Labeled and Misunderstood

I mentioned a couple of weeks ago that I would share with you the story of Indie and how he came into my life. Prior to COVID, I had been looking to get back into owning my own horse and although my sweet friends shared their horses with me, it just wasn't the same and I just wanted another horse to bond with. Horses bring so much joy into my life and just being in their presence grounds me. I have asked the Lord MANY times, "Why did you give me such a passion for these majestic animals?" I hope someday, I will understand.

Anyway, I looked and looked, and the prices were outrageous (and still are) and then one August day, I was searching on Dream Horse and an add was there describing a great trail mount, stocky built looking for a new home. No pictures, no fluffy description. So, I reached out to the seller and after a few days, she did send me a picture of a horse named, DAGGER! (His first label) What comes to your mind about a horse named Dagger? Do you think he would be a kind horse? Lol. The picture she emailed to me reminded me so much of my first heart horse, Boss and I admit, I fell in love with the picture and hopes of having another Boss horse. I can tell you without a shadow of doubt, he is NOTHING like Boss! Maybe someday, I will share about Boss.

I showed the picture along with his bloodlines to Annie and she immediately fell in love with his bloodline and knew of another horse long ago with the same lineage, a horse with a great mind that I also knew and had ridden, so that added to my excitement of wanting to meet him. Well, the lady put me off for over 3 months with excuse

after excuse before we could make the 4-hour trek to see him. That should have been a big clue! Kevin and I drove on a Sunday afternoon in November to see "Dagger" and what we saw was a severely neglected, lame horse that looked nothing like the picture. He immediately came over to us and started nuzzling my husband's hand and at one point he pulled me in for a hug. His tail was one big club of cockle burrs as was his mane and forelock, and he was lame. He lived on a very steep hillside on 30 acres with no shelter other than a trees. My heart sank. We decided to go home and think about it before making any decisions and within 20 minutes of our ride home, I patted my husbands hand and said: "I don't think I can leave him there and Kevin agreed!" I figured he had hock issues, which I had dealt with before and I wasn't afraid of that, but little did I know, there was a lot more going on.

It was 3 weeks before I brought him to Michigan and over to Annie's and I know she was shocked to see how "poorly" he truly looked and I knew there and then that I had a long road ahead of me. It took 3 hours to just get the burrs out of his tail! Well, I am here to tell you that I could have bought a very fancy broke show horse for what I have spent in supplements, injections, chiropractic and vet expenses for this boy. More on that in a few! The first thing to change was his name. His registered name is Blues Northern Comfort and the name, Dagger just didn't fit. Dagger sounded harsh and I didn't want his name to be associated with any preconceived notions that his name might be a reflection of his attitude. God's word promises a new name to those who overcome or are in Christ, symbolizing a fresh identity, an intimate belonging, and a redeemed destiny rather than just a legal name change, so it was important that "Dagger"

received a new name. His registered name is Blues Northern Comfort and my favorite color is Blue and Indigo Blue is a deep and rich color, and Indie could be short for Indigo so I looked up what it means and here is what I found: **independent**, **self-reliant**, or **free-thinking.** A horse living alone without a shelter must certainly be independent and self-reliant, so that is how he received his new name. No longer a Dagger. My long-time bestie made room for him in her barn and we began a 4-year journey of watching change after change with this boy and the labels began of who he was, or what we thought he was. Some of the labels were:

Shut down

Pushy

Lazy

Dead sided

Left Brained

Stubborn

Angry

Walter (After the character in Grumpy Old Men)

And you know what? I started to believe them all! Sadly, many times I regretted my purchase. In the first 6 months, he was very lame in the right hind leg and I had a lameness vet come out shortly after I got him and do x-rays. Not only did he have osteoarthritis in his hock, but he had also a slight deformity in the upper portion of it. So, we did injection #1. It didn't help much at all and he ended up swelling from the top of his leg to his foot. We cold hosed and

waited. By June, he couldn't even swish his tail to get the flies off him and I had a gut feeling that he may have a neurological issue. One I had dealt with years ago with another horse that ended up having to be put down. So, on to Vet #2 for a 2nd opinion. An 88 yr young vet that was known for diagnosing lameness and a neurological disease called EPM (Equine protozoal myoencephalitis), which is caused from a protozoa that is in possum urine and eats through the myelin sheath of the spinal column. Sadly, he was diagnosed with EPM that day and was treated for that and he appeared to get better. I was finally able to start riding my boy. Well, trying to ride my boy, I should say. He would do all he could to not stay on the rail and he would get frustrated with me and stomp his foot. Yet on the trail, he was happy, but we really didn't have brakes in the beginning either and he hated accepting a bit. (I forgot to mention that when I got him, his teeth and pallet were a hot mess, and he actually had 3 holes in his tongue, the size of quarters and his tongue was very swollen). I sought advice from friends, cried a lot, yelled a lot, became frustrated and was questioning my decision to keep him. But, I stuck with it and slowly, things got better. Last summer, he felt off again and I took him back and the old vet said either the EPM never went away or he could have lyme disease, so he gave him another treatment. In the meantime, I found a clinic in Florida that was doing a research study on the disease, and they could test via blood serum to see if indeed he had it or not. (This was a new study, and many vets are not on board with it.) I sent his serum down and low and behold, I was told he did NOT have it, nor did he have Lyme disease, which I was suspect due to the ticks he had when I got him. Soooooo, back to

square one! During the past year, he started to also become aggressive to one of the horses where he was living and he had to be separated because of it. He then became frustrated due to being alone, even though he could see the other two horses most of the time. My sweet friend was getting tired of him as well and the last thing I wanted was to damage my friendship with her. That is when I started praying that either the Lord would direct us to a new home where I could keep him myself or send me the perfect person where he would flourish. Selling him was not my first choice, and I worried how he would be at another facility, but I also wanted to do what the Lord directed, which is quite often a hard choice. There were lots of tears and worry and prayers over this boy. A young girl texted and wanted to come see him and it was NOT a good fit. More tears and I told my husband that I really didn't want to sell him, but he needed a new home and that is when Annie called. She asked me to be honest about whether I really wanted to sell him and I just broke. NO! I don't, but I had laid my horse at the foot of the cross and was willing to do what the Lord directed me to do. Both she and Jacque were unsettled about my decision to sell him and offered to let him come and be a part of the program. We already knew he did well with the kids camp and Jesse sure was in love with him, so we loaded him up and here he is! A complex, emotional sweet boy that has much to teach us and much to learn his self. After bringing him here and learning from both Jacque and Annie, I have found out that he is NONE of the things I had labeled him as. He was completely misunderstood by not only me, but others as well. Our first clue was when I decided to get on him bareback and my legs barely touched his sides, and he moved from the lightest of pressure. I was

shocked because, so often, I was having to bump, bump, bump his sides to get him to move forward. We are now working on a new way to get him to move forward without even touching his sides. It is the same with the porcupine game you all watched a couple of weeks ago where I struggled greatly. He is getting increasingly responsive to my requests, now that I am learning his language better and he is getting lighter and lighter. Think about how removing pressure has been a huge relief to him. For the past 4.5 years, I have been putting un-needed pressure on a very sensitive horse who has learned to shut down and deal with confusing requests. I now look forward to watching the journey and the people who he will be blessing.

We are learning to communicate with his language, and I cannot wait to see how he will change in the days and weeks to come.

I want to take a minute now and ask: How many of you have been given labels? What are some of the labels you have given yourself?? Are those labels true??

“What names are you answering to? Names like, Unworthy, Unwanted, or Unloved? Or Names like Loved, Wanted and Chosen? Please know that what you think about yourself determines how you live.

No one has the power to define you but the One who created you.

God’s voice must be the loudest voice in our lives.

God’s lens must be the lens that we see ourselves through

When the sly voice of the enemy reduces your value, we must remember that you are more than a label to God!

Who does God say I am? While preparing for this devotion I came across this video by Hosanna Wong titled, “I Have A New Name”. Let’s take a moment to hear who God says we are:

Video

So, from today forward, anytime you feel defeated by the enemy and you or someone else is tearing you down, please remember who you are in Christ. If you belong to Jesus—You have a new name! The label has been removed!

And to Indie, my sweet boy, you have taught me more in 4.5 years than all of the other 25 horses I have had the pleasure of owning and I am looking forward to many more years of learning your language so I can better understand you.

1 John 3:1

“See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are.”

Never forget, we are not the labels that others have given us or we have given ourselves. God’s love shapes our identity. No matter our past or failures, His love remains steadfast.

Prayer

Lord, God, thank you for your love. You see us as we truly are and You still accept us! Today, we bring all our struggles, insecurities, and false labels to You. You know what we have been called and what we have believed about ourselves. Please replace any false narratives with Your truth; That we are Your children and greatly loved by You. In Jesus' name, Amen

2 Corinthians 5:17

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!"