

A
TREASURE
MAP
to
HEAVEN

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First Edition

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This is a work of nonfiction. While every effort has been made to ensure accuracy, some interpretations and commentary reflect the author's personal viewpoint. Sources for the stories and facts in this book are given in the Notes on the Territory at the back.

Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.

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First Edition

A NOTE FROM THE MAPMAKER

I am a man who died —
and I experienced heaven not in the dying,
but in the living,
once I finally began to notice it.
What you are holding is not a credential I earned.
It is a reality I noticed.
And now, share.

THE MAP

What if I gave you a treasure map and told you the treasure was already somewhere in the room?

Not buried underground.

Not waiting at the end of your life.

Here.

You would probably start looking differently.

Good.

That is the entire idea.

I called this book A Treasure Map to Heaven, but this is not a book about what happens after you die.

I have some experience with dying.

This is about what happened after I lived.

I came back to essentially the same world I had left.

Same people.

Same streets.

Same morning coffee.

Same problems waiting for me.

But I began noticing things I had apparently been walking past for years.

A laugh from another room.

Light hitting a wall just right.

The way someone's voice changes when they say the name of a person they love.

Warmth arriving exactly when I needed it.

A moment when absolutely nothing had been solved and, somehow, everything felt okay anyway.

Small things.

Almost embarrassingly small.

But there were a lot of them.

Enough that I started wondering.

What if we have been looking in the wrong direction?

What if heaven leaves clues?

Not proof.

Not answers.

Clues.

That question became this map.

Seven treasures kept appearing:

Joy.

Hope.

Truth.

Love.

Beauty.

Peace.

Grace.

And each seemed to leave evidence through the same ordinary places we experience everything else.

What we see.

What we hear.

What we touch.

What we taste and smell.

What we remember.

What we feel.

What we somehow know before we can explain why.

Thirteen ways of noticing.

Seven things worth hunting.

One map.

THE RULES

There aren't many.

Each hunt contains thirteen clues.

You can solve them in order.

Or don't.

Take an afternoon.

Take a month.

Remember something from twenty years ago.

Notice something ten minutes from now.

It all counts.

When one of the clues answers you, mark the X.

There is no answer to perform and nothing to prove. A clue asks only for attention — and then discernment about what, if anything, it opens in you.

You're collecting your own evidence.

One more rule:

Don't try too hard.

Joy hates being chased.

Beauty has terrible timing.

Peace rarely appears when ordered.

And grace, you'll discover, has absolutely no respect for scorekeeping.

Carry the clue.

Live your day.

See what answers.

The world does most of the work.

There is one sentence that started all of this for me.

It comes from a prayer I had heard most of my life.

You will work it with me a few pages from here. It is the first clue on this map.

You do not need to believe what I believe to hunt with me.

You only need to be willing to look.

Because I already know one thing about the treasure.

You have encountered some of it before.

You probably just didn't know there was an X to mark.

THE LEGEND

Every map needs one.

Here is what the marks mean.

THE TREASURE

Each hunt is looking for one thing:

Joy. Hope. Truth. Love. Beauty. Peace. Grace.

THE THIRTEEN

Each treasure can be found through thirteen different doors — sight, sound, touch, scent, taste, temperature, balance, emotion, memory, intuition, presence, yearning, and recognition.

THE COMPASS

People will ask where faith is on this map.

It is not one of the treasures.

Faith is how you read the map.

THE CLUE

A clue is not proof, and it is not a question with a correct answer.

It is a description of something already loose in your day.

THE DEPARTURE

Every hunt opens by taking you somewhere — a real place, where a true story happened. You will travel without leaving your chair, and

each hunt will bring you home by a different door. The stories are told in pieces along the way. Let them unfold; don't read ahead.

THE PAGE

A few clues stop early, with the rest waiting past the turn of the page. When a clue stops, stop with it. The pause belongs to you. Turn when you're ready.

THE FIND

When something in your actual life matches the clue, stop.
That is the find.

THE X

Mark the X when you find it.
An X does not mean you completed an assignment.
It means: I noticed.

THE TURN

Every treasure eventually asks to be passed on.
The Turn is where the hunt moves from noticing something to becoming part of it.

THE GRAND X

Thirteen finds complete a hunt.
Mark the Grand X.
Then keep looking.
The map ends.
The territory does not.

A WORD ABOUT DISCERNMENT

A clue is an invitation, not a verdict.

A feeling, memory, or intuition may open a question; it does not settle one. Let what you notice stand beside honesty, time, compassion, and safety. Nothing in this hunt asks you to ignore evidence, cross a boundary, return to harm, or force meaning onto a day that does not offer it.

Leave any X open.

Discernment is part of the hunt.

THE FIRST CLUE

Before there were seven treasures, thirteen doors, or a single X on this map, there was one clue.

I had known it for most of my life. That may have been the problem.

Some things become so familiar that we stop hearing them. We know the words. We know when to stand. We know when to bow our heads. We know what comes next. And somewhere along the way, knowing the words becomes a substitute for listening to them.

That is what happened to me with this prayer.

I had said it. I had heard it. I had repeated it with other people whose voices joined mine until no single voice stood out.

But I had never really worked it as a clue.

Then one day, four familiar words opened differently:

on earth as it is in heaven.

Earth. Heaven. Not divided into separate prayers. Not even divided into separate sentences. Placed beside each other.

Something in heaven being asked to reach earth.

Once I noticed that, I could not stop noticing it.

The prayer I had always associated with heaven was not asking me to wait passively for heaven. It was asking for the kingdom of heaven

to come near. It was asking for something of heaven to be experienced here—in this life, on this earth, today.

Not all of heaven. Not a world without suffering, loss, cruelty, or death. We do not live in that world. I know that as surely as anyone.

But perhaps a glimpse.

Enough of heaven to recognize its direction. Enough to change what we see, how we live, and what we pass to one another.

That was the clue that made me draw this map.

THE PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven,\ hallowed be thy name;\ thy kingdom come;\ thy will be done\ on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses,\ as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation;\ but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom,\ and the power,\ and the glory,\ for ever and ever.

Amen.

WORKING THE CLUE

Our Father

The first word I notice now is not *Father*.

It is *our*.

Not my Father. Our Father.

The prayer continues that way.

Give us. Forgive us. Lead us. Deliver us.

There is no *I* in the prayer.

Jesus could have taught people to pray privately for individual rescue, individual provision, and individual forgiveness.

He did not.

The prayer places us beside one another before it asks for anything.

The person I love is there. The person I do not understand is there. The person who has wounded me is there. The person praying in another language, in another country, under circumstances I cannot imagine, is there.

Our.

Whatever is about to be requested will not be received by one person standing apart from everyone else. We come before God together.

That is the first bearing on the map.

You are not hunting alone. None of us are.

Hallowed Be Thy Name

Before the prayer asks for anything, it stops to honor the One being asked.

Hallowed be thy name.

For a long time I read that line as ceremony. A formality before the requests.

I do not read it that way anymore.

To hallow something is to treat it as holy. Not to make it holy — it already is — but to stop treating it as ordinary.

That is a decision about attention.

The name is already holy. The bread is already given. The kingdom is already near.

Hallowing is what happens when we finally notice.

That is why this book will ask you to mark an X. The X is a small act of hallowing. It says: this was holy, and I did not walk past it.

Every hunt in this map is this petition, practiced.

Thy Kingdom Come

When Jesus spoke of the kingdom of God, people knew what kingdoms looked like. Kings ruled. Armies marched. Enemies were defeated. Power announced itself through force, wealth, territory, and command.

Many people longed for a Messiah who would overthrow their oppressors and restore what had been taken from them. They wanted deliverance they could see—a throne, a victory, an enemy brought down.

Christian teaching says that God answered, but not in the form many expected.

The conqueror arrived as a child. The king knelt to wash feet. The lion was revealed as a lamb.

Instead of commanding others to sacrifice themselves for him, Jesus sacrificed himself for them.

That was not the kingdom people knew.

It was the kingdom Jesus came to reveal.

A kingdom in which strength serves. Power gives itself away. The forgotten are seen. The hungry are fed. The guilty are offered mercy. The wounded are not abandoned. Enemies are not merely defeated. They are forgiven.

This kingdom does not advance through domination. It appears whenever someone begins to live according to its ways.

Perhaps that is why Jesus did not only describe it.

He demonstrated it.

He touched people others avoided. He ate with people others condemned. He noticed those the crowd passed without seeing. He stopped for the person everyone else considered an interruption.

He made the kingdom visible in ordinary human encounters.

Then he taught us to pray:

Thy kingdom come.

Not only, “Take me to your kingdom someday.”

Let your kingdom come here.

Let it reach this table. This argument. This grief. This frightened person. This ordinary Tuesday afternoon.

Let what is true where You are become more true where we are.

On Earth as It Is in Heaven

These are the words that stopped me.

For much of my life, I thought of heaven almost entirely as a destination. It was where we hoped to go after this life.

The prayer did not take that hope away from me. But it showed me something I had missed.

It asks for heaven to move in our direction too.

On earth as it is in heaven.

The prayer does not say that earth is heaven.

It clearly is not.

There is too much pain here. Too much loneliness. Too much cruelty. Too much that remains broken and unfinished.

I died here.

I came back here.

I know how quickly an ordinary future can disappear. I know what it is like to lose the assumption that tomorrow will arrive simply because it always has.

But I also know what waited for me when I returned.

The same rooms. The same streets. The same people. Morning light through a familiar window. Coffee in a cup. A hand reaching for mine.

A life that looked almost exactly as it had before and no longer looked the same to me at all.

Nothing had become spectacular.

It had become visible.

That is when the prayer became more than words I knew.

If something of heaven can be experienced on earth, what would it look like? What would it sound like? Would it always announce itself? Would it arrive surrounded by light, or could it be sitting unnoticed at the kitchen table?

Could it be the laugh I nearly missed? The voice that softens when it says a certain name? The person who remains when leaving would

be easier? A moment in which nothing has been solved, yet somehow there is peace?

Could these be small openings between what the world is and what God desires it to become?

Not heaven in its fullness.

A glimpse.

Enough to recognize. Enough to follow.

That question became this map.

Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread

The word translated as *daily* is rare. Its precise meaning has been discussed for centuries: bread needed for today, bread for the coming day, bread necessary for our existence.

I love that one of the most familiar prayers in the world still holds a word we have not completely exhausted.

But the request itself is strikingly simple.

Bread.

Not wealth. Not certainty. Not enough stored away to guarantee that nothing frightening will happen.

Bread for today.

Enough to sustain us. Enough to nourish us. Enough to take the next step.

Bread is ordinary. That may be exactly why it matters.

Jesus could have chosen an image of treasure, spectacle, or abundance. Instead, he gave us something made every morning and

broken at the table. Something held in the hand. Something tasted. Something shared.

Something easily overlooked until it is absent.

I began to wonder how much daily bread I had received without recognizing it.

A meal prepared for me. A voice on the telephone. A place to return to. Strength I did not know I had until it was required. A kindness that arrived on the wrong day to be accidental. A person who stayed. One more morning. One more breath.

Enough.

Maybe daily bread is not only what keeps the body alive. Maybe it is also whatever gives us enough hope, love, grace, or courage to remain fully alive inside the life we have been given.

Not everything we will ever need.

Enough for today.

The world trains us to dismiss enough. It teaches us to look for more—more certainty, more success, more evidence, more control.

The prayer teaches us to ask for bread.

Then to notice when it arrives.

That is what every hunt in this book asks you to do.

Taste the bread instead of merely consuming it. Notice what is nourishing you. Recognize what has been placed within reach.

The ordinary does not have to become extraordinary before it becomes holy.

Sometimes the ordinary is where the holy has been waiting for us all along.

Forgive Us as We Forgive

The prayer then moves from bread to forgiveness.

Different traditions use different words.

Trespases. Debts. Sins.

Each word carries something slightly different, but what caught me was not the vocabulary.

It was the movement.

Forgive us, as we forgive.

Something comes toward us.

Then something is asked to move through us.

Receive. Then give.

The kingdom does not end with what we have been given. It becomes visible in what we allow to pass through us to someone else.

This is the Turn at the center of every hunt.

Joy is found, then shared. Hope is found, then lent. Truth is found, then lived. Love is found, then given. Beauty is noticed, then shown to someone who has forgotten to look. Peace is received, then carried into a room that does not have any. Grace is accepted, then extended.

The treasure is never meant to stop with the person who finds it.

Forgiveness may be the hardest example.

Sometimes what we carry is not simply a painful memory.

It is a ledger. An old argument. A case we continue prosecuting long after everyone has left the courtroom. A debt we insist must still be paid.

Forgiveness does not declare that the injury was harmless. It does not require us to return to danger or pretend that trust has not been broken.

But it may release us from making the wound the permanent center of our lives.

We are offered mercy for what we have done.

Then we are asked whether mercy can continue its journey through us.

Not because it is easy.

Because this is what the kingdom looks like when it reaches earth.

Lead Us Through the Trial

The word translated as *temptation* can also carry the meaning of testing or trial.

That changes how I hear the line.

This is not merely a prayer for protection from small failures. It is the prayer of people who understand that life can become difficult enough to test everything they thought they knew.

I understand that prayer.

There are moments when life divides into before and after.

The telephone rings. The doctor enters the room. Someone does not come home. The future we assumed was waiting for us disappears.

In those moments, daily bread may not look like an answer.

It may look like enough strength to remain. Enough hope to survive the night. Enough love to keep us from becoming completely lost inside our fear. Enough grace to forgive ourselves for not handling any of it particularly well.

The hunt is not an escape from suffering.

It does not ask us to pretend pain is beautiful or loss is secretly easy.

It asks a different question:

Is suffering the only thing present?

When darkness comes, is there still one light? When hope becomes difficult, is there still one reason to continue? When peace seems impossible, is there still one breath in which we can rest? When we have failed, is grace still moving toward us?

Perhaps this is another form of daily bread.

Not enough to explain everything.

Enough to take the next step.

The Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory

The familiar ending of the prayer has its own history. The earliest manuscripts of Matthew do not contain it. It entered Christian worship very early and became part of the prayer through generations of people praying together.

I find that beautiful.

The prayer Jesus taught gathered a response from the people who carried it.

They reached the end and answered:

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory.

One generation added its voice to another.

The prayer begins with *our*.

It ends with people speaking together.

That matters because the kingdom described here cannot be experienced alone.

Bread must be grown, made, broken, and shared. Forgiveness exists between people. Love requires someone to receive it. Peace changes a room. Grace moves from one life into another.

Very little on this map is entirely new. People have been finding joy, hope, truth, love, beauty, peace, and grace for thousands of years.

The clues are old.

The experience of finding them is always new.

Amen

A small word.

Easy to say without hearing.

Its roots carry the sense of firmness, reliability, and trust.

Something like:

This is true.

This holds.

Let it be so.

That is where a prayer leaves the mouth and enters a life.

And that is where this clue must leave the page.

THE FIRST FIND

I once thought this prayer was primarily about how to reach heaven.

Now I also hear it as a prayer for heaven to reach us.

Not completely. Not permanently. Not yet.

But truly.

In bread enough for today. In mercy we did not earn. In strength that arrives during the trial. In forgiveness received and forgiveness released. In the moment another person's need becomes *our* concern.

In the life of Jesus, who showed that the kingdom does not always arrive looking powerful. Sometimes it kneels. Sometimes it serves. Sometimes it suffers. Sometimes it gives everything and appears, for a time, to have lost.

And then it rises.

The prayer gave me a way to understand what I had begun to notice after I came back to my life.

Heaven was not only a place I hoped to reach someday.

There were moments when it came close.

A moment of joy that asked to be shared. A reason for hope when very little evidence remained. A truth that held when everything else moved. Love passing quietly between two people. Beauty interrupting an ordinary day. Peace arriving before the problem had been solved. Grace reaching me before I knew how to ask for it.

Glimpses.

Not proof.

Not the whole kingdom.

But enough of its light to recognize the direction from which it came. Enough to nourish me. Enough to change the way I thought, felt, and acted.

Enough to share.

That is what this book is.

A map to the daily bread.

A map to the places where heaven comes close enough to be noticed.

The clues will ask you to see, hear, touch, taste, remember, feel, and recognize what has been around you all along.

The map cannot manufacture the treasure.

It does not need to.

The gift has already been given.

The question is whether we will notice.

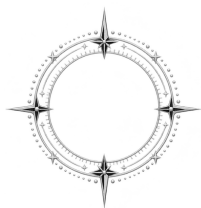
And when we do, whether we will keep it to ourselves—or allow it to move through us into the life of someone else.

That is the first clue.

That is the first treasure.

Heaven is not only where the map ends.

A glimpse of heaven is where it begins.



THE FIRST FIND — MARK IT HERE WITH
AN X