

Everything is appropriate in its own time. But though God has planted eternity in the hearts of men, even so, many cannot see the whole scope of God's work from beginning to end.

(Ecclesiastes 3:11 *The Living Bible*)

the Journey

#3
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a scrapbook of life in Christ

MADE FOR SOMETHING BETTER

It's like walking along the mud flats in the bottom of a slough.

The muck beneath your bare feet sucks at every step, slowing your stride. The cold slime oozes between your toes, with each labored step pulling you down, pulling you down.

Something deep within you cries out, frustrated, convinced of your grasping notion that there is surely something better. Every morning you swing your weary bones out of bed, plant your feet down onto what you hope will be gossamer clouds of ease—only to discover that nothing has changed from the day before, and your feet sink down into the familiar brown muck.

You want to say, "I *deserve* better than this," but don't like the presumptuous sound of it. What you mean is that you were *made* for something better—that you are cut from better cloth than this. You acknowledge the Creator, and because He made you in His image, there is something profound and mysterious dwelling—simmering, percolating—within: a sense of

your part in God's grand scheme of man's eternity. Your part is small, admittedly, but not insignificant. He has placed within you a desire for Him and His ways; He has, through the sacrifice of His own Son, graciously given you a place with full rights in His own family.

You have enjoyed moments of sweet, intimate communion. You have, like sister Mary, sat enraptured at His feet, listening, letting His words and love seep into your very pores. Every part of you embraced the Lord and, secure in His elevating love, you left His presence driven not by mechanical

locomotion, but by the sheer power of His life. Your feet never touched the ground as you returned to live for Him, by Him, *to* Him.

But soon you found yourself, once again, treading not just upon the soil of earth, but down deep in its muck.

It's not inevitable, but it is persistent. Man may have been created with a heart yearning for God, but he was also created with feet of clay. Indeed, that paradox is the source of the believer's pain. Having been granted a glimpse into the ethereal

"lightness of being" of eternity with the Savior, our leaden steps in the muck of this world have become all the more disconcerting. We know better. We have *lived* better.

**"Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering."
(Matthew 5:23-24 nasbu)**

If Jesus' words are sound counsel when we have wronged a brother—and they are—then how much more pertinent they are when we have wronged Christ Himself. We are not to track the world's muck into our worship.

The life of a Christian is to be, by definition, Christ-centered. To avoid the path that takes us through the muck of the slough we are to keep our eyes—even while we still float in His heavenly realms—on the Lord. The sobering sight of His empty,

but blood-splattered cross is the caressing breeze that keeps us aloft. And if our gaze roams—if from the heights we begin to envy those who trudge the earthen path—and our feet sink into the sucking slough, then, on our way to the throne, we are to revisit the place of His sacrifice. For only there, in that awful, holy place, do we find the cleansing, restoring waters that will clean our feet of the world's mud, and lift us once again onto the Father's plane.

I thirst, Thou wounded Lamb of God,
To wash me in Thy cleansing blood;
To dwell within Thy wounds; then pain
Is sweet, and life or death is gain.

Take my poor heart, and let it be
Forever closed to all but Thee:
Seal Thou my breast, and let me wear
That pledge of love forever there.

How blest are they who still abide
Close shelter'd in Thy bleeding side!
Who thence their life and strength derive,
And by Thee move, and in Thee live.

What are our works but sin and death,
Till Thou thy quick'ning Spirit breathe?
Thou giv'st the power thy grace to move;
O wondrous grace! O boundless love!

How can it be, Thou heavenly King,
That Thou shouldst us to glory bring;
Make slaves the partners of thy throne,
Deck'd with a never-fading crown?

Hence our hearts melt, our eyes o'erflow,
Our words are lost, nor will we know,
Nor will we think of aught beside,—
My Lord, my Love is crucified.

(John Wesley)

A soul can never attain the knowledge of God unless God Himself in His condescension takes hold of it and raises it up to Himself. For the human intellect lacks the power to ascend and to participate in divine illumination, unless God Himself draws it up—in so far as this is possible for the human intellect—and illumines it with rays of divine light. (*The Philokalia*)

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