

Precious Pilgrim,

I'm sitting up at the top of our lake house. It's a glorious day - not a cloud in the sky. It's a rainbow-jumping day. I have a 360-degree panoramic view of blue. The sky is incredible. The vivid indigo above fades to a pastel aqua as it blends into the horizon. You can't tell where the sky ends and the water begin. It's the beginning of spring - the Resurrection season - and it's as if all nature knows. There is a pristine cleanness and a morning stillness in the air. I can smell the newness of creation. The world seems quiet, holy and peaceful. The only sound is a chorus of birds, each singing his own melody.

My favorite is the slow, rich baritone notes of the mourning dove. I think his lyrics are "I praise you, Lord God." The soprano birds are trilling away and trying to steal the show, but there's no way (I recognize their scheme for I am such a bird!) This daylight performance belongs to the dove. He's setting the pace, proclaiming the news - "It's another rainbow-jumping day." I wonder if he was awarded this part after faithfully flying three times for Noah, or was it his being sacrificed at the temple for the Christ child? I wonder why the Holy Spirit chose from all the creatures to descend like a dove at Christ's baptism? What an honor. What a privilege. What a blessing. No wonder he has the richest sounding song.

I first became aware of his hymn a few summers ago in Taynton, England. It is a tiny town, population less than 75,

in the Cotswolds right outside of Burford. There are no stores or offices or businesses. You don't go there to be busy but to "be." The church bells chime hourly. They seem to take on the heartbeat of the community. There is no rush or hurry. It's always a slow forward there. It's where the across-the street neighbors' pet finches, Mr. And Mrs. Pipp, and their lop-eared rabbit, Mr. Puff, are fed daily at teatime. It's where you can back out of your driveway into the middle of the road and get out of your car and visit without fear of being rammed by an oncoming vehicle.

In fact, the only fast car was totally contained. It belonged to the parents of a 16-year-old boy who was allowed only to go back and forth in his driveway. This he did for hours on end, and that was OK. We'd just smile as we'd hear the gravel fly behind our wall. His pace did not accelerate ours, or anyone else's.

It was there, lying on my back in the walled garden of our rented 18th century barn, that I first pondered doves. They'd sit on any available roof, chimney, wire, or tree and do their broadcasting. It was like watching a vocal telegraph being sent out from house to house.

"I praise you, Lord God. I praise you, Lord God. I praise you, Lord God." A perfect hymn, for they knew - "It was a rainbow jumping day!"

But what, you may ask, is such a day? Well, my precious pilgrim, I'm just learning myself, but hopefully as we go along we can glean understanding together.

I first learned about rainbow-jumping days via my friend Mary Barwick. Oh, sure, I'd experienced them regularly as I'm sure you have. It's just that I didn't know they had a name, and without a name there really isn't total awareness, do you think? Well, anyway, my awareness came more into focus about three years ago when I had just begun the first book. After completing twelve letters, I boldly took them over to Mary's to ask her to be the illustrator. Can you imagine? Twelve handwritten letters does not a book make. For a week, which felt more like a month, I anxiously awaited her call. In this long-short time I went from bold to almost bonkers, for the dream was still very much in its wobbly infant stage and was somehow dependent on Mary's response. (I thank the dear Lord that He understands our shaky-kneed need for encouragement.)

Finally, she called and said she'd painted two paintings for the book. I went as fast as my little red Blazer could take me to her home. And sure enough, there were two glorious illustrations. It was apparent which letter went with the first painting, but I didn't have a clue about the second. When I asked, she said she saw it as the cover. Cover? Cover? We now have a cover! That statement solidified a dream into a reality. This painting's title was "jump-roping with a Rainbow." I was

given the explanation that when her children were young they would ask, "What do angels do when they are not helping others?" and her standard answer was, "They jump rope with rainbows."

That statement and painting have since been imprinted on my spirit. So much so that I've found on blue-sky days that the silent declaration of "It's a rainbow-jumping day" has drifted into my being. It usually doesn't elicit a verbal response, but rather a Mona Lisa smile and a "bend the knee of my heart." Thank you, Lord.

More recently I've come to realize that such a response should not be dependent on the weather. The glory of God is ever present. It's not dependent on the barometric pressure, but on our Lord Jesus Christ's presence.

It says in Hebrews 13:8. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, and forever." NAS It is because of knowing this reality that Paul could also say:

37 For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come.

38 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:37-39

Today the sky is blue. All is right in this world. It is a rainbow-jumping day. The hope of heaven can be perceived. The dove proclaims it with his hymn. May you and I join in . . . and this response should not be dependent on barometric pressure.

I praise you, Lord God."

I praise you, Lord God."

Your sister in Christ,

Lucy