

In My Life – October 2002 (Written for the Dark Day of September 11th, 2001)

There are places I remember
All my life, though some have changed
Some forever not for better
Some have gone and some remain
All these places had their moments
With lovers and friends
I still can recall
Some are dead and some are living
In my life I've loved them all

This week our lives have been changed irreparably. Like Adam and Eve in the Garden, our innocence has been lost. But whereas Adam and Eve chose to eat of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, we had that fruit forced down our throats with each new report in the breaking news stories and pictures of Tuesday morning. And like Adam and Eve, we are shocked and surprised by our nakedness.

But even as God came to walk with them in the evening, so He continues to walk with us, despite the sense of loss and separation that is ours.

Along with the loss of their innocence, Adam and Eve faced the loss of life as they'd known it. We too, have lost life as we've known it; there can be no undoing what has been done to us and the pain that is ours as a result. By those acts we have been banished forever from the garden of innocence, safety, and abundance that was previously ours. We can only look wistfully back through the gates and glimpse what once was and no longer is - a sense of security that was ours simply because of where we lived - a sense that while the rest of the world might not be able to escape such evil, it would not come "nigh our dwellings."

Like Adam and Eve, we were wrong, not in being "beguiled" into sinning, but wrong in thinking it would never happen to us, wrong in thinking we were too powerful, intelligent, well-armed, experienced, and feared to have it come to us.

Like the Hebrews of Christ's time who anticipated a king who would deliver them from oppression and captivity, we were wrong in thinking that God would deliver us from oppressive events that have lead to our emotional captivity.

Like the disciples at Christ's death, we are grief-stricken, confused, and disillusioned, not because God has failed in any way, but because of our failure to understand how He works.

One needs only to read again the stories of the Bible to be reminded of the hardship, heartache, loss, and disappointment of the lives recorded there - to be reminded that God's ways are not our ways. Indeed, "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts," Isaiah 55:9.

What of the suffering of Adam and Eve when their son was murdered, or Abraham, far from home in famine and childlessness, or Joseph in the pit and the prison, or David with Saul trying to kill him, or Job as the lightning rod for the debate between God and Satan? Did any of them understand at the time the reasons for the heartaches that were

theirs?

In fact, the writer of Hebrews says:

"Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheep skins and goat skins, destitute, persecuted, and mistreated - the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground. These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised."

Or if these serve not as sufficient example, what about Jesus Christ Himself, who, as he hung naked on the cross, whipped, beaten, blood and spit running down his face and body, cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Perhaps we cannot now see past the death, destruction, and the suspicion that God has forsaken us - this blackness and bleakness that currently cloud the skies of our spiritual perspective even as the smoke and dust have clouded the skies of lower Manhattan and the Pentagon; perhaps we cannot now see clearly to an understanding of why this has happened and how a loving God could allow it. Yet, even as Paul said, "He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things?" (Romans 8:32)

For the Bible patriarchs and for our loved ones who suffered and died this week and for us alike, the story doesn't end with tragedy; this book has another chapter. The end of the earlier passage in Hebrews says "God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect."

God has something better planned for us. We haven't yet seen the fulfillment of it; in fact, we only understand it in part, but the Bible says Christ is the firstfruits of the fulfillment of that promise, and Moses and Elijah are reminders to us of its reliability even as they were to Christ in His hour of need.

Like a geode or thunder egg, both of which are formed under extreme circumstances, in this week's scenes of damage and destruction we may, for the time being and from the outside, appear unattractive. But like the geode, on the inside we contain a heart of multi-faceted beauty.

The images of destruction from this week that are forever etched in our minds are not who we are - they are what the enemy has done to us. Our true measure is found on the inside and is revealed, like the geode, as a result of our having been cut open. Our true beauty is seen now in all who have united and will continue to unite in the heroic acts of searching, rescuing, working, praying, giving blood, donating, counseling, and bringing to justice those who have tried to bring us down, yet who have not only failed, but have made us better in the process.

At times I have wondered if nobility, selflessness, and patriotism were dead in America; as a result of this tragedy, I see they are not.

Psalm 9:10 - And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.