

The storyteller once told of a very interesting legend, of a woman taken by a king as part of a string of disposable property, to be used for one night and then thrown away. This woman, though, extended her life by telling stories that were so fascinating that the king kept her alive for a thousand and one nights. The stories told of such new paths, intrigues, and adventures that the king's mind became immersed in a new world of thoughts and values<sup>1</sup>.

My friend was in awe of this ability to tell stories with such force that his listeners never wanted him to stop. I felt somewhat the same desire for my writing. And both of us were inspired by a subject that carried that kind of power – Christ, and the incomparable depth of the love of God. Indeed, there is a parallel in the woman's story to that of Christ, who was meant to die on the cross one night (and did), but in doing so wrote a story that lives forever (because He arose)!

After listening to the epic tale of the storyteller, I thought of my friend the artist and teacher. I could see that in her way she had been trapped in her work for some years. There were demanding kings in her world as well. She endured by finding a way to create something new every day, telling a story in a different way, and sharing it with others that she saw needed encouragement. She was finally able to escape the “kingdom” and began to live free to pursue her art in her own way.

Another story in the storyteller's collection told of a merchant that gave food to poor children if they brought a special stone to trade; something that was smooth to the touch, or shaped in an interesting way, or contained a prettily-colored crystal<sup>2</sup>. The shopkeeper acted as if he enjoyed collecting such stones, and the exchanges kept the boys and their families fed. The children believed in the man's “hobby”, but as they grew up they realized how he had used a little subterfuge to help them out. The story ended in a description of the funeral of the aged tradesman, where each of those who had been blessed by the man, returned and each put a special stone in the dead man's hand. These stones spoke one of the greatest eulogies I have ever heard.

I thought of a similar tribute that had been paid to my friend from all of those whose lives she had touched. I knew many of her students kept with great pride the things that they had made under her encouraging influence. She inspired them to put their creations on display, and they responded while she was still alive. Over time those who had received things she had created or had helped them create came and offered their own stories of being helped, protected, influenced, and inspired by her. This was to me a living eulogy, a tribute of love that she could enjoy as she got older and became unable to keep up the normal pace of creating her art. The story that she had woven with the many threads of her work would not fade away quickly, and would linger for a generation or more after she was gone.

We are all moving through a never-ending story that reveals not just what we accomplished, but what (and who) inspires us. We can relate such a legacy to that of Christ, who wrote the everlasting story of grace and redemption – not only through His words, but in His life (and death). He ever lives, and we ourselves are carried along with the beauty of that story. He truly

is the grandest living legacy, and we bow before Him with the little stones of our worship that represent the best offering that we have, as we respond to His Great Sacrificial Love.

1. see, for example, The Peanuts Papers, Andrew Blauner, ed., p.71
2. see Paul H. Dunn, Seek the Happy Life, p.97ff

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