

A Thankful Heart

Bryn Jones

This is a sane, wholesome, practical, working faith: first, that it is man's business to do the will of God; second, that God takes on himself the special care of that man; and third, that therefore that man ought never to be afraid of anything.

George MacDonald

The wedding service was over. Both of us, fresh in the joy of our union, were hustled into the car to be taken to the reception. I looked at my bride and again thought how beautiful she was.

When we arrived at the restaurant all the guests crowded in, my wife and I at the head of the table. We sat there, enjoying the meal and the atmosphere, with everyone around us laughing happily. The wedding toasts were being made and the speeches going on when suddenly it hit me.

'Gosh,' I thought, 'the tickets!'

In looking after all the wedding arrangements the one thing I had forgotten to do was buy the train tickets for our journey to the south of England, where we were going on honeymoon! I put my hands in my pockets and quickly felt around. I only had sixpence. And so it came about that the first question I ever asked my wife was, 'How much money do you have?'

'Nothing,' she replied. 'Why?'

'Oh, never mind, it's okay. Everything's fine.'

I began to perspire. 'O Lord,' I thought, 'what's going to happen when the people discover at the railway station what I've forgotten to do? I'm going to have to embarrassingly confess that I don't have any tickets.'

At that moment a scripture rose to my mind: 'You will know that I am the Lord, for they shall not be ashamed who wait for me' (Isaiah 49:23 RAV).

As the wedding speeches continued I quietly whispered, 'Lord, I believe you. You won't put us to shame. You won't let us be disappointed.' I had no idea how God would do it but I felt the quietness and confidence that he would meet the need.

Then the wedding reception was over. We were bustled off to the hotel room to change and from there into the cars that made a noisy procession down to the railway station.

Just as we turned into Liverpool's Lime Street station, a young man came running along shouting, 'Bryn, Bryn, just a moment. These cards arrived late at the church for you.'

I hadn't even got out of the taxi. I thanked him, took them and started opening them. By the time I had opened the last one I not only had enough money in cash to pay the train fare but we had considerably more left over with which to enjoy the honeymoon.

How good God is! How detailed his care for his children! My heart there and then filled with worship.

It is often by these demonstrations of kindness that God fills our hearts with praise and worship. He does not need lengthy explanations of our needs and difficulties—he simply wants us to thank and worship him in anticipation for his diligent and detailed care for us. And when we receive it, our praise is doubled and tripled.

In 1961 Bob Heslop and I, who had gone through college together, set out for Cornwall—two young evangelists with a single intention: to carry the gospel of Christ through the small villages of South-West England.

We did not know anyone there and, heavily cast on God, looked day by day for our direction from him. We lived in a small caravan belonging to a local greengrocer, from which we set out each day on a visitation programme of the area. Over the next few months we spoke to hundreds of people about Christ.

Our finance was quickly spent in travelling, site fees and food. We were helped with food by daily collecting mushrooms in the fields for breakfast. The only problem was that, after searching for mushrooms day after day, every time I closed my eyes to pray I kept seeing little white blobs rise up in front of me. I knew it was time to change diet or I would end up worshipping the mushroom instead of the Lord!

The inevitable moment arrived when there was no food or money left, and the two of us quietly turned our hearts to God in prayer, calling upon him to provide our need.

Late one evening I went alone across the clifftops at Newquay, wrestling in my mind with our predicament. I imagined headlines springing up in the newspapers: 'Young evangelists starve to death in Cornwall' or 'Religious fanatics die of starvation'. I thought of the terrible shame it would bring on the testimony of God.

As I walked that clifftop I found myself playing with the one penny that was left in my pocket, twisting it between my fingers, turning it over in my hand. I held it as though it were a piece of gold—it was the only money I had in this world.

Suddenly, I felt a surge of exhilaration. I thought, 'God is wonderful, God is good, God is great. He isn't restricted in his ability to meet our needs. Those who trust him will never be disappointed. He has infinite wealth in his treasures, he owns the cattle on a thousand hills. His Word assures us that, if we are generous, he will supply all our needs according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.'

With that I pulled the penny from my pocket, gave it one last look and, laughing, threw it as far as I could from the clifftop out into the sea. As it went I shouted, 'There, devil, I have God's resources at my disposal!'

With that I felt the release of joyous faith and I started to worship and praise the Lord. I think if anyone passing by at that time had noticed me they would have wondered about my mental condition! I went back to the caravan filled with the joy of God.

As I approached the door I noticed a big sack there and thought Bob must have been clearing out old papers or rubbish. Going in, I asked, 'What have you got in the sack outside?'

'What sack?' he said.

Suddenly I realised the sack hadn't been put there by Bob. I quickly went outside. I tried to lift it but it was incredibly heavy, so I called to Bob and together we lifted it indoors. It was filled with tinned foods, a bag of potatoes, two dozen eggs and fruit!

You might say, 'What a wonderful gift pack from someone.' But I knew it was from God, our source, and that the anonymous donor had simply been his means of blessing.

That night Bob and I sat together worshipping and praising the God of supply, the God of care, the God of kindness who will never see us disappointed. There is no need to hold on to the little when we have the God of so much.

How like him to care for us in this way. He provokes us to worship by showing himself to be the God of everyday affairs. We are so often aware of his greatness, majesty and power that we can forget his loving concern for the details of life.

The thankful heart is provoked not simply by the majestic workings of God on a grand scale but also by his everyday kindness in meeting us right where we are.

Have you noticed in the gospels what I can only call the 'quiet miracles', where Christ acted on behalf of the ordinary person, or did something small in itself yet significant to the individual concerned? Once he went with Peter to his home to dine. He was concerned to find that Peter's mother-in-law was ill, and so he performed the miracle of her healing before going on to enjoy fellowship with his disciples. That was one of his quiet miracles, a little thing that he didn't overlook.

Again, as he healed the forgotten people of life, he often whispered to them, 'Don't tell anyone about it,' as though he longed to give to all without craving anything in return.

How like our God, who gives because he loves, not because of what he can get. For what could we give him that is an adequate recompense for what we have received? He gives because he's a giver, he loves because he's a lover, and we love him because he first loved us.

