

The Game's Afoot

A simple game of Hide and Seek: you lean against a tree, eyes closed, and count out loud, “1, 2, 3,” Do you remember what it was like to be the seeker?

Even as you counted, you could hear the scattering of players, the running, the giggles, and an occasional “You can’t hide here! There’s no room!” “Shhh! Be quiet!” Eventually, the sounds diminished, except for the slow cadence of the numbers and the sound of leaves rustling in the breeze. “...13, 14, 15...”

Standing still seemed to take such a very long time; but, in a game of Hide and Seek, there were rules: you can't go and search until you've finished the count. Only then are you allowed to open your eyes and leave the place where you've been standing.

I was very good at hiding and seldom caught; so, of course, I was very seldom the Seeker. Even so, I remember waiting. The memory of it fills my senses so completely that, for just an instant, I'm taken back in time...to the sun beating down on the back of my neck and the smell of wild blackberries as I lay hidden in among their thorny branches...

I'd spotted this place many days before and knew how difficult it was for anyone to find me here. The wait and the sound of lazy insects lull me once again into a wandering state of mind...

I wonder if we're always playing some kind of game, though not always one with such an unmistakable beginning. Sometimes, the game begins without our even knowing it; sometimes it starts when we grow tired of playing other games. This game—the one that we are playing now—was started many years ago. The object is to find a certain hiding place, but be forewarned: It's very hard to see, even though it's close at hand.

The Mountain above the Water Line

I looked from a long way off, from a different perspective in time and space, and saw you sitting there... a tired and sad expression in your eyes. I wanted to reach out somehow and fix things...to make everything all right. But I couldn't. So, I'm inviting you, now, to come to this place.

I live in a house in the middle of a high meadow, and there are wild flowers all around. It's a quiet place, faraway from cities, warm and peaceful. The strange thing is that during the winter, outside and surrounding this meadow, even though a storm rages and the snow can drift to depths of fifteen feet or more, here on this mountain, the faint smell of flowers still mingles with butterflies on the breeze; and the clear stillness of the air is broken only by the buzzing of bees and the occasional cry of a bird in flight.

Sometimes, the wild creatures, such as fox and bear and bobcat, come out of the storms to collapse in the warm, sweet smelling grass. Their wounds are healed and their hearts are gentled, and they don't seem to mind one another's company at all, often lying side by side, peacefully, in the sun.

Yesterday, I saw a she-wolf drag herself into the meadow, half dead from starvation and covered with raw, ugly wounds; but today, she's lazing about, her eyes are bright and her coat is rough and shining. And there's no sign at all that she'd ever been hurt. She can leave any time she wishes; and, for awhile, a piece of the meadow will surround and stay with her.

Please come and visit, my friend. Don't get that stubborn look on your face that I know and love so well. There's no need to weather the storm alone. My Father's mountain is a beautiful place and you can come at any time; but I think that winter is best. Come in the winter if you can...or better still, just before winter begins, because that's the time when miracles are most easily seen. [From The Stewardship Papers (TSP)]

The rules of *Hide and Seek* have changed a bit since childhood. They now include a movement of the mind (instead of just the body), a seeking of ideas (instead of other children) and a seeing with the heart and mind (instead of with one's eyes). I didn't know the rules and went in search of something without really knowing what I sought....which, by the way, makes it very difficult to

identify when it's found.

“God’s Mountain” is to people what “people’s mountains” are to fish; because living in the world, rather than in heaven, is a lot like living in the water rather than on dry land. It’s limiting; it lacks clarity and light, and those living in the water have no conception of what the world above the water line is really like...or even if such a place exists. Underwater creatures have to look straight up to get an undistorted view of what's above the water line; and even then, they wouldn't see a lot. At any other angle, the light from up above would be deflected back, making the water line appear as a silver ceiling to their world, the end of their universe, or a *vault to those who see things from below*.

To fish, the tallest mountains must have seemed to have no tops—their view of towering cliffs stop sharply at the water line, you see. Until, that is, a tiny fish took one small chance and “stuck its neck out,” so to speak, then crawled up onto land. We are the product of those who have broken free from watery limitations, and we now know that the mountains in the light and air don't have flat tops, that they support a totally different way of life than what is found beneath the sea. And if a fish can overcome the limitations of its world, then so can we.

But, limitations come in many forms, some as limiting to us as the water line is to fish. In general, though, deliberately choosing to “move on” can be just as difficult for those who are secure in "where they are" as it is for those who are not. After

all, an object at rest tends to remain at rest...no matter why that object was at rest in the first place. We may choose to stand our ground... but the ground, itself, is moving.

Nothing in this universe stands still. The continents move beneath our feet, while the earth encircles the sun. Even the solar system journeys around the galaxy as the galaxy moves away from its point of origin. In a similar way, the foundations of our ideas are moving, too, sometimes without our even noticing. We may seem to be standing still (may even want to be standing still), but we are like the continents themselves: sometimes moving apart from one another, sometimes merging back together, again, in order to create mountains...or, metaphorically, an uplifting of new ideas.

In other words, there are times when we will be moved, whether we choose to be or not, while at other times, we can decide for ourselves when it is time to move on. Each of us is different. I'm a meanderer and love to wander through colorful meadows of fresh new ideas; however, some might become impatient with this way of moving and are more of a let's-get-on-with-it type of individual. If you've read this far, perhaps you're a bit like me.

However, regardless of how, when or why we move, if we chose to move in the direction of God's Holy Mountain, our perspectives will begin to change in some unexpected ways. We might even end up developing a new way of

breathing...like growing lungs instead of gills...and discovering (like the dolphins) that we can never completely return to the water below without coming up occasionally for a breath of air. Or is it a breath of Spirit? I suppose it depends on the kind of *vault* under which we've been living...or hiding?

Still and all, for a fish, it might be worth taking the risk of crawling up and out of its watery wilderness, because the sight above the water line is so incredibly breath-taking that such a creature might be willing to give up his old life in order to gain that new one. And perhaps, such a being couldn't help but come back and tell others what he had seen. Maybe that's why Jesus said, "*Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.*" [Mt. 4:19]

Maybe that's why there are days when we hear a voice crying out in this wilderness of ours "Ready or not, here I come!"

Rewritten, April 27, 2014.