



But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. -

Matthew 15:9

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As I sit to write this my son and daughter-in-law are on their way here with their 9 “children.” Yes, I said 9. And those children all have fur, paws, and tails.

Samuel is a pastor who has recently accepted a job to pastor 5 churches in a different state. We are located about halfway from where they live now to where they are going. They are headed to the new area to do some house-hunting and dropping my 9 grandkitties here for us to baby-sit while they find a place to live then go back home, pack, and start traveling. When they are headed to their new home with their belongings they will stop here to pick up their kiddies spelled kitties.

Since we already have 2 cats that Samuel has pawed off on us, this will be an interesting 2 weeks in front of us. But I'm excited about it. I love cats and one of those cats he's bringing is very special to me. His name is Nermal.

Nermal was a kitten who showed up at our place probably early summer last year. Elkanah's brother-in-law was the one who found him and also was the first to touch him. If you don't know already, when a cat believes himself to be in jeopardy, the first person to touch him is the one he believes to be his rescuer and that's the one he chooses. The bro-in-law comes over most Friday nights and Nermal would always go to him as soon as he saw him.

We had some difficulty potty training Nermal. We have 2 litterboxes that are covered. Their openings are facing each other and there is a rubber mat on the floor between the two boxes. Nermal insisted on using that rubber mat for number 2 and was using something else when he needed to tinkle. I had learned of a way to make mats out of plastic shopping bags and had found a place to donate them once they were made. They are given to the homeless to use as padding to sleep on. My sister-in-law had given me a ton of bags and I

had them scattered on the floor trying to get them sorted out and cut. I ended up unable to make the mats and had to throw away all those bags because Nermal insisted on using those bags instead of the litterbox when he needed to tinkle. I was unable to break him of that.

Eventually it occurred to me that this kitten was afraid of being inside a box. When I figured that out and pulled the lid off one of the litterboxes he began to use it. But that created another problem because one of our other cats goes into the litterbox and fails to squat. I stood and watched as she tinkled and it shot out onto the carpet. For her those litterboxes must have a lid. For him they can't have a lid.

When December arrived last year Samuel came to spend some time with us over the Christmas holiday. On the Tuesday before Christmas Nermal had been inside sleeping all afternoon. When he woke he was begging to go outside. Since he had a fear of the litterbox I let him out. About 45 minutes later Elkanah got home and Nermal was at the door wanting to come back in with Elkanah.

The first thing I noticed was that Nermal was wet and he stank. He reeked! He immediately plopped down in the middle of the floor in front of me, hiked his back leg and started licking. I could see a hole in him that didn't belong there. Somebody had shot him!

Our 2 girls still hadn't taken to him well so we took him to the bedroom and shut him up in there with an open litterbox, food, and water. He seemed to be in shock. After 2 days he was up and wanting to go outside again. Friday evening came and we had our weekly Bible study and Nermal seemed happy to spend that evening in bro-in-law's lap.

When everyone left Elkanah disappeared and all was quiet. Soon I heard him calling to me and I went into the bedroom where he had Nermal on the bed and was examining him. There was another hole in him. This one was in his side. We never knew if it was the exit wound from the earlier bullet or was it another shooting incident. My guess is that he got shot a second time and I base that on the size of the wound. Neither of those holes were big enough to be an exit wound, they were too small.

When Samuel came to visit he only had 2 cats and had brought them with him. They use a litterbox without a cover and Nermal was using their box. Samuel told me that Nermal was passing blood so we took him to the vet. The vet put him on antibiotics and told us not to worry.

When Samuel left he took Nermal with him in an attempt to keep him safe and nurse him back to health. Not long after he reached his new home he visited another vet who monitored that bloody stool stuff and eventually removed from Nermal his "desire to go outside." He is now a happy, indoor, neuter-gender who hogs all the kittens they keep bringing home. I think they have rescued 6 young kittens and Nermal has stepped in and mothered them all. He gives them the grooming and cuddling that a young cat needs.

When Samuel left he had to literally take Nermal from my arms. It hurt so bad to let him go. I felt like he was taking one of my children from me. And I'm finding that as I type this there are tears coming to my eyes.

A few days ago I was talking to Samuel and he had me on speaker. He and his wife started telling me to talk to Nermal, that Nermal was right there. I got quiet and they both started telling me emphatically to start talking to Nermal. They said that it appeared Nermal had recognized my voice because he was purring and rubbing all over the phone while I was talking. It's been 9 ½ months since I've seen him. Can a cat have a memory dating back that far? I hope so. I hope he remembers us. If so he'll be pleased to see bro-in-law again.

OK, no, I didn't intend to talk about my little boy when I began writing this. I wanted to share a memory that was triggered by an event that happened earlier tonight while Samuel and his bride were traveling. While I was talking to him on the phone I heard him say, "I wonder why she just turned north? Did something happen? I need to hang up. I'll call you back."

Since they are traveling with 9 cats they are coming in 2 cars. They have the same kind of phone but their GPS gave them different directions. She turned when it told her to turn but his didn't tell him to turn. Having made the trip home several times in the past, he knew to keep going to straight. But she didn't have that luxury. They are newlyweds and she had made that trip only once before and he was with her. Now here she was at night separated from him and too scared to turn around and try to find him so she kept going. He was trying to call her but for some reason couldn't get through. It took him a while to find a place to turn around so he could go searching for her causing them to be separated for some time.

By the time he finally found her so much time had passed that it made their arrival too late at night for them to come on in. They are planning to spend the night an hour from here then arrive sometime in the morning. It's 2 a.m. as I'm writing this so they may come before I go to bed. Samuel is scheduled to preach at the local church today and I'm told that it will be posted in a few days at a

church member's group on Facebook. If it is I'll try to share the link. But that's not a promise because I forget a lot of things.

That incident of theirs reminded me of an experience that Elkanah and I had many years ago. We were living in the south and Elkanah's parents were living in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. We made a trip up there in one car and came back with two cars.

While there Elkanah got the idea of getting 2-way radios so we could speak to each other while traveling back home in separate cars. No, we didn't have cell phones at the time. Elkanah has one now and I have Samuel's old one but mine is only connected to the home network. As for those 2-way radios, they were very nice to have because we were able to talk to each other whenever we needed or wanted to.

We weren't the only ones making use of those radios while traveling. While we were heading south and approaching Wausau, Wisconsin from the north, we picked up a conversation between a car and a U-Haul that was going north. She was asking him if he was tired and needed a break.

Elkanah had picked out a channel for us to use and told me to keep it there and keep the thing turned on. At one point we were traveling through some city when he suddenly pulled off the road and parked. I followed, wondering what was going on. He got out, came to my car, got in and picked up the radio. Somehow I had managed to bump it and turn it to a different channel without knowing it. He had been trying to talk to me but I wasn't responding and there was something coming up that I needed to know before we got there.

Elkanah had made that trip in the past and knew of a clean and comfortable motel south of St. Louis where he was wanting us to stop for the rest of the night. Outside this motel looked like a dive but inside it was surprisingly clean and very nice. To top that off the price was very budget-friendly.

When we finally reached St. Louis it was nearly midnight and a very dark night. The streets were wet but the rain had stopped by the time we got there. We were on the interstate and traveling with a chain of cars all in the right hand lane. I thought Elkanah was right in front of me but he wasn't. He was 2 cars ahead. We came to an exit and every car except the one that was 2 cars ahead began taking that exit. I also began to exit even though Elkanah was telling me don't exit, go straight. But everyone was exiting and I didn't think that was him way up there, I thought he was right in front of me and that car had followed the crowd headed for a different interstate. I argued that he was turning but he

assured me that he was the only car going straight. I told him to tap his breaks so I could know that was him. He did so I followed him even though I thought it was wrong. Had I followed my feelings that night I would have found myself lost and not knowing how to find him.

So I was immediately behind him again and stayed there until we reached an exit in south St. Louis where he decided to stop for gas. We filled both cars then left. When he got to the exit to get back on the interstate, he did a quick cut across 2 lanes and turned onto the entrance ramp headed for the interstate. But traffic suddenly appeared and I was unable to cut across those 2 lanes and follow him. I had to keep going and try to find a way to turn around. Thanks to the radio I was able to tell him what happened and to pull over and wait for me. Eventually I found a place to turn around and went back to where I could get on the interstate.

Finding my way back to Elkanah was unnerving. The road was barren of traffic when I approached the turn to the interstate, but once again there was suddenly a lot of traffic. I needed to get to that exit in front of that traffic but there was no way I could. Miraculously the way I needed suddenly and unexpectedly appeared. For some unexplained reason the person driving the vehicle in front of that mess of oncoming traffic pulled into the middle of both lanes of traffic, then he stopped which blocked the traffic, stuck his arm out the window and waved at me to make the turn to get onto the interstate. I was stunned but so thankful that he had done that for me.

By then I was panicking and knowing me the way I do I was probably begging God to help me. In looking for a place to turn around I had gone far enough that Elkanah was momentarily out of radio range and I was scared. I made that turn in front of that blocked traffic, headed down the ramp and found Elkanah parked at the side of the interstate waiting for me. Not long after that we were at the motel, both of us too tired to rest.

That's a memory that has stuck with me. I know that God knew how frightened I was and that I needed to make that turn. Did he actually send an angel to block the traffic for me so I could get back to where I needed to be? I think he did. Why else would a total stranger block the traffic simply to wave me through? And if it wasn't an angel, then the driver had to be acting on an urging that came from God. How else would he have known that I was frantic about making that turn? I was driving normally, not like an idiot.

So there you go. No texts or sermonizing tonight. I just shared a memory of a time I believe God intervened to help me out when I was frightened and

separated from Elkanah in the middle of the night in a strange town and not knowing where we were headed. He will and does take care of us. It's not His will to harm us, He wants to rescue us. And I believe that is just another of many occasions that He rescued me.

Now that it's 2:40 a.m., I should proof this, print it out so Elkanah can proof it, then try to get 8 hours sleep, then shower and dress before my kiddos arrive sometime before church. Somehow I don't think that's going to happen. Wish me luck.

Happy Sabbath to all and may God's blessing land on each and every one of you, filling you to overflowing with his love and goodness.

Love to all,

Hannah

P.S. About getting sleep before they arrive, instead of finding my pillow I found my bread machine and set to baking a loaf of sugar-free, raisin/walnut bread. Now I'm hungry and ready for breakfast but that bread won't be ready for 3 more hours. That's just enough time to get enough sleep to make me grumpy. :)