

IDENTITY MATTERS

INCARCERATION CERTAINLY PLAYS INTO OUR IDENTITY. BUT I DON'T NECESSARILY DEFINE INCARCERATION STRICTLY FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF BEING BEHIND THESE WALLS. MANY OF THE CHAINS THAT BIND US ARE OUTSIDE OF THESE WALLS. THIS INCARCERATION IS GENERALLY THE RESULT OF THAT TYPE OF INCARCERATION. BEING INCARCERATED BY WOUNDS WE RELIEVE IN LIFE. WOUNDS WE CHOOSE NOT TO ADDRESS BUT RATHER SEEK TO MEET OUR NEEDS THRU DYSFUNCTIONAL BEHAVIORS. ALCOHOL, GAMBLING, SEX, MONEY, DRUGS, WORK, RELIGION, FOOD, & FITNESS ARE JUST A FEW OF THESE BEHAVIORS. SADLY THESE ONLY BRING MORE EXTREME BROKENNESS TO OUR LIVES. SO HERE'S A PIECE OF MY STORY.

MY NAME IS BENNY. I TEND TO DIVIDE MY LIFE INTO TWO HEADINGS OR AT LEAST I USE TO. THE FIRST HALF BEING HEAVEN AND THE SECOND HALF BEING HELL. NOW THAT IMPLIES THAT MY LIFE IS OVER, THANKFULLY, IT IS NOT. IN FACT IT REALLY HAS JUST... WELL, LET'S LEAVE THAT FOR LATER. LET'S GO BACK FOR A BIT.

YOUNG AND FREE, INNOCENT AND IGNORANT, WINGS SPREAD LEAPING FROM THE NEST. CHILDHOOD, HIGH SCHOOL, TRADESCHOOL, WORK, MARRIAGE, NEW CITIES, AHH... NEW PHILOSOPHIES

EXPLORATION, INVENTION, DISCOVERY, ENLIGHTENMENT. CARE, COMPASSION, CONCERN, AND EMPATHY. THE SPIRIT SOARS WITH YOUTH. SOARS WITH HOPE IN THE WORLD IN WHICH WE HAVE BEEN CREATED. DREAMS ARE REACHABLE, ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE!

ONE CHOICE ALTERED MY JOY, MY HOPE, MY LOVE, AND ULTIMATELY MY PEACE. A SINGLE EVENT IN MY LIFE CHANGED ITS VERY COURSE. I VIOLATED MY MARRIAGE AND LEFT MY SOUL-MATE, MY WIFE.

LIFE HAS FOUND ME DEEP AND TWISTED, DEEP AND TWISTED I HAVE FOUND LIFE. I AM A JUNKIE, 25 YEARS NOW. MAINLY, A JUNKIE OF LIFE, OF EXPERIENCING LIFE. EVERY EXPERIENCE IN LIFE IS A TREASURE, A TREASURE WE CAN CARRY THRU LIFE. WEALTH IS A FUNNY THING, PERCEPTION IS EVEN FUNNIER.

I AM FIFTY YEARS OLD. I HAVE NO CAR. I HAVE NO HOUSE. I HAVE NO I.R.A. OR 401K. MOST CALL ME POOR. I BELIEVE THE OPPOSITE.

I AM ONE OF THE WEALTHIEST MEN ALIVE, SEE I HAVEN'T HAD A DRIVER'S LIC. FOR 23 YEARS NOW, SO I HAVE LITTLE NEED FOR A CAR. I HAVE BEEN IN 41 OF THESE GREAT UNITED STATES, SO A HOUSE, NOT REAL PRACTICAL FOR ME.

WEALTH EQUALS JOY, MONEY PLAYS A VERY LITTLE PART. EVERYDAY IS AN OPPORTUNITY THERE IS WEALTH AVAILABLE EACH NEW DAY. YOU JUST HAVE TO LOOK AT IT RIGHT.

SINCE THAT SINGLE EVENT, THE DAY I BROKE MY OWN HEART, I HAVE LIVED PRETTY FAST AND HARD. MIND YOU, ALWAYS STOPPING, STOPPING TO SMELL THE ROSES I HAVE FOUND ALONG THE WAY. SOME BRIGHT AND BEAUTIFUL, SOME OLD AND WITHERED, SOME TATTERED AND TORN, AND SOME THAT HAVE YET TO BUD TO BLOOM. WANDERING THROUGH THE LAND, THROUGH GOD'S BEAUTIFUL CREATION, STOPPING STRANGERS TO SHAKE THEIR HANDS. SEARCHING FOR SOMETHING, SOMETHING THAT CALLED ME. SOMETHING THAT ECHOED EVEN THRU MY OPIATE FILLED HAZES. SOMETHING THAT IDENTIFIED ME.

IN JANUARY I WILL TURN 54, I STARTED WRITING THIS WHEN I CAME TO PRISON JUST OVER 3 YEARS AGO. I GOT A BIT TO GO YET BUT I HAVE A FOUNDATION OF JOY, HOPE, AND PEACE I STAND ON. I AM A GREATER SINNER THAN MOST, CERTAINLY NOT A PREACHER. THIS IS ONLY MY STORY, BUT IT, I BELIEVE IS ALL OF OUR STORIES.

ON THE SIXTH DAY GOD CREATED MAN IN HIS OWN IMAGE, LOVE. IN THE GARDEN, AS

A CHILD OF GOD, HE POUROD HIS LOVE UPON US MEETING ALL OUR NEEDS. AS A CHILD OF GOD OUR PURPOSE WAS TO LOVE GOD ABOVE ALL ELSE, MULTIPLY AND LOVE OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS AS WE LOVE OURSELVES, REPLENISH THE EARTH, AND TO HAVE DOMINION OVER EVERY LIVING THING (GEN 1:28). WE DIDN'T KNOW INSECURITY. WE DIDN'T KNOW OF OUR NAKEDNESS. WE WERE SECURE IN GOD. WE HAD DAILY COMMUNION WITH GOD. HE CAME TO US DAILY, CAME WHEN WE CALLED, WE FELT OUR SIGNIFICANCE OVERWHELMINGLY DAILY. WE UNDERSTOOD WHO WE WERE, IN RESPECT TO THE WORLD, TO GOD, AND TO EACH OTHER. LOVE SURROUNDED US. EMANATED FROM EVERY ASPECT OF THE GARDEN. IMAGINE THE LION LAYING WITH THE LAMB, THE EAGLE FLYING WITH THE DOVE, EVERY BEAUTIFUL BLOSSOM OF THE FIELD EMITTING SCENTS OF LOVE. AND ULTIMATELY WALKING HAND IN HAND WITH OUR CREATOR DAILY. TALK ABOUT BELONGING WE BELONGED TO GOD AND KNEW IT, FELT IT! NEVER EVEN QUESTIONED IT. EVERYTHING WAS AS ITS SUPPOSE TO BE. WE COULDN'T HAVE EVEN DREAMED OF WHAT WAS TO COME.

THE FALL. IN ADAMS SIN THE IMAGE OF GOD WAS LOST TO US. CREATION

BECAME PERVERTED AND WARPED. WE BEGAN WONDERING THE EARTH SEARCHING FOR SOMETHING, SOMETHING THAT ECHOES THRU A LONG AGO MEMORY. SOMETHING THAT CALLS US; EVEN A LONG AGO KNOWLEDGE, A TRUTH. A TASTE OUR TONGUES ONCE KNEW, FRUIT FROM THIS TREE OF LIFE.

THE FALLEN WORLD WOUNDS AND HURTS. IT DOES, EVEN THE INNOCENT, THE UNDESERVING, SOME OF US AS INNOCENT CHILDREN, SOME OF US AS MISTAKEN ADULTS. IT JUST IS.

THRU GRACE MY DAUGHTER CAME TO SEE ME IN PRISON (BEFORE COVID). MY DAUGHTER FROM MY EX-WIFE, WHOM I WAS BASICALLY WITHOUT A RELATIONSHIP WITH FOR 25 YEARS. SHE CAME AND REMOVED A BARRIER I HAD PLACED BETWEEN MYSELF AND CREATION. I CARRIED A SELF HATRED OF MYSELF, CARRIED IT SINCE MY MISTAKE, THAT ONE CHOICE THAT ALTERED THE COURSE OF MY LIFE. HATING THE CREATION WAS HATING THE CREATOR. I WAS SO BLIND WITH SELF HATRED I JUST NEVER SAW IT. PERCEPTION IS A FUNNY THING. AS I FOUND PURPOSE AND WORTH AGAIN, MY CHILD SHOWED THAT I WAS WORTHY OF LOVE. IN HER FORGIVENESS I FOUND THIS SELF HATRED CRUMBLING. AND

GOD'S LOVE REACHED ME. WHEN THE LOVE OF CREATION TOUCHES YOU EVERYTHING CHANGES. WHAT A POWERFUL GOD WE HAVE. AND TO THINK EVEN GREATER THAN THAT, ALL HIS POWER IS DIRECTED BY, ONLY HIS LOVE. HIS LOVE FOR US.

IT'S BEEN A LONG AND WINDING ROAD, I WISH I COULD SHARE IT ALL. BUT I AM GRATEFUL THAT I FOUND MY WAY BACK TO CREATION, TO THE GARDEN, TO GOD. I CERTAINLY KNOW AND HOPE THAT SOME OF YOU CAN FIND YOUR WAY BACK TOO! AFTER 25 YEARS OF PAIN, MISERY, AND SORROW; OUT OF NOWHERE CAME A BEAUTIFUL JOY, AN IDENTITY, AN ORIGINAL IDENTITY OF SELF. FREE FROM INCARCERATION, FREE FROM THE CHAINS OF THIS WORLD THAT ONCE BOUND ME SO TIGHTLY. FREE TO BREATHE, FREE TO REACH, FREE TO DREAM AGAIN. IDENTITY MATTERS!

② & ♡,
BENNY

