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## Waking the Dead

### Chapter Five

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#### The Weight of Your Glory

The Lord their God will save them on that day  
as the flock of his people.  
They will sparkle in his land  
like jewels in a crown.  
How attractive and beautiful they will be!

(Zech 9:16-17)

Those who look to him are radiant;  
their faces are never covered with shame.

(Psalm 34:5)

“Have you no other daughters?” “No,” said the man. “There is a little stunted kitchen wench which my late wife left behind her, but she cannot be the bride.” The King’s son said he was to send her up to him; but the step-mother answered, “Oh no, she is much too dirty, she cannot show herself!” But he absolutely insisted on it, and Cinderella had to be called. She first washed her hands and face clean, and then went and bowed down before the King’s son, who gave her the golden slipper. Then she seated herself on a stool, drew her foot out of the heavy wooden shoe, and put it into the slipper, which fit like a glove. And when she rose up and the King’s son looked at her face he recognized the beautiful maiden who had danced with him and cried, “This is the true bride!” The step-mother and two sisters were horrified and became pale with rage; he, however, took Cinderella on his horse and rode away with her.

Its one of the best parts of any story – is it not? – to see the hero or heroine unveiled in all their glory. To have them (finally) rise up to their full height. Mocked, hated, laughed at, spit upon – Cinderella is the one the slipper fits, she’s the one the prince is in love with, *she’s* the true bride. Just as we are. We the ransomed Church are the Bride of the King’s Son, are we not (Rev \*\*)? We’ve been chosen by him. We are the object of his love. “You have stolen my heart with one glance of your eyes” (Songs 4:9). This fairytale is *true*. I love it that in this passage from the original Cinderella, the King’s son *insisted* she come out of hiding. Though her family would keep her in the cellar, he’ll have none of that. Come out. You are mine now. Let your light shine before men. No more hiding.

Still, if I’m honest, I appreciate the story from a distance. The thought of *me* being called out of hiding is... unnerving. I don’t think I want to be seen. I remember one night, years ago, after a performance I gave in the theatre brought the audience to its feet – what actor doesn’t want a standing ovation? – I remember now that I *ran*. Literally. I bolted for the door afterwards, so I wouldn’t have to talk to anyone. I’ll wager you feel the same about being unveiled. You probably can’t imagine there being a glory to your life, let alone one that the enemy fears. But remember – things are not what they seem. *We* are not what we

seem. You probably believed that your heart was bad, too. I pray that noxious gas from the pit of hell is beginning to fade away in the light of God's truth. And there is more.

Not only does Christ say to you that your heart is good, he invites you now out of the shadows to unveil your glory. You have a role you never dreamed of having. There's the beautiful scene towards the end of Joseph's life, where he, too, is unveiled. The very brothers that betrayed him to slavery as a boy are standing before what they believe is an angry Egyptian lord, equal in power to Pharaoh himself, their knees knocking. The silver cup of this dreaded lord was found stashed away in their luggage as they headed out of town – placed there by Joseph himself, as a ruse. Now Joseph interrogates them till they squirm, deepening the plot by using an interpreter as if he doesn't understand Hebrew, pressing them hard. Finally, unable to hold back his tears, he *reveals* himself. "I am Joseph! Is my father still living?...So you shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt...and you shall hasten and bring my father down here" (Gen 45:3, 13). This is who I really am! Tell him about my glory! Amazing.

Much to everyone's surprise, Peter is unveiled at Pentecost with quite a sermon and brings 3,000 converts into the church. This from the man who denied Christ, three times, in his hour of need. Peter's buddies had to have been thinking *whoa - where did that come from?* And of course, Jesus himself, the carpenter's son, is unveiled on the Mount of Transfiguration for who he really is – the King of Glory. In a beautiful mythic parallel, Aragorn son of Arathorn and true heir to the throne of Gondor is finally unveiled in the third book of Tolkein's trilogy, aptly titled *The Return of the King*. For years upon end he's merely been known as Strider, a Ranger, living out in the wilds doing no one really knows what. (Can anything good come out of *Nazareth?*) The chief of the Dunedain, the last great king of the race of men, Aragorn comes forward to take his rightful place.

Thus came Aragorn son of Arathorn, Elessar, Isildur's heir, out of the Paths of the Dead, borne upon a wind from the Sea to the kingdom of Gondor; and the mirth of the Rohirrim was a torrent of laughter and a flashing of swords, and the joy and wonder of the City was a music of trumpets and a ringing of bells. But the hosts of Mordor were seized with bewilderment, and a great wizardry it seemed to them that their own ships should be filled with their foes; and a black dread fell on them, knowing that the tides of fate had turned against them and their doom was at hand...But before all went Aragorn with the Flame of the West, Anduril like a new fire kindled, re-forged as deadly as of old; and upon his brow was the Star of Elendil.

The day has come and the Morning Star has risen, never to set again. This unveiling, this coming into your glory, this is inevitable for the ransomed heart. If you'll recall, Moses put a veil over his face, first to hide his glory, then to hide the fact that it was fading away. That, too, was a picture of a deeper reality. We all do that. We have all veiled our glory, or someone has veiled it for us. Usually some combination of both. But the time has come to set all veils aside:

Now if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory, so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, fading though it was, will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious?

Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold. We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to keep the Israelites from gazing at it while the radiance was fading away.

And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit (2 Cor 3:7-8, 12-13, 8).

We, too, are in the process of being unveiled. Created to reflect God's glory, born to bear his image, he ransomed us back so that we shall reflect that glory again. Every heart was given a mythic glory, and that glory is being restored. Remember the mission of Christ: "I have come to give you back your heart and set you free." For as St. Irenaus said, "The glory of God is man fully alive." Certainly you don't think the opposite is true. How do we bring God glory when we are sulking around in the cellar, weighed down by shame and guilt, hiding our light under a bushel? Our destiny is to come fully alive. To live with ever-increasing glory. This is the Third Eternal Truth every good myth has been trying to get across to us. Your heart bears a glory, and your glory is needed...now. This is our desperate hour.

### **No Good Thing?**

In an attempt to explain the biblical doctrine of sin, we've let something else creep in. You'll hear it come up almost automatically, whenever Christians talk about themselves. "I'm just a sinner, saved by grace." "I'm just clothes for God to put on." "There isn't anything good in me." It's incredibly common this mindset, this idea that we are no good wretches, ready to sin at a moment's notice, incapable of goodness and certainly far from any glory.

Its also unbiblical.

The passage people think they are referring to is Paul in Romans 7:18, where he says, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing...." Notice the distinction he makes. He does *not* say, "there is nothing good in me. Period." What he says is that "*in my flesh* dwelleth no good thing." The flesh is the old nature, the old life, crucified with Christ. The flesh is the very thing God removed from our hearts when he circumcised them by his Spirit. In Galatians Paul goes on to explain that, "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature [the flesh] with its passions and desires" (5:24). He does not say "I am incapable of good." In fact, just a few moments later, what he discovers is that "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death" (8:2).

Yes, we still battle with sin. Yes, we still have to crucify our flesh on a daily basis. “For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the [sinful nature] you will live” (Romans 8:13). We have to *choose* to live from the new heart, and our old nature doesn’t go down without a fight. I’ll say more about that later. For now the question on the table is: Does the Bible teach that the Christian is nothing but a sinner – that there is nothing good in us? The answer is NO! Christ lives in you. You have a new heart. Your heart is good. That sinful nature you battle *is not who you are*. Twice, in the famous chapter of Romans 7, where Paul gives a first-person angst about our battle against sin, twice he says “but this is not my true nature. This is not my heart.”

As it is, *it is no longer I myself* who do it, but sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature...Now if I do what I do not want to do, *it is no longer I* who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it...For in my inner being I delight in God’s law;” (7:17-18,20)

Paul is making a crucial distinction. This is not me; this is not my true heart. Listen to how he talks about himself in other places. He opens every letter by introducing himself as “Paul, an apostle.” Not as a sinner, but as an apostle, writing to “the saints.” Dump the religiosity; think about this *mythically*. Paul, appointed as a Great One in the Kingdom, writing other Great Allies of the Kingdom. How bold of him. There is no false humility, no groveling. He says, “Surely you have heard about the grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed to me...” (Ephesians 3:2-5). Paul is unashamed to say that he knows things no man before him knew. He even assumes they’ve heard about him, the mysteries revealed to him. That is part of his glory. His humility comes through clearly, in that he quickly admits that it’s all been a gift, and in fact, a gift given to him *for others*.

And listen to how he talks about us. “You shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life” (Phil 2:15-16). As Shawn Mullins sings, we’re born to shimmer; we’re born to shine. You are *supposed* to shimmer. “Let your light shine before men,” as Jesus said. All this groveling and self-deprecation done by Christians is merely shame masquerading as humility. Shame says, “I’m nothing to look at. I’m not capable of goodness.” Humility says, “I bear a glory for sure, but it is a *reflected* glory. A grace given to me.” Your story does not begin with sin. It begins with a glory bestowed upon you by God. It does not start in Genesis chapter three, but in Genesis chapter one. First things first, as they say.

Certainly you will admit that God is glorious. Is there anyone more kind? Is there anyone more creative? Is there anyone more valiant? Is there anyone more true? Is there anyone more daring? Is there anyone more beautiful? Is there anyone more wise? Is there anyone more generous? You are his offspring, his child, his reflection, his likeness. You bear *his* image. Do remember that though he made the heavens and the earth in all their glory, the desert and the open sea, the meadow and the Milky Way, it was only after he made you

that he said, “now this is *very* good.” Think of it: Your original glory was greater than anything that’s ever taken your breath away in nature.

As for the saints who are in the land,  
they are the glorious ones in whom is all my delight. (Psalm 16:3)

God endowed you with a glory when he created you, a glory so deep and mythic that all creation pales in comparison. A glory unique to you, like your fingerprints are unique to you, like the way you laugh is unique to you. Somewhere down deep inside we’ve been looking for that glory ever since. A man wants to know that he could be brave; he longs to know that he is a warrior; and all his life he wonders, “Have I got what it takes?” A woman wants to know that she is beautiful; she longs to know she is captivating; and all her life she wonders, “Am I lovely?” As the poet Yeats wrote,

If I make the lashes dark  
And the eyes more bright  
And the lips more scarlet  
Or ask if all be right  
From mirror after mirror  
No vanity’s displayed:  
I’m looking for the face I had  
Before the world was made

Yes, that’s it. When we take a second glance in the mirror, when we pause to look again at a photograph, we are looking for a glory we know we were meant to have, if only because we know we long to have it. We remember, if only faintly, that we were once more than what we have become. Our story didn’t start with sin, and thank God, it does not end with sin. It ends with your glory restored. “Those he justified, he also glorified” (Romans 8:30). And “in the meantime,” you have *been* transformed and you are *being* transformed. You’ve been given a new heart. Now God is restoring your glory. He is bring you fully alive, because, as Irenaus said, the glory of God is man fully alive.

### **Under a spell**

“Well then, if this is all true, how come I don’t see it?” Precisely. Exactly. Now we are reaching my point. The fact that you do not see your good heart and your glory is only proof of how effective the assault has been. We don’t see ourselves clearly. Have you forgotten your fairy tales?

In *The Silver Chair* (the third story of the Narnia series), two English schoolchildren – Eustace and Jill – are summoned into Narnia to find the missing Crown Prince of that kingdom. Years earlier, Prince Rilian was abducted by a witch, placed under a spell and taken to her underground kingdom. Once a day, for an hour, the prince would wake from her magic spell and realize where he was and what had happened. But during those hours he was chained to a silver chair so that he could not escape. All the other hours of the day he was “free,” because he was convinced that the witch was good and he was her grateful

slave. A no-good wretch. The children – with the help of Puddleglum the Marshwiggle – free him from the chair and the power of the spell.

Then he turned and surveyed his rescuers; and the something wrong, whatever it was, had vanished from his face. “What?” he cried, turning to Puddleglum. “Do I see before me a Marsh-wiggle – a real, live, honest, Narnian Marsh-wiggle?” “Oh, so you have heard of Narnia, after all?” said Jill. “Had I forgotten it when I was under the spell?” asked the Knight. “Well, that and all other bedevilments are now over. You may well believe that I know Narnia, for I am Rilian, Prince of Narnia, and Caspian the great King is my Father.” “Your Royal Highness,” said Puddleglum, sinking on one knee (and the children did the same), “we have come hither for no other end than to seek you.”

“How long then have I been in the power of the witch?” “It is more than ten years since your Highness was lost in the woods at the north side of Narnia.” “Ten years!” said the Prince, drawing his hand across his face as if to rub away the past. “Yes, I believe you. For now that I am myself I can remember that enchanted life, though while I was enchanted I could not remember my true self.”

Though while I was enchanted I could not remember my true self. That’s it exactly. We are under a spell. We are alert and oriented times zero. We have no idea who we really are. Whatever glory was bestowed, whatever glory is being restored, we thought this whole Christian thing was about...something else. Trying not to sin. Going to church. Being nice. Jesus said it was about healing your heart, setting it free, restoring your glory. The Religious spirit has tried to veil all that, put us under some sort of spell or amnesia, to keep us from coming alive. As Pascal said, “It is a monstrous thing...an incomprehensible enchantment, and a supernatural slumber.” And Paul said, it is time to take that veil away.

But when anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. (2 Cor 3:16-18)

Freedom. Transformation. Glory. Do you see it? I am not making this up – though I have been accused of making the Gospel better than it is. The charge is laughable. Could anyone be more generous than God? Could any of us come up with a story that beats the one God has come up with? All the stories that we tell borrow their power from the Great Story he is telling. Take the movie *The Lion King*, ignore the “circle of life” stuff – the whole myth is borrowed from Christianity. There once was a beautiful kingdom. But it was stolen by the evil one. Its glory has been marred. Badly. Now its time for the true king to come back and take over. But Simba – the lion heir to the throne – doesn’t believe who he is. His father was murdered when he was young, and the enemy blamed it on Simba. Simba ran away, and after years of losing heart he winds up living with a wart

hog and a near cat whose highest ambitions in life are breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Then one night, Simba's father appears to him in a vision:

Mufasa: Simba.

Simba: Father?

Mufasa: Simba, you have forgotten me.

Simba: No! How could I?

Mufasa: You have forgotten who you are and so forgotten me. Look inside yourself, Simba...you are more than what you have become.

Simba: How can I go back? I'm not who I used to be.

Mufasa: Remember who you are. You are my son, and the one true king. Remember who you are.

Simba finally throws off the veil of shame and self reproach and goes back to take the kingdom that is rightly his. As a result, his glory and the glory of the realm are restored. Something similar happens towards the end of *The Matrix*. Neo joins the forces seeking to set the world free. He has left behind the identity of Thomas Anderson, computer guy, nobody special really. He's taken many risks, lived by faith. But the real moment of his glory comes when he finally turns to face his enemy. Up to this point everyone has run from the "agents," who are symbols of the demonic. As John says in his first epistle, "You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world...and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one" (1 John 4:4, 5:19). No one has challenged them, no one has taken them on. As Neo turns to confront evil incarnate, his friends are watching, incredulous, afraid.

Trinity: What's he doing?

Morpheus: He's beginning to believe.

Yes, he's beginning to believe...*who he really is*.

### **Your Truest Self**

But from on high  
Somewhere in the distance  
There's a voice that calls  
"Remember who you are.  
If you lose yourself  
Your courage soon will follow"

You are going to need your whole heart in all its glory for this story you've fallen into. So, who did God mean when he meant you? We at least know this: We know that we are not what we were meant to be. Most of us spend our energy trying to hide that fact, through all the veils we put on and the false selves we create. Far better to spend our energy trying to recover the image of God and unveil it for his glory. One means that will help us is that which will help us see with the eyes of our heart. Which brings us back to myth. As poet David Whyte says, "Myths reveal to us what we are capable of." Or Clyde Kilby, who said, "Myth is a lane down which we walk in order to repossess our soul." Wow. Wouldn't you love to repossess your soul, to live with an unmasked, unveiled glory that reflects the glory of the Lord? That's worth fighting for.

The Bible is filled with characters – I don't mean people playing parts, I mean the word your grandmother uses for your grandfather, who at the age of 87 just got himself his fourth speeding ticket in a month. "He's a real character." Or as you say of those folks who wear hats or sing loud or walk to the beat of a drummer nobody else is hearing. Abraham's a character; so's his wife, Sarah. King David's a character. The disciples of Jesus are all characters. Take James and John, for instance, "the sons of Zebedee." You might remember them as the ones who cornered Jesus to angle for the choice seats at his right and left hand in the Kingdom. Or the time they wanted to call down fire from heaven to destroy a village that wouldn't offer Jesus a place for the night. Their buddies called them idiots; Jesus called them the Sons of Thunder (\*\*). He sees who they *really* are. It's their mythic name, their true identity. They look like fishermen out of work; they are actually the Sons of Thunder.

There are stories that you've loved, there are characters that you've resonated with down deep inside, maybe even dreamed that you could be. Do you know why? Deep is calling unto deep. They spoke to you – they speak even now – because they contain some hint or glimpse into your true self. Rolland Hein says, "Whether or not people are aware of the fact, they cannot live without myth, not can they reach full stature as people without true myths."

The apostles called Joseph Barnabas, which means Son of Encouragement.

Taped across the top of my computer, just above the screen on which I am now typing this sentence, I've pasted another. *Aequa non pronuncario mundacium. Sed ego sum homo indomitus*. It's Latin, for those of you like me who don't know their Latin, a line from the movie *Braveheart*. And there's a lot of story behind it. Personal Myth. It starts way back in my youth when I made up lies about myself because I didn't think there was anything special or worthy about the real me. I told my friends I was part Indian, or a robber by night, or a motorcycle racer. I made up a glory because I was convinced I had none of my own.

Fast forward to about this time last summer when I led a group of friends into the Wimunche Wilderness on a backpacking expedition. We were on a sort of mission. *Wild at Heart* (a book I wrote about men recovering their masculine soul) had just come out

that spring, and we were sort of living it out each day. In the morning, I'd suggest a question to wrestle with, pray through as we sweated our way through the wilderness. After dinner that evening we'd share our thoughts and stories around the campfire, and so we processed our lives against the book. Or vice versa. On the fourth day of the trip, as we broke camp in the woods near Twin Lakes, I suggested that the issue for the day was simply this: God, what do you think of me? Who am I to you?

This was The Question, the coveted question, the one we all wanted to ask on day one but knew it wouldn't come until we'd wrestled with other business, like the father wound and the role of the Woman in our life. We had to sort of earn the right to ask this question, and after the hell we'd been through the day before, it seemed we'd paid our dues. (We'd lost the trail and took a three-mile detour through some of the boggiest, leg-thrashing face-lashing willows which the elk seemed to have no trouble penetrating until I realized their legs are two feet longer than ours and we took the whole mess head-on for hours under the afternoon sun).

Hoisting our packs we headed out to cross a high pass and then down a long valley to another unknown camp. It started raining in about ten minutes, and the wind really whipped up as we climbed above tree line. All was wetness and heather and rock and crag, and I was *loving* it. It reminded me of the Scottish highlands in *Braveheart*; I felt I was hiking in a mythic reality. Then I remembered the day's mission, and I began to ask God one of the most important questions any of us will ever ask: *What do you think of me, God? Who am I to you?* The guys were strung out over a mile or two along the trail by now, and I was alone and just reaching the pass.

"You are My Wallace."

Something in my heart sank. Yes, sank. *Good grief, John – look at you. You're pathetic. You're making up the voice of God. Filling in the blanks. Cooking up what you'd want him to say.* Whether or not it was the voice of God, it only took about ten seconds to shut it down with a generous dose of heartache for wanting to hear something like this from my youth, and contempt for thinking I'd stepped in for God to pronounce the name, and self-reproach for not being willing to just hike for awhile in silence and let God speak for himself. About this point some of the guys caught up to me and we stopped to snap a few photos at the pass. Then we headed down.

We reached camp with about an hour to spare before the dinner chores, so I took a walk by myself out into the meadow. No, that's not exactly right. I left camp because I felt *summoned*. I knew God was waiting for me, there at the end of the day, just like a father or a friend, unwilling to let the matter slip away. As I began to tune into my heart once more, I heard him ask me a question. (Just so you don't think I'm schizophrenic, entertaining voices, let me remind you that our heart has become the new dwelling place of God, and it is in our heart that we hear his voice. "My sheep hear my voice" (John 10). I'll say more on that in a minute). God's question to me felt unrelated to the event at the pass.

“Tell me what you love.”

*Oh. Well...I loved the hike this morning. The wind and the rain and wildness of it all. The high country. (Did I just say highlands?).*

“Go on.”

*Well, I love this sort of expedition, too. I love leading a band of men.*

“Is there anything else?” (Each question felt like it was taking me deeper into my own heart).

*I love fighting for people’s freedom.*

There was a moment of silence.

“Are you convinced?”

God took me into the truth of the mythic name through doorway of my own heart and my desires. I was trapped; there was no denying now that it was God who spoke that morning, and what he spoke was true. Over the past year I have needed that mythic name and all the strength and courage it offers. The battle has been ugly, and there are many hearts to free. The Accuser laughs and mocks and throws everything he can. *Aequa non pronuncario mundacium. Sed ego sum homo indomitus.* I never tell lies. But I am a savage.

## **Embracing the Glory**

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, “Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous?” Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. You’re playing small doesn’t serve the world. There’s nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won’t feel insecure around you. We were born to manifest the glory of God that is within us...And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others. (Nelson Mandela)

When I first read this quote, I thought no, that’s not true. We don’t fear our glory. We fear we are not glorious at all. We fear that at bottom, we are going to be revealed as...a disappointment. Mandela is just trying to make a nice speech, like a sermon, to buoy us up for a day or two. But as I thought about it more, I realized we *do* fear our glory. We fear even heading this direction because...it seems prideful. Not at all. Paul says it brings glory to God. We walk in humility because we know it is a glory *bestowed*. It reflects something of the Lord’s glory. The deeper reason we fear our own glory is because once we let others see it, they will have seen the truest us and that is nakedness indeed. We can

repent of our sin. We can work on our “issues.” But there is nothing to be “done” about our glory. Its so naked. That is why it is the only loving thing to do. You cannot love another person from a false self. You cannot love them unless you offer them your heart.

Finally, our deepest fear of all...we will need to live from it. To admit we do have a new heart and a glory from God, to begin to let it be unveiled and embrace it as true – that means the next thing God will do is ask us to live from it. Come out of the boat. Take the throne. Be what he meant us to be. And that feels risky...really risky. But it is also exciting. It is coming fully alive. As my friend Morgan said, “It’s a risk worth taking.”