

*Testimony - by Susan Starrett*

I've been pretty good at getting by mouthing rote words about Jesus. Bible quotes, scribbled notes and labels: Redeemer, Lord of Lords, Saviour. Halleluiah! Praise Jesus!  
But, there's been a wall between Him and me. Happy words have rung hollow, empty echoes of wishful thinking of wishing I could get it.  
I've struggled with drawing near the Bridegroom. A heart once broken tends to shy away.  
I've struggled having Him as a Brother; that, too, a place of sorrow.  
I've struggled being adopted as His own because I was a once unwanted child.  
The "supposed to be this way" weights of Christian ideals about this Good Shepherd have placed a burden on my soul because for some reason, I couldn't buy into the party line.

So instead, Jesus and I draw swords together. Mine a warped and faded yardstick that has slain a thousand foes. His is flaming words of freedom, redemption and truth.  
He wept first so I am free to grieve and release the heartbreak that stands in our way.  
He teaches me to fight with grace for the right to live, to speak, and to be heard. He wants to hear my take on things. Wrong or right doesn't matter. What matters is the sharing.  
He is my audience of one when the joy of worship transcends this world.  
His patient grace shows me that change happens by listening to others and honouring *their* story.  
He stands guard during nights of unquiet rest when I lay my head upon His pierced and battered feet.  
He swallows me in His arms when spinning storms of unbridled panic sweep reality away.  
He draws me back to Him when the wilderness ways close in.  
He has unbridled the limitless ability of imagination and creativity once bound by shame.  
He honours my need for answers about everything and anything. Sometimes the answers come before the "ask" is even asked!  
He laughs at me, often, with tender delight. I realize that sometimes I can be pretty silly. A red and tingling head smacked slap is soothed away by the healing balm of forgiveness given freely.  
I smack my head a lot and then laugh 'cause He laughs with me.

I give thanks because the one thing my Jesus does well *is* break the rules.

I give thanks for Ruth asking me to write a little something for this holiest of days because now I know my Jesus lives outside the box but is firmly present in my every day.  
I give thanks that my Jesus is my partner, my eternal companion and friend.

Most of all, I give thanks for what my Jesus did.  
You see, I have tasted where all this began. Choices not my own brought me to my knees and threw my mind into a place of terrible, twisting shadows, because it was more than I could hear. This was a miniscule fraction, an atom, a neutron, a quark of the burden my Jesus bore when Innocence took on the sins of the world and left them at the cross.

For all of us.  
Because *He* is *your* Jesus, too.