

Thanksgiving and Black Cats

Sometimes we find ourselves thankful for the simplest and strangest of things. Take for example our family cat, Leo. I grew up on and around the farm and cats were just there. They had no names and you did not pet them. They kept the premises free of rodents and as long as they did their job we tolerated them. In my adult life I have never owned a cat, much less tolerated one in the house . . . until Leo.

Leo is a three year old and black as the ace of spades. I did not know until I met Leo that I possessed the ability to speak cat. It's true! For some strange reason we can communicate. As odd as it may sound, it is not unbiblical. After all, Adam and Eve spoke to the animals, as did Baalam. In fact on one occasion Jesus was confronted with paying his taxes and gently spoke to a fish and it went in search of coin, bringing it to the disciple for payment to the tax collector. Now while I have heard many a man talking to a fish, desperately trying to coax them onto the hook only to revile them with unrepeatable curses when they refuse to listen, my situation is somewhat different. Leo has taught me to speak cat.

It all began when I started to listen with my eyes as well as my ears. When Leo is hungry, he goes and stands staring at the empty food dish. He then looks at me, then the dish, then at me again. Through some strange telepathic ability I began to understand that he wants some food. Am I smart or what? He does the same thing when he wants a drink of water or to go into the attic and prowl around. He looks at the door, then at me, then at the door, then at me. I can understand him perfectly so I open the door and off he bounds without a single word of thanks whatsoever. He wakes me up around the same time each morning (*although he hasn't quite grasped the concept of daylight savings time*) with a bounce on my belly and if I do not respond quick enough he slaps my wife on the face. (*She speaks cat better than I do.*)

Last week Leo did the unthinkable. Late in the evening he must have slipped out while someone was coming in. He never does this, so we never imagined him doing it. The next morning he did not wake me up, he did not ask for food or water or even the attic. He was missing! A careful search of the house revealed he was not there. Everyone searched around the outside and I reluctantly even drove around the neighborhood (*and then the whole town*), to no avail. He was gone. "*Oh well*", I thought. After all, he was just a cat and everybody knows you don't own cats, they own you, so, he must have gotten tired of us.

Later in the day as I was praying for some folks on my prayer list, the most absurd thing popped into my head. "*Pray for the cat.*" How stupid. It's just a cat. Yet, he had taught me to speak cat. He did purr when I let him sleep beside me and although he never thanked me for turning on the faucet or getting his food or opening the attic door, I did kind of miss him. What is wrong with me?!! Nevertheless I did something I have never done before, I prayed for the cat.

Nothing elaborate you understand, but to the point nonetheless. *“Let him find his way home.”*

When I arrived home later that afternoon, there he was. Aaron had found him hiding in the flowers beside the house. *“What a sissy, hiding in the flowers”*, I told him. As I went up to my room he bounded along beside me and went straight to the attic door. Understanding cat, I went and opened the door. This time was different though, instead of just bounding up and out of sight, he went two steps and meowed at me and turning around sat down and began to purr. Then just as quick, after I said *“you’re welcome”*, he bounded off in search of whatever it is he searches for in the attic. For the first time he said, *“thank you.”*

Sometimes, God teaches us the most wonderful things through the most unusual ways. For example; so many times we take for granted those around us until we realize that they are lost. We had never thought to pray for them, until we noticed that they were lost. All around us are folks who have lost their way. They are lost and lonely, hiding and hurt. If we can find it in our hearts to pray for a lost cat, why can’t we find it in our heart to pray for them as well? It does not take anything elaborate, just to the point. *“Lord, let them find their way home, and help me to show the way.”*

Strange what we can be thankful for . . . even black cats.