

Woman in the Park

The woman was sitting quietly on the park bench. She

overlooked a quiet pond. The wind was blowing quietly. Everything about that moment was quiet. Except her soul.

She was in great distress. None of her dots were connecting. Her lover had walked away. Her dad had died. Mom was very ill. She had no siblings with whom to bond. She had lost her job of ten years. Money would soon trickle to nothing. She was behind on her rent payments.

She bowed her head to talk to God - but she really wasn't sure anymore that there even was such a person, thing, force, or whatever God was supposed to be.

As time passed, all around she saw children playing. Lovers holding hands. Grandmothers pushing kids in strollers. She had none of that. How long had she been sitting there? She had lost all track of time.

A woman walked by and smiled. The woman on the bench lifted her head and feigned a return expression. The other woman stopped. And slowly returned.

"Hey. Are you all right?" she asked, sensing pain in the woman's eyes. The woman on the bench said nothing at first. She slowly looked up, a small tear trickling down one cheek.

"No. No, I'm not."

The other woman sat down. She put a hand on the distressed woman's leg. It felt good to be touched, thought the quiet woman.

"Do you want to talk about it?"

"No. I can't," came the response.

The other woman said that was okay. She remained by her side. She continued to touch her. She, too, looked out onto the park...the quiet pond...listening to the wind. Minutes passed.

"You know," said the second woman. "I used to come to this park years ago. I haven't been here in a long, long time. But I used to come here a lot. To listen."

"What did you listen to?" asked the first.

"I wasn't sure at first. I just knew that if I listened long enough, God would speak to me."

"How did you know it was God?" asked the first.

"Oh. You know. You know because a great sense of calm and peace comes over you. And I often even walked away with an action plan or two. And they often worked."

"I don't know. I don't know if that will work for me."

"It may not at first," said the woman still communicating through touch as well as words. "But if you are willing to accept that it might, you are one step closer."

"There is chaos everywhere," she continued. "I've lived that chaos. Every single moment. I tried to escape that chaos by taking my own life. And then someone said, 'meet me at the park'."

“Who was that person?” asked the first woman.

“Good question. It wasn’t a person at all. It was simply a voice directing my path. So, I came here. Sat. Listened. You can do this. But you don’t have to do it alone. I think that was the key message I heard as I, too, looked onto that pond.”

For the first time, the shaken woman turned to look into the other woman’s eyes. She saw someone who cared. She saw hope. She embraced the woman and actually smiled.

She continued to come to that park bench every week. But now she came with a purpose. To listen.

Commentary

This takes a theme similar to the genesis for Me, Jesus, a Beer, and a Cigar. It portrays a woman seeking a silent place to gather herself. Figure things out. While lonely, she still wants to be alone because she can’t handle all that is coming at her and all that has happened in her life. I attempt to portray quiet because, for me, that is when I most often get ideas and hear God speak.

There are some subtleties with the second woman I don’t want you to miss. First, she comes without being announced—much like God. She sees a need to show compassion and recognizes a hurting soul. She admits she has not been to that park in a long, long time, a place where many years ago she, too, came to find answers. What possessed her to be there that day? And she intuitively knows that physically touching the other woman will create a powerful connection. I often believe that among our five senses, touch can be the game changer. So, the woman touches her almost from the start and doesn’t stop—analogous to how Christ touches us and doesn’t stop even if we are unwilling to listen.

At one point, the listening woman realizes that she, too, needs to be quiet as both women gather themselves and let their thoughts and emotions percolate. In an era when many of us believe that doing more and more, constantly being active and in motion, is the way to keep ahead of all that is coming at us, this entry shows the necessity of seeking the quiet.