

The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter

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His Patient Silence

When Jesus was captured by the mob on the Mount of Olives He was taken to the house of the high priest where the guards mocked, beat, blindfolded Him, and demanded, "Prophecy! Who hit you?" Luke's account says that many other insulting things were said to Him, but not a word of reply is recorded. It was a solemn moment in His trial when, in all the confusion and cross-examination of witnesses, the high priest asked Jesus, "'Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?' But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer" (Mark 14:60-61).

What a tense, nearly heart-stopping moment it must have been—every eye fixed upon the Prisoner, every spectator waiting with bated breath for His reply. He spoke not a word. With the calm that flowed from unbroken communion with His Father, He heard the blasphemy, the insults, the ridicule. Despised and rejected by men, "He was oppressed and afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so He did not open His mouth" (Isaiah 53:7).

In Debrecen, Hungary, there is a museum built specifically to house Munkacsy's stunning triptych: Christ on the Pavement, Christ before Pilate, Christ on the Cross. Tears rushed to my eyes as we entered the immense room—three scenes, each filling an entire wall from ceiling to floor. The figures are life-size, the facial expressions of the spectators running the gamut from smugness and satanic glee to agonized love. In the first panel Christ stands erect and quiet, surrounded by a motley crowd. In the second, He has been stripped by His jeering captors and clothed in the purple robe. The crown of thorns has been jammed onto His brow. Still He stands, perfectly composed, as Pilate, with folded arms and knitted brow, wrestles with his soul-ripping dilemma. In the last, the face of Jesus is lifted to heaven, His mouth slightly open. Is it the tormented human cry of dereliction, "Why hast Thou forsaken Me?" or is it, perhaps, the final victory

of spirit over flesh, His "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit"?

"For the transgression of my people He was stricken.... It was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer" (Isaiah 53:8, 10). *It was the Lord's will to crush Him.* Ought we not to meditate on that when we are tempted to ask why God allows us to suffer? We live in a fallen world, a world desperately in need of redemption. Jesus was not a stoic or indifferent or impervious. He bore *our* griefs. He carried *our* sorrows—bore them and carried them in a human body that felt every pain, heard every insult flung against Him, read the expression on every face, yet kept His perfect patience. "Shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?" (John 18:11).

Jim Elliot, age twenty-two, wrote, "I think there is nothing so startling in all the graces of God as His quietness. When men have raged untruths in His Name, when they have used the assumed authority of the Son of God to put to death His real children, when they have with calloused art twisted the Scriptures into fables and lies, when they have explained the order of His creation in unfounded theories while boasting the support of rational science, when they, using powers He grants them, claim universal autonomy and independence, He, this great silent God, says nothing! His tolerance and love for His creatures is such that, having spoken in Christ, in conscience, in code of law, He waits for men to leave off their bawling and turn for a moment to listen to His still, small voice of the Spirit. Now, after so long a time of restrained voice, bearing in Almighty meekness the blasphemies of His self-destroying creatures, now, how shall break upon the ears, the consciousness, hearts, and minds of reprobate men the voice of One so long silent?

"It shall thunder with the force of offended righteousness; rage with lightning bolts upon the seared consciences; roar as the long-crouched lion upon dallying prey; leap upon, batter, destroy, and utterly consume the vain reasonings of proud humankind; ring as the battle shout of a strong, triumphant, victory-tasting warrior; strike terror and gravity to souls, more forcefully than tortured screams in the dead of night!

O God, what shall be the first tones of Your voice again on earth? And what their effect? Wonder and fear, denizens of dust, for the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with battle-cry, with the voice of the archangel, and the trumpet blast of God Himself—made more terrible, if that could be, by the long suffering of His silence" (from the entry of November 29, 1949, in *The Journals of Jim Elliot*, Revell-Baker).

In the meantime, Heaven is silent. "Yes," writes Sir Robert Anderson, "but it is not the silence of callous indifference or helpless weakness; it is the silence of a great sabbatic rest, the silence of a peace which is absolute and profound—a silence which is the public pledge and proof that the way is open for the guiltiest of mankind to draw near to God."

"For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him" (1 Thessalonians 5:9-10).

What a thrilling hope—that we may live together with Him in heaven! But think of this—we may live together with Him *here* and *now*, a daily walking with Him who loved us and gave Himself for us.

Perhaps these thoughts may help our meditations during Holy Week.

Singing in the Rain

A radio listener tells me she met a man whose convictions matched hers. He was everything she had hoped for. After five months he dropped out of sight. Eight years later she was engaged to another. After some time he confessed that he simply was not ready for marriage.

"The pain my heart was put through is, as you well know, hard to describe. But we serve a God of comfort and even beyond that, a God of *joy!* Indescribable joy. I had determined in my heart that I would not give in to depression. I've always said that there's an element of pleasure in depression, making us want to dwell in the pain. 'The weapons of our warfare are divinely powerful,' and praising the Lord became my weapon. I never cried at work (that was the Lord's doing) but as soon as I got in my car, torrential rains would come pouring down, along with feelings of rejection and humiliation. I never let that last longer than it took my hand to push the tape into the tape player, and with every ounce of strength I had, I would start (by forcing

myself) to sing praises to Jesus. In a matter of a couple of minutes or less, His precious Holy Spirit would flood my heart in an unspeakable surge of joy and power and peace! I would come home and continue. I knew I had to hold on to my Father's hand at a time like that. In a few months (maybe weeks) my heart was completely healed and restored! Praise the Lord!"

Forcible Shakings

Among the myriad tales of sorrow that my mail brings are those of parents to whom God has given a child with special needs. I am awed to read of the amazing grace whereby some of those parents respond to such a gift. Jackie Karsh of Mt. Vernon, Washington, sent a photo of her precious Joanna, thirteen—microcephalic, blind, mentally retarded, unable to do anything for herself. She has had countless surgeries and hospitalizations, and must be fed by a tube. Her father became a Christian because he was confronted with something he could not fix.

C.S. Lewis wrote to his friend Owen Barfield, "Only these forcible shakings can deliver us from worldliness." The Karshes love Joanna. "We have all learned more about the heart of Christ because of her than we have from any sermon," Jackie says. "Once I said to the Lord, 'I wish I had a prayer partner today.' He spoke to my heart very clearly—'You have Joanna.' I was 'blown away,' as the children say, but I took her hand and we prayed... We are a family who has a handicapped child but we're not a handicapped family! People ask, 'How is this affecting your other children?' I answer, 'Very well.' They know that if anything ever happens to them, their family will care for them, and they are and will be loved unconditionally. Once at a dance I saw my son Byan ask a girl in a wheelchair to dance. She accepted, and he danced next to her, holding her hand. I weep with gratitude every time I think of it."

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Freddie Holmes of Peyton, Colorado, wrote to tell me about her two handicapped sons. She asks us to join them in a prayer of *thanksgiving*. Merlin is fifteen, born with bilateral club foot deformity. This he accepts, by the grace of Jesus Christ, with wit, humor, and wisdom, rather than with self-pity. Miles, fourteen months old, was born with multiple random anomalies for which he has had surgery and will have another in March. Freddie asks us to thank God for the baby's sweet disposition, and for a successful outcome, God willing, to the second surgery.

"Please pray also," she asks, "that we as a family will continue to recognize the *hidden eternal gifts* [emphasis mine], under the temporary facade of human suffering, with which we have been blessed. Our girls, Corinna, eighteen, and Luella, eleven, and Tessa, six, are of sound body. Pray for their continued spiritual growth through knowledge, faith, and obedience to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Thank you."

Forcible shakings. I read such stories with awe (and shame), and I remember the solemn words of Jesus, "I tell you this: anything you did for one of my brothers here, however humble, you did for me" (Matthew 25:40).

The Other Side of Misery is a selection by George MacDonald in *The Wind from the Stars*, a little gem of a book, 365 selections from his writings which, alas, has just gone *out of print*. But I could not omit it, since it follows so beautifully the foregoing pieces.

"It seems to me, also, that in thinking of the miseries and wretchedness in the world we too seldom think of the other side. We hear of an event in association with some certain individual, and we say—'How dreadful! How miserable!' And perhaps we say—'Is there—can there be a God in the earth when such a thing can take place?' But we do not see into the region of actual suffering or conflict. We do not see the heart where the shock falls. We neither see the proud bracing of energies to meet the ruin that threatens, nor the gracious faint in which the weak escape from writhing. We do not see the abatement of pain which is paradise to the tortured; we do not see the gentle upholding in sorrow that comes even from the ministrations of nature—not to speak of human nature—to delicate souls. In a word, we do not see, and the sufferer himself does not understand, how God is present every moment, comforting, upholding, heeding that the pain shall not be more than can be borne, making the thing possible and not hideous."



Just to keep you abreast of the aging process—seventy now—here's E.E. herself, taken by Kimberly Slaughter in September, 1996.

Prayer

"Lord! When I am in sorrow, I think on Thee. Listen to the cry of my heart, and my sorrowful complaint. Yet, O Father, I would not prescribe to Thee when and how Thy help should come. I will willingly tarry for the hour which Thou thyself hast appointed for my relief. Meanwhile strengthen me by Thy Holy Spirit; strengthen my faith, my hope, my trust; give me patience and resolution to bear my trouble; and let me at last behold the time when Thou wilt make me glad with Thy grace. Ah, my Father! Never yet hast Thou forsaken Thy children, forsake not me. Ever dost Thou give gladness unto the sorrowful, O give it now unto me. Always dost Thou relieve the wretched, relieve me too, when and where and how Thou wilt. Unto Thy wisdom, love, and goodness, I leave it utterly. Amen."

J.F. Starck, 1680-1756

The Proof of Love

It is not difficult to talk about loving God. It is easy to write about it, sing about it, even pray about it. But

Jesus said, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me will not obey my teaching" (John 14:23-24).

The love by which one person puts his very self at the service of another, for that other's sake, is the bond that unites them. For in so willing the good of his beloved, the lover makes *that good* his own as well. And in their sharing of that good, the two are one without ceasing to be two. Self-giving love, to God and to others, is the only way to fulfillment and joy.

If I Condemn You

In Lubeck Cathedral, Germany, is this inscription:

Ye call Me master and obey Me not;
Light, and see Me not;
The Way, and follow Me not;
Wise, and hear Me not;
Rich, and petition Me not;
Eternal, and seek Me not;
Friend, and trust Me not;
Lord, and serve Me not;
Powerful, and honor Me not;
Just, and fear Me not;
If I condemn you, blame Me not.

Keep in Touch

Are you moving? Getting married? Leaving school? *Don't forget to send us your change of address.* The post office DOES NOT FORWARD third class mail like the Newsletter. *Please remove your address label below and send it with your new address to:* The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter, Post Office Box 7711, Ann Arbor, MI 48107-7711.

Travel Schedule March - June 1997

March 14-15 Chambersburg, Pa., First United Methodist Church, (717)263-8491, or Peggy Shank, (717)264-1147.

March 21 Vineland, N.J., Faith Bible Church, (609)691-3460.

March 21 Plumsteadville, Pa., Christian School, (215)766-8073.

March 22 Doylestown, Pa., Covenant Church, (215)794-7909.

April 5 Westfield, Mass., Evangelical Church, Sylvia Wallis, (413)572-4661 or (413)562-1504.

April 18-19 Atlanta Metro Area, Phyllis Maxwell, (770)935-0005.

April 26 Chicago, Ill., Moody Women's Day, Jo' McCarthy (312)329-4402.

April 28-30 Elizabeth, Ill., Triple Creek Ranch, (815)858-2435.

May 4-7 India, Women's Prayer Fellowship, Tamil Nadu.

June 5, 6 Beijing, China; Holly Sheldon, Phone (65)562-5554, FAX (65)563-5554.

June 7-8 Ulaan Baatar, Mongolia, Candice Purnell, Phone/FAX 976-1-358518.

June 14 Grenville Christian College, Brockton, Ontario, (613)345-5521.

June 15-21 (Family reunion)

June 30 Taichung, Taiwan Missionary Fellowship, Walter McConnell 886 (7) 363-8364.

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