



Photo by Pam Heikkila

Run to the Father

Written by Jenifer Heath

May 17, 2023 got off to a rough start. Jason looked out the kitchen window and noticed that a fence was down. Upon closer inspection, he could see that Max, our Percheron draft horse, was also laying down. Recognizing immediately that something was **dreadfully wrong**, Jason and I sprinted out the door to check on him. (It is very dangerous for a horse to lay down for a significant length of time, more than an hour or two. Their intestines can become blocked or stop moving, leaving them in a life-threatening situation). When we arrived at his paddock in the winter pasture, we discovered that Max had his left hind leg caught in the metal fencing that lines his pen. The paddock is fenced with very safe flexible fencing, however, in order to keep his **best friend, Zacchaeus**, the miniature mule, in the pen, we also installed a goat fencing made of large metal squares on the inside of the flex fencing. Until that day it had not caused a problem, but it only takes one freak accident, and a horse can suffer injury or even death. In this case, Max had broken down the fence in an effort to get unstuck, and in so doing had apparently also fallen. As a result of being **twisted up in the fence**, his upper leg had a large abrasion, and there was swelling around his fetlock, the lower part of his leg above the hoof. We were gravely concerned because if the injury was serious, it could mean an **end to Max's riding career** or even death.

It was imperative that we immediately remove the fencing from his leg and then try to get **Max to stand up!** Anytime you work around a horse's legs or hooves, it's dangerous, and he is our biggest horse, weighing around 1500 pounds. Although he would never kick us on purpose, if **fear or anxiety** got the best of him, he might react with a swift kick, putting our lives at risk. Somehow, Jason was able to skillfully twist the fencing back and release Max's leg, but although **we set him free**, he remained laying down and didn't even attempt to get up. He was worn out from struggling. His body was weak and shaking from pain and exhaustion. It was as if he looked up at us and said, **"Help me! I can't do it on my own."**

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“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior . . .” – Isaiah 43:2-3

I blurted out a **quick prayer**. “Lord, we can’t lose this amazing horse today. Please help us get him up!” We put a halter on him and pulled with all our might. Max happened to be laying at a slight incline, leaving him unable to get his legs under him. We tried lifting his head, but even that felt like a ton of bricks.

He wasn’t budging. The only option was to try to roll him back the other direction. Jason put a rope around his good hind leg, and I positioned myself under his two front legs. We heaved and pushed and pulled, and finally we were able to roll him over the other direction. He never reacted with fear, kicking or struggling against us. I think it was because **he trusted that we were trying to help him.** Miraculously, Max got his trembling legs under him and stood up. He immediately went to the bathroom, which was **a good sign**, and although he couldn’t put much weight on the leg, he began to hobble around little by little.

As I think back on this day, I realize that sometimes in our lives we get **tangled up too.** Maybe we get caught up in worrying about money or our children or a job situation. Maybe we get stuck in **negative thinking** or a relationship that isn’t good for us. Or maybe we even get tangled up in sin. At first, we might think that it isn’t such a big deal, but before we know it, we’re in over our head, and we can’t seem to free ourselves. I want you to know that there is a way out. **God has a good plan**, and it’s not too late to call out to Him for help and guidance. Don’t just lay down and give up. Keep going. Be willing to ask for help. Cry out to your Heavenly Father, and **He will rescue you.** It doesn’t mean there won’t be some pain or difficulty in the recovery time, but He will give you the victory. That’s why **Jesus came- to set free, rescue, and deliver us.**

A short time after Max stood up, we could see that he was going to be ok. Jason and I **burst into tears of joy** and began thanking the Lord for saving our gentle giant. The vet arrived a short time later to examine him and found only superficial injuries. I am happy to report that Max has made a full recovery. And, you can too. You just need to know where to turn. **Run to your Father. He will never let you down.**



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