The slave and prisoner pour over the same words as we do on our couches or desks (if we pour over it). Were we to meet them, we would have the same source of hope and power. It is a miraculous shared gift. Its message is simple and complex. Through the Word we know the Word made flesh.

1 Cor 1: For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

This world seeks power in all its twisted forms. Yet here God has with grace and mercy laid in our hands the power to set people free. Use it and learn it. Hold it close and make it a priority. The Spirit will guide you. Trust Him.

Pray. Pray without ceasing. Pray when you get up. Pray when you lie down. It's the desire of God's heart that we pray. Prayer doesn't change God – it changes us. Hallelujah it changes us.

Rom 8: For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Family strife? Family feuds? There's no place for that here brothers and sisters. Not within this place. We ain't got time for that. We have better work to do. We have a common purpose. We have the same Father. We are bound together. We are His children.

Eph 2: So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

Rom 8: For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

And we have other work to do too. We will get up tomorrow morning and we will go to work. We will work to make our world a better place because it pleases Him to do so. Work for Him. Work unto Him. Wash, create, fold, clean, file, call, cook, push, pull, write and click by the power of God almighty. It all matters.

Eccl 3: I perceived that there is nothing better for them than to be joyful and to do good as long as they live; also that everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil—this is God's gift to man.

Love one another. Show it. Say it. Mean it. People need to know it. Christian books and theology help us wrestle with God and sort things out. Christian music

lifts our spirits. Giving is important. But all these are worthless without love. Love is God's great weapon.

1 Cor 1: Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.

I have carried a copy of this one page essay with me for over ten years now. Clipped from World Magazine, it reminds me what faith is. In the writing, Woodlief reflects on the death of his young daughter.

Tony Woodlief ~ What they teach us

It took burying a child, and birthing three more, and countless dark sins along the way, to teach how deep pride can run, and that it sloughs off faith. I sit in the back row now, not simply because each boy will require at least one bathroom trip during any given church service, but also as a reminder that I have just barely made it in the door. Perhaps we've all just barely made it in. And yet we are welcomed to the feast, prodigal sons and daughters each of us.

Sometimes after a day of barking and griping (at my children), I am filled with shame. I kneel beside their beds, each in turn, and kiss their faces. I ask them to forgive Daddy for being a big grump, and they always do. I tell them that tomorrow will be better, and they always believe me. My daughter did too, as I whispered to her that Jesus would make it all better. Some think that a child's faith is fragile, but I have seen a child believe unto death. Is my faith that strong?

It seems that losing child-like faith defines our passage into adulthood. Only a fool or a child would believe, in the face of daily wounds and sins that tomorrow will be better. Grow up, is what we say, when we want someone to see the world as it is, not as it is promised to become. But grace grips us in its gentle, relentless hands, and we are told to go back to childhood, to relearn a faith the world has slowly constricted. I whisper, 'It will be better tomorrow sweetheart', and my children believe. Somewhere in their

expectant faces, as they nod and smile and forgive, is the Kingdom of Heaven. This is why sometimes I hold their faces and search for faith I am relearning, and pray it will never leave them.

And sitting above and over it all is Jesus. The Lamb of God. Who was, and is, and is to come. He has it all – and it is all for him. He has paid it all – and all is paid.

Is 42: Thus says God, the Lord, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people on it and spirit to those who walk in it: "I am the Lord; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness.

I am the Lord; that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols. Behold, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them."

Ordinary Day ~ Melanie Penn

It was an ordinary day, I woke up on a wave
I filled a sail, and made my way to the shore
I blew through the center of your town
Came upon your house
And waited there for you to come to your screen door

I asked you, Can you hear me blow?
Though you don't know, Where I'm coming from, Or where I go?

It was an ordinary night, I met some fireflies
I danced around with them, until about 9 o'clock
Heard your footsteps on the road, I ran to bring you home
And I whispered through the leaves, up and down your block

Oh I'm a summer breeze - I brush across your cheek
I have always been - And I will always be
You can hear me blow, though you don't know
Where I'm comin from - Or where I go

It's me when you catch the fragrance of spring and tall trees sway
It's me in the cold winter sting, in the alleyway
I am the sigh
While all creation groans and waits

You can hear me speak, if you're listenin'
I will always be, and I have always been
You can hear me blow, though you don't know
Where I'm comin from, or where I go
Oh I'm the summer breeze, I brush across your cheek
I have always been
And I will always be.