

3.5.24

Rambo, Restoration, and Renewal.

Last Friday we sent our beautiful boy, maddening mighty Rambo {our Staffordshire Terrier}, on to doggo glory. He had cancer in his spleen which had spread to his lungs. His spleen was swollen and inflamed, and it was only a matter of Time before it burst. When it eventually did, he would've begun seizing and then died in front of us shortly thereafter. So, we practiced what we preach and did what we believe in— showed *mercy*, no matter how painful, to him and to us. His breathing at times was labored, though his spirit was strong and playful to the very end.

This is one of the most unique animals I have ever encountered in my half century-plus on this planet. Highly intelligent, incredibly athletic, this dog could do *anything* you could teach him and even more you couldn't. He could walk the back ledge of the couch like a mountain goat as a small puppy, could hop on and surf the wheeled ottoman across the room, never panicking or hesitating in the slightest. He *aced* every agility test the trainer and I gave him. Frankly, he made other dogs look ridiculous doing it. It was fun to watch.

The first day we got him, we brought him home from the airport and he followed me onto the back porch {I don't blame him: I *did* have the chicken, his favorite thing in all the Earth!}. I went down the six steps, past the concrete landing, and about 15 feet into the backyard. Once Sweet Mama turned him loose, at six weeks old he came down those steps like he was shot out of a barrel, leapt from the second step over the landing, the tree roots and anything else in his way and headed straight for the Chicken Man with abandon. I said to myself, "Holy smokes! We've got something here. This dog has *no fear. None.*" And so it was for the next decade.

His name is Rambo. Not because he was a fan of or resembled Sly Stallone {my Man!}, but as an abbreviated form of the term *rambunctious*, meaning- 'uncontrollably exuberant, boisterous.' Wild as a March hare but sweet and loving as the day is long. He is a *good*, good boy, and our hearts are better for having loved him and been loved by him. **I love you, buddy ...and I'll see you on the Other Side.**

We had a week to say 'goodbye,' to let people see him {I know it's weird but he has a lot of girlfriends: he loves the Ladies}, and to give him all the loving and rotisserie chicken his loyal heart desired. In this sense, it's been tougher than most of the dogs I've owned and loved throughout my Life. I've been through this process with animals since I was a child, many times now. But almost always because of an immediate need — an injury, an accident, old age, something comes up and there's no other option. This one was prolonged. And this was both very good for him, and very tough for us, knowing the End of this part of the Journey was coming on Friday.

So, we have *grieved*. Almost, but not quite, like “those who have no hope” {1 Thes. 4:13}. **The loss is enormous; it always *is* with those you love.** It deserves whatever weight and worth our hearts have decided to give it. My experience as a shepherd of souls and counselor of crises has led me to believe quite often *Abba* uses the pain of the present to put us in touch with the pain of the past. I.e., to tap into the well of *ungrieved* grief most of us walk around with bubbling beneath the surface of the soul. And to relieve it, to allow us to pour it out, to process it, to forgive it if necessary, and to be comforted by His tender mercies {2 Cor. 1:3-5}.

Restoration, Redemption, and Renewal.

“Then I saw a New Heaven and a New Earth, for the first Heaven and the first Earth had passed away....” {Rev. 21:1}. Jesus “will wipe every tear from their eyes. Their will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away. He who was seated on the Throne said, ‘I am making everything new!’” {21:4-5a}.

This is restoration and redemption: “Behold, I am making *all things new*” — not ‘all new things.’ I’m banking on it. This was not something I just happened to throw out blindly in the midst of emotional outpouring. I’ve thought this through at length for several years, primarily because of the questions of so many grieving Saints. Yes, over the loss of someone and something as precious to them as a pet.

The passages in Revelation end on a note of Triumph, a *resounding* shout from the Halls of Heaven that evil is vanquished, darkness has been banished, a New Creation has come into being, *all* is well and all manner of things shall be well. **Forevermore.** They speak of many things, but uppermost in the minds of those who choose to believe they speak of Restoration and Renewal: ‘the action of returning something to a former person, place, or condition.’ In this case, our Universe’s {the ‘New Heaven and New Earth’s’} original intention: as perfect, pristine, sinless and absent of evil, a place where the beauty and glory and goodness of God shine undimmed!

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who keeps on asking *receives*; he who keeps on seeking *finds*; and to him who keeps on knocking, the door will *finally* be opened. Which of you, if his son asks for a roll of bread, will give him a round rock? Or if he asks for some fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are capable of *immense evil*, know how to give *good* gifts to *your* children, how much *more* will your *Abba* in Heaven give good gifts to those who ask Him!” — Jesus of Nazareth {Matt. 7:7-11}.

Our *Abba* specializes in mighty works of restoration and renewal. The question here is: Why, in a perfect Kingdom ruled by a perfect King with the wisest, most

gracious, most generous and loving heart ever imaginable, would He not restore to us those things which have brought us such holy joy, which have shown us such unconditional love, such fierce protection, such *undying* loyalty? Do they not reflect His glory in magnificent ways, often far more and far more faithfully, than we who are created “**in His image**” {Gen. 1:26-27}? **Indeed.**

The thoroughly Biblical concepts of restoration and redemption, the removal of the Curse and renewal of all Creation, healing and wholeness through the Resurrection of the King, are foundation stones of our theology here at J114M, the foundation stones of *any* ‘forward-thinking’ theology, any theology which aspires to an eternal perspective. **They are our only Hope as the Children of God.** Not sure if you’ve noticed, but true and genuine Hope — for joy, for peace, for Love and a Life *beyond* the walls of this world — is not exactly growing on trees. In fact, apart from the Kingdom of Grace and its Savior-King Jesus it can’t be found *anywhere* in this world!

But it *can* and *will* be found, fulfilled in Him, one glorious Day.

And that’s the point.

— Ric Webb
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