**“Love as God”**

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Psalm 98

Acts 10:34-48

1 John 5:1-8

John 15:9-17

Easter 6

Jesus said: “As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you. This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his **friends**.”

Christ **is** risen! He is **risen, indeed!** Alleluia! Grace to you and peace from God, our Father, and from our Lord, and Savior, Jesus Christ.

1a

The origin of the expression: “having a face only a mother could love” is unclear. There’s an obscure 1976 film that used the term toward the end (and claims origination), but the Greek mythology of Medusa (with her hair of snakes) is suggested to have brought the idea forward.

It’s not a compliment … except to the mother who looks beyond everything **to** **love what others apparently can’t or won’t**. I might “resemble that remark” on some levels, so appreciate my mom overlooking (out of love) most of my flaws. She loves me **motherly** **as I am**. I doubt she “**likes**” me all the time, but what I do know (because **she’s my mother and that carries with it this reality**): “she does **love** me … and (for the most part) no matter what” …

… which **expresses** quite a bit of the point of the texts for this weekend. Without too much stretch, we (without exception) have faces that only **God** could **love purely**. Mothers of each one of us stand (no doubt) **close to that by their nature**, but God’s love for all of us **in spite of the us that we all are**, **THAT** has **no real equal**.

I skipped over commenting more (last week) on the account of the Ethiopian eunuch who was reading and wondering about Isaiah’s 53rd chapter. Reading the section “like a sheep He was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so He opens not His mouth. In His humiliation justice was denied Him. Who can describe His generation? For His life is taken away from the earth.” “And the eunuch asked Philip, ‘About **whom** does the prophet say this, about himself or about **someone else’**?” The answer was “**Someone else**”, and I (along with how Philip did it) want to spend a little time (this weekend) talking about that.

See, I picture my mother giving her life for me. I can easily imagine a scenario where, given the choice of my life or hers, she’d (without hesitation) die so that I can live. My mom (I have zero doubt) would do that without even needing to think about it. Your mom would die for you. Given that choice, I have almost no doubt that every one of your moms would (without batting an eye) donate her life so that you can keep yours.

That Mother’s Day acknowledgment only gets sullied by the **complete abomination of abortion**. What makes the abortive act so much the breakage of the **5th Commandment on steroids** is the fact that **it’s completely against the natural nurture and selflessness of motherly love**. A mother in any species of the animal kingdom would **STAND BETWEEN** death and her children (you don’t mess with a mother with young), and **human mothers can’t conceivably choose the inhumanity of** **offering up her own child to be killed without something seriously wrong in the cosmos**. “**Greater love** has no one than this, that **someone lays down his life for his friends**.” Motherly love **naturally befriends her children**. **Jesus (the “Someone else” of the eunuch’s inquiry) befriended everybody that way**.

If Mother’s Day is a time to **honor motherly love in women** (and **abhor any contradiction to that as more OFF and UGLY than much of anything else could be**), then what’s the day where we **honor the sacrificial and well-beyond our nature (but natural love of God for everybody in Christ Jesus)? “AS the Father has loved Me, SO have I loved you. Abide in My love. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you and that your joy may be full.”**

2

There’s a **command** to this text (a **second part of this** that is supposed to be, at least in some semblance, **like the first**). Jesus **wants His joy in us that “our joy may be full”**, and that “fullness” will require of us an (I’d call it) **minimally motherly loving “of one another AS Jesus has loved us”**. “**Friends**” Jesus called even **enemies**. He loved (each one) by laying down His life … for each one.

I’m floored by the toughest thing I know the Lord Jesus has to do in His future, and that’s to judge and condemn “**friends**”. There will be those (He says) on Judgment Day where He will have to remain after He’s ushered up believers to Heaven and say a final “Goodbye” to people who He was willing to (and did) “lay down His life for”. He loved (in a beyond-motherly-way) the world **to death**. He followed through on that **natural expression for Him** by having to (within 24 hours of when He spoke of this “greatest love”) **show it** by allowing Himself arrested and unjustly tried, beaten upon and nailed to a cross for execution **out of love for “friends” who He calls even the ones hammering the nails**. “Father, **forgive them**”, He said while in process. And the **faces** of Roman soldiers and Pharisees and Sadducees and mocking criminals also killed there and deriders so many in that crowd watching as well as those not even caring to come watch, **faces** **“only a mother could love”** were **loved by Another (each one)**. And **we’re** called to **love likewise**, out of “**His joy**” that we’re given to “abide in” so that, also, “**our joy might be full**”.

It seems to me that fulfilling this charge starts with the **right eyesight**. “A face only a **mother could love**” is solely a matter of a mother’s **vision**. The **eyes** by which mom sees children only hints at the **eyes** by which the Lord God sees sinners helpless to save themselves. And He only hopes at their response, but **loves in spite of it (as mothers so often do)**. **We must see even enemies as “friends”**. **That (by itself)** ought to make the rest more naturally Good and loving, useful and joy-filled for us.

Returning to last week’s account of Philip with the Ethiopian eunuch, he was called into a situation to **see a foreigner as “friend”**. Philip (it says) **“ran to him and heard him”, then** **asked (concerned) “Do you understand what you are reading?”** Forever, for this traveler, there would be the memory of his eyes opened to Jesus’ sacrificial love for Him upon a cross (that’s from the Isaiah text, explained), but also to a man (who he may never have gotten the name of) **taking the time with him**, **SEEING him**, so **NOTICING AS A FRIEND WOULD** **NOTICE**, **giving him time (as if, for the time, his attention was all his)**. Part of what the Ethiopian eunuch would remember is the gracious way a technical stranger, yet brother, **saw him**.

1b

**I like the way I look through my mother’s eyes**. With that as just a **hint**: **I, then, love the way that I look through God’s eyes**. Pray with me:

“Heaven Father, the One who sees me (and everyone in this room and everyone in this world) as nothing less than “friend” because of Who He was willing to sacrifice in His own Son Jesus, we have to **love the way we look as you see us**. Why would we ever need to worry about “self”-image when **Your image of us** is as “**worth Your Son’s death**”? We thank you for an **earthly** **model of that love** in**, minimally**, the **loving (and gracious) eyes of our mother**. Give to us **eyes like Yours** to **graciously SEE (and NOTICE and LOVINGLY PAY ATTENTION-TO IN CONCERN AND CARE AND, JUST, A COMPASSIONATE FAVOR-IN-OUR-EYES for even enemies or strangers (ones maybe tragically feeling un-noticed by us). May we, by our actions and perspective, give others (all others) a WAY TO SEE THEMSELVES SAVED BY GOD THROUGH CHRIST JESUS, LOVED and NOTICING THEMSELVES THROUGH GOD’S EYES AND OUR EYES OF LOVE**. For Jesus’ sake and in +His name we pray for this. Amen.”