

*Precious Pilgrim,*

*My husband and I had the most wonderful, perfect, heavenly day. It does not get much better. Upon arriving, we headed for the lake. We stopped halfway at a restaurant for breakfast. There we read the newspaper, which had a feature article on local gardeners. One of the pictures really caught my husband's eye. It was a photograph of Isabel Hill in one of her gardens. I told him her landscaped world was fantastic. He instantly wanted to make a detour and go see her. I knew she lived in Millbrook, Alabama, a community about 30 minutes away, but I didn't know the exact location. We started calling around for directions and no one we called was at home. So leave it to my Curious George-type husband, we played right turn until we found it. Meanwhile, we called Isabel to warn her of our arrival, but there was no answer. So as we started going up her long, cherry tree lined driveway, I left a message saying we were trespassing and hoped she didn't mind. Thank the dear Lord on this breathtakingly beautiful spring day, she was outside telling visitors goodbye.*

*She graciously greeted us as if we were long awaited guests. She gave us a tour of her gardens and her home. Never have I seen such an exquisite spot. Over three hundred acres had been hand loved, planned, and planted by her and her late husband. There was a profusion of azaleas, dogwoods, tulips and cherry trees. Tucked in nooks and crannies, we came across unexpected della Robbia and hidden garden*

*statues. There was a creek and ponds, a hammock and a gazebo and ferns galore. It was heavenly -- absolutely heavenly. All was right in this world.*

*Eventually, we did have to leave, but it was made bearable by the knowledge that we were going from one paradise to another -- the lake. We took country back roads, stretching out our drive through the full-blown thickness of spring's purple wisteria-draped trees. The smell was so fragrant that we chose to ride with our windows down. The dogwoods were so dense that the woods looked as if there were huge snowflakes frozen in space. There also was shades of spring green being shown off by the trees and a palate of pinks gracing the azaleas.*

*Almost too much, too beautiful to comprehend and it didn't stop with the natural beauty. The animals and birds seemed to be showing off too. Somehow the cows and horses we passed looked more pastoral than ever. And upon arriving at the lake, we saw two loons, four mallard ducks, bees, butterflies and, if that wasn't enough, an eagle flew overhead.*

*Most of the afternoon my project-oriented spouse worked like a dog cleaning the boat. I played my part and gave him moral support as I sat on the dock reading and breathing and soaking in the beauty. We fixed dinner, he the steak, me the salad, then we took trays and went back outside and ate by the light of a full moon. Close your eyes and breathe deeply -- in -- out -- in -- out. Can you imagine the smells? The sounds? The*

*sights? The water lapping; the wind blowing; the moonlight dancing; the stars twinkling? The lake is what early Celtic Christians would call a "thin place." They are places where our Lord's presence can be felt most strongly.*

*Precious Pilgrim, do you know of such places? Have you experienced such up close and personally? Holy ground -- "thin places" where our Lord's presence is felt so strongly that you felt compelled to take off your shoes and fall to your knees in worship of our Almighty God. Sometimes I feel like Paul when he had scales on his eyes and couldn't see after encountering our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ on that Damascus Road. He was convicted, changed, rearranged, never to be the same. But first, he was blind -- totally blind. He couldn't see. Can you imagine the darkness after he had encountered the infinite light of our Christ?*

*Sometimes I feel like I'm running around with shades on -- not perceiving God's glory which is everywhere. I think my busyness can cause distorted vision. Can your busyness do the same? I know my sins can cause blurry sight too; in fact, even more so, do yours? Ahh, I wonder when Saul became Paul, when he was blind and then could see, if he received an even more profound gift of vision than ever before that if it wasn't just scales that fell from his eyes, but even more miraculously scales fell from his heart. And he received clarity of heart -- a truly light-filled, love-filled heart -- one in which his Savior Christ totally reigned. Ahh, that is what I yearn for. Do you*

*also, Precious Pilgrim?*

*Oh, if by God's grace our hearts could become totally loving ones where Jesus totally reigned, then can you imagine the incredible gift of sight that would come forth? Heart sight where we could receive and perceive the beauty -- God's beauty in all -- yes, in all. Have you run across such rare people who have that Christ-like clarity apart from sight -- those who see God's glory in some of the most unglorious places and unglorious people? They sense God's presence in everything -- everywhere. "Thin places" for them are everywhere. I do yearn to have the scaleless eyes of Paul and of so many other Christ-like Christians who truly saw and see as our Lord and Savior God's glory everywhere -- even in the darkest of places. Ahh, my precious Pilgrim, ahh for that total heart change -- one like Saul -- Paul -- that was instantaneous or, even if it's a more gradual scale removal, where our Lord's tender touch takes time for the scales to be removed. Whatever the case, may God's will be done in each one of our lives. May He reign so completely, so totally that each of us not only perceive His glory more fully, but may we each reflect His glory in our lives more profoundly.*

*I'd like to end today's letter by reading Acts 9, verses 17 through 22.*

*And Ananias departed and entered the house and after laying his hands on him said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming,*

*has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” And immediately, there fell from his eyes something like scales and he regained his sight and he arose and was baptized and he took food and was strengthened. Now for several days he was with the disciples who were at Damascus and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogue saying, “He is the Son of God.” And all those hearing him continued to be amazed and were saying, “Is this not he who in Jerusalem destroyed those who called on His name and who had come here for the purpose of bringing them bound before the chief priest?” And Saul kept increasing in strength and confounding the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that this Jesus is the Christ.*

*May we, my brothers and sisters, become more scaleless in our vision, may we become through the filling of the Holy Spirit, more Paul-like.*

*I am your sister in Christ,  
Lucy*