

Hebrews 13: 2

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.



Foreground of "Angels Unawares" by Timothy Schmalz

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Wayfaring Stranger

Dear Opal,

This week, I found a photograph of a bronze sculpture by Timothy Schmalz titled, “Angels Unawares”, located in St. Peters Square that reminded me of your earthly journey. The fascinating sculpture depicts a group of migrants and refugees on a boat wearing clothing that show they originate from diverse cultures and historical moments. There are wayfaring strangers fleeing from Poland to escape the communist regime, Jews fleeing Nazi Germany, Syrians departing the Syrian civil war, just to name a few; all whose faces depict a variety of moods and emotions. Then, when you allow your eyes to look into the soulful faces of each individual, you will notice angel wings that rise above their heads in a poignant manner, thus, connecting their plight directly to the Scripture from Hebrews 13:2, *“Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.”*

Given the composite of this group of refugees, you are probably wondering why this particular sculpture would prompt me to connect it directly with your philosophy of life.

In order to answer this question, you will need to bring to mind the trusty old pressure cooker that played such an important role every Sunday of your life for many years. Then, recall how handy it was for preparing a meal for wayfarers that would simply drop by with the assurance that they would not only enjoy fellowship with your family but also leave with a fully belly.

Since you never knew how many people would arrive at your door each Sunday after church, that old pressure cooker allowed a complete meal to be served within a very short period of time.

In anticipation of your guests, you would also have prepared cakes or pies on Saturday that served as a sweet ending for one and all that had arrived unannounced. Above all, everyone had a place to put his feet under your table.

Opal, have you ever wondered if, by using a meal prepared in that old pressure cooker, you have at some time on your journey of life entertained angels unawares? Interestingly, do you think you showed this hospitality without ever knowing you were blessing a wayfaring stranger?

All things considered in this scenario; I am of the opinion that anyone of us could be a wayfaring stranger as depicted in the sculpture above. Without doubt, every human being having walked the face of this earth has found himself in need of some type of nourishment, be it a literal meal or food for the soul.

Given these circumstances, have you ever wondered if God sent an angel in your midst for the purpose of shoring you up when facing obstacles or tragedies as well? Either way, the question one must ask is, "Did I receive this angel with hospitality and an open mind in spite of the fact that he/she was a humble stranger and may have been covered by a different color of skin?"

As I contemplated an answer to this question, my eyes focused on eight quarters neatly stacked on a table beside my desk that stirred tremendous emotions in my

heart, not only many years ago when they were received, but even today at this point in my journey on the road home.

Having been invited as a guest speaker by a women's group at a church, as a new aspiring writer I decided to focus on a collection titled, "Jesus Is the Heart of It" that consisted of an array of spectacular stained-glass windows with matching poetry that I had carefully composed.

Finding myself wondering if I had discerned correctly God's plan for myself as a writer, doubts occupied a prominent position in my brain; so much that not only did I feel extremely inadequate compared to other writers, but was ready to throw in the towel. After all, who was I, a farm girl from Missouri, thinking God would bless someone like me in this manner? Was it just my imagination that elderly people would enjoy the words I had written? Were they even worth reading?

Given this scenario, are you able to imagine the chaotic static that filled my brain as I began a power point presentation using stained-glass church windows that had taken over 2 ½ years to collect? Would they matter as much to them, or even at all?

Even though my heart was beating rapidly accompanied by a mouth as dry as dust, not being a quitter, this old girl maintained a stiff upper lip and made it through the presentation without a hitch and felt immense relief when it ended.

Then, as refreshments were being served, out of nowhere came a lady garbed in a little burgundy felt hat and a black coat. Wearing a sweet and gentle smile on

her face, she handed me eight quarters and said, "God bless you. This is all I have to give you for support on your journey that awaits."

Since there had been no mention of a cost for the presentation, in a state of shock I replied, "How very kind of you. I expect no financial remuneration from anyone. It has been my pleasure to simply share these beautiful stained-glass windows with you."

Her reply was, "Yes, honey. I am fully aware that this is coming from your heart but this is my way of encouraging you to finish the race our Maker has set before you. Always remember dear one that he holds you in his hands."

Stunned and totally mesmerized, I watch her quietly walk out of the fellowship hall feeling deeply within my heart that something heavenly had just transpired. As she departed, I quickly pointed in her direction and ask some of the attendees if they knew her name. Absolutely no one could identify her. Since it was only announced to the ladies in two church groups, her presence is still a mystery even today.

As the years have passed, it is enlightening to see how the Lord has offered his wisdom, council, and especially patience on this journey. Thinking back to the first book for all ages that came through my fingers, the definition of a writer was very different in my mind then than the one now that has been formulated through my Father's guidance.

You see, when the first book for all ages was completed, I thought only of being published, an indication that "self" was at the forefront. I just knew people would

love reading this book; a thought that made me very proud. Oops! Did I just utter the word, proud?

Then, as time went by, the sweet old folks entered my life with such enormous impact that, unbeknownst to me, everything took on a new direction; meaning, the thrill of the journey occurred when witnessing an old soul receive a blessing from the messages or pictures in the work. In fact, when observing their emotional reactions as a story unfolded, I just bowed my head and wept with joy because of feeling honored to be in their presence.

Interestingly enough, it was just this week when finishing a book titled “A Lasting Impression” by a Christian author, Tamera Alexander that I read a question she had written that brought the sum total of my journey as a writer truly into focus. A character in her book heard God ask the question, **“Would you paint if you knew you were painting only for me?”** So, reworking the words to fit my situation, I wrote down, **“Would you write if you knew you were writing only for me?”**

Pausing for a time in thought, I then lifted my eyes toward the ceiling with tears rolling down my cheeks and replied, “Today, I can answer with an emphatic YES! Thank you for being patient and allowing me to figure this out! Why did I have to reach this age before grasping the concept that the gift was bestowed by you, not for me to hone, but to use for your purpose and pleasure? Lord, every word I write truly points right back to you. Thank you for allowing me the time to internalize this teaching that arrived straight from your throne.”

Opal, after having spent a great deal of thought on the various definitions of the word wayfaring as being, (to journey, one passing on a path, one walking on a road, traveler, a wanderer, a pilgrim, a vagrant), can we agree on the truth that most of these fit every human being that has set foot on this earth? Are not we all just wayfaring strangers making our way back home to be with our Creator?

Unfortunately, what we fail to realize is the importance of centering our focus on the Great Potter who lovingly made us with his hands and acts as our one and only true compass for all eternity. After all, who other than him would want to prosper and not harm us? Who other than him would keep his eyes on us both day and night? Who other than him would give his only Son as a Sacrifice for our sin? Who other than him would love us so unconditionally that there is no possibility of having it abate?

Yet, sadly, we become so centered on self, that we mistakenly reach the conclusion that life is about all that we can accumulate and store. Unfortunately, this stance means that over time, as a wayfarer, we are going to be faced with the hardships of life thinking we can solve our own issues, when in reality, we are totally dependent on God for every breath we take and, in the end, lack understanding as to why trials are faced by all earthly travelers, even Christians.

Then, becoming disillusioned by the plight that weighs heavily on our shoulders, we feel broken and unable to answer the question. Again, referring back to the book written by Tamera Alexander, "A Lasting Impression", as her story unfolded, one of the characters gave advice to a heroine that applies beautifully at this moment with the declaration, "We should not expect to have all the blessings of

life and none of the trials. It would make this world too delightful a dwelling place, and I fear we would never care to leave it. I have come to believe that it's only by taking some of these objects from us to which our hearts so closely cling that He endeavors in his kindness to draw us from this world to one of greater happiness."

So, in closing, my dear friend, let us keep on keeping on with faith that although the terrain under our feet will be almost impassable at times and constantly shifting causing us to feel alone due to being the last one of our generation still standing, we are never walking solo. Our North Star is our Heavenly Father, our True Compass that points always toward Him. Then, when we finally reach the conclusion of our journey, we will have internalized the words written by Thomas Moore who declared:

***"Joy, joy forever, my
task is done.***

***The gates are passed,
and heaven is won."***



As we say farewell, let us use a wonderful old spiritual that was written in the early 19th century about a plaintive soul on the journey through life as our prayer. Although no one knows for sure who wrote it, the lyrics and soulful tune still strike a chord today. Until next week, keep journeying toward those celestial shores accompanied by the following words from”

Poor Wayfaring Stranger

**I'm just a poor wayfaring stranger,
I'm trav'ling through this world below;
There is no sickness, toil, nor danger,
In that bright world to which I go.
I'm going there to see my father,
I'm going there no more to roam;
I'm just a going over Jordan,
I'm just a going over home.**

**I know dark clouds will gather o'er me,
I know my pathway's rough and steep;
But golden fields lie out before me,
Where weary eyes no more shall weep.
I'm going there to see my mother,
She said she'd meet me when I come;
I'm just a going over Jordan,
I'm just a going over home.**

**I want to sing salvations story,
In concert with the blood-washed band;
I want to wear a crown of glory,
When I get home to that good land.
I'm going there to see my brothers,
They passed before me one by one;
I'm just a going over Jordan,
I'm just a going over home.**

**I'll soon be free from every trial,
This form will rest beneath the sod;
I'll drop the cross of self-denial,
And enter in my home with God.
I'm going there to see my Saviour,
Who shed for me His precious blood;
I'm just a going over Jordan,
I'm just a going over home.**



*Love,
Colene*