

PICTURE PERFECT: HOW GOD “SEES” OUR TROUBLES

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Have you ever heard someone describe a place, person, or an object, so precisely, so perfectly, that though you had never been there, met that person, or seen that thing, it felt as though you had? Once, while on vacation with my family, our friend Sue, introduced my family and me to Steve. Steve worked for the Jungle Aviation and Radio Service (JAARS), a division of Wycliffe Missions. Since I was on vacation, Steve proceeded to tell me of the place he and his wife were also going on vacation; a cabin up in the Smokey Mountains. Every niche, every corner, every nuance of this cabin was described by this man with profound clarity. I came away from the conversation feeling as if I *knew* that cabin. As if I knew the path to get there, knew the number of rooms, knew the colors of walls and furniture... and knew that God's peace would also meet me there.

Shortly before He was crucified, Jesus comforted His disciples by also describing a place. The place Jesus described was not a cabin, but a mansion in heaven. His disciples, His closest friends, were grieving the imminent death of Jesus, and longing to stay with Him. So Jesus reassures them: *“In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you”* (John 14:1). Thomas then asked: *“Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?”* (vs.5).

Like Thomas, you may long to know the way in a matter in your life. You may long to see a certain path, grasp a step in a decision, or gain clear direction. Unlike Steve's cabin rhetoric from the Smokey Mountains, you may not have a clear, orderly, precise picture of how these circumstances will work out...but you desperately need God to show you.

That same clear guidance, that same clear path in how Jesus comforted His disciples in John 14, is how He desires to reassure us today. He wants us first not to be troubled: *“Do not let your hearts be troubled”* (vs. 1). He tells us to come to Him for salvation and eternal life: *“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me”* (vs. 5 & 6).

Jesus then understands our human, natural desire to be able to “see” these things ahead of time. Even Phillip pleaded with Jesus: *“Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us”* (vs.8). But He emphasizes that it is through *belief* and *faith* that these things will come to pass: *“Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me?” “I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing”* (vs. 12).

Near the end of our vacation with the Wycliffe Missions folks, I remarked to my friend Sue: *“I enjoyed meeting Steve. I almost felt like I had been to that cabin.”* Sue answered me: *“I don't know if you noticed or not, but Steve is blind.”* No... neither I,

nor my any of my family, had noticed that Steve was blind. Steve's wife had picked out this cabin. With belief and faith in his wife's goodness, Steve was willing to listen, to follow, to go to this place that was prepared for him and his wife for a time away. In spite of his disability, as Steve trusted, he could "see" this place of rest, even to describe it vividly to total strangers.

Jesus' disciples struggled to picture this mansion in heaven, and struggled to picture how life could even go on without this One they loved. Steve would never physically picture the cabin in the mountains. Likewise, perhaps we cannot yet picture how God is working in certain parts of our lives. As Jesus concludes his discourse with His disciples in John 14, His words are true for us as well. As we choose Him as the path to life and to the Father, as we trust and believe in Him, we can have His peace. *"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you"* (John 14: 27). Furthermore, we can trust that He sees our circumstances. Faith in Him will not disappoint: *"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen"* (Hebrews 11:1).

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