

IN TOUCH



The Innkeeper

Excerpt from The Magnificent Defeat by Frederick Buechner (Submitted by Marcia Lewandowski) (*Words in italics were added by me, feel free to add your own.*)

And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. Luke 2:7

“That was a long, long time ago,” said the Innkeeper, “and a long, long way away. But the memories of people are also long, and nobody has forgotten anything about my own sad, queer part in it all unless maybe they have forgotten the truth about it. But you can never blame people for forgetting the truth because it is, after all, such a subtle and evasive commodity. In fact, all that distinguishes a truth from a lie may finally be no more than just the flutter of an eyelid or the tone of a voice. So I do not blame posterity for forgetting the subtleties and making me out to be the black villain of the piece—the heartless one who said, ‘No room! No room!’ But if you want to speak the whole truth, then you will have to call me a villain with a catch in your voice, at least a tremor, a hesitation maybe, with even the glitter of almost a tear in your eye. Because nothing is entirely black, you know.

“I speak to you as people of the world,” said the Innkeeper. “Not as idealists but as realists. Do you know what it is like to run an Inn—to run a business, a farm, a family, to run anything in this world for that matter, even your own life? It is like being lost in a forest of a million trees,” said the Innkeeper, “and each tree is a thing to be done. Are the rooms clean? Is there fresh linen on all the beds? Are the books up to date, the bills posted? Has the letter (*email*) been answered, ...*the dishes washed, the floor swept, the ashes cleaned out, the doodads dusted, the recycling sorted, the library book returned, the clothes hung out to dry? Has the oil in the car been changed, the apple trees and grape vines pruned, the leaking faucet fixed, the garden weeded, the lawn mowed, the wood split & stacked, the leaves raked, the gutters cleaned out, the tomatoes canned, and is the meatloaf in the oven? Has the Christmas tree been trimmed, the shopping finished, the presents wrapped, the cards addressed, the cookies frosted?* Is there money enough left in the bank? Today we have food in our bellies and clothes on our backs, but what must we do to make sure that we still will have them tomorrow? A million trees. A million things.

“Until finally we have eyes for nothing else, and whatever we see turns into a thing. The sparrow lying in the dust at your feet—just a thing to be kicked out of the way, not the mystery of death. The calling of children outside your window—just a distraction, not life, not the wildest miracle of them all.

“Of course I remember very well the evening they arrived. I was working on my accounts and looked up just in time to see the woman coming in the door. She walked in that slow, heavy-footed way the women have in their last months. Her husband stood behind her—a bit tongue-tied I thought. Not many words passed between us, it was clear enough what they wanted.

Then it happened much in the way that you have heard. I did not lie about there being no room left—there really was none.

“Later that night, when the baby came, I was not there,” the Innkeeper said. “I was lost in the forest somewhere, the unenchanted forest of a million trees. So when the baby came, I was not around, and I saw none of it.

“But this I do know. All your life long, you wait—we all do—for our destiny, our joy, our heart’s desire. So how am I to say it friends? When he came, I missed him.

“Pray for me, brothers and sisters. Pray for the Innkeeper in us all.”

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As for Grow Groups—One person spoke the word vulnerability at the gathering last Sunday (December 11th) when we were given opportunity to share about the life-giving opportunity for spiritual growth in small groups. Several persons described their new experience of meeting together with other words like connection, support, and encouragement. It is a humbling experience to meet with other believers and learn to listen better while loving God's love on each other. It is an opportunity to learn how love looks as we move closer to the Lord. As scripture is read together, we take opportunity of struggling in it and applying it while clothing ourselves more and more with the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. May the Lord, Himself, encourage you as you seek to meet over His Word, listen for application of His Word, listen to each other's successes and failures at transformation, and intimately pray together. May you be encouraged to hold tightly "meeting together" while "thinking of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works, and support of one another while holding tightly to the hope we affirm in Jesus Christ". (Hebrews 10) We encourage you to persevere in your meeting, learning, and walking together in the new year. Pray for each other, and with thankfulness, seek to love because of who you are in Christ while finding refreshment in His presence with you.

Submitted by Marilyn Kamp

The Depot MCC Thrift Shops in Goshen, Indiana, is seeking a full-time general manager. Applicants must have commitment to personal Christian faith and discipleship, active church membership, excellent organization skills, supervisory skills, communications skills, ability to work with volunteers, and computer skills. Responsibilities include organization and general oversight of the Thrift Shops (clothing, furniture, and variety), incoming donations and processing, warehouse area, outgoing merchandise, recycling, and volunteers. Experience in retailing helpful; working knowledge of Excel and Quickbooks is also helpful. Applications will be accepted until January 2, 2017. Send resume and cover letter to: Search Committee, email brshirk69@gmail.com; or C/O Ben Shirk 63341 CR 33, Goshen, IN 46528.

OrrVilla Event—A special evening of music will mark the Feast of the Epiphany at OrrVilla Retirement Community when accomplished local pianist Peter Douglas performs for residents and guests on Friday, January 6, 2017, at 7:00 p.m. in OrrVilla's Maple Terrace. The concert, celebrating the arrival of the Three Magi will include sacred and classical music in addition to audience carols. Free and open to the public, the event takes place at OrrVilla's Maple Terrace, 333 E. Sassafras Street, Orrville.

Central Christian School Event—Alumni Night, December 23rd: Smoked Pork Dinner for all, 5 – 7:00 p.m. by donation in cafeteria. Varsity girls' basketball at 6 p.m. and Varsity boys' basketball at 7:30 p.m. vs. Mansfield Christian. All alumni get in free and will be eligible for prize drawings.

Mennonite Church USA Announcements

Do you have your summer vacation plans set yet? Why not spend it in Orlando, Florida? You can attend the Mennonite Church USA convention as well as visit your favorite theme park. The convention takes place July 4-8 with the theme "Love is a Verb." Learn more at <http://convention.mennoniteusa.org/registration/> or find the convention on Facebook or Twitter.

Registration for "Beyond Buried Treasure: Turning Hidden Resources into Assets" is now open. This second joint MHS Mennonite Health Assembly and Mennonite Education Agency Education Leaders Gathering takes place March 9-12 in Jacksonville, Florida. For more information or to register, visit mhaelgconference.wordpress.com