

## Slices of Time

One day I went to visit with painter friend of mine to watch him work. I had seen those shows on television, where in the space of half an hour you saw a masterpiece created. So I was interested in seeing how a real person performed.

He welcomed me in, but warned me that I might not be able to understand totally his own personal creative process. As I looked around his studio, I saw many wonderful pieces that he had completed. But when I looked at his current project, I was confused about the plainness shown in the area of the painting that he was working on; there was nothing very outstanding about it, although other places on the canvas were so beautiful.

We were talking about his style and work habits when he received a telephone call. As he talked for a few minutes, I could tell that it was his son on the other end of the line. It seemed that there was nothing really important discussed, but I could feel their closeness by the tone of the conversation. You could see that my friend had become more animated, and had taken on sort of a glow as he talked to his son.

He kept working on the painting as he talked, and I saw that the part he had been working on was being transformed; the hues changed dramatically and other aspects were altered to the point that the effect was astounding. I wouldn't have believed it if I hadn't seen it with my own eyes. It was an amazing thing just on the surface of it; but then I found something much deeper as well.

When he hung up the phone, I asked him how this transformation in both his being and his art had happened. He talked about the joy he felt when he was contacted by someone who really loved him, especially his children. It was a moment when the world suddenly felt differently; there was sort of a burst of color for him when it happened. He regretted not being able to be near his family all of the time, and he explained about what he called 'slices of time', and how it affected his work and his life. These moments were like finding specks of gold or diamonds in the dirt, and he accepted each of these slices as a gift to be savored.

"It is just such a blessing to feel the connection with my children," he said. "I'm so lucky to have them. I could lose them at any moment. So when we have a special moment, even just talking for a minute or two, it feels magical. It is a beautiful event that is imprinted in my memory, and sometimes it makes its way to the canvas. It is a captured moment, a little snapshot of joy that I can put in my album. I feel like my creative force is suddenly freed for a moment, and the flow is unblocked. It's almost like I can fly. I don't know how it works, but I am left with something permanent, something I can keep for all time. It can't be painted over or destroyed."

"You can't replace the time that is lost when you can't be with your children for whatever reason. But you can make yourself as available and responsive as you can. I always tried to be consistent and dependable when it came to my family. You must glorify the memory of your contacts with them, instead of just letting them go by without any real notice, as many people do. You have to make the most of each moment so that you have no regrets."

We chatted for a while longer, and I left with my mind full of wonder at what I had seen. It dawned on me that at a higher level, we should feel the same "rush" when we commune with God. I remembered that Moses' face shone with a great light after he had been in the presence of God. Similarly, the face of Jesus was transfigured in similar circumstances. The exhilaration that we feel at times with God is a glimpse of what we will feel in heaven for all eternity.

We must realize that God does not always do earth-shattering things for us, but He is ever with us and there is always that potential for that power. We didn't have a chance to be with Christ while He was engaged in His ministry here on earth, but we can certainly savor the moments in which we now feel His glorious presence.