

IT HAPPENED IN THE STREETS

Inspired by Mark 7:31-37

Again Josephine found herself at a crossroads in her life. What she was doing for a living wasn't fulfilling. It was draining. She worked long hours and made enough money to pay the bills, but nothing in her life brought joy. She spent the most hours out of her week doing work that was only for the sake of the work and for a weekly paycheck. Was that enough? Was this her life vocation? She had no time to do something more meaningful, and she had no idea how to change the course of her life.

Again she left her apartment in the district and headed to her job. She took the long way and went by way of the Riverwalk through the City Square. There were people from everywhere and they were milling around as usual, selling their wares, displaying their art, begging for money, sleeping under the trees, rushing to work....it was never boring or mundane around here. A few people walked around all day having long external conversations with the voices in their heads.

She came across Joubert, a self-proclaimed healer and prophet. He had been on his corner for as long as Josephine could remember. He spoke of people beginning life anew. His stories were all the same, as far as she could tell. She never really stopped to listen, but often dropped a few bucks in his old black hat which lay on the ground upside down at his feet. Joubert wore a faded purple velvet suit. She examined it more closely and saw delicate beading in the shape of swirls, crosses, and fleur de lis. That suit must have been brilliant in the beginning. Just like his clothing, the man's cardboard sign was weathered and no longer impressive. She wasn't even sure what was written on it.

Josephine must have passed by him at least 50 times in the 5 years she had lived nearby. He was a constant, an odd anchor of sorts. Familiarity and inspiration -- if Joubert could show up another day, so could she. But, this day was different. -- This day, Josephine stopped to listen. She struggled to understand his unusual accent. Joubert was recalling the story of a deaf man who had a speech impediment and begged God to lay His hand on him. "He was indeed healed!" shouted Joubert.

A passerby answered, "Way to go, Magic Man!" The stranger took off by himself and disappeared into the crowd before Joubert could stop him. Joubert fell to his knees, put his fingers into his ears and spit on the ground as if to expel the stranger's comment. Then he looked up to Heaven and groaned, "Lord," he cried.

“Open their hearts and minds to know You are the healer. It is not magic!”
Immediately, Josephine felt her heart begin to race. Her ears opened and although she was still surrounded by all the people and noises, she could only hear a soft whispering. The voice of an angel very gently repeated the words, “Be healed!” over and over. Josephine’s eyes were open, but she no longer saw crowds milling around and a dirty, faded street performer. Instead of the masses pushing through more concerned about their destination than what was placed in their path, she now saw individual faces and persons of value. She even had the sense that some of them were angels. And, she suddenly realized that the ragged old man in front of her was the one who had been deaf. His thick, unusual accent had once been a speech impediment. All of these years he had been proclaiming the truth of his own miraculous healing and answered prayer! How could he NOT tell everyone???

But, no one listened, not even Josephine herself -- until today. Josephine was astonished how she felt. She no longer felt weighed down by the thick cloud of uncertainty and despondency. She no longer felt alone and lost. Though she couldn’t quite name what had happened to her, she was forever changed. Joubert saw her transformation, and he knew. He saw the Holy Spirit lift the veil from this woman standing before him. Locking his gaze with Josephine’s, he shouted into the crowds though they weren’t listening, “God has done all things well. He made this deaf man hear, and this mute man speak. I am healed. Go! Be healed, too!”

Josephine was forever changed, no doubt. Her job and her circumstances remained the same, but she was different. Alleluia! Praise the Lord!

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