



ALTAR OF MY HEART

Isaiah 9:1

“The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.”

CHRIST HAS RISEN, OPAL! CHRIST HAS RISEN, INDEED!

At the break of day this morning when evening shadows had been diminished by the first rays of light, a voice within this writer wanted to proclaim, "I am a child of the Resurrection! Because he lives, I can face tomorrow with the knowledge that Jesus is the Light that destroys all darkness!"

However, given the fact that the usual behavior pattern of dressing for Easter Sunday church would not occur because of sheltering in place out of reach from the dark threat of a hungry virus stalking its prey, it soon became a stark reality that things would not unfold as usual. The coveted smiles and greetings from congregants decked out in their Easter finest would not be transpiring. Instead, the churches throughout the country would be that of ghost like buildings filled with only hollow echoes of bricks and mortar settling with sounds of creaks and moans, harshly replacing the Halleluiahs and Amens emanating from the human voices lifting the rafters praising God as a Resurrected people.

However, in spite of these dire circumstances, it did not change the fact that the calendar announced clearly that it would still be Easter. Rain or shine, the date would stay the same and the clock would tick away the hours of this special day. What was the solution to these grim circumstances?

Opal, as these thoughts rattled around in the mind of this writer like empty tin cans, as if on cue, the Creator began filling the air with promise. What had virtually been forgotten was the note that each bird sings, when heard in unison, forms the most spectacular music ever composed; meaning magical strains provided by nature, with God as the Maestro. As their beautiful melodious notes floated through the branches of trees that were laden with droplets of water from the spring showers, it was obvious that nature was offering the world the gift of encouragement and wisdom.

After all, it has been proclaimed that even a raindrop contains the nectar of life that holds mystical rainbows all because of the reflection of light. Then, if a burst of sunlight happens to make its presence known, it might momentarily hold a beautiful meadow or that of the entire sky. And...from where does this light

originate? Opal, it arrives straight from the hand of our wonderful Creator who is the Light of the world.

Thus, while standing at the window being serenaded by this cacophony of musical renditions that could only be labeled as true perfection, another puzzle crossed the writer's mind in desperate need of a solution. Was this to be the Easter worship service, or was there more? Were these voices in nature singing prayers as well? Where was the altar of the Lord to be located in this unique format?

Therefore, after sorting through all the possible answers to these thought provoking questions, a childhood memory surfaced and served as the foundation that would provide a definition of worship that would last eternally.

You see, having been placed in the arms of an earthly father that loved God with all his heart mind and soul, every morning, no matter the weather, at exactly the same time, he could be seen walking out through the field toward the woods without fail; a habit that remained the pattern he followed all his life. Wearing his overalls and old straw hat, he would whistle and sing as if all was right with the world, always walking resolutely along the same path toward his chosen destination.

Surprisingly, his three girls instinctively realized, even though never instructed, that this was dad's private time when he simply wanted to be totally alone. Thus, as curious as it might seem, it was not until his passing that a friend of his shed light on this constant behavior that never failed; not even once.

Opal, having developed an intimate relationship with his Lord, our dad had meticulously selected an old stump located in a very private spot in the deepest part of the woods that he used as his altar; a sacred place where he would have a little talk with Jesus every day.

Consequently, after hearing this tender and precious story of faith, a great desire to locate his sacred spot prompted a search by his girls that turned out fruitful. Lo and behold, there before their eyes appeared an ordinary old stump that would have been labeled as, not worth a glance by society, to them would serve as an epitaph of his love for God, and would be carved in their minds forever. When last visiting the old home place, in spite of the fact that the fields all around

the woods had been turned into pasture land, that wonderful old stump remained undisturbed. Oh, Joy!

Although the writer's earthly father is now at home with the Savior, the foundation of faith he modeled for his girls has remained so strong and solid that even the gravest of circumstances that threatened to tarnish the true meaning of Easter were halted post haste.

Instead, taking a journey down memory lane and recalling how an old stump that served as the altar for an earthly father's sacred place where he received his daily manna from heaven, set the stage for even greater exploration of how best to walk with the Lord. Recalling the Scripture from Jerimiah 31: 33-34 that reads:

“This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, ‘Know the Lord’, because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more,” prompted new light to be shed on worshipping God at the altar. Then, Leviticus 6: 13 added even greater depth to the solution for worshipping our Savior on this beautiful Easter morning with, **“The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar; it shall never go out.”**

Oh, precious friend, God shed his light on the life of his child who was in search of a solution that will forever stand, not just for me, but for you and all mankind. Although my dad had chosen an old stump as his altar, it was only symbolic as to the true meaning of worshipping God. Given the Scripture above, it is obvious that our Father has written his name on each of our hearts; an action that causes us to long for him all our days. In short, each of us has an altar deep within our own heart.

Additionally, in a book titled, *“Morning by Morning”* written by Charles Spurgeon he describes it beautifully with these words, *“God loves to see the hearts of his people glowing towards himself. Let us give to God our heart, all blazing with love, and see his grace, that the fire may never be quenched; for it will not burn if the Lord does not keep it burning. Many foes will attempt to extinguish it; but if the unseen hand behind the wall pours thereon the sacred oil, it will blaze higher and higher.”*

As our closing prayer, visualize my hand on your forehead in blessing from one child of the Resurrection to another using the following poem I wrote after revisiting the memory of dad and the old stump he used as his altar:

WALK WITH ME LORD!

(A prayer requesting God's nearness)

There is a little altar, deep within my heart

Reserved just for you Lord, separate, and set apart

To walk each day with you, dear God, is my desire and humble plea

For directing my steps through Your Word and drawing me closer to thee

Help me remember that You're in charge of each and every day

Mapping the path for my journey and making straight the way

Help me overcome darkness as I walk in Your favor and light

Knowing the plan for my journey is always in Your sight

Fill my mind with ever present, grateful thoughts of You

With assurance Your plan to prosper me will surely always come true

Teach me to trust Your perfect will in everything I meet

And know You'll turn the hard to easy and bitter things to sweet

Help me hear the music of life playing joyfully in my head

And dance with You the song of victory down every path I tread

Let me sit at Your table where the word of God is spread

With the knowledge it's through Your love that I'm forever fed

Remind me to daily lift my voice in grateful prayer to You

Until Your mission is finished and my journey on earth is through

Help me always to realize that sacred idleness is not loss

Instead, that simply being, is sitting at the foot of the cross

Jerusalem! Oh, Jerusalem! City of salvation, light, and love

Because of the cross, my final destination is with You in heaven above

Love,

Colene

