Edward Pritaker’s revival began, oddly enough, in his own living room. When the pressures of life, the onslaught of the world, and the struggles of his own heart became too much, he found comfort at the piano, his hands rediscovering tunes from memory that brought him back to truth, back to his own heart. Funny how old songs could do that.

by Chris Fabry

A LIFELONG CHURCH member, Edward had witnessed and lamented his congregation’s slow drift. Sermons were shorter and less meaty these days. The Word was a smorgasbord, picked and chosen from as desired (or not) rather than something exposited verse by verse. The music was louder but bereft of the deep theology of hymns he’d sung since childhood. Belief these days felt as thin as a child’s helium-filled balloon, but it looked cheery and colorful to the eye.

The culture was coming apart at the seams, there was no question. People did what was right in their own eyes, making up rules and genders as they went along. Morality and truth was a toss of a coin rather than something written in stone. And as he saw it, the church — meaning the people, not the building — needed to drive a
On this day, in his own living room, Edward realized he’d been praying for the wrong thing.

Edward placed his hands on the piano keys and took a breath. He could have picked any song, but for some reason, “Blessed Assurance” came to him. He remembered the words written by a blind woman who lived in a time much like his own, when everything in her culture felt up for grabs. These rich words reverberated in his heart, and he smiled — a moment of pure praise, heavenly sunshine breaking through, a light illuminating his clouded mind. Spiritual bliss.

He had been driven to the piano after leaving a heated online argument. Old friends tossed verbal grenades at each other on social media. The latest political dust storm had degenerated into name-calling. He knew if he didn’t physically leave the computer, he would post something regrettable.

Edward’s house?

His hands moved across the keys in 9/8 time, the words like incense rising inside. What was going on in Fanny Crosby’s life for her to pen such truth? When he reached the second verse, he softly and audibly murmured, “Perfect submission …”

It was at that unguarded moment that he glanced out the window and saw a teenager with black hair, black fingernails, and a sleeve of tattoos. Was it a he or a she? He couldn’t tell. And he wondered if the kid knew. Such a crazy, mixed-up world.

He chose to believe it was a male because of the kid’s height and posture. Studying closer, Edward saw the young man had metal in one lip and in his nose and ears and who knew where else. He stood on the sidewalk, looking at Edward’s house.

“Echoes of mercy …”

Edward stopped playing and stared. Was the teen waiting for someone? Listening to something? Looking for something to steal? Edward felt a jolt of fear, thinking the kid might have seen him through the window. But that was impossible with the way the light reflected off the glass at this time of day. Still, the young man stood transfixed. Had he lost something? What made him stop in front of Edward’s house?

Edward studied him more closely. Holes in his jeans. Rips and frays and tendrils of white cotton. Had he worn the jeans out or had he bought them that way? Maybe he wasn’t a kid. Maybe he was 30. If so, why wasn’t he at work? Why was his hair covering his eyes? When was the last time he’d bathed? Edward shook his head and frowned. The questions rolled and roiled inside him, and he came up with a new answer until he heard movement in the hall. He turned to see his wife staring out one of the frosted glass windows in the front door. The windows provided a measure of privacy. You could see shapes and figures from either side of the glass, but nothing clearly.

“She looks at the house,” Edward said quietly. “I can’t figure it out. Do you think he wants something?”

When his wife did not respond, he stood and approached her. What he saw shocked him.

There were tears in her eyes.

“Honey, what is it?” he said. “Is something wrong?”

She took her time, blinking. There was water on her cheek, and he brushed it away and put a hand on her shoulder. Then with both hands, he gently turned her to face him.

“What is it?” he said.

“He looks so lost,” she whispered. “Like a sheep that wandered away. Isn’t that what he looks like?”

Edward looked out the window at the blurred image of the young man. He hadn’t seen anything of the sort. But now, looking again through her eyes, he didn’t see tattoos or long hair or ripped jeans or dark nails or piercings. The vision was too fuzzy for details. What he saw instead was the outline of someone made in God’s image. The outline of a soul.

“That’s my story, this is my song …”

He thought of those friends on social media. It was much easier to watch an elephant draw a picture or click on videos of cats jumping into trash cans or laugh at dubbed dogs speaking funny lines. He liked talking with people who agreed with him about political and spiritual things. He liked posting Bible verses and hymn texts. It was hard to engage with people who disagreed with his political views. Harder still to engage with the spiritually incorrect.

Looking through this window and seeing the compassion his wife had for someone she didn’t know and couldn’t clearly judge made him question his own eyes. The way she responded without condemning, without getting lost on the veneer, flipped a switch inside he didn’t know was there.

“This is my story, this is my song …”

It struck him then that the view from this window was clearer than the one by the piano. And as the words and notes and thoughts and this new vision coalesced inside, he did something strange that surprised his wife and shocked himself. He smiled at her and opened the door and walked outside.

Chris Fabry is a writer, speaker, radio personality, and author of more than 50 books. He is a member of the Radio Hall of Fame and the CCM Hall of Fame. He hosts a weekly radio program, “Chris Fabry Live,” on Moody Radio. He is the author of the novel Overcomer, which was released in July. His book, “Of Mercy and Miracles” appeared in November.

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