

THE NEXT BARK YOU HEAR

3 OCTOBER 2004

Preached by Ellie (with the help of Dawn)

The first thing you need to know, Richard, is that I love you. You made the right decision, but you were one week late. Remember: dogs are dogs. We're animals. We're not humans. We may live with you, but our real world is still the world of nature. We understand its rhythms. We don't try to control them. We don't worry too much about them. So I knew it was time. I was in a great deal of pain. If it were just me, I would have gone off into the woods to die. But you were scared, so I was patient. You were scared to wake up in the morning without me. I understand. I needed to help you understand. I actually acted sicker than I felt. That was the only way I could tell you I was ready.

I wasn't scared. I had confidence in the direction of my own soul. I knew what would happen and where I was going. Humans have bigger brains. Why are their souls so undeveloped? Why don't they have as much confidence?

Anyway, I am perfectly happy. I am really peaceful and safe. And Richard --- this should be no surprise to you --- I got even more sympathy than you did! So many people talked to me --- so many people prayed for me, an enormous number --- such adoration. I loved it. And, of course, I deserved it. Thank them for me, but they don't have to pray for me. I am well. I send you and them lots of love.

Now, I know you wanted me to preach the sermon today --- to share some wisdom. Here it is.

Do you know what I really loved about you? You are genuine. You are who you are. You don't pretend. You always let me know how you were feeling. You shared that with me.

But as far as I can tell, this is a big problem for lots of humans. They are not truthful about themselves or their feelings. (If I didn't warm up to someone, this was the reason why.) Humans express less than they feel -- less anger, less sorrow, less happiness, less joy.

Look at me. I say how it is.

Reflect on that difference, will you?

What is the source of this lack of honest emotional expression? The source is a lack of self-confidence. I knew I was the best. I really loved myself, even with my imperfections. I think the root of these repressed human emotions, and the root of so many problems people have is that they don't like themselves. Dog-showing did a lot for me. Maybe humans should be shown like dogs. Maybe that would teach them to trust themselves and love themselves.

Another thing. Humans don't have a clue about what God is like, either. I'll tell you. You remember what it was like when we walked in the orchard together on sunny days in October, and you breathed in deeply, and felt your lungs expanding, and felt happy, and peaceful and safe? That's what God is like. That's what God is. God is warm, comfortable, comforting. You want to know how to experience God? You experience God by not feeling afraid.

Don't be afraid, Richard. Fear has nothing to do with God and should have nothing to do with you. And get another dog. I'm not jealous. And you're ready. And get a corgi. We're the best. But don't buy one off the internet. I know you've been cruising the pembrokes on line. That's not the right way to do it. You've got to meet them first. And be open to them. Don't expect another "me."

And Richard, that's fine. Remember how happy I looked when I woke up in the morning and jumped on the bed? That's because it was a new day! The past was the past. I didn't even remember the day before. It was a new day. There were unlimited possibilities. Richard, things flow on. One day flows into another. One day goes. Another comes. Enter that rhythm with me. Reflect on that, will you?

Now some special words for some special people. Tell your father I understand. His pain is like mine was, and he's stoic like me. I know I brought comfort to him. I will again. I send him love. I want him to know everything will be okay. And Sean. I send him love, too. He is sweet, compassionate, lots of fun, he likes to do things. He's just great.

Finally, I know how sad you feel sometimes. I understand. It moves me. But the sadness is not where I am. Humans don't understand this either when they lose someone they love. They want to stay connected to them, and they think it's through their sadness. They're confused. Don't be confused, Richard. I am not in the sadness. It has no connection to me. I am in the joy. When you feel that Richard, you'll know it's me, still with you, and still trying to teach you to play and run in the sun.

Amen.