
The Kin-dom of Heaven

Sarah Werner

The kin-dom of heaven is a summer camp.
Mid-July in the flat piney woods of East Texas
the heat of a vibrant earth radiating on every surface in daylight,
with a soft cool breeze to soothe in the night,
which is loud with crickets and whippoorwills and barred owls.

The kin-dom of heaven is a summer camp.
We come with all our perceived imperfections—
rural accent, skin too dark, too light, blind, orphaned, widowed, gay,
five years old, eighty-five years old,
and
there is a place and task for
every
body:

Counting the number of minutes from the first light of the
pink dawn
until the sun breaks over the trees onto the still water of the
pond.
Clearing the brush from the hiking trails.
Tending the garden of spiders under the picnic tables.
Sorting out the markers that still draw from the ones that are
dried up.
Watching the beauty of the day unfold
content in the joy of being alive.

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In the kin-dom of heaven that is summer camp
we gather to become more deeply who we are.
We come to learn that we are immeasurably stronger
and
more valuable
than we thought.
That we matter, belong, just because we are alive,
that our scars do not define us
but add beauty to the sharp edge of our lives.

I want the kin-dom of heaven to be this place,
because I need somewhere to belong
as my whole self,
to be seen for all of who I am,
not what I lack or
what I've lost.

I want to be more than my fragile, painful, too-tense body,
more than my wheelchair,
than my bulky muscle arms, than my skinny legs,
more than the words on my tongue and in my mind,
more than the thoughts I pour onto the page, and
my education and
my family and
my upbringing.

I want to feel with keenness that I am strong for what I do have,
which is my soul-being.

I want to know that there is a place to belong
even if I am no longer sharp-witted,
even if I can no longer move on my own,
even if I don't "contribute" to society,
that my just being alive is still a blessing for the world,

that I am not
one person
alone
but part of a web of family, given and chosen.