

I was scrolling through Amazon prime looking for something to watch the other night, and a film titled the radical story of Patty Hearst caught my eye. . I was very familiar with Patty Hearst.

In 1974 when I was a senior in high school, I a 19 year old Patty (who was the granddaughter of William Randolph Hearst the famous newspaper millionaire mogul and the daughter of Randy Hurst publisher of the San Francisco chronicle) was violently kidnapped from her home with her fiance Steven Weed in Berkeley California . She was kidnapped by a small cell of revolutionary political activists called the symbanrse liberation army. A small group of 6 people. 4 women and 2 Men. After breaking into Steve and Patty's apartment they beat Steven up

pretty badly and they tied Patty up, slung her over their shoulders and spirited her away into the night.

America was horrified. Here was one of its golden children captured out of her home in sunny California.

It was a week before anyone heard anything from her at all and when she did finally call all her parents it was to let them know she was alright and to give them a list of her captor's demands.

She was kept in a closet for weeks. She was beaten. She was raped twice . She was constantly berated about how her family and their like were the core of all of the problems in America and at the base of the Vietnam war which was still raging. ()

After several weeks of this treatment and several botched attempts on the part of her family to meet the group demands, an interesting thing happened.

Patty joined the symbionese liberation army and became one of them.

And to prove that she had become one of them she donned a black wig and a machine gun and was front and center during their second bank robbery in the San Francisco area.

After weeks and weeks of fearing for her life , watching her anguished parents, America was shocked to see Patty wielding a weapon on behalf of her captors.

when a year and a half later she was finally captured along with two other

members of the SLA, her defence attorney F Lee Bailey used the defence that she had been brainwashed, that she suffered from Stockholm syndrome, and that the only way her subconscious knew to save her life was to join ranks with her captors..

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She was initially convicted but later had her sentence commuted by Pres Carter and then she was pardoned by Pres Clinton. She married the police officer assigned to protect her, raised children and went back to the life she knew.

The reason I'm bringing this up today is because when I was going through the readings for this week, I was struck by

the trajectory of the narrative, the identity of Jesus, the word which created this world and all of us, who promised to ransom us from hands too strong for us and who became himself the Ransom

Some people mistakenly think this means that God was a kind of hostage taker, looking for a ransom.

But there's another player in this story from the beginning.

During our Christmas carol service, we heard the story of Adam and Eve and The serpent (aka the devil.)

Nobody likes to talk about the devil, the word brings up cartoon characters, pitchforks and pointy beards, but if

we're going to follow along with the Christmas story and the creation story, when Adam and Eve sinned, they had help.

In the aftermath of their capitulation to a lie, they crossed over from the realm of innocence and life with God to the realm of sin and sorrow, and a destruction which showed up in their sons with the first murder, it showed up in subsequent generations full of unhappiness and struggle and we see its impact still..

Jesus himself referred to Lucifer as the prince of this world. And as that prince, when Jesus was in the desert for 40 days and 40 nights, while he was weak from fasting, the devil tempted him to use his powers inappropriately, and when that

didn't work, he offered him everything..
he said I will give you dominion over all of
this world, if you will just bow down to
me and Jesus told him 'get lost'.

The devil used scripture to try to trick
Jesus and Jesus used scripture right
back

If he hadn't had rule over this world, he
wouldn't have been able to offer it.

Herod was consumed by jealousy and
fear and in a rage ordered the death of
every male child under the age of two in
israel.

There were many times that Stones were
picked up to murder Jesus in the middle
of his ministry. The chief priests

conspired together to kill him long before they actually accomplished it.

Scriptures said he came to his own and his own rejected him. Came to his own and his own received him not.

I've often wondered just when it was that Lucifer decided to leave heaven and take a third of the Angels with him. Maybe the day that God announced the he was creating man was the day that Lucifer left. Was he jealous?.

Because the first thing he does after their creation is to make sure they are separated from God he thinks for eternity.

Adam and Eve were kidnapped by lies,
kidnapped by evil and along the way,
mankind has become kind of victims of
Stockholm syndrome, where they have
forgotten where they came from,
forgotten who they were, forgotten who
they were born to be

And instead have joined up in a never
ending cycle of violence and greed and
selfishness, of oppression and bigotry
and murder.

or just as bad, indifference.

The last couple of years have worn all of
our nerves to a frazzle ...something in
our minds we thought was going to be
over in a year maybe 2, looks like it may
hang around for a while and it's put such
pressure on us humans. I think all of us

have a certain reserve of goodness and patience and fortitude and this has called on all of those reserves.. for some people its emptied them and they find themselves at odds with themselves, with their future, with a lack of meaning.

Jesus and the Father with the Holy Spirit in a trinitarian community that is god from the beginning of time, knew what we as human beings would go through throughout time.

If we believe that God is omniscient, he knows.

There have been times during the past year I've said to Him, why in the world did you create us, we are in so much trouble and there is so much suffering. what is the reason for all of it?.

Then I see there's also so much beauty and there is so much goodness... but the battle between the goodness that is possible and the evil that we see is sometimes difficult to understand.

When Jesus died on the cross, he paid a ransom... not to God, he was God... he paid a ransom to subvert evil, to disempower it. he paid a ransom to the law that says without the shedding of blood there is no sacrifice .. the first blood that was shed was when God killed an animal to make clothing for Adam and Eve before they left the garden to cover their knowledge of sin.

he set himself as a ransom to deliver us from hands too strong for us.

Who has known the mind of God, when Jesus became a baby human God made himself vulnerable, fragile, accessible. When Jesus died on the cross, evil thought it had won over humanity.

Who has known the mind of God and how could they have known that God would send Jesus himself to the depths to bring the captives out of hell and deliver them. A Ransom from hands too strong for them.

Jesus not only is the Ransom, he is also the way out of believing that we have to protect ourselves, that we have to look after ourselves first, that we need to hoard anything. That this is 'just the way it is', the system always wins.

The captor is a liar and we are freed, we don't have to cooperate anymore.

1st John

In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God he was in the beginning with God all things came into being through him and without him not one thing came into being what is come into being in him was life and the life was the light of all people the light shines in the darkness and the darkness . did. not. overcome. it. .

The darkness did not overcome it, beloved.

We are living through dark times, but we have light, we have been ransomed we have been called into adoption as the sons and daughters of God, not born of

flesh and blood but of the spirit and we can walk out of captivity, into the beautiful possibilities that are still available in Christ, regardless of current circumstances or obstacles or difficulties or sorrows.

'Hear the word of the Lord oh nations and declare in the coastlines faraway. say he who scattered Israel will gather him and will keep him as a shepherd of flock ,for the Lord has Ransomed Jacob and has redeemed him from hands too strong for him.. they shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the Lord ... their life shall become like a watered garden and they shall never languish again.

I will turn their mourning into joy. I will comfort them and give them gladness for sorrow. '

May God give us Grace in the new year to give thanks for the life God has given back to us and to look for a way to share it with people who haven't heard the good news that they are no longer prisoners.