

Unremembered Loss

For all the news and information from the world of Rathrac, and for the story Unremembered Loss

Issue 25

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Welcome to another issue of the newsletter. This month I'm doing two things. I'm looking back at something I started doing two years ago, and I'm working on my first post for the Fantasy Writers Who Are Christians web site (<http://fwwac.webnode.com>). That "thing" is writing fantasy short stories based on the sermons I hear. The first one I did from memory. Then I started taking a note book to church. Now days I sit in the pews typing away on my iPad. You can find all of my sermon based short stories on my web sites. Also, don't forget to forward this newsletter on to your friends and help me build a following that will one day lead to Unremembered Loss being published. Sign up for the newsletter at <http://www.douglasgclarke.com/lists/?p=subscribe>

Doug

Sermon Based Fantasy Short Stories

Say that again.

How do you take a sermon and turn it into a short story? And a fantasy one at that!

For me it took two things; a **spark of inspiration** and some **nuggets of truth**.

I didn't plan on writing my first sermon based short story. I was sitting in church on a Sunday morning in September of 2009. We had a visiting missionary with us from North Africa. He talked to us about the life of the nomads he and his wife were ministering to. Specifically he told us how it was easier to witness to them than the people who lived in the small villages - nomads are more independent, they think for themselves, and they know what it means to trust.

Then came the sermon. It was about trusting God and how easy it is to stop trusting God when we feel like we have everything under control.

I was inspired.

I went home and decided to write a short story, but where to start? I quickly realized two things. First, in order to be sermon based I needed to figure out what the nuggets of truth were that were hidden within the sermon. Second, I needed to make sure that when I wrote about those truths they pointed towards God.

I sat down and started to analyze what I had heard - **looking for the truths**. In this sermon I found the following things:

God wants to lead us and will if we let him.

We let other things distract us, so we stop listening.

We have the ability to put ourselves into situations where we will be able to hear God.

God is always ready to take us back and lead us again.

It is the journey that matters, not the destination. Be ready to change your direction if God leads you somewhere new.

Now I was ready to write my story - well almost. I needed to **figure out what the story was about**. One of the characters in my novel is a cleric. I decided that he could be on a pilgrimage and run into the nomads.

Great, now **I just need a problem to overcome and something to add tension** - the two things that drive any story.

To find my problem I looked at my list of truths. I picked one of the truths and made it something that my main character was doing the opposite of. In order to solve the problem he would have to change so that he could recognize that he was wrong.

I looked at my characters - my cleric, Hector, and the nomads and decided that I didn't want to just tell the missionary's story I had heard that morning. I decided that Hector should be the one with the problem. Looking at the list I picked, "We have the ability to put ourselves into situations where we can hear God and can trust him."

Great, now I have a character with a problem, and presumably another character who already knows the truth.

To **add tension** I looked at my list of truths and picked some that the main character was unaware of. This gave the character something to discover on his way to realizing that he is wrong about the first truth. I decided that Hector was focused on getting to his destination and didn't realize that it is the journey that really matters. Also, Hector didn't realize how often he let the world distract him.

The rest of the truths in my lists are then things that Hector knows, but perhaps hasn't connected to this particular situation: God wants to lead us and is willing to take us back when we come back to him.

Then I was almost ready to start the story. All that I needed was some way to show Hector the errors in his way - **conflict**. That way, in this case, was through the nomads. The Nomads would be living each day trusting God. They live the way they do on purpose, so they have to trust God. They aren't going anywhere, it is the journey that matters. Whenever they stop listening for God's voice bad things happen, but God is always ready to lead them again.

The Story

In the story, tension and conflict build as the **Hector meets the nomads and they are doing something that he is not**. This will cause reactions in both of him and them. Who is right and who is wrong? Hector sees people who are wandering in the desert and living a very meager life (a misconception). The nomads see a man who

is focused on the future and not the present. A man who is following after God, but is not putting himself into a situation where he has to wait to hear what God will say (the truth the Hector does not see).

On Hector's way to seeing that he is wrong **he tries to defend his position**. "I listen to God. He allows me to heal in his name." Life is so much better where I come from, where we don't have to look for water every day.

The nomads **share examples from their lives where they are living the truth**. This makes Hector uncomfortable. Over the course of the story they share some of the unknown truths with Hector, which he accepts as truth and lead him steps closer to where he will have to admit he is wrong.

Hector also connects some of the truths he already knows that make it even clearer that he is wrong.

But Hector is defiant to the end. The nomads finally put him into a situation where he has to deal with the truth. Only by believing and acting on that belief can he succeed. It is the faith of the nomads in him and in God that give Hector the strength to believe. Having succeeded, Hector sees that he was wrong and so solves his inner problem. This in turn allows him to see the external problem and solve it - he was going on a journey to a place, but it was this stop along the way that was the whole point. He asks God where he should go now. The answer was not to the place he was heading before.

The story ends with Hector heading off in a new direction.

The Results

By turning the sermon into a story I did two things. The first is that I took what could have been a feel good Sunday morning experience and integrated the truth buried in it into my own life - I have been changed by the journey. The second is just maybe there is a story on the internet that someone might read and because of it, God might speak to him or her.

Since that first story, I've started taking a notebook to church so I can take notes and see if I can find the nuggets of truth. I've written more stories and found myself moved by the truths I have written about. I've written some other great stories, and a bunch of "good" ones. But they all have one thing in common. They come from the heart, mine and God's.

If you would like to read "Wilderness," follow this link:

<http://www.hathrae.com/hector/wilderness/>

I'd love to hear your thoughts on this story and the other sermon based ones I've posted over the last two years.

Have you heard a good sermon lately that you could turn into a story? I'd love to read it and even post it on my website if you would let me. If you have a sermon based story that is crying to be told and need some help, drop me a line and I'll see if I can assist you.

God Bless, and remember to listen.