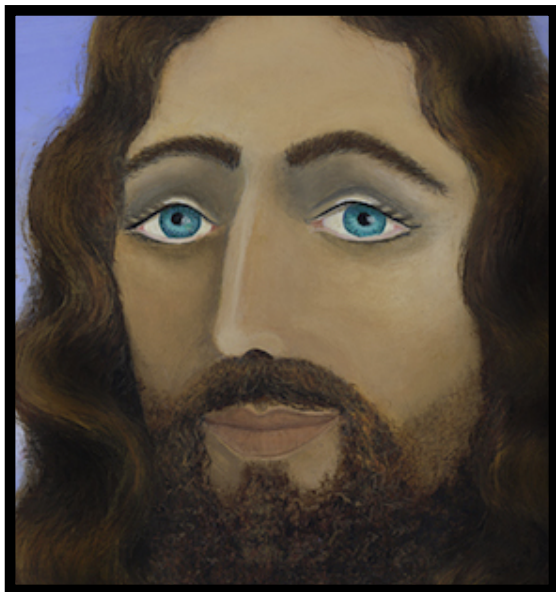


The Painting: Joy Comes in the Morning



January 26, 2017

May the Lord bless you with the deepest desires of your heart.

Well, it's taken me a few days to get this all together, but the Lord wanted me to encourage you with the story of how this painting came about.

As you may recall, I was finishing up the Tethered Thumb drives so that we had something to leave behind. This was before we got the great news that we had another three years, because of His mercy and more time in response to our prayers.

I had asked a very well-known artist who works in the motion picture industry if I could use his portrait of Jesus for the drives so people would be touched by His love in that difficult period in history. After numerous tries, the answer was, "NO." I tried to reason with them saying that this was like a time capsule and his portrait would be a very tiny file in the midst of year's worth of music and teachings. Anyway, I was crestfallen.

I went into prayer afterwards asking God to help me forgive and let go. It was hard, it really was. It was then that He said, "I can do better than that if you will work with Me." Oh let me tell you, I have only done about 10 paintings in my life, and every one of them was a mammoth project taking gobs of time and emotional energy. I am not an artist!!!

However, when I need a picture, the Lord has blessed me to execute it. But only on His assignment would I dare to try this. This was the first gift the Lord gave me, right after I became a Christian. You see, the only reason I took up photography - which I worked at for almost 30 years - was because I couldn't paint any further than a stick figure and maybe a heart. Even rainbows were impossible.

Then my black panther of avarice got the best of me when I thought I would need a lot of pastels. It was two weeks before they all arrived and got organized, along with pastel pencils. And I ended up with way too many and crumpling up at Jesus feet, confessing my avarice A-gain. Then He confirmed that He wanted me to use Acrylics and pastel. So again I went to the art store and was very careful what I got, this time.

So, I began the process of getting materials together and different renditions of the Shroud of Turin, some done by forensic artists. The night finally came, the moment of truth. I had shared what the Lord said to me with the channel and stuck my neck out - way out - boldly declaring that HE was going to do something even better. Not me, mind you!

I mapped out His features and projected that onto the acid free masonite coated with gesso. I carefully

marked the details with charcoal. Then I proceeded to begin to paint.

And I wanted to share with you. Norman Rockwell wrote a book on how to put illustrations together, and I used his technique, I studied it. And I used that and it was highly successful for me. So, that again I was the approach I was taking here.

But the real challenge was capturing His expression. You know, I knew the Lord would have to do this, there was no way I was going to be able to do it.

My first attempt looked like a cartoon...at least it looked like that way to me. I used several photographs of actors that captured a certain feeling about Jesus as I began the shading. My very first attempt, His eyebrows were raised. I thought, that's funny - why are His eyebrows raised? That's not right. So I re-did it and lowered His eyebrows. That for sure didn't look right! I wanted so badly to get some kind of loving expression in His eyes. I was getting very frustrated after about four nights at 6 hours apiece.

Then Ezekiel had a communion service just for me and at the end he said, "I feel like the Lord is going to really do something through you tonight." So, I enthusiastically set to work. I discovered my proportions on the face were not quite right. I had to redo the projection to get them lined up accurately. Almost at the end of the night, I started filling in a few details roughly. And something happened - the eyes said something, finally - but still like a cartoon. The Lord really did capture His facial expression, or at least a semblance of it. His eyebrows went up in a rather inviting way, kind of saying... "Well, are you Mine or not?" Or kind of like saying, "I am here - are you coming with Me?" and just a very knowing smile, very gentle, knowing smile.

Then I began working on the details. The eyes first. His eyes came really alive one night and I began to feel His presence very strongly in the draft. I needed a smile, but not too obvious. I thought, 'How in the world am I going to do that?' I finally hit on just the right expression. His beard needed texture and cheeks needed depth. It was beginning to shape up! But He looked too...harsh and Arabic with the strong beard...it needed to be softened.

When I gave Him a neck, He really began to feel real. But what would he wear? I got some lavender silk and draped it, looking for beautiful folds to paint. But then I realized they were too distracting. Really, more than anything I wanted His face and eyes to be the only attention-getting focus. Then I discovered His nose was about 3/4 of an inch too far to the left, so I had to redo His nose and cheeks.

After working on His shirt, I began the background. I started with clouds but they were a bit distracting. And I wanted the feeling of morning...'joy comes in the morning' was the theme, not clouds but a fresh new day. And so after redoing the background about 5 times, trying everything, I settled on a misty early morning - very, very subtle background.

Returning to the face, I realized the bridge between the eyes was too elevated, so I added some shading. Then along came the need for a little hair on His chest, as any Middle Eastern man would have. I didn't want it overstated...I'll tell you what - some of the pictures of hairy chests on Google were downright gross! But I finally settle on just a tiny bit of hair.

I redid His hair around His face several times. At first it was too contrasty, too wavy. Then it was too dark. Looking at it now, I can see it's not faithful to the portrait because I did darken it a bit on the digital

one that's up now - and that makes His face not as soft as in the original. So - stay tuned. There will be one more revision! Ohhhh, boy....

Then came time to photograph the painting, which they call image capture now. And right around the corner is a wonderful photo shop that did a superlative job on the digital capture. I couldn't have found anyone more competent - not even in NYC or San Francisco. I was thrilled.

So, that's the short story. Did I grow discouraged? Yes. Did I think of giving up? No - I couldn't, because I knew God could do this if I just hung in there. And true to His nature, He did! And besides, I promised you that I was going to do it - and I couldn't let you down.

I really don't know how it works. Grace is so invisible. Undetectable. So difficult to perceive when it's actually happening. I can only tell that He's been about His business through my fingers when I look at the finished product and exclaim, "You did it, Lord! You did it!"

Really it is my absolute delight to translate into music, words and images anything having to do with the love of God. With Jesus and His personality. When I became a Christian, all I wanted to do was tell the world about what He had done for me and who He is. And I thank Him for giving me this opportunity. Truly though, it is His painting. And if you want to see the part I did...well, look for the blemishes.

Lord, do You have anything You want to share?

"My precious Vessels unto Honor, I can do with you anything I want to. If you don't have the DNA to do it, I will transplant My DNA into your very physical being and you will have the talent necessary. I ask for only two things: a pure love for Me and a willing heart of faith. With these voluntary attributes from you, I can do anything - and much to everyone's surprise, I often do! You are not limited by past failures and boundaries you could never cross. As a matter of fact, you may not have been able to cross them, because I didn't feel you were ready - and the gift could have been your undoing.

"Music is an especially treacherous in a gift, because people begin to worship the artist and it can go to their heads very quickly. For this reason, there is much tempering and seasoning and in fact difficult events in the past of my musicians. They must carry the anointing to bring you all into My presence. This is a priestly duty, and not all live a pure and priestly life. That is why you are seeing older musicians raised up. They have lived through the fancies and vanities of the world and have come into a place of realization: only I am important.

"I wanted Clare to share this with you so you could understand that you are perfectly fit for any assignment I impart to you. Your skill level is not needed; your heart and surrender are. In fact, I place My desires in your heart. So I would ask you to look inside and recognize your longings. I have placed them there for a reason. As you discover what lies beneath that throbbing heart, you can bring it to Me to turn it into reality.

"I am waiting for some of you to discover yourselves and what I have for you. Seek Me until you find Me and I will give you the desires of your heart. Even as it is written, "Seek first the kingdom of God and all these things shall be added unto you."

"Remember, to bring you joy and fulfillment is truly My delight."

Heart Dwellers

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