

Letting in the Light

Warm winds
Bright sunlight

A road leading travelers to their longed for destination

Dark and forbidding trees
Dead branches
Deadfall on the ground
Broken and twisted trees
Debris catching the eye
Debris catching in the soul
A warming welcome not

Light being blocked
Growth being inhibited
Progress being impeded
Dark and forbidding trees
Strangling the light
Blocking
Blocking
Blocking

A sound
Of saw against wood
The teeth singing as it moves back and forth
Back and forth
Back and forth
A branch falls
Another branch falls
One after another
Until there is.... freedom!

A grunt, a sigh
Heave!
Another log removed from the forest floor
Growing piles of dead and rotten wood accumulating
along the roadside
Space opening up
Ground appearing
An invitation to explore being extended

Voices speak disparaging words
Not meant in anger or unkindness
But spoken in unbelief
A teasing jest at the futility of it all
One cannot make a difference
The task too large
The task unimportant
The task unending

Day after day
In the warm sun, the blistering heat
In the drizzle, in the downpour
In the summer, in the fall
In the winter snow
Of saw against wood
A grunt, sigh
Heave!
The worker goes on
Battling and Building
Building and Battling
Hearing the Voice of God

Tree after tree stands proud as branches
fall to the ground
Light pouring in where there was only drooping death
Inches and then feet and then yards and then wide
expanses of unencumbered forest
An invitation of welcome extended

The eye no longer caught by death
But by life
The spirit no longer flinching as it traverses the road
But now uplifted
An invitation of welcome extended
A declaration of purpose made
"Prepare ye the way for the Lord"

Welcome Traveler
The light has been let in
Welcome
A place has been prepared for you
The light has been let in
Welcome
Come and rest
The light has been let in
Find peace here
The light has been let in
Meet with our Lord
The light has been let in
Come and explore
The light has been let in
Be refreshed
Be renewed
A place has been prepared for you
The light has been let in!

By: Della Ganske



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The poem *“Letting In the Light”* embodies my journey of hope with God since June 2020. It is the experience and expression of the genuine hope I have for my ministry and for the future during, what can, at the very least, be called unsettling times.

I was excited to hear about the *Hope Infused Art Challenge*. I wondered how in the world I could express my marvelous journey of hope in a way that another might enter into it with me. The above results from that effort. The below is the context for the journey.

What does a camp registrar do when there are no summer camps?

That’s a good question! Well, this one took up a challenge in the summer and fall that others often made fun of because of its size and

seeming impossibility: clearing up the deadfall that lined the roadside leading up to our main facility, the Lodge.

Why did others make fun of this project? The road is 400 metres long, bordered on both sides by a forested area that has been unattended for a long time.... and I was going to tackle it with a handsaw and a tree lopper!

At first, I just enjoyed being outside. Being a camp registrar, I spend almost every day, all day, in my office. I do not have the opportunity to go outdoors often and my body was relishing this new thing called... movement! There was also the feel of the sun on my skin, the wind in my hair, the sounds of birdcalls and the opportunity to pause and marvel at the beauty of an insect where before I wouldn’t even have noticed. Nor would I have taken time to gaze upon it and ponder about a God who puts that much effort into the iridescent colour of a... fly!! It was a time of reconnecting with my Creator.



There was also the tangibility of the task. Camp registrars work in the intangible digital world of registration software, updating online registrations, designing and running reports, improving procedures and processes, reading and responding to untold numbers of emails answering camper parent questions.... all very necessary, all very rewarding, and all very difficult to actually ‘touch’ when needing to confirm that you have accomplished something at the end of your day. To be engaged in a project that produced tangible results at days end - a pile of sawed off dead branches from an evergreen tree, a cleared area on the forest floor, a pile of brush alongside the road for pick up, an ever-growing burn pile, the creation of a more welcoming atmosphere for guests and campers - was a hugely rewarding process that left me invigorated as each day came to its end.



Then I went to my church one August Sunday and heard a message called *“Battle and Build”*, based on Nehemiah 4:14-18. As clichéd as it sounds, that sermon changed not only my summer and fall, but my life.... although I didn’t realize it at the time.

Nehemiah 4:14-18 talks about the people of Jerusalem facing intimidation and discouragement from their enemies regarding the rebuilding of the wall surrounding the city of Jerusalem, Nehemiah encouraging them in their efforts and the people carrying on with... *“their work, one hand supporting their load and one hand holding a weapon.”* (Nehemiah 4:17)

The next morning I was back in the brush, sawing away at a dead spruce branch that was over my head while standing on my tiptoes (I am 5'4"); head tilted upwards, arms lifted up, one hand grasping the branch, one hand working the saw, sawdust getting in my eyes (glasses offer only so much protection), and sweat pouring off of me, working from an awkward position to bring this branch down. It's important to know that I was working on the west side of the road with the eastern sun weaving its light through the tree's limbs, sunlight shining in my eyes as I wrestled with this branch. As I sawed away, looking upwards, I was hit with the realization that I wasn't only dealing with a dead tree limb or even creating a welcoming atmosphere for guests and campers as they entered our property, but that I was letting God's light into the land; that I was preparing a welcome for people when there were no people in sight to welcome! That I was in fact doing what it says in Isaiah 40:3 *"The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the dessert a highway for our God."* Whoa!!!!



I was holding "my load" with one hand (the dead tree limb) and "my weapon" (my handsaw) with the other. I was preparing "the way of the Lord" and making "... straight... a highway for... God" on earth AND in the heavenly realms; letting in the physical light of the sun and the spiritual light of God. By my actions, I was declaring that there would be people joining us once again!



From that day onwards, I seem to be surrounded by references to Nehemiah. Sermons. Christian radio broadcasts. Devotions. Seminars. Conferences.

Each person and family building a section of the wall. Building beside them, next to them, next down the line, beyond them. Not letting discouragement block their vision, whether it came in the form of what's been done in the past, what's been lost or what has yet to be done. Allies who should encourage them onwards repeating words of negativity. Nehemiah encouraging the people: it's time to stop living in ruins, it's time to rise up and build! People working together using whatever skill set

they had, not worrying if they weren't a mason, not "qualified" for the task and not working out of their strongest skill set. (Can you imagine a perfumer working on that wall? Well, there was one!)

At camp, there is a lot of maintenance required to keep facilities functioning throughout the year and due to competing schedules, often not a lot of time or opportunity for projects outside of that to be done. This season of COVID has allowed many projects to be undertaken, some small and some large, some new and some that have been on the back burner for years. All with the goal of improving, maintaining and stewarding what's been entrusted to us.

In the camp world, we frequently use the words "maintaining" and "stewarding" of our resources regarding the land, the animals, the facilities and the site. Those are good words to use. They convey responsibility, care and concern. They are also limiting. Those words have a connotation of "status quo" and the present. What is really happening is that with every project undertaken, item repaired, wall painted; we are building the future. We are

not maintaining or repairing, we are preparing. And preparing is declaring what will be! We are preparing a welcome for people when there are no people in sight to welcome! But there will be!

It has taken me a long time to share with others what the Lord showed me that day, and in the weeks, and months that have followed. I just went about my business with my handsaw and lopper; sawing, lugging, hauling, piling. Working with others when their schedule permitted to load up my piles of brush and haul them to the burn piles. But I pondered a lot. What one person can accomplish when they have a vision. What's possible for that one person to do by themselves



with a seemingly insignificant amount of resources. When a vision needs a team involved to help move it to the next level.

How faithfulness and showing up day after day after day can accomplish more than you thought possible. That visions take time to come to pass.



Winter has come to my camp. Snow has fallen, temperatures have dropped, and the forest no longer sings with the sound of a saw. There's more to be done alongside the road and it will wait for me come spring. And that's all right. Visions take time to come to pass.

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