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Rare Moments

Yesterday I found myself smack dab in the middle of one of those rare moments of life when I thought, "This is what it is all about. This is life lived to the fullest." It wasn't monumental. It wasn't planned. It was just a moment of time where my heart felt completely alive. A simple interval of time that would be frozen in my memory as one of the best. Yet, there were no elements in that instant that the world would say could qualify it as being important. I didn't win the lottery. I wasn't on a trip to see the Great Smoky Mountains or the Grand Canyon or a Hawaiian sunset. There was no party in my honor. Nothing significant on the world's Geiger counter.

It just happened.

I opened the door and entered an artisan's shop. After glancing at some art hanging on the wall, I saw a box of artist's prints with prose written on each one. The art was not my style at all, yet I was drawn to it. As I held one in my hand and read the prose on the print, the wind caught my heart and I felt understood. This artist, totally unknown to me, spoke of my deepest feelings and thoughts. Time stopped. I paused. I pondered. I drank deep waters. Purposefully, I relished in the moment. No rushing. I didn't want to miss the richness of what my heart was experiencing.

I picked up another and read it. Then another and another. Compelled by their impact, I sat down on the floor by the box to read more. Eventually I moved up on the step beside the box and planted myself. I dared not miss one of them because I recognized the potential of each one to speak something of value to me.

The fullness of the moment expanded as I handed a print to a friend who was at the shop with me. She read. Breathing in, she was stopped by the wonder of truth. We spent the next hour reading through this box full of artist prints – passing them back and forth – unwilling to move from the space of time we were caught in. Sometimes I would read one and although it didn't touch the inner rooms of my heart, I knew it would touch hers and so I would pass it to her and say, "This one is for you." At times, she would read one and pass it to me saying, "This one is for you." There were moments of hilarious laughter. Moments of saying, "This one is so and so..." But mostly the mystery of experiencing being touched and moved because an artist had been able to express a dimension of our hearts.

It was like when someone gives you a gift that is so perfect for you because it shows how deeply they understand you. A gift that validates your heart because it is, in itself, an expression of your heart. And you rejoice because you feel loved in that validation. Someone took the time to search for an expression that said, "I see you for who you really are. I understand what will bring you joy."

It was like seeing the ocean for the first time. The awe of it leaves you speechless. The wonder can't be expressed in words.

It was like drinking in a perfect cup of coffee and savoring every sip.

And so I believe it is when we connect with one another in such ways that we share glory. The breathtaking splendor of life as God meant it to be. Not cheapened or rushed through. Just lived. Lived in. I've often been guilty of living through life but not really living in life – living in the moments – breathing them in and experiencing their fullness.

There were a few times in that shop when one of us would say, "Read this." We were saying, "This is important." And the other would have a quizzical look as if to say, "I don't get it." And so we would try to explain what it was about the verse that moved us. Sometimes we were able to and sometimes we were not. But it was okay. We understood that there are deep places inside us all that no one else has known or found. And often, we are finding those places ourselves for the very first time.

Once again, I gazed into the wonder of God because I knew that He, better than anyone, truly understands all those places within me. The places no one else "gets". The ones that sadly, many times, I've been unwilling to share with anyone else.

I felt His challenge. The challenge to engage others in ways that are real. Open. Intense. Sometimes

uncomfortable. Sometimes fearful. Ways that open us up to being hurt, rejected, misunderstood. But ways that afford us the opportunity to live fully – to be understood by some – and to understand the hearts of some. To hold another's heart right within our hands and cherish that heart – in all its imperfections– yet seeing so far beyond the imperfections to the glorious beauty that is also there. And to enjoy that beauty.

The moment of now is an inextricable challenge as we are extended the opportunity to seize it - to squeeze all the joy and goodness and love that is possible out of the it. To breathe deeply. To stop. To dream. To experience. To live. Engaging the most beautiful of all God's creation – people. And I'm finding that to engage others faithfully, I must first engage my own heart in truth and kindness.

Rare moments. They are gifts from God. Treasures from His heart to ours. Tragically, often missed, because in the busyness of our living, we miss the opportunity to truly live.

So the next time you feel that whisper of the Spirit which says, "Enjoy", reach for the gift of God –the gift of the moment. Dare to engage life. The gift of the moment is living in the abundance of joy that is possible in times that aren't always religious or evangelistic. They might just be a moment in a shop reading verses from someone's heart and finding the commonality of life spoken from one of His children to another.

Rare moments – the essence of the joy of living fully. As we seize them, perhaps they will become less rare and more a way of life that will invite others into a realm of relationships which pictures God in ways we have not seen before. And we will truly be able to say, "This is what it means to really live."

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