

There are two versions in the New Testament of a very interesting story of unselfish love. One is found in Matthew 26:6-13 (paralleled in Mark 14:3-9; John 12:1-18), and the other is found in Luke 7:36-50. In both, a woman brings a jar of very expensive perfume and pours it on the head and feet of Jesus. She then uses her hair to further anoint Him. In one version the woman was Mary, the brother of Lazarus. In the other, she was a known sinner who also showered the feet of Jesus with her tears and kisses. Though the two lessons that Jesus taught from these experiences are different, it is clear that Jesus was touched by the loving sacrifice shown to Him. In a way it was an image of the sacrifice that He would soon make for mankind, and the first lesson related to the value of the woman's advance preparation for His death and burial.

The other lesson deals with the idea of the true meaning of love. Those who were together with Jesus condemned this 'sinner', but Jesus showed that she was the only one who demonstrated her love to Him. She knew better than the others how much she was loved. She understood her need for forgiveness, and she knew that Christ had forgiven her. The flow of this woman's tears expressed the outpouring of her love for Jesus. This woman "got it"; she understood what love is really all about. It doesn't take a PhD to understand it. We may resist it, like when someone wants us to try a new food, but then once we try it we can't ever get enough! If we really understand what love is, then how can we possibly not be good to people? How can we possibly not love each other if we have ever tasted true love?

Not feeling loved can cause great problems in our lives, and I think that we all know this from personal experience. We know that it is impossible to please those who don't love us. It is very possible to please God (though we cannot satisfy Him). True love "locates" us, or "centers" us. Truly understanding it is like being put on a high place where we can see; we can better interpret the meaning of life.

I have been in groups of people (family, friends, co-workers, church) where love flows like an everlasting waterfall, like an invigorating shower of blessings. This is even though I don't deserve it. If you have ever walked through the woods to see the glory of thousands of gallons gushing over weathered rocks, you know the wonder of it. But the main point is that the feeling of overflowing love shown to us by a family that smothers us with hugs and words of friendship is truly awesome. The Psalmist wrote that "Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfall (Psalm 42:7)", and it makes me think about the fact that in a similar way we can't hear our troubles as well when we are under the waterfall of love. God is able to make love flow in the desert of our lives, just as he was able to provide overflowing water in the desert (Psalm 105:41). Once we truly comprehend that we are loved, and what that means, we are transformed just as powerfully as the apostles were. They were changed into dynamic men who gave their very lives for God.

The idea of such a family relationship reminds me somewhat of Moses as he stood before Pharaoh and demanded, "Let my people go!" He may not have had quite the emotional attachment to each of the Israelites as we have to our friends, but he still considered them as a family that he was willing to put his life on the line for. We often hear about the concept of our "extended family"; to me this is all of those on our prayer list that we are earnestly interceding for. We love them and want them to be protected so that no tragedy befalls them. These are the people that love us without qualification, and thus they are truly "our" people. And we ask God to demand of Satan that he let them go.

We gather these people in our hearts in an "Embrace of Goodness", much like what happens with our Father. We see Jesus as the Great Hen in Matthew 23:37, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing." God does gather together those who love Him, and He will keep them in His Embrace for all eternity.

When we think of the Flood of Good that covers us through the power of God, we should realize that this is indeed what God wants to see come out of us. We know that God wants us to be perfect as He is perfect (Matthew 5:48), but He knows very well that we can never actually achieve that. He wants us to be like Him as much as we possibly can, but what He wants goes beyond this surface interpretation. God does not want us perfect in terms of the law (which we cannot accomplish), but he does want us to flood our corner of the world with Goodness (which we can). Let us each pour out our hearts to Jesus and anoint the world with our love.

© Copyright 2001, Heard Lowry