

Thoughts and Smiles... Monday, January 30, 2023

In the autumn of 2009 a few dozen people travelled to London to mark his one-hundredth birthday celebration and to thank Nicholas Winton. The group themselves were mostly all in their seventies or eighties. But this was no social trip. It was a journey of gratitude. They came to thank the man who had saved their lives: a stooped centenarian who met them on the train platform just as he had done in 1939, seventy years previously.



Nicholas Winton was a twenty-nine-year-old stockbroker at the time. Hitler's armies were ravaging the nation of Czechoslovakia, tearing Jewish families apart and marching parents to concentration camps. No one was caring for the children. Winton got wind of their plight and resolved to help them. He used his annual leave to travel to Prague, where he met parents who, incredibly, were willing to entrust their children's future to his care. After returning to England, he worked his regular job on the stock exchange by day and advocated for the children at night. He convinced the government to permit their entry into the country. He found foster homes and raised funds. Then he scheduled his first transport of child refugees on March 14th 1939, and accompanied seven more over the next five months. His last trainload of children arrived on August 2, bringing the total of rescued children to 669.

On September 1st, the biggest transport was to take place, but Hitler invaded Poland, and Germany closed borders throughout Europe. None of the 250 children on that train were ever seen again.

After the war Nicholas Winton didn't tell anyone of his rescue efforts, not even his wife when they got married. [Over 40 years later] In 1988 she found a scrap book in their attic with all the children's photos and a complete list of names. She prodded her husband to tell the story [and afterwards she secretly contacted a popular TV programme called, *'That's Life'*: The presenter, Esther Ransom, sneaked the unsuspecting Nicholas Winton into the studio and then revealed his story to the world.]

The grateful group of people he rescued includes a film director, a Canadian journalist, a news correspondent, a former minister in the British cabinet, a magazine manager, and one of the founders of the Israeli Air Force. There are some seven thousand children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren today who owe their existence to Nicholas Winton's bravery – and who remember him with joy. (He died in Slough in 2015, aged 106.)

https://youtu.be/6_nFuJAF5FO

Source: Max Lucado, 2010, *Our Live Your Life*, Thomas Nelson Publishers: Nashville Tennessee, USA, p.15-16



What A Return to God's Mercy Really Meant



Rembrandt painted the picture of the prodigal son between 1665 and 1667, at the end of his life. As a young painter, he was popular in Amsterdam and successful with commissions to do portraits of all the important people of his day. He was known as arrogant and argumentative, but he participated in the circles of the very rich in society. Gradually, however, his life began to deteriorate:

First he lost a son,

then he lost his first daughter,

then he lost his second daughter,

then he lost his wife.

Then the woman he lived with ended up in a mental hospital,

then he married a second woman who died.

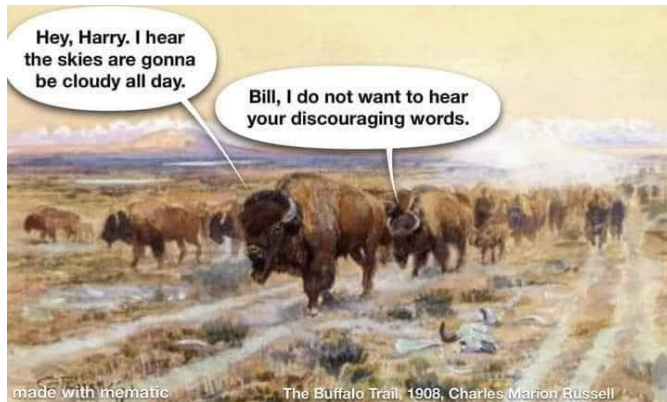
It was a man who experienced immense loneliness in his life that painted this picture. As he lived his overwhelming losses and died many personal deaths, Rembrandt could have become a most bitter, angry, resentful person. Instead he became the one who was finally able to paint one of the most intimate paintings of all time—[The Return of the Prodigal Son](#). This is not the painting he was able to paint when he was young and successful.

No, he was only able to paint the mercy of a blind father when he had lost everything; all of his children but one, two of his wives, all his money, and his good name and popularity. Only after that was he able to paint the mercy of a blind father when he had lost everything: all of his children but one, two of his wives, all his money, and his good name and popularity.

Only after that was he able to paint this picture, and he painted it from a place in himself that knew what God's mercy was. Somehow his loss and suffering emptied him out to receive fully and deeply the mercy of God. When Vincent van Gogh saw this painting he said, "You can only paint this painting when you have died many deaths." Rembrandt

could do it only because he had died so many deaths that he finally knew what the return to God's mercy really meant.

Source: Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Home Tonight: Further Reflections on the Parable of the Prodigal Son*, Doubleday, 2009.



Me, at church when I was a kid



Have a terrific week!

Blessings to you all!

David Jones

Check out "David's Blog" on the Sauble Beach United Church website.

<https://saubleunitedchurch.ca/category/davids-blog/>

