

The Lost Cat and Jesus

The winter of 2015 hit western NY with no mercy. Making national news, a tsunami of winter snowstorms struck Buffalo to NYC with a vengeance. Many became captives in their homes, while others were stranded at the side of the road waiting for help. It is a winter we won't soon forget.

My daughter and I were driving home during a recent blizzard, with dangerously low visibility. I clutched the wheel, trying to avoid the slight pull of the vehicle to the side of the road. It was dark, and the wind chill showed no sympathy. Engaged in conversation, Alyssa and I were anxious to get home and stay there. Suddenly, we noticed a small animal lying at the side of the road, covered with snow.

"Stop, Dad!" Alyssa yelled. "There's a cat lying on the side of the road!"

I shook my head. "Oh, it's probably just a rabbit or possum." Then I listed all the reasons why we couldn't turn the car around.

With tears in her eyes, she pleaded, "We have to turn back—we must! Please turn the car around!"

I argued, "What if the cat decides to bite you?"

She answered, "I don't care. I have to try to save it!"

I thought the animal was probably dead as I carefully turned the car around and pulled to the side of the road. Alyssa covered her face, and ran out into the frigid night gale. With a jacket in hand, she wrapped it up and rushed back to the safety of our car. Once inside we examined what turned out to be a kitten and noticed that it was bleeding from the eyes and mouth—the freezing temperatures had been slowly killing her. It was clear that by morning the cat would have been dead.

Alyssa spoke softly to the kitten and before long it began to purr. Once we made it home we placed her in a warm blanket and spoke loving words to her, letting her know she was safe. Then we gave her food, drink and plenty of love. Alyssa decided to name her Gracie.

Days later Gracie was running around the house enjoying the constant love and attention from our family and our other cats. Every time I sleep Gracie is beside me, and when I sit at my computer she is purring on my lap. Thanks to a daughter whose love and passion drove me to action, Gracie found GRACE and she was saved.

This incident reminded me of Christ Jesus who was not afraid to leave the ninety-nine to go after the ONE who was stuck in the briar. He is the Great Shepherd and His heart is full of love for lost sheep, no matter what their condition or the danger involved in reaching them. Many of the Lord's wounded children lay helpless on the road of life, terrified, humiliated, and without hope. They call out to those who pass by every day, but no one hears, because storms present a whole new set of risks for anyone willing to reach out. These ailing and wounded children have given up any hope of rescue. Their eyes are vacant—their cold, distant stares see nothing but more of the heartache that trapped them where they are. They've been injured in the fight and are too weak to go on. Will they ever have a place to rest and recover? Who will nurse the wounded back to health?

They believe life will always be a cold, cruel battle because that's the way it's always been. What brought this wounded child to collapse on the edge of the road of life? Could it have been their own poor choices, or were they victims of circumstance? Whatever the reason for their plight, God is raising up 'medics'—healers who are equipped with compassion and grace. Wounded children need grace-driven stretcher bearers, healers, and cheerleaders who believe in healing and are committed to helping them rise to fight again.

God is looking for those who will stop what they're doing and yell, "We need to turn around and go help. We can't let them die on the side of the road of life." Then they stop and take the warm blanket of His presence, wrapping them in the safety of His love.

Perhaps today you are that stranded one who is too wounded to go on. I can see the scarred hand of our Precious Lord tenderly reaching out to you. I see the tears of compassion as He weeps for you. His teardrops softly fall upon your head as you lower your eyes, afraid to even meet His gaze. The brokenness and wounds of the past are still visible when He lifts your chin, and with eyes full of love He looks deep into your soul and says these amazing words: "I will rescue you; I will heal you; I have made you whole! By my GRACE I have made all things new. You are my **child!**"

Our story has a happy ending, because Alyssa refused to take no for an answer, and I couldn't ignore the passionate plea that forced me to act with compassion. I had to stop, storm or no storm, danger or no danger, to rescue a dying kitten. Don't lost and helpless human beings deserve the same kind of tender compassion? Let's not close our eyes to the hurting around us, but choose to be Jesus with skin on and bring them in!

Steve Porter

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