Dear Lexie,

"When God has a plan, there is no stopping Him"

When one embarks on a journey one wants it to go without a hitch. However, there is always something that gets in the way, some hitch that rears its ugly head and puts a crack in the plans. I had such an experience a couple weeks ago.

My wife and I were invited to California to present a week's seminar for families. We were delighted to be able to share with others some practical tools to strengthen the family and have a happy home. It all started smoothly - we purchased the tickets to go out there without any problem and prepared the seminars. Heavy snow, between 10 and 18 inches, had been forecast for the DMV area on the day we planned to leave. I had heard about...
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March 8, 2014

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Armand Davilla, Soloist
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'snowmageddon' and was afraid of what could happen...

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Musical Notes:
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A musician develops a unique bond with her instrument whose worth is not so much tied to its monetary value, but rather to the intimacy of her connection with the instrument...

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An Education in Transcendence
A thought by Barry Casey

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Missed Last Week's Sermon?
When God Has a Plan, There is no Stopping Him

pesposito

When one embarks on a journey one wants it to go without a hitch. However, there is always something that gets in the way, some hitch that rears its ugly head and puts a crack in the plans. I had such an experience a couple weeks ago.

My wife and I were invited to California to present a week’s seminar for families. We were delighted to be able to share with others some practical tools to strengthen the family and have a happy home. It all started smoothly – we purchased the tickets to go out there without any problem and prepared the seminars. Heavy snow, between 10 and 18 inches, had been forecast for the DMV area on the day we planned to leave. I had heard about ‘snowmageddon’ and was afraid of what could happen. Two days before our scheduled trip I called the airline to get the status of our flight. They assured me that all was fine and that our flight would leave on time.

I was still doubtful about the status of the flight but trusted the airline to know what they were talking about. I called the airline again in the early morning on the day before our trip and was informed that all was on schedule but that I should call again before we drove to the airport. That afternoon I received a text letting me know that our flight which was scheduled to leave out of BWI at 6:20a.m. had been canceled. The airline rescheduled us to fly out at 1:20p.m. on the same day.

My wife and I had been praying that the seminar would help at least one family. On the morning of our rescheduled departure I received another alert which said that the flight had been canceled due to heavy snow. I looked out the window and saw more snow than I had ever seen in my entire life. We opened the front door to find the snow completely covering our front steps and halfway up our cars. It was a sight I had never seen before! I called the airline again and this time I could not get rescheduled until two days after the seminar was due to begin. The devil wanted us to give up and throw in the towel because he did not want anybody to hear the seminars. But God had a plan and when He has a plan, nothing or no one will stop Him from making it happen.

I called the church pastor and explained what was going on with the weather and he graciously accepted our delay. We finally flew out to California and began the seminar a day later. The Lord blessed our ministry and we saw His hand at work in the families there. We found out that the enemy had been attacking families, husband and wives, parents and kids all that week. However, we were told that at the end they came out victorious through God and the seminars.

God allowed us to be delayed for a reason, and although I don’t know what that was and may never know, I trust Him enough to know that He had it all in hand. Whenever the enemy tries to discourage you while on a journey, remember that if it’s in God’s plan for it to happen it will happen. I always go to Philippians 4:6 that says, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. He is the One that will take care of everything and give us all peace, because when He has a plan for you it will happen. Jeremiah 29:13 says, “… for I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” Amen to that!

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Musical Notes: Freedom from the Law

Jamie Jean

“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.”
(Romans 8:1-2)

A musician develops a unique bond with her instrument whose worth is not so much tied to its monetary value, but rather to the intimacy of her connection with the instrument. After twenty years of disciplining my body and mind to play the oboe, it has become an extension of who I am and a vital means of communication—connecting me with people where words fail.

Through countless hours of practice, I have slowly adapted to my instrument’s demands in order to produce the best possible outcome (for me) in a performance. Music enables me to express every degree of emotion I feel, often more naturally than if I had to explain the same sentiments with language. When I perform, I am truly free—no thoughts, no worries—just music, and emotion.

“When the law of God is written on our hearts, our duty will be our delight.” (Matthew Henry)

This was not always the case. My students’ struggles remind me of the difficulties that only years of training, patience, dedication, and practice can overcome. At first, a student struggles with just the basics of playing. Then as they progress, these initial challenges give way to more advanced challenges, and the basic steps are no longer a burden. Sometimes, a student can become overwhelmed by all the details and ‘rules’ of playing, and give up in defeat. But the student that never gives up and keeps earnestly seeking to follow the guidance of her teacher, to the best of her ability, reaps the fruits of her labor. As a teacher, there is nothing more rewarding to me than watching a student reach the point where she forgets the rules, lets go, and just makes music.

“Does that mean that by trusting in God, we do away with the law? Of course not! In fact we affirm the importance of the law.” (Romans 3:31)

Does this mean that the ‘laws’ of playing the oboe are no longer in effect? No, the same fingerings and techniques apply, the performer simply no longer has to think about them. What once was a struggle has become second nature. To hear a master musician perform (or any type of artist), is to hear someone who has perfected their technique to such an extent that the performer and instrument are lost to the music—music being the fruits of their labor and the ultimate goal of their life’s work.

“That thing is Freedom: the gift whereby ye most resemble your Maker and are yourselves parts of eternal reality.” (C.S. Lewis, The Great Divorce)

I would love to reach this stage with God’s law in my life. Yet in the words of Walter Hilton “I feel myself so far from true feeling of that I speak, that I can naught else but cry mercy and desire after it as I may.” I hope that after years of seeking to be more like Christ, a new heart will develop in me that is wholly obedient to God’s law by its very nature. I seek to make His law and character a natural extension of who I am, and my actions a reflection of the fruit of the spirit. I will always be bound to the law, but with God’s grace, I will no longer be burdened by the law—freeing me to enjoy the peace of heart and blessings from God for an eternity. I am an imperfect person, who, without Christ, is fatally flawed. My relationship with music is only a dim reflection, a parable, of what is possible if I allow the work of the Holy Spirit to be done in my life’s journey.

“That the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.” (Romans 8:21)
While I know very little about figure skating, something about Yuna Kim’s performance during the winter Olympics touched me. As the Ice Queen flew and danced across her stage, she radiated a freedom in her art that I suspect few are ever lucky enough to experience—she appeared to abandon herself. Yet I know that once she was a little girl who could barely walk. We stand in awe of the final product, and forget the journey.

Watch her performance>>

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Adventist HealthCare President to Leave After 14 Years of Service

After serving as president and CEO of Adventist HealthCare for 14 years, William G. “Bill” Robertson announced Monday he will be leaving the Gaithersburg, Md.-based, organization April 4. Robertson will become the president and CEO of MultiCare Health System, a not-for-profit based in Washington state.

“It has been an honor to work with the executives, employees and physicians across Adventist HealthCare who each day demonstrate our mission with their compassionate and high-quality care,” Robertson said. “The organization has a very bright future and is well-positioned to be a leader in the state as more of an emphasis is placed on preventive health and wellness.”

Robertson, 54, was named president and CEO of Adventist HealthCare in April 2000. During his tenure, Adventist HealthCare grew to become the largest provider of healthcare in Montgomery County and one of the largest private employers in the state, with more than 6,200 employees.—

Courtesy of Columbia Union’s Visitor Magazine.

Full story here

Story by Tom Grant

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Barry Casey

“An education in transcendence prepares us to see beyond appearances into the hidden realities of life—beyond facts into truth, beyond self-interest into compassion, beyond our flagging energies and nagging despairs into the love required to renew the community of creation.” — Parker Palmer, To Know As We Are Known

That we are alone in this world is a fact which is confirmed by movies, reality shows, advertising, and economic self-help theories. That this is, in fact, false is something we must learn.

I don’t mean alone in merely a physical or social sense. I once had a colleague, a recent arrival from China, who went to a public gathering on the 4th of July in Baltimore and felt a sense of panic because she was in a crowd numbering only a few thousand. It’s all in what you’re used to apparently.

This kind of aloneness is not that of the weary commuter on the train gazing without seeing as the stations blur past. Not even Philip Seymour Hoffman, dying on the floor of his bathroom, a needle stuck in his arm, was alone in the way we are told is the norm.

This kind of aloneness is deeply American, although other cultures are sensing its allure. It’s a strand of ideological DNA which causes moral palsy in some: the hand outstretched to help twitches, the cup of cold water crashes to the floor.

We are taught to be unique at an early age. Ralph Waldo Emerson, in an essay entitled “Self-Reliance,” drummed the message in with eloquence and fervor: “Whoso would be a man, must be a nonconformist.” And, “Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind.” And again: “What I must do is all that concerns me, not what the people think.”

There is something thrilling in these lines, and in many others that Emerson writes. He hated the mob, the unthinking crowd so easily swayed by demagogues and charlatans. He wanted people to think for themselves, to see themselves as individuals.

What the nation needed in 1841, he thought, was a sense of the present, not the past. Europe was the past: for all its intellectual glories it could not be the template for America. The country needed to build itself from the ground up and the way to do it was to boldly go where no nation had gone before. A nation of individuals, each one pursuing his or her course with a sturdy vigor, was the ideal.

But somewhere along the way that centrifugal honesty snapped its line and arced away. What we see now is not Emerson’s neighborly self-reliance, but what Parker Palmer calls an endless power struggle between the self and the world. Each self is convinced it is in a battle for survival, with dominance over the world the only possible goal.

Palmer has been a teacher for decades, a Quaker by choice, and a thoughtful critic of an educational system that trains people for arrogance rather than service.

He suggests that our hunger for knowledge arises from two sources: curiosity and control. Curiosity for its own sake is amoral, a need to know that shrugs off any restraint. Control “is simply another word for power.” Together, curiosity and control can generate knowledge that leads us toward death, not life.

But there is another kind of knowledge that contains just as many facts and theories as the knowledge we now possess, but that springs from something other than mere curiosity and control. “A knowledge born of compassion aims not at exploiting and manipulating creation but at reconciling the world to itself (To Know as We Are Known 8).”

This is not a sentimental warm fuzzy kind of love, he notes, but a tough love—“the connective tissue of reality”—and we find it most often in community.
Palmer talks about “community” a great deal, a word that splays out in so many directions these days that it’s hard to grasp what it means. I can sense that it’s a good thing, though, and as spiritual qualities go, it tops any wish list I could draw up. I’m just not sure how it comes about.

Palmer ties it to transcendence, a word often misunderstood. We need to think of transcendence as not being drawn up and out of life to an eternal realm, but as a sideways impulse, a breaking in of the Spirit which breathes hope and trust into us. That’s the kind of transcendence which happens in community, a practical notion of love with its feet on the ground and its heart aflame with Jesus incarnate—God among us.

I get a much clearer sense of what ‘community’ can mean when Palmer speaks of a “discipline of mutual encouragement and mutual testing, keeping me both hopeful and honest about the love that seeks me, the love I seek to be (To Know as We Are Known 18).”

At Sligo I have found community in the study group I belong to, Believers and Doubters. For years we have prayed together, argued together, studied the Bible and books about it together, laughed and suffered together, and suffered the loss of members together. I would not trade it for anything. It has been an “education in transcendence.”