

When we feel like we can't go on . . .

Psalm 116:7 - Return, O my soul, to your rest; for the LORD has dealt bountifully with you.

We have a rhythm here at Marco and Sherrie's. It's simple and complete and filled with rest. Everyone has their role, their jobs and we meet in the doing and in-between. One of the longer "in-between" times is at lunch when we breathe and break and enjoy fellowship with one another. We spend time at lunch catching up on the evening before (since I usually go home to Daniele and Petra's for the evening) or talking about the morning's activities, and the thoughts wrapped around those activities. We spend the majority of our lunchtime discussing matters that . . . matter. Talking about our sin, our growth, sharing questions and responses from Scripture. These are rich times for me.

Last Thursday, we sat down for lunch. Every Thursday, I pray before the meal. Another one of our "rhythms". I began. "Oh, Lord, thank you that you are . . . that you are . . . that . . . you are strong when we are weak. That you are . . . awake when we are . . . That you . . ." I struggled to form the words. They just weren't coming and when they did, they didn't fit together. I eventually broke down, a puddle of tears. "In Jesus precious name, Amen." Of course, Marco and Sherrie were concerned after this sudden display of uncontrolled emotion. "Are you okay?" they asked. "What's wrong?"

I spluttered out between tears "My soul's good . . . but physically I'm . . . I'm . . . wiped . . ."

And despite lots more tears during the whole of lunch (to the point where we began to laugh together because I couldn't contain the exhausted fountains which poured out of my eyes), the sweet rhythm continued. For the rhythm here is not only comprised of jobs and roles, each doing their part, but it is mostly made up of, and made sweet by, love and encouragement which is given during the day. Always imperfectly but always in Christ's perfection.

So even though, on Thursday, I was a sort of mental exhausted which I haven't been in a long time, and although I could no longer think straight for want of my pillow, I was lucid enough to notice and remember being touched by love and care that day, my heavenly Father showering me with buckets of it through Marco and Sherrie and later that evening, Daniele and Petra. They loved and loved and I recuperated quickly. It's beautiful how love and patience quickly restore a weary body and soul.

Everyone has moments like this at some point . . . moments when the rhythm of our daily lives doesn't seem as sweet and we begin to feel like we can't go on. And these are crucial moments. Moments when I have a choice to live in my flesh or walk by the Spirit. The only way I will walk by the Spirit is if I remember and pour out thanks. The only way I will walk by the Spirit and not by the flesh is if I think thanks and record kindnesses and purposely praise.

Let me begin by pouring out thanks to God for all of you. Specifically, for your love and patience (waiting for updates and emails and news from me) and for your prayers during this season of "worn-out". I have many reasons to be thankful and the prayer and encouragement warriors in my life (you all) are one of them. So, I had to tell you and thank our loving Father for you.

I have so many other reasons to say "thank you" to my Father and I want to and need to. Since you asked to be included, I'll share :-)

God's grace – how much more likely I am to sin when I'm physically worn down. But God loves me back after repentance every time, reminding me that I am covered by Christ's blood.

The love of Christ – covered and loved unconditionally . . . I didn't do anything to deserve his never-ending love and patience. Resting in His love is a place of rapid recovery.

Eternal peace – this wondrous rest of soul that I would never trade for a lifetime of physical rest. I thank God that though physically tired, He's kept my soul uplifted.

Believers – the traces of Jesus in my surroundings. The reminders of Him and His presence and care.

The sweet rhythm of the life I lead here in Italy, surrounded by all of the above. I am immensely blessed.

Light loads – as I stated in my email a few weeks ago, the tiredness is real but it is not from carrying heavy burdens . . . what important perspective to keep.

God's strength which keeps me moving and remembering that I couldn't do so without Him.

And so much more . . .

Pray that I will daily remember the above reasons for praise. Praises which are easy to write down one day but not so easy to impress permanently upon the heart. I need the constant reminder.

Praise be to the Giver of all that is tiring and restful and good and sweet.

Love to you all in the tender name of Jesus,
Ashley