



Maurice Roberts

Several months ago, Peggy and I took a road trip that we dubbed our Bucket List trip to celebrate our fifty-eighth anniversary of marriage. Our goal was to see family and friends, but the list seemed to grow in number during each of our planning sessions. We finally decided to drive rather than fly to our destinations across the country, from North Idaho to the North Carolina coast and back home. We enjoyed visits with fifty-four relatives and another forty-two very personal friends from our previous decades of relationships as we crossed twenty-two states. We traveled for nearly two months over several thousand miles. Some of these connections were more intimate than others in terms of history, but the purpose of these stopovers was to update our relationships and to know each one better.

Our thoughts this week are centered along the theme of an intentional intimacy with our Lord, as well as coming to know the other person(s) in our life.

The photo above finds us standing in front of Mount Rushmore and four stone-faced men. We continue to live in Hayden, Idaho. After serving on the administrative staff of Anthem Friends Church (formerly Hayden Lake Friends) for several years, I retired at the end of 2012. We both continue to actively work with our Global Missions Committee and in mentoring younger people.

BIBLE READING: Ephesians 1:17-18

“I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better” (v. 17).

This “knowing” is profoundly more intimate than to “know about” someone. Paul prayed for us that we might know Jesus better. I can know about the president, or the coach of my favorite team, but not *know* them at all. I can know my neighbor by name, or the one sitting in front of me at church, but not really *know* that person.

In order for our relationship with Jesus to develop toward maturity, the apostle said he keeps asking God to give us wisdom and revelation so we can *know* Jesus better. We come to know only through the process of learning and caring and investing more into who Jesus is. He is our teacher and the adventure of getting to know him more and more will never come to an end.

Paul said in Philippians 3:10: “I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection.” This is the journey I am on. Can you subscribe to this kind of trip—to know Christ better?

SONG: I Love You, Lord, and I Lift My Voice

PRAYER SUGGESTION: Lord Jesus, teach me something today about your nature that will help me to know you better. Help my mind to be open to the truth of your Word and its application for me.

—Maurice Roberts

BIBLE READING: Ephesians 1:17-18

“I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the *hope* to which he has called you” (v. 18). A friend once paraphrased this to read, “My prayer for you is that your heart will be able to see through fresh eyes so that you can comprehend the reality of the hope that is yours.”

This hope is an assurance of total security, as opposed to “hoping” by crossing your fingers behind your back and throwing salt over your left shoulder. This hope is the security we are not able to document; that we cannot measure. It is not verifiable except by faith in knowing who holds the tomorrows as well as each today.

This hope gives us confidence to go on when the circumstances of life cause us grief or loss or failure. It is the knowing (remember yesterday?) that, with God in control, he has the whole world in his hands, including my world—today.

This hope assures us that we have the security of an eternity in the presence of our Creator God who loves us so much that God himself fulfilled his plan in order that our sins are not only forgiven, but thrown away as far as the east is from the west.

SONG: My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less (The Solid Rock)

PRAYER SUGGESTION: Lord, we want to be able to see your ways and your will through fresh eyes today. Deliver us from getting caught up in expectations of our own choosing.

—Maurice Roberts

BIBLE READING: Ephesians 1:17-18

Verse 18 continues with a second appeal, “I pray...that you may know...the riches of his *glorious inheritance* in the saints.”

And when does one become a saint? The apostle addresses his Ephesian letter to “the saints.” Wikipedia defines a saint as a person who is recognized as having an exceptional degree of holiness or likeness to God. We believe otherwise; our “saintliness” is not the result of anything we possess or anything we have done. It is only because of what Jesus did.

Is the writer saying that it is God who inherits us as one of his saints? Or is it we, as new saints by way of Jesus’ death on the cross, who inherit eternal life? Or is it a win-win relationship? Great relationships between two persons should always be a win-win.

An inheritance is the result of who you *are* and not what you have *done*. We remember that in Jesus’ parable about the lost son (Luke 15:11-31) it was clear that this guy didn’t deserve anything, but the father’s love allowed him to give his son his inheritance prematurely and overlook the son’s unworthiness.

Can it be that this is a mutual inheritance? Jesus inherits you and me because we have become a new person in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17), and we inherit eternal life because we have accepted Jesus’ sacrifice of dying for our sins. Jesus inherits us and we inherit him.

SONG: I Am Redeemed

PRAYER SUGGESTION: Lord, we want to allow you to jump-start our heart today so that we may rejoice over the inheritance you have so gloriously called us to experience.

—Maurice Roberts

BIBLE READING: Ephesians 1:19

In verse 19, the apostle's third appeal is, "I pray also...that you may know...his incomparably great *power* for us who believe." Again, the paraphrase says it this way: "so that you can comprehend his unlimited power that is available in and through you who believe in Jesus Christ."

We are endowed with a new power when we become God's forgiven child, a power that begins to indwell us with confidence in our belief system centered around Jesus' presence. It expresses itself in the confidence of who we now are by embracing the truth. We understand that this has nothing to do with abilities and talents, but only with the Holy Spirit's power working through us.

It is the confidence of Philippians 4:13: "I can do everything through him who gives me strength." I have faced spiritual battles that were not winnable except for the power of patience and persistence that comes through the Holy Spirit's presence. I have faced battles in the business world that could not be overcome except by the intervention of the Holy Spirit. Power coming from above overcomes circumstantial power.

SONG: There Is Power in the Blood

PRAYER SUGGESTION: Heavenly Father, all power is in your name. Make me aware today of your power working through me, not by my choice or effort, but simply by your own presence working through what I obediently do.

—Maurice Roberts

BIBLE READING: John 8:32 (MSG)

Jesus' words to each of us is to know what "truth" is and to be set free to "do the truth." Malcolm Muggeridge was a British journalist in the past century and these are his words: "What Christ offered was a larger freedom of the Spirit. He proclaimed as the true freedom the glorious liberty of the children of God. He called men to a service that is itself perfect freedom, releasing them from the grueling enslavement to their own egos and appetites. All other freedoms, once won, soon turn into a new servitude. Christ is the only liberator whose liberation lasts forever."

Freedom does not mean license to do my own thing. It means opportunity through the power of Jesus' presence to "do truth." This raises the question as to what truth is. As Christ-followers, we are called to live by his own words as recorded in Scripture. It is not the philosophy of being faithful to my own interpretation. This only becomes our own servitude.

The apostle James says: "Anyone who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins" (James 4:17). Knowing the truth is one part of the equation of obedience, but the heavier responsibility is to do it. Sin is the willful transgression of a known law of God.

SONG: Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone) (Chris Tomlin)

PRAYER SUGGESTION: Lord Jesus, we want so badly to be freed from the bondages that wrap us up, and legalism is one of the worst. We pray for a new dimension of freedom today that empowers us to enjoy the freedom to trust you and follow your perfect example.

—Maurice Roberts

BIBLE READING: Galatians 6:8-9

I was raised on a family farm where wheat, milo, and alfalfa were the primary crops planted on a regular basis. With each season's harvest a supply of seed grain was set aside for the next season. Never once did the field planted with wheat seed produce a crop of corn.

The apostle Paul warned the Galatian believers to not be deceived. "A man reaps what he sows," Paul said. Three principles are applicable in these words. First, sowing is necessary before there can be any reaping. It's our choice what we sow, and we reap what we have sown.

The second principle is that we will reap only after a period of waiting. Winter wheat is planted in the fall and the farmer waits several months until the following summer to harvest. I marveled at my father's calm patience during all those months of waiting and watching storm clouds roll in, or hail storms brewing. Yet, a farmer can only wait until harvest time.

Third, harvest always produces more than was planted. The one exception to this is when a storm or drought results in a destroyed or failed crop. I remember my father saying, during dry years, that we must be able to harvest at least enough to provide seed grain for the next planting.

Verse 9 says, "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." Sometimes the harvest is less than we hope for, but our hope is not limited to the crop production. It should also be a hope that is grounded in Who causes the crops to grow.

SONG: Bringing in the Sheaves

PRAYER SUGGESTION: Father, protect us from the human tendency to compare our success by "doing" good instead of patiently waiting and following your leadings.

—Maurice Roberts

BIBLE READING: 2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:17-20

“He [Christ] anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.”

Most every corporation has an official seal that is affixed to documents for the purpose of verifying its authenticity after a corporate officer signs it. Christ, our Redeemer, has set his seal of ownership on each one who makes that confession of faith in the price Jesus himself paid for our salvation. It provides a guarantee before the throne of God that we have become a new person in Christ.

“If anyone is in Christ he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God who reconciled us to himself through Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Verses 18-20 go on to say that “God has reconciled us to himself through Christ and given us the ministry of reconciliation....We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors as though he were making his appeal through us.” A major qualifying factor in being named ambassador is that the person is a citizen of the country which will be represented.

The theme for this week has been reflections on *knowing* and not just to *know about*. The seal of Christ on our heart is evidence that we do know Christ to be who he says he is, and know who we are because of who he is. What more do we need before we can be agents of reconciliation for other persons who are without hope or assurance?

SONG: He Reigns (Newsboys)

PRAYER SUGGESTION: Lord Jesus, we want our badge of honor, our seal, to be the living presence of Jesus who guides all we say and do and think today.

—Maurice Roberts