



Experiencing God in the Calving Pasture

The Fall of the year with its cool breeze, crisp and clean morning sun, and the smell of fresh hay, has always been my favorite time of the year. I guess the reason I enjoy Fall so much is because it has traditionally been calving season at my house and there is nothing I enjoy more on the farm than calving season.

There is the anticipation of whether the calf will be a bull or a heifer, what will it look like, what color will it be, and did I choose the right bull and make the right breeding choice? Then there is the presence of the newness of life that is so encouraging and majestic that fills you with the awe of God's greatness, creativity and attention to detail.

This morning as I watched our first Cattle for Christ heifer calf being born, I was reminded of how much we can see, hear and experience our loving God in the day to day work on the farm. I see so much of His greatness, His compassion and His love for us in all that He has created for us, but I especially see these attributes of God in each and every birth of a new calf.

As I watch this first calf heifer labor in the delivery, I am reminded of how much God loves us and how much it cost Him to send His only Son to suffer and die in our place for our sin so that we too might have new and eternal life. I watched the heifer as she writhed and moaned with the pain of giving birth. She lies down and she gets up, she kicks her legs trying to relieve the pain, the longer she labors the more she hurts, but she doesn't quit. As she labors, now and again she looks back and lets out soft soothing moos (or coos) to the yet unborn baby. She hasn't seen it, but she knows its coming and it is as if she longs to see it, not just to end the pain, but to enjoy its presence and its affection.

Finally, the time comes and the birthing is complete. Up comes the new mother as she spins around and immediately begins to vigorously lick and clean the new baby that she will now fight you for. As she licks, the soft short moos dramatically increase as she talks with her new calf for which she has suffered and labored so long so it could have life.

In this process I notice two distinct actions of the dam that always take me back to my own relationship with the Living Christ. First, I notice that she always licks the calf in an upward direction. All of her actions and all of her motions are lifting the calf up, encouraging and assisting the calf to get up and stand on its own feet so that it can partake of the life sustaining colostrum that she has to offer. This colostrum contains all the antibodies and the nutrients that the newborn calf needs at this stage of his life-without it, the baby will die within hours. The dam is persistent in her efforts to urge the calf to stand on its own and partake of the nourishment that she has for him.

Sometimes I think the dam is being too rough as she tends the calf, but I have learned that she does this not to be hurtful, but because it is all part of the process of arousing the calf and getting the blood to flow throughout the calf's body so that it can breath and stand on its own. All of her actions are directed to what is best for the baby and what will help it to get up and suckle and be able to live and grow up into what it was intended to be.

The calf inevitably staggers and flips and stumbles several times before it eventually makes it way to its feet. Feeble and unsteady at first, the calf has trouble walking on its own in

this new life. But soon, with the encouragement and nourishment of the one who gives it life, it is running and bucking, even if at first in an awkward and clumsy way.

Secondly, I notice the constant soft mooing that has now accelerated to almost one moo between every lick. The new dam communicates consistently with her new baby and in just minutes the baby calf begins to moo back. This critically important process imprints on the baby's brain the voice of its mother and on the mother's brain the voice of her calf. All moos may sound alike to me and you, but this baby will always be able to distinguish the voice of its dam and this dam the voice of her calf from all the others in the herd.

You know that is exactly the kind of relationship and intimacy that God desires to have with each of us. He has so many blessings and so many good plans for our life that we miss out on because we haven't spent enough time alone with Him to really know Him and be able to distinguish His voice from all the other voices that call out to us in this world. As a result, we often find ourselves in places and situations that we never intended to be, all because we did not have our hearts attuned or trained to recognize and obey His voice.

Jesus says, in the Gospel of John chapter 10, that He is the Good Shepherd and that His sheep listen to Him and follow Him when He calls because they know His voice. He calls to them, they follow Him and He leads them out to safe and fresh pasture. Jesus further states that His sheep will never follow a stranger; in fact they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice. How important then is it that we spend enough time with the Good Shepherd that we be able to know His voice and follow Him when He calls?

The next time you are in the calving pasture and get to experience this birthing process or the next time you hear a mama cow calling out to her calf, I hope that you will be reminded that God not only loves you, but that He wants you to know Him, to love Him, and to follow Him. God has such great plans for you—plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future (Jer. 29:11). If we will spend enough quiet time with Him and if we study His Word, we will learn to know and recognize His voice. If we know His voice, we will hear Him when He calls and we will be able to follow Him to where He wants to take us.

Sometimes He speaks words of love and encouragement. Sometimes words of guidance or correction. Sometimes He just speaks to us to give us the much needed companionship that only He can offer. One thing is for sure, He always speaks to us from a loving heart that is always calling us closer to Himself. Close to Him is where we are the safest, where we are the most content, and where He can meet all our needs and protect us from harm.

Do you know God personally and intimately through His Son Jesus? Do you know His voice? If so I encourage you to listen to Him and follow Him anew every day. If not, I want to tell you that you are missing out on the most precious, the most loving, the most forgiving and the most needed relationship of your life. He loves you so much! So much that He would send His only Son suffer and die in your place, for your sin. He paid the debt that He did not owe, because you owed the debt you could not pay! He did all of this so that you can know Him and be able to spend eternity in right relationship with Him and with other people.

In Revelation 3:20, Jesus said: "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me." Jesus knocks on our heart's door but it is up to us to open up and invite Him in. Sometimes he knocks when we are in church, other times He knocks when we are in the calving pasture. Wherever or whenever He calls you, when you hear His voice—that is the moment that you are to respond by opening your heart to Him and inviting Him to be your Savior and the Lord of our life. Once you accept Him, your sins are forgiven, the birthing process is complete, and you can forever enjoy His

presence, His loving care, and the peace and joy that come only from an intimate relationship with Him—a relationship where you can know His voice and follow Him as He leads you and guides you to where He wants you to be.

If you would like to know more about how you can know God intimately, how you can receive His forgiveness and eternal life that only He can give through the shed blood of His Son Jesus, we would like to hear from you. Perhaps you already know Christ personally and want to make sure that others around the world have the opportunity to know Him, we want to hear from you too. Please contact us at:

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