

Tunnels

The date was Friday, September 8, 2000. Thomas and I had both just retired and decided to take a once-in-a- life-time trip to Oberammergau, Germany in order to see the Passion Play.

According to legend, the black plague was ravaging Europe. In 1633, the people of Oberammergau prayed to God to save them and, in return, they promised to put on a play every 10 years to commemorate the passion of Jesus. With but a few exceptions and/or delays (involving war and, this year, a pandemic), the village has kept its promise.

Within the first couple of days of our bus trip, we became aware that Ginny (another traveler on the bus) was afraid of tunnels, which was really a bad thing since we had a whole week to spend in the Tyrolean Mountains of Austria. It wasn't surprising, then, when several people had Ginny in mind when we hit the first long tunnel on our way to see some famous person' castle...probably "Luney Ludwig's." Ginny was sitting in the front seat of the bus, and Tom and I were sitting near the rear.

I figured it would be a good idea to say a prayer for her as soon as we were immersed in the darkness of the tunnel, but the prayer turned into a song which kind of "sang itself". It was a song about how fear wasn't from God and how He would lead her out of the darkness into the light. It was really quite pretty, and it kept going through my head for the entire trip through the tunnel. At the time, I remember feeling the hand of God on me...sort of like saying "yes"...or "thanks"...or something...

When we emerged into the bright sunlight, Ginny looked back at me, smiled, and nodded. I gave her the OK sign and blew her a kiss. She mouthed the words, "Thank you."

Tom asked me how I thought Ginny was doing.

"She's just fine," I said.

"How do you know?"

"Because God gave her a song for the tunnels so she wouldn't be afraid."

"Oh...that's nice," he nodded.

Later, I made some excuse to go up to the front of the bus; and when I did, I told Ginny that I had prayed for her and that God had given her a song. It had her name on it, so I couldn't sing it to her because it was her song. So, if she began to feel afraid, she was to close her eyes and hum...and God would sing the song to her.

After the next tunnel, Ginny came back to our seats to talk with us.

“I did what you said,” she explained. “When I started to panic, I closed my eyes and tried to hum...but I tried to hum songs that I knew. And for some reason, I couldn’t seem to do it! Then I finally gave up, and suddenly there was this beautiful song...in my mind...one I’d never heard before. The song was about how I shouldn’t be afraid because even if the mountain were to fall down on top of me, God would lift me up and out of the mountain. And suddenly I wasn’t afraid anymore. You know? I don’t think I’ll ever be afraid of mountains again!”

“No, I don’t think you will,” I smiled.

Later, God reminded me that “The Lord is my strength and my song” ...and to go look at the reading for that day. It was Psalm 40: “He has pulled me out of the horrible pit...[and] He has put a new song in my mouth.”

So...who caused that miracle? I don’t know...a whole busload of people had Ginny in mind when we went through that tunnel. But, I do know this: “When two or three are gathered in my name, I will be among them,” said Jesus ^[Matthew: 18: 20]; and a whole busload of people certainly meets that requirement. Maybe everyone had a hand in the asking, but the Lord God made it happen, because as long as there’s love, caring, or compassion between people, Jesus (“The Light of the World”) will be there, too...even in the midst of a dark tunnel.