



November 2015

Dear Friends

**What does “being *different*” look like to you?**

At first glance, I look like a “typical” American. But I’m not. I’m from another country. Another Continent. Africa.

When people hear the word “Africa,” they immediately assume that my skin color would look a little *different*. Since in the States, I usually have to repeat my name three times before people grasp my name through the *different* accent. I noticed how when attempting to say my name with an American accent, **I’m heard** the first time. This got me thinking.

**I’m heard.**

Do you ever find yourself in a place where you feel so *different*? So *different* in ways that’s often hard to explain. Standing in the middle of a crowded room, yet lonely. Do you ever just long to be heard? To be seen and accepted for who you are?

For me, my “on the surface” *differences*, is my “British like” accent, cultural phrases or words used, and “skin color.” However, for 25 years of my life, I’ve always felt *different*. An outsider. Often lonely. I felt like I never belonged, as though I was always out of place. I never had the best of anything, according to the “world’s expectations.” I drove a hand me down vehicle, driven by 3 generations, which leaked everywhere and often left me stranded. I lived in a tiny home, adjacent to another home, where, while I lay in bed alone at night, could hear the laughter and festivities from people within the other home. Desperate for an invite, yet was I? I wouldn’t fit in anyway. I never had the best clothes, I never had the opportunity of buying luxury foods and treats. I was just *different*. Actually, not “was.” I am *different*.

I used to despise being *different*. Until, I realized, I wasn’t *different*. I’m set apart.

Set Apart. Eager to understand what this meant, and how this “*different*” was more than just “*different*.” I began hearing what the Lord was saying.

*“You are to be Holy to me because I, the Lord, am Holy, and I have **set you apart** from the nations to be my own.” – Leviticus 20:26*

**“YOU ARE MINE.”**

*“For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has **chosen you** out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be His people, His **treasured possession**. The Lord did not set affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. **BUT** it was because **the Lord has loved you** and kept the oath He swore to your forefathers that He brought you out with a mighty hand and **redeemed** you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh King of Egypt.” – Deuteronomy 7:6 – 8*

**“I HAVE CHOSEN YOU. YOU ARE ACCEPTED. I LOVE YOU. I HAVE REDEEMED YOU. YOU ARE SET FREE. I AM THE LORD, YOUR GOD.”**

If you're reading this and can relate to feeling "*different*", do you see your value, your worth and in whom your belonging is found? Through Jesus, we are redeemed, we are set free, no longer bound by sin or the weight of this world. Our finances do not determine our wealth. The clothing we wear or the car we drive does not determine our value. **Our worth is immeasurable** because we are a **treasured possession** of a Mighty Father, daddy God. **We belong.**

This past month I was challenged by a lady whom my friend and I met, begging on the side of a busy road. She's homeless, sleeping in the backseat of her barely running vehicle. Through rain and shine, she fights to provide for her and her two children. As we helped her carry her very wet belongings, soaked from the rain, along with the window cleaner she was using to clean car windows for money, God began stirring something in my heart. Hearing her life story of how God has never forsaken her throughout, was humbling. She has little, but her heart is full of thanksgiving to Father God.

In the world's eyes, this lady was poor. However, in my eyes, she was richer than the wealthiest person I know. Why? Because her heart was rich in love, thanksgiving and gratitude. Through her, God began impacting my heart in a ways I cannot sum up in words. Something more valuable than money could buy.

Another question I asked myself: "Who am I to say I'm lonely, when this lady's only conversation throughout a day is from strangers passing her by, often looking at her in disgust, or not even paying attention to her at all?"

Is there a *difference* between standing in a crowded room and feeling lonely, in comparison to sitting on the side of a busy road begging to be seen and heard? I am no *different* than that lady, and she's no *different* than me. We're just *different*. Set apart.

Perhaps being "*different*" isn't a label placed on us by the world. We were made to stand out, set apart, for His Glory.

A sister in Christ,

Natalie Spronk

**"Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God."  
Hebrews 13:16**