

Love in the Gospels

Introduction

18 “Here is my servant, whom I have chosen,
my beloved, with whom my soul is well pleased.
I will put my Spirit upon him,
and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles.

**19 He will not wrangle or cry aloud,
nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets.**

**20 He will not break a bruised reed
or quench a smoldering wick**

until he brings justice to victory.

21 And in his name the Gentiles will hope.” Matthew 12:18-21

The evangelist Matthew uses Isaiah's first Servant Song (Isa. 42:1-4) to explain the silence Jesus imposes on individuals whom He has healed (Matt. 12:16). The quiet and unobtrusive nature of Jesus' ministry fulfills the expectation of the Servant. The Servant does not follow the custom to cry aloud in public and thereby impose upon his hearers with his message.¹ Nor will the Servant use violence and follow the customary harsh treatment of the weak, bruised and dimly burning.² Instead, the Spirit-filled Servant will express God's own compassion for the poor, oppressed, naked, hungry, blind and imprisoned,³ and will be successful in His mission of justice (v. 4).

The unique feature in the first Servant Song is the quiet, non-aggressive and compassionate manner in which the Servant goes about His task of restoration. The world reflects the "law of the jungle" where violence and aggression "pay off" and conquerors proclaim victory over the weak, bruised, helpless, vulnerable and alienated; "to be weak and helpless was to be destined for destruction."⁴ In Isaiah's time, public proclamation (quarreling and crying out) may well have been voiced at the time of the inauguration of a new king or judge. In contrast to such public declaration, Jesus charges the crowd to maintain silence concerning His identity.

Jesus demonstrates love, gentleness and compassion for the bruised and the ones who are like smoldering wicks; compassion counters the violence, which the powerful express at the expense of the weak. In Matthew's narrative, weak and needy persons follow Jesus in His withdrawal while the powerful and aggressive authorities remain in the synagogue and plot His murder on the Hallowed Sabbath, a day set aside for life and doing good (Matt. 12:12). The world system, then and now follows the path of power, violence, aggression, external success and advertisement of success—all at the expense of the weak and vulnerable.

¹ The loud public proclamation may be directly related to the time in which a new king would succeed to the throne. Cf. Claus Westermann, *Deutero-Isaiah*, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1969), p. 96.

² In the original setting, the prophet regards Israel in the weakened condition which needs to be enlivened, not crushed or snuffed out. We regard the Servant Songs in a creative ebb and flow between the individual and corporate Servant.

³ Blind—Isa. 42:7; weary—Isa. 50:4; prisoners in a dungeon with no hope of freedom—Isa. 42:7.

⁴ James D. Smart, *History and Theology in Second Isaiah*, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1965), p. 84.

In His ministry, Jesus chooses the Servant path of love and compassion and He refuses to take the path of power and control. This ministry of apparent weakness leads Him to the Cross, wherein God's "powerlessness" and vulnerability are never more apparent. Jesus knows the power of love and the way in which love defeats all other forms of power. His victory will not be won at the expense of others but at the cost of His very life. He offers to people the love of God throughout His ministry and offers Himself on the Cross as the supreme expression of God's love. Jesus works from the assumption that the most important choice that people can make is the heartfelt response to His love. Such a choice can only be made by persons with free wills who give a genuine response that comes from within. This choice cannot be forced, controlled or manipulated by any other person. It can only be given in weakness and vulnerability because that is how God has expressed His love. Our love-response to the love of God constitutes the very purpose of our creation and existence. We truly live when we live in a love-response to the love of God.

Jesus says that Christians will be recognized by their love for one another (Jn. 13:35). He does not point to external things: beautiful sanctuaries, societal and ecclesiastical conservatism, successful church programs, to a tidy orthodoxy, "correct" forms of liturgy and worship, denominational hobby-horses, Christian bumper stickers, even the "church rolls." Jesus says the badge of authentic discipleship is the love-response to God and to others.

And Jesus expresses His love in a quiet, non-pretentious, compassionate and sensitive manner, without aggression and fanfare. He offers the love of God in an authentic manner from a God who really cares. His saving activity for the diseased, possessed, and alienated, reflects the compassion of God for the people He has created. True to the mission of the Servant, Jesus expresses particular sensitivity and compassion to those described in Isaiah as bruised, the dimly burning wick, poor, weak and helpless. In a special way, these people have no other source of help at their disposal than God's compassion expressed through the Son of His love. And they are often most responsive to God's love. No doubt, each broken person whom Jesus encounters, out of desperation and disappointment, comes to the realization of personal need. Sometimes it takes a fractured experience of life to make people aware of their deepest need. They have no other "offers" from the world that can promise relief to their brokenness. They are genuinely ready for the joy of a Father who runs to meet them as the father did for the runaway son (Lk. 15).

Conversely, those who are most "put-together" are often the least responsive to the love of God, since they are counting on other sources of security. They do not recognize that their forms of self-security are masks and illusions that can offer no lasting refuge. Often they project upon God the feelings of rejection that they have for themselves. Ironically, they are more upset with their own mistakes and moral failures than they would ever be for someone else. They appear to make God in their own image; He becomes the One who rejects and looks for flaws and failures, instead of success.

In His offer of Himself to both the broken and the "put-together," Jesus provides the experience of being "the beloved of God." The love of God, which is at the very heart of the universe, is the genuine offer of God to people—to the broken and "put-together" alike. From the millions of decisions that people may make, the one decision that ultimately counts is the love-response to the love of God; it means that a person can

enter into a "daughter-Father," "son-Father" relationship with God, realized through the Abba-experience of Jesus with His Father.

The Terminology of Love

The major NT term for "love" is the noun ἀγάπη (ἀγαπάω vb.) and the less common φιλία (φιλέω vb.). In Classical Greek, the ἀγαπ- word-family generally denotes "satisfaction," "greeting," "honor," "desire for someone or something," and "preference."⁵ The word-family φιλ- denotes "friendship," "affection for a friend or kinsman," "love for everyone else that bears a human countenance."⁶ The term ἔρωσ denotes a "passionate love, which desires the other," "sexual desire" and "passionate aspiration"; however, the NT writers avoid using the term, since it was so extensively used in philosophical, religious and sexual discussion. The OT verb בָּהַג generally denotes "a spontaneous feeling which impels to self-giving."⁷ Although interpreters and preachers frequently argue for a distinction between ἀγάπη and φιλία, the NT texts frequently use the terms in an interchangeable manner:⁸

It appears that the writers of the NT adopt the bland and least defined word for "love," ἀγάπη (ἀγαπάω vb.), and then coin the significance of the word-family by the way in which they use the term. This word family is the primary unit for expressing the nature of God, His attitude, His activity, His revelation in His Son and Spirit, and the way in which human life is meant to be lived.

A cursory view of a concordance provides a clue for understanding the essential nature of love. The noun "love" (ἀγάπη) occurs only twice in the Synoptic Gospels and then in negative contexts⁹ and only seven times in the Fourth Gospel.¹⁰ However, there

⁵ E. Stauffer, "ἀγαπάω," *TDNT*, vol. I, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1972), p. 36.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 22. It leads to the LXX translations.

⁸ Matt. 23:6 They love (φιλοῦσιν) to have the place of honor at banquets and the best seats in the synagogues,

Lk. 11:43 Woe to you Pharisees! For you love (ἀγαπᾶτε) to have the seat of honor in the synagogues and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces.

Jn. 3:35 The Father loves (ἀγαπᾷ) the Son and has placed all things in his hands.

Jn. 5:20 The Father loves (φιλεῖ) the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing; and he will show him greater works than these, so that you will be astonished.

Jn. 11:3-5 So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, "Lord, he whom you love (φιλεῖς) is ill."⁵ Accordingly, though Jesus loved (ἠγάπα) Martha and her sister and Lazarus,

Jn. 19:26 When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved (ἠγάπα) standing beside her, he said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son."

Jn. 20:2 So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved (ἔφιλει), and said to them . . . "

Jn. 21:15 When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me (ἀγαπᾷς) more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love (φιλῶ) you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs." ¹⁶ A second time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love (ἀγαπᾷς) me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love (φιλῶ) you." Jesus said to him, "Tend my sheep." ¹⁷ He said to him the third time, "Simon son of John, do you love (φιλεῖς) me?" Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, "Do you love (φιλεῖς) me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love (φιλῶ) you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep.

Often the use of similar words is a feature of John's writings, e.g., two verbs for "know," "feed/tend," "sheep/lambs."

⁹ "the love of many will grow cold" (Matt. 24:12); "you neglect justice and the love of God" (Lk. 11:42).

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are 57 occurrences of the verb in the four Gospels. This is striking; love is primarily a verb, which denotes what a person *does* and is not primarily a thought or ideal to be analyzed as an object of cool reflection. Love is best understood by observing the activities wherein love manifests itself. In a similar way, Paul's "Hymn in Praise of Love" accentuates love's activities through 16 present tense verbs: how love does not act, and then conversely, how love does act continually (I Cor. 13:4-7).

Jesus is the Beloved Son.

In the Gospels, Jesus is recognized as "the beloved Son." There are two key events where the affirmation is explicit and other places in the Gospels where there is an implicit allusion to Jesus' "beloved" position and relationship. At the baptismal scene, the heavenly voice affirms Jesus' unique status:

Mk. 1:11 And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased." (par. Matt. 3:17; Lk. 3:22).

The affirmation of Jesus' position as "the Beloved Son" expresses two major titles--Elect Servant-Messiah and Son; the terms reflect the language of the Old Testament. The Servant Messiah title is traced to Is. 42:1; 44:2. Isaiah 42:1 promises of the elect Servant, "Here is my servant, whom I uphold, *my beloved*, in whom my soul delights; I have put my *spirit upon him*; he will bring forth justice to the nations."¹¹ Many of the references and allusions to Jesus' true identity that are found in Matthew's birth narratives are developed in a fuller way throughout the gospel narrative. Later Matthew cites Isaiah 42:1-4 in 12:18-21, which concludes with the affirmation that all the nations will trust in the Servant. The adjective, "beloved" (ἀγαπητός), in Matt. 12:18 (from the LXX of Isa. 42:1), is a rendering of the term "chosen/elect," to refer to the utterly unique position of the Son.

The affirmation of Sonship is derived from Psa. 2:7, "I will tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to me, "You are my son; today I have begotten you."

Psalm 2 is a royal psalm, used in the OT setting as a psalm of coronation, i.e., *Today* = the day of coronation of the Israelite king. In the psalm, the royal speaker, i.e., king becomes God's son not through a natural birth process of begetting, but by adoption at the occasion of his elevation to the kingly throne. "Similarly, in the Gospel, Jesus at the baptism becomes, or is revealed as, Son of God, not as the result of a divine begetting but because he is then installed as King Messiah, the true successor of David."¹² It is significant that the Rabbis applied Psa. 2:7 to the Messiah.¹³ If the words of the Heavenly Voice are a combination of Psa. 2:7 and Isa. 42:1, then it would seem obvious that the Evangelists regard this as a critical moment when Jesus is anointed as Servant-Messiah, the Beloved Chosen One and King. At this juncture the Messianic age begins. The same heavenly voice expresses a similar approval at the transfiguration:

¹⁰ :Jn. 5:42-negative; 13:35; 15:9, 10 (twice), 13; 17:26.

¹¹We should also add Isa. 11:2; 61:1 in that the Elect Servant of God is equipped with the Spirit to effect a wholistic ministry to the needy. There is also a remarkable witness from the Testament of the XII Patriarchs:

"Then shall the Lord raise up a new priest . . .

In his priesthood shall sin come to an end." (Testament of Levi. 18:2-12).

¹²Dunn, p. 41.

¹³See Strack-Billerbeck, III, pp. 15-22.

<p>Matt. 17:5 "This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; Οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἐν ᾧ εὐδόκησα·</p>	<p>Mk. 9:7 "This is my Son, the Beloved; Οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός,</p>	<p>Lk. 9:35 "This is my Son, my Chosen; Οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἐκλελεγμένος,</p>
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In Matt. and Mk., the heavenly voice affirms the Son as the Beloved, while Luke's version includes the term "elect, chosen." The link between the two designations is already established in Matt. 12:18 ("beloved" LXX of Isa. 42:1; "chosen/elect" in the MT). The term "beloved son" also occurs in the Parable of the Wicked Tenants, in the tragic story of the owner's supreme and vulnerable sending of the son into a volatile and murderous context:

Mk. 12:6, "Yet he had one, a beloved son . . ." (cf. Lk. 20:13 "my beloved son"; Matt. 21:37 "His son").

In the parable, the abuse and rejection of 1) the former prophets and 2) the latter prophets, is climaxed by the shameful murder of the owner's "Beloved Son."¹⁴ Through the parables in Matthew, Jesus warns the religious leaders of the consequences of their mounting hostility against Himself. It is in the vineyard parable that the religious see a reference to themselves in their evil plot. Jesus intends that they see a reference to themselves in their dastardly plot. They are in the tragic process of putting to death "the Beloved Son" of the Owner God.

There are several affirmations in the Fourth Gospel, wherein Jesus is the special object of the Father's love. These sayings develop the statements in the Synoptic Gospels:

John 3:35 The Father *loves the Son* and has placed all things in his hands.

John 5:20 The Father *loves the Son* and shows him all that he himself is doing; and he will show him greater works than these, so that you will be astonished.

John 10:17 For this reason the Father *loves me*, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again.

John 15:9 As the Father has *loved me*, so I have loved you; abide in my love.

John 17:23 I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as *you have loved me*.²⁴ Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me *because you loved me* before the foundation of the world.

26 I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which *you have loved me* may be in them, and I in them."

Jesus is the One who is marked out in a special way as the recipient of God's love; the Father's love for the Son is eternal, and exists prior to the Incarnation (17:23, 24, 26), and it is evident in the Son's ministry (3:35; 5:20), climaxed by His self-sacrifice and resurrection (10:17). He is entrusted with all things and is especially favored because He

¹⁴ The Parable of the Wicked Tenants (Matt. 21:33-46) is followed by the Parable of the Marriage Feast (Matt. 22:1-14); the feast is extended by the king for his son (the term "beloved" is not used in this parable).

voluntarily gives His life over to others; love motivates the action. His sacrificial death together with His resurrection provide a special occasion for the love of the Father for Jesus.¹⁵ In His High Priestly Prayer, the love of the Father for the Son is stated three times. An understanding of the Father's love for the Son is a necessary and basic part of understanding the nature of the mutual love and mutual indwelling, i.e., the divine fellowship of which the believers are privileged. A fountain of inexhaustible love issues from the mutual indwelling within the Godhead. The sphere of divine fellowship constitutes a circle of love between the Father, the Son and the people who love the Son; it is the sphere of life and light, which does not originate from the world. By way of contrast, the world is characterized by death and darkness. The evangelist makes it clear that the divine love for the world is preceded by His eternal love for the Son (3:16; 17:24).

Aspects of Jesus' love for others

Jesus' love accepts and creates a safe place for the reorientation of people's lives.

Since Jesus is the Beloved Son, He accepts people where they are in life; His love demands no conditions, knows no boundaries or breaking points and overturns systems of performance and approval. He is aware of the profound human need for an experience of the love of God and He offers that very love as a gracious gift. The constant complaint against Jesus is His "free" lifestyle in which He is accused of being "a glutton and drunkard and friend of tax-collectors and sinners" (e.g., Lk. 7:34). Jesus does not wait for people to "get cleaned up" before He accepts them and celebrates the joy of table-fellowship with them. What was it that prompted the lavish and vulnerable display of gratitude ("loves more") by the unnamed sinful woman of Lk. 7:36-50? We can only conclude from the narrative, the parable and its application, that at some point, prior to the meal in Simon's home, Jesus has pronounced the forgiveness of sins to her. Her expressions of gratitude, which far exceeded the cultural norms (foot-washing, kiss, oil) reveal her vulnerability. Jesus, however, has accepted her in her brokenness and she feels "safe" in His acceptance and thus, takes the risk of self-expression of her own gratitude. She appears unaware of her surroundings and critical audience; one item alone matters—her need to express gratitude for His acceptance, forgiveness and grace. To her, Jesus responds with respect and honor; He affirms that she "loves more" (i.e., is more grateful), confirms her forgiveness of sins, honors her faith and bestows peace upon her. Jesus takes sin seriously but also makes it clear that people cannot really deal with their sin when they believe that they will be rejected as people.

The stories of Jesus' acceptance of "observable" sinners¹⁶ are numerous:

Levi the tax-collector (Mk. 2:13-17)

Zacchaeus (Lk. 19:1-10)

The sinful woman (Lk. 7:36-50)

The Samaritan woman (Jn. 4)

¹⁵ Morris notes that the phrase, "For this reason the Father loves me . . .," (10:17) may well express the thought, "I love you for that." Leon Morris, "love," *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. by Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, (Downers Grove, Illinois, 1992), p. 493.

¹⁶ His acceptance of sinners also includes various individuals who live in the sphere of the unclean (e.g., the Gerasene demoniac Mk. 5:1-20) or come to Jesus on behalf of one in the sphere of the unclean (Syro-Phoenician woman in Mk. 7:24-30).

The woman taken in adultery (Jn. 8)

Tax collectors and sinners (Lk. 15:1-2)

A Samaritan leper (Lk. 17:11-19)

In addition, Jesus' love goes out for a rich young ruler, even when he realizes that the cost of following Jesus is too great: "Jesus, looking at him, *loved* him and said, "You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me" (Mk. 10:21). His love for the young man goes out to Him in acceptance as well as challenge. The story reveals many things, which are inextricably linked: love and acceptance, probing of the young man's self-deception, command, promise, gift of Himself and eternal life. Jesus' offer remains solid despite the youth's rejection of Jesus and His genuine offer.

Jesus' acceptance of sinners does not negate the realities and consequences of sin; however, He creates the climate of safety and security, wherein people can deal with their past and present. For example, Jesus invites Himself over to Zacchaeus' house for a meal (Lk. 19:5) and joins in the celebration of life and joy, although His action incites criticism from both Jesus' opponents and all the people (19:7). And Zacchaeus makes some decisions that will hurt his bank account, "Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, "Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much." (Lk. 19:8). The decision for financial integrity, however, follows the celebration of life as an outgrowth of sheer grace. Grace precedes Zacchaeus' repentance, repentance of personal dishonesty by a very rich man (19:1).

Why does Jesus love the publicly acknowledged sinners? Because He follows the example that He sees the Father doing:

Jn. 5:19 Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, the Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise. (cf. also Jn. 5:30)

Because God loves them all, Jesus loves them all. And it is also correct to say that Jesus "liked" them as well. Frequently, the term "love" is used in a non-emotive manner to express what God "has" to do; the example of Jesus demonstrates the "want to" of God. The mere presence of Jesus is attractive to people; He accepts them and is glad for their presence and He receives them with warmth. The presence of a caring, affective and accepting person creates a climate of safety and security. Such acceptance quells the fear of rejection, sarcasm, "rolling of the eyes," the need to impress and "drop names." Jesus orients the people to a loving Father, not a stern deity who demands and exacts; He affirms the loving concern of a Father for His children. The ones who are rejected by the social and religious system find an environment wherein they can be vulnerable, affectionate, tender and warm. Jesus visits all sorts of people in their homes, walks with them, sits with them, eats with them, teaches, laughs and heals. Jesus acts out His own understanding of the Father's heart. The Father loves in an indiscriminate way, not conditioned by the relative "goodness" of the recipients:

Matt. 5:45 so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous.

Since the Father's care is indiscriminate (sun and rain on both evil and good), Jesus' love is also indiscriminate and reaches out to all—to those who both love and hate God. Jesus'

love embraces those who live in their "relative righteousness" and those who live in sin, shame and guilt. His choice of friends and table-companions lead to the real point of leverage for His opponents.

The absolutely unpardonable thing was not his concern for the sick, the cripples, the lepers, the possessed . . . not even his partnership for the poor, humble people. The real trouble was that he got involved with moral *failures*, with obviously irreligious and immoral people; people morally and politically suspect, so many dubious, obscure, abandoned, hopeless types, existing as an eradicable evil, on the fringe of every society. This was the real scandal. Did he really have to go so far? . . . What kind of dangerous and naïve love is this, which does not know its limits: the frontiers between fellow countrymen and foreigners, party members and non-members, between neighbors and distant people, between honorable and dishonorable callings, between moral and immoral, good and bad people? As if disassociation were not absolutely necessary here. As if we ought not to judge in these cases. As if we could always forgive in these circumstances.¹⁷

In our theological expressions about God, we use terms such as omnipresence, which may evoke an emotional response of fear, in that God sees and knows every thought, word and action which are done. The omniscience of God may issue in human efforts to know and acquire a larger body of knowledge, in a misguided attempt to be like God. God's omnipotence correspondingly may evoke a human response of total powerlessness or the need to grow in authority and influence, to be like God. God's immutability suggests an image of an engraved character, etched on stone, non-living and non-personal. Such human theological terms, which are used to describe God, frequently may tend to keep God at a distance, far removed from human struggle, human pain and human sin. The heart of the Incarnation expresses a God who is near, personal, approachable, attractive and accepting. The acceptance, which Jesus models expresses the acceptance by God and enables the broken people of Jesus' day to experience the "love" and friendship of God; they are enabled to sense something of the heartbeat of God as with complete candor—they deal with their own brokenness.

Jesus insists upon the indiscriminate nature of God's grace for the broken and for those who are "put-together." When a father flips a light switch on in his daughters' bedroom, the light enables him to see the entire picture, a daughter who is not in the bed and misbehaving and also a daughter who is fast asleep (cf. Mk. 4:21-22). The light is indiscriminate; likewise God's love and fascination with people is indiscriminate. Jesus models God's acceptance of both the evil and the good; He creates a "safe" environment, wherein the important issues of life can be worked out. In Lk. 15, both the apostate son and the self-righteous brother are invited to the lavish table. Jesus expresses the very human face of God and expresses the acceptance of people and their worth; He believes in them and embraces all. He will not tolerate sectarianism, division, apartheid, stereotyping, barriers, class-ism, sexism or racism. Genuine discipleship begins with the wonderful news from the Father's heart that He accepts people as they are and believes in what they can become by virtue of the new relationship with His Son. To find friendship with Jesus in the new relationship means to find a friendship with God.

Jesus' love is expressive in the full gamut of human emotion.

¹⁷ Hans Kung, *On Being a Christian*, (New York: Doubleday, 1976), p. 32.

Jesus knows the freedom of expressing the full gamut of human emotion as He interacts with His disciples, the crowds and His critics. His *grief* over the rebellious city of Jerusalem is expressed through the language of a *wounded lover*:

Matt. 23:37 "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!

Lk. 19:41 As he came near and saw the city, he wept over it, 42 saying, "If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes.

The words, "How often have I desired . . ." express Jesus' wounded and frustrated love, which has been repeatedly rejected.

Jesus expresses *irritation* with people at Simon the Leper's house in Bethany, when they critique the extravagance of the woman who "wastes" the very expensive perfume from the alabaster jar, "Leave her alone . . . Why are you bothering her?" (Mk. 14:6). Nonetheless, his initial irritation gives way to a reasoned explanation for why He and they should celebrate in the woman's precious gift (14:6-9) of love. Jesus expresses *exasperation* with His disciples in their inability to exorcise a demon from a possessed son; the exasperation also includes the entire generation, which is unbelieving, Jesus answered, "You faithless and perverse generation, how much longer must I be with you? How much longer must I put up with you? Bring him here to me" (Matt. 17:17). Evidently, Jesus is troubled because the disciples should have been able to deal with this heart-rending need. Perhaps his exasperation is due to the fact that the disciples had been given authority over unclean spirits (Matt. 10:8) and had exercised such power on their short-term mission trip but are now unable to provide the needed help.

Jesus expresses *anger* on several occasions. Before Jesus heals the man with the withered hand, He looks "around at them and anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts" (Mk. 3:5). The emotional response here is especially pointed in that Jesus is fully aware of the hostile climate before the healing. True, there are similar responses after other healings, but in this instance, the hostility is apparent before Jesus acts in healing power. We might wonder whether this man was a deliberate "plant," who was put before Jesus with malicious intent. Jesus' anger is evident when the disciples are criticized for not following the Jewish ritual of washing hands. Jesus' response includes both anger and *irony*: "Well¹⁸ did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, 'This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me' (Mk. 7:6). Jesus calls his opponents, "hypocrites" saying, "You are sons of your father, the devil and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning" (Jn. 8:44; "liar like you" Jn. 8:55). In the woes against the religious leaders, Jesus calls them, "blind guides of the blind" (Matt. 15:14), "snakes, brood of vipers" (Matt. 23:33). He likens them to "whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside, but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean" (Matt. 23:27). Even to His leading disciple, He says, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me . . ." (Matt. 16:23). Jesus is angry with Peter, the one whom He has just renamed as "Rock," upon whom the Church will be built (16:18). Peter has resisted Jesus' primary servant mission. Anger is also apparent in the account of Jesus' cleansing of the Temple, wherein He single-handedly drives out the merchants and merchandise from the Temple with a whip and

¹⁸ The adverb "well" (καλῶς) clearly expresses irony.

cries out, "Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!" (Jn. 2:13-25; Mk. 11:15-19 par.).

Jesus expresses *self-recrimination* and *the heartbreaking feelings of betrayal and abandonment*. At the tomb of Lazarus, Jesus responds with self-recrimination, expressed through the verb, "He censured Himself" (ἐμβριμάομαι)¹⁹ in response to the death of Lazarus and the criticism of the Jews, who questioned His care for His friend (Jn. 11:33, 38). We suggest that the verb should be rendered, "He *censured His spirit* and troubled himself." The expression may be understood, "Why did I not come sooner and save my friends their grief and the grief of their friends as well? I have only myself to blame that I did not come sooner."²⁰ Our modern expression, "If only I had . . ."

When Jesus foretells His *betrayal*, the actual prophecy is introduced with the words, "He was troubled in spirit" (Jn. 13:21). We can only surmise the emotional impact that this knowledge had upon Jesus. Further, we read that the foot-washing of the twelve included Judas, the betrayer. And yet the morsel and wine are extended to Judas in the Passover Meal. The abject horror of betrayal is real and yet, Jesus extends His friendship to Judas in weakness and vulnerability. The incredible mixture of weakness and strength will be mirrored upon the cross. The cross of Jesus itself represents weakness, vulnerability and shame. And yet, the very paradox of the Christian faith rests upon Jesus' apparent weakness, set in motion by betrayal with all of its emotional horror. In the morsel offered to Judas, in the washing of Judas' feet and the subsequent crucifixion, Jesus' strength is real; He is tender and vulnerable, asking nothing but giving everything.

The language of *desperation* is surely expressed in the crucifixion narrative: "My God, my God, why has thou forsaken²¹ me?"²² (Matt. 27:46; Mk. 15:34). Jesus senses that He has been abandoned by God and cries out for an explanation, "why?" During His ministry He was abandoned by others, His brothers, His hometown acquaintances and friends, the people of God, the religious leaders, His own disciples, more pointedly by Judas and then Peter. In the Upper Room Discourse, Jesus prophesies the desertion of the twelve and yet affirms the divine presence with Him even in the abandonment by others:

The hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, every man to his home, and will leave me alone; yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me.
(Jn. 16:32)

The disciples were scattered, as He had predicted, but Jesus now experiences the abandonment by God and people. Jesus speaks from the Psalter, from a complaint song (Psa. 22), which describes the suffering of one of God's people, a lone poet in Israel. The Hebrew poet lodged his complaint with God (Psa. 22:1-18), made supplication to God (vss. 19-21), and then experienced the joy of deliverance (vss. 22-31). What grieves the

¹⁹ The verb is used in Mk. 14:5—the censure of the bystanders for the woman's outpouring of precious perfume; Mk. 1:43—Jesus' censure of the leper in His silence charge; Matt. 9:30—censure of the two blind men whom Jesus healed. In each instance, there is a person who is censured. Thus, in Jn. 11:33, 38, the verb indicates that Jesus censured Himself.

²⁰ Cullen I K Story, *The Fourth Gospel: Its Purpose, Pattern and Power*, (Shippensburg PA: Ragged Edge Press, 1997), p. 248.

²¹ The verb "forsake" (ἐγκαταλείπω) conveys the meaning "abandon" or "desert." BAGD, p. 214.

²² The evangelists interpret the Hebrew and Aramaic mixture as "My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?"

poet more than anything in the opening lines of the psalm is the apparent absence of God, also expressed in the second line of 22:1, "Why are you so far from helping me?" The sense of God's absence and abandonment does not mean a lapse of faith or a broken relationship with God, but it does mean that God's protective presence is withdrawn as the enemies close in on the poet (vss. 6, 7, 8, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18). The poet searches for God and finds God in and through his suffering. In Jesus' hour when He feels abandoned by God, Jesus remains faithful, by uttering the words of Israel's poet. He seeks to know God in God's apparent absence and He makes supplication for others, and looks beyond His suffering to its redemptive effect on all future nations and generations.

Was the abandonment by God something Jesus felt (subjective) or was it true in actuality (objective)? Similar to the mystery of the incarnation we probe a mystery that exceeds our human grasp. On the one hand, Jesus is the object of divine pleasure, the Beloved Son (Matt. 3:17) who has no need to confess sin. He lived a life of sinless obedience to the Father's will, which led Him to the cross, the very purpose for which He was born and for which he lived. Readers are reminded of Jesus' resolve in the Garden of Gethsemane, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Take this cup away from me. But not what I will but what you will" (Mk. 14:36). And yet, there at the cross, the insidious nature of the human heart is exposed. What an incredible contrast between the love of God and the world's sin! Jesus gives in reckless abandon and becomes utterly weak and exposed, so that He might heal those who are utterly weak.

Jesus' love and freedom of expression frees people to be "mature" children.

Jesus' personal freedom to express the full range of His emotions allows for the spontaneous expression of others. Consider, for example, Jesus at Lazarus' tomb. The two sisters blame Jesus for the delay (two days) and His apparent lack of concern. The two women are utterly free to express to Jesus their anger and hurt for his late arrival; they are not intimidated in the slightest but rather voice their hurt and complaint openly. The narrative is filled with emotion: Jesus' love (φιλέω, ἀγαπάω) for the family (Jn. 11:3, 5, 36), grief of others (11:19), weeping (11:31, 33), Jesus' self-recrimination (11:33, 38) and tears (11:35). Jesus, who has the Father's power at His disposal, also reveals sympathetic concern at the graveside. His free expression of His own sympathy enables the sisters to freely express their hurt and pain.

On another occasion, when little children are brought to Jesus, His disciples, indignant, exercise a selfish control in the situation. They regard themselves as the "gatekeepers" who should manage Jesus' agenda and appointment book. Instead, Jesus says that the Kingdom of God belongs to children (Mk. 13:13-16).

The entire 18th chapter of Matthew hovers around the question, "Wherein lies true greatness in the Kingdom of God?" And the answer is found:

- 1) in unpretentious, open-hearted little children, and
- 2) in undeserved and unexpected divine forgiveness.

Both truths constitute unforgettable answers to the questions, which the disciples raise.

"Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven" is their first question (Matt. 18:1). And the answer is found in the "little child" (παιδίον) whom Jesus places in their midst (18:2). He urges His disciples to become child-like in their openness to Him, like this little one of low social standing. He proceeds to warn them not to cause "one of these little ones who believe in me" (18:6) to stumble nor to despise any one of them

(18:3-10). Each is dear to Him as a lone lost sheep [an erring brother] whom the shepherd seeks and finds (18:12-14).

Jesus' condemnation of the legalism of His day underscores the priority of His freeing grace; in His negation of performance-based religion, He seeks genuine freedom for His people. The religion of the Pharisee emphasizes personal performance, achievement, rules and regulations, duty, responsibility, conditional acceptance, stricture and narrowness, repression—all of which lead to a harsh, exacting and less than attractive view of God as a Cosmic Calculator, whose primary role is to reward and punish. Jesus emphasizes the openness and relationship of a child to a Father.²³ Indeed, the childishness of His critics is expressed in a binding legalism, which impedes genuine growth. A love relationship with God cannot be achieved through rules and performance. As indicated in His thanksgiving prayer (Matt. 11:25-30), Jesus offers a freeing relationship to those who believe in Him:

Matt. 11:25 At that time Jesus said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants;²⁶ yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.²⁷ All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

28 "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

As a man, Jesus prays. Sometimes we forget about Jesus' own Sonship with His Father. Manson says, "We are so accustomed, and rightly so, to make Jesus the object of religion that we become apt to forget that in our earliest records he is portrayed not as the object of religion, but as a religious man."²⁴ He was a man with a humanity, with temptations, prayers, spiritual experiences, and needs as real as ours. We catch glimpses and snapshots from the Synoptic Gospels concerning Jesus' relationship to the Father, a picture that becomes fuller in the Fourth Gospel. But there is a veil that is drawn over this mystery. "We are so made that we cannot lightly speak of the things that most profoundly move us: and for every man, the Holy of Holies in his life is hedged about with silence. The thoughts that lie too deep for tears do not easily clothe themselves with words: and, if they do, the words are not such as can be shouted from the housetops."²⁵

Jesus begins the prayer of thanksgiving with praise to the Father for His own failure with the wise and intelligent (rejecting cities [Matt 11:21-24], religious leaders and legalists) and the contrasting success with the infants (the poor, needy and responsive). Both the positive reception and negative rejection are due to the divine will.²⁶ Jesus contrasts the way in which the Father both "hides" and "reveals" such knowledge and relationship. The verb, "hand over" (παραδίδομι) is a technical term for the passing of knowledge from a father to his son, a rabbi to his disciples, a craftsman to his apprentice. Jeremias notes,

²³ Usage of "father" in the Gospels: Mk. = 4; Q = 8 or 9; Matt. = 23; Lk. = 6; Jn. = 107.

²⁴Ibid., p. 101.

²⁵Ibid, p. 108.

²⁶The aorists are timeless aorists (ἔκρουσας, ἀπεκάλυψας, ἐγένετο, παρέδοθη).

It was customary for the son to learn his father's craft. Many trades had their secret processes, which were carefully guarded, and into which the son was initiated by his father. In the same way, this metaphor of the pupil suggests, Jesus' Father has initiated him into the relationship. . . What Jesus wants to convey in the guise of an everyday simile is this: Just as a father talks to his son, just as he teaches him the letters of the Torah, just as he initiates him into the well-prepared secrets of his craft, just as he hides nothing from him and opens his heart to him as to no-one-else, so God has granted me knowledge of himself.²⁷

Jesus praises the Father that the knowledge and relationship is hidden from the wise and revealed to infants. But who are the wise and who are the infants? Clearly, ignorance is not a qualification for the Kingdom of God and intellect, on the other hand, is not a disqualification. The qualifications for revelation are moral—not mental.

Perhaps a clue can be found in v. 28, which refers to *all who labor and are heavy laden*, i.e., those who have been crushed down under the weight. The perfect participle for *heavy laden* is πεφορτισμένοι and is derived from the verb, "I burden someone with something," φορτίζω. In Matt. 23:4, the noun form "loads" (φορτία) appears:

Matt. 23:4 They tie up heavy burdens (φορτία), hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of others; but they themselves are unwilling to lift a finger to move them.²⁸

Other contexts speak of Jewish legalism and the burden of Rabbinic teaching. It is revealing that in Matt. 12:1-8, 9-14 we immediately find ourselves immersed in two subsequent controversies over the issue of the Sabbath.

The wise and intelligent refer to the Scribes and the Pharisees, who often portray corresponding attitudes of pride, hypocrisy, and pettiness, as well as those who impose legalistic burdens upon others. In 23:16 they are described as blind guides. The religion, promoted by the legalists, actually inhibits a relationship of love with God. Freedom, not rule-keeping belongs to an adult relationship. For example, rule keeping is perfectly in order for a small child, who needs to learn that she cannot play with matches. However, when the child grows old enough, she can use matches in a mature setting for lighting a stove, a campfire or a hot water heater. In the prayer, Jesus addresses the poor who struggle under the weight of Jewish legalism; they are the simple and humble people of the land called *ha-am ha-arets*, by the religious establishment.

The invitation in 11:28-30 (only in Matthew) follows the same strophic-like form of the earlier affirmations in prayer 11:25-27.²⁹ Jesus not only reveals the Father as no one else can, but invites the weary and burdened to a mediated relationship (v. 28), which is free and open. Although the Son is the only one who knows the Father in the absolute sense, He also wills to impart the new relationship to others. He invites them to take up His yoke, and in so doing, there will be rest for their souls. The invitation is followed by a corresponding and paradoxical promise of an easy yoke. The yoke was a common

²⁷Jeremias, p. 60.

²⁸Lk. 11:46 And he said, "Woe also to you lawyers! For you load people with *burdens hard to bear*, and you yourselves do not lift a finger to ease them.

Gal. 6:5 For all must carry their *own loads*.

²⁹The verb δεῦτε, *come* is characteristic of Matthew (4:19; 21:38; 22:4; 25:34), and expresses a pressing and joyous invitation.

Jewish metaphor for discipline and obligation. Obviously we are dealing with a paradox. How can something like a yoke on one's shoulders possibly be easy?

A striking feature of the invitation is the emphasis on Jesus' gentleness, a theme that is vitally connected with the messianic servant language, which Matthew stresses.³⁰ The texts of Isa. 42:2-3; 53:1-2; Zech. 9:9 are variously used in Matthew's gospel, e.g., the silence charge, which follows a healing in 12:15-21. Further, there is an implicit link between an OT promise and Jesus' promise:

Jer. 6:16 Thus says the LORD:
Stand at the crossroads, and look,
and ask for the ancient paths,
where the good way lies; and walk in it,
and *find rest for your souls*.
But they said, "We will not walk in it."

The *yoke* (v. 29) is put on animals for pulling heavy loads, and is used in a metaphorical sense for discipline and obligation.

Lam. 3:27 It is good for one to bear the yoke in youth,³¹
In Jewish tradition, the expression, *yoke of the law*³² refers to the study of the Torah, which becomes a means of divine acceptance in Jewish tradition. But what Jesus offers is not a new legalism, a new Torah, or even a release from all laws, but a committed and sensitive relationship with Him and with the Father. Jesus must be received, not Torah nor Pharisaic legislation, and thus He stands in welcome relief to a legalistic understanding of the OT.³³ He offers His person, including His freedom and gentleness in contrast to a religion and religious system that imposes a severe discipline, without

³⁰Isaiah 42:2 He will not cry or lift up his voice,
or make it heard in the street;
3 a bruised reed he will not break,
and a dimly burning wick he will not quench;
he will faithfully bring forth justice.

Isaiah 53:1 Who has believed what we have heard?
And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?
2 For he grew up before him like a young plant,
and like a root out of dry ground;
he had no form or majesty that we should look at him,
nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.

³¹See also Acts 15:10 Now therefore why are you putting God to the test by placing on the neck of the disciples a yoke that neither our ancestors nor we have been able to bear?

³²*Pirke Aboth* 3:6; see Eccles. 51:25-26:
I open my mouth and speak of her,
Acquire Wisdom for yourselves without money.
Bring your necks under her yoke,
And her burden let your soul bear;
She is nigh unto them that seek her,
And he that is intent upon her findeth her.
Behold with your eyes that I laboured but little therein,
And abundance of peace have I found.

From this text the *yoke* is the yoke of the law as *the house of instruction* is the *Beth ha-Midrash*, the School of the Law.

³³ shown in the next two pericopes (12:1-8--plucking grain on the Sabbath; 12:9-14--healing a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath).

communicating the joy of salvation. He does not free His disciples from discipline or obligation, but offers Himself and communicates His very life.

As the Beloved Son, Jesus is intimately related as a Son to His Father. Thus, due to the immediate and mutually exclusive relationship, Jesus communicates God as Father to whomever God wills. The Father is personal and intimate; He is not simply a Father of a nation or a patron deity of a power-block. To be related to Jesus means to enter into the Abba experience of Jesus and experience a new relationship with a personal Father. The Father opens the door to the guilty and He overcomes legalistic burdens and introduces His friends to genuine freedom. We are invited into the experience of the Heavenly Father who individually not only knows every hair on our head, but more importantly reveals an active concern for the well being of His children.

Jesus' love forgives and restores.

Two parables underscore the wonder of Jesus' love and compassion, which issues in the forgiveness of sins and the restoration of the human person. The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant (Matt. 18:21-35) expresses the wonder of divine mercy and compassion (18:27, 33), which offer release from the stranglehold of an astronomical debt. While people "count up" offences of others (18:21), Jesus speaks of the incredible and unbelievable mercy of God that provides the norm for all human relationships. Through Jesus, the new norm of human relationships is that of mercy and grace—not justice.

Jesus uses the Parable of the Two Debtors to declare that forgiveness of sins issues in love, which is understood to be gratitude; this is expressed through the narrative and parable (Lk. 7:36-50). Indeed, allowance must be made for expressions of human appreciation for divine forgiveness. The parable is intended to affirm the woman's vulnerable expressions of gratitude (greater debt) and to expose the unfeeling attitude of Jesus' critic(s) (lesser debt). The parable presupposes that Jesus has previously forgiven the woman, identified as a "sinner". Through the parable and His explanation, He honors her lavish display of gratitude for the forgiven sin and unmask the thankless response of the onlooker(s). Ironically, the "lesser debt" of the critic "runs-up" the massive debt of religious pride, which is far more deadly than the obvious sin of the woman, i.e., immorality.

The Sermon on the Mount assumes that His people enjoy a new relationship with Jesus and experience His grace and the forgiveness. The basis for the radical love-demand lies in the new relationship with God as a personal Father realized in Jesus the Messiah. The one who "does" Jesus' words (7:24) is also the one who "does the will of My Father" (7:21) and who can genuinely pray, "Thy will be done" (6:10). These words breathe a sense of personal relationship issuing in loving conduct, which mirrors the Father's care for both good and evil alike. For example, the disciples who have been forgiven (received the *kerygma* [preaching]) are also summoned to forgive (*didache* [teaching]); they have welcomed the Divine *kerygma*: they are summoned to share the Divine forgiveness (6:12).³⁴ Jesus proclaims no new social world order, with impossible demands, but He simply proclaims the forgiveness of sins, such as Jeremiah prophesied

³⁴ In the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant, what grieves the fellow-servants and shocks the listeners is the fact that the forgiveness of the astronomical debt had no effect on the forgiven servant (Matt. 18:21-35). Jesus says that the new lease on life (*kerygma*) ought to make a difference in the way life is lived (*didache*).

(Jer. 31:31-34). The new relationship with God implies both hearing and doing the words of Jesus. The relationship is exemplified by the wise builder (Matt. 7:24-27), not by the false claims of the charismatics (Matt. 7:21-23). Thus, those who claim to do mighty works without a vital relationship with Jesus are excluded from the Kingdom ("Depart from me for I never knew you" 7:23).

Human performance of God's will (cf. Matt. 7:21) can only follow the offer and reception of Divine love and forgiveness. Because divine grace has been extended and received, it is now possible to love one's enemies. Thus, Jesus' sharing of a meal with Zacchaeus embodies His central mission—to seek and save the lost (Lk. 19:10); it includes forgiveness, wholeness of life, restoration of the human person and the radical reorientation of the person. Wholeness of life and self-acceptance are granted when Jesus befriends people as they are, restores them to their true selves and enables them to live the new life. From the human perspective, there is an unbridgeable gap between an infinite God and the human person. However, Jesus offers people the incredible opportunity of living in the joy and astonishment of God's infinite grace, compassion and forgiveness.

There is a revealing interchange between Jesus and Peter after breakfast by the Sea of Tiberias. Both Peter and John had been engaged in their normal fishing vocation; they are hungry from their all night labors and they have shared breakfast with Jesus. Breakfast over, Jesus asks the chief apostle, the probing question, three times, "Do you love me?" (Jn. 21:15-17).³⁵ Peter's response to each question is followed by Jesus' commission, "Feed\take care of my lambs\sheep. Peter's threefold response was a reminder to all who were present, of his three-fold denial of Jesus. Yet, in a surprising way, Jesus entrusts the flock to the one who had denied Jesus. The entire exchange between Jesus and Peter speaks of forgiveness, cleansing, and reveals Jesus' confidence in Peter's leadership. Jesus does not throw away the "loyal" traitor, the "faulty clay vessel" but re-instates him, demonstrating thereby, a buoyant confidence in him.

Jesus' love is passionate

There are three related noun/verb families that articulate the language of "love": 1) "compassion"/"I have compassion" (σπλαγχνον/σπλαγχνίζομαι), 2) "mercy"/"I show mercy" (ἔλεος/ἐλεέω), 3) "sympathy/mercy"/"I show sympathy/mercy" (οἰκτίρμος/οἰκτίρω). Each of the forms expresses a heart-felt attitude and resulting action. In a word, the three word-families express *passion*. Passion is the capacity to be acted upon by external agents, forces or persons, which leads to compelling action. Passion includes both intense emotion and compelling activity. In many ways, passion is the energy of the human soul that is awakened to respond to an outside force. The three word families express passion and are used in the Gospels to refer to God, to Jesus or to the expected experience and behavior of the people of God. The words express fervor,

³⁵ Interpreters note the changes from: ἀγαπάω to φιλέω and suggest different possibilities:

Jesus to Peter: Do you love (ἀγαπάω) me? Peter to Jesus: "you know that I love (φιλέω) you.

Jesus to Peter: Do you love (ἀγαπάω) me? Peter to Jesus: "you know that I love (φιλέω) you.

Jesus to Peter: Do you love (φιλέω) me? Peter to Jesus: "you know that I love (φιλέω) you.

J. B. Phillips interprets Peter's response as "I am your friend," to which Jesus finally agrees, i.e., "he takes Peter where he is in his comfort level. However, more important for the text than subtle distinctions with "love" is the issue of the commissioning of a leader to responsibility for the people of God. Jesus accepts Peter, believes in him and restores him to leadership.

Love in the Gospels

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ardent affection, enthusiasm and intensity. They express God's capacity to be affected by human need to the extent that He moves in a healing and restoring way. Similarly, the Gospels record Jesus' capacity to be affected by those who come to Him in various crises and needs, for themselves or for others. The three word families also express the kind of emotion and behavior that are expected of the people of God; since they have been the recipients of divine passion and are "loved," they are expected to express that very passion towards God and towards others.

The amoeba, one of the very lowest life-forms, is a one-celled organism found in fresh and salt water. Other than its ability to absorb food into its food vacuoles, the organism is unable to interact with its environment; it is a-sexual and multiplies through its own cell division. It moves very slowly by the flow of its cytoplasm and is comprised of: 1) cell membrane, 2) cytoplasm, 3) nucleus. The amoeba is scarcely affected by its surroundings in any give and take manner. It subsists of itself alone. How unlike it is to the more complex forms of life in the higher stages of the food chain, which interact and are affected by innumerable forces in countless ways. And beyond these forces, and beyond the passionless amoeba, the human person, created in the unique image of God; another entire reservoir of passion emerges, since God Himself is a God of passion, One who is affected by the world, its conditions and its needs. Even though the biblical writer affirms that Jesus Christ is "the same, yesterday, today and forever (Heb. 13:8)," this does not mean that He is unaffected by people; He possesses the capacity of being acted upon and deeply affected; He revealed such responses during His ministry. He lived with an intensity and passion that was unparalleled in human history. People affected Him deeply. We can only reasonably conclude that even in His exalted position in the heavenlies, His passion continues with the same fervor. Indeed, it is the risen and exalted Jesus who senses deeply the blows administered by Saul of Tarsus against Jesus' "body," the Church (Acts 9:4). He is affected and moved by what happens to His people. He is no statue or icon in the heavenlies, who is unmoved and static. Rather He is passionately concerned for His people. He continues to be affected by their sorrows and joys, their failures and successes, their defeats and celebrations, their disease and healing, their brokenness and wholeness.

1) *Compassion*. (σπλάγχνον/σπλαγχνίζομαι). The noun, "compassion" and the verb, "I feel compassion," express deep feeling and the seat of heart-felt mercy in later Jewish and Christian writings. The noun originated as a term to express any number of internal physical organs, constituting the viscera: heart, liver, lungs, kidneys, loins as seat of procreation and the seat of impulsive passion (anger, lust, anxious desire, feeling, love, courage)³⁶—thus, the expression, "the bowels of compassion." The verb, "I feel compassion," is based on the noun and expresses the stirring of pity (Prov. 12:10). Although the word-family is infrequent in the LXX, the words do occur in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, and express the feeling of God, the expectation of the Messiah and the people of God:

Test. Zeb. 8:2: Because also in the last days God will send His compassion on the earth, and wherever He finds bowels of mercy, He dwells in him. For in the degree in which a man *has compassion* upon his neighbors, in the same degree has the Lord upon him.

³⁶ H. Köster, "σπλάγχνον," *TDNT*, vol. VI, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971), p. 548. The expression ἄσπλαγχνος means "cowardly," "without strength or savour" (cf. "no guts").

Test Nap. 4:5: And the Lord shall scatter them upon the face of all the earth, until *the compassion* of the Lord shall come, a man working righteousness and working mercy unto all them that are afar off, and to them that are near.

Test. 9:7-8: And after these things you shall remember the Lord and repent, and He shall have mercy upon you, for he is merciful and *compassionate*, and he sets not down in account evil against the sons of men.

And after these things there shall arise unto the Lord Himself, the light of righteousness [And healing and *compassion* shall be in His wings]. (LXX version of Mal. 3:20)

In these texts, God is identified as the One who is compassionate, whose Messiah is "compassion," who will come and express mercy and compassion in a manner, which corresponds to His divine nature. The texts also affirm the passion—compassion, which are expected of the people of God. Clearly the word-family expresses the sensitive and "feeling" involvement of God in the lives of His people, expressed in a supreme way through the Messiah.

In the Gospels, the verb characterizes the divine nature, feeling and activity—of a God who is passionately connected with His people. The verb is used in three parables and expresses God's feeling and attitude through human figures. In the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant (Matt. 18:23-35), the slave's master felt compassion for the servant who had "rung up" an astronomical debt (v. 27); compassion here serves as the driving force behind the master's decision to release the servant from the impossible debt. In the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Lk. 15:11-32), the father sees the son over the horizon, felt compassion for him, and ran to meet him (v. 20). The dramatic feeling and action of the father for the apostate son expresses Jesus' passion for the irreligious (vss. 1-2), his accepting involvement in their lives, the feeling of God and the celebration of the angels in the saving event. In the well-known parable of Lk. 10:25-37, the half-breed Samaritan had compassion on the wounded traveler (v. 33). His compassion led him to render benevolent service to the half-dead victim. Feeling, which leads to saving help, reflects Jesus' own passion, the passion of God and God's expectation that the people of God should be passionately involved with the "broken" and needy.

The verb is also used by the evangelists in narrative paragraphs to express the passionate involvement of Jesus in situations of human need:

Mk. 6:34 As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and *he felt compassion* for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.

Matt. 14:14 When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and *he felt compassion* for them and cured their sick.

Mk. 8:2 "*I feel compassion* for the crowd, because they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat.

Matt. 15:32 Then Jesus called his disciples to him and said, "*I feel compassion* for the crowd, because they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat; and I do not want to send them away hungry, for they might faint on the way."

Mk. 1:41 *Moved with compassion*, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, "I do choose. Be made clean!"

Mk. 9:22 It has often cast him into the fire and into the water, to destroy him; but if you are able to do anything, *have compassion* on us and help us.”

Matt. 20:34 *Moved with compassion*, Jesus touched their eyes. Immediately they regained their sight and followed him.

Lk. 7:13 When the Lord saw her, *he felt compassion* for her and said to her, “Do not weep.”

In succession, the texts relate Jesus' passionate involvement with the plight of hungry crowds, a socially and religiously ostracized leper, a father with a demon-possessed son, two blind men and a widow with a dead son.³⁷ Jesus is passionately involved with people, aware of their needs and the various faces of human pain. Such feeling by Jesus is then translated into saving help. Clearly the stories characterize Jesus' emotional response and practical help to those who are in need. The translations of the Greek verb generally contain the expression, "I have compassion"; we suggest that the translation, "I feel compassion" more adequately represents the verb. Compassion is something that people "feel" in the deepest level of their being; it is not something that is possessed. Correspondingly, the verb and noun express God's passionate concern, "feeling" and saving help to those who are in desperate straits.

2) "*mercy*"/"*I show mercy*" (ἐλεος/ἐλεέω). In Classical Greek, "mercy" is an "emotion roused by contact with an affliction which comes undeservedly on someone else."³⁸ From the field of jurisprudence, an accused person seeks to arouse the mercy of the judge. In the LXX, the Greek term "mercy" is the usual translation for "goodness," "kindness," "lovingkindness" (חסד); the verbal form is used for the Hebrew verbs, "show favor," "be gracious towards" (חסד) and "love," "have compassion" (רחם). Mercy generally denotes the feeling, attitude and behavior, which arise from the covenant relationship. Such a relationship applies to God and His people, their relationship with Him and the myriad number of human mutual relationships (family, relatives, friends, kings and subjects, masters and subjects, hosts and guests, parents and children).³⁹ Since covenant relationships vary in expectation, the covenant-love, which is expected within the relationship, is determined by the very nature of the relationship, e.g., a "given" in one relationship may not be a "given" in another. Correspondingly, the fulfillment of "loving-kindness" in each relationship insures "wholeness" (שלום),⁴⁰ "love" (אהבה),⁴¹ "salvation" (הצלה)⁴² and "brotherhood/compassion" (אחווה).⁴³

In addition, "covenant-love" includes the "plus-factor" of grace. While one may fulfill the legal or expected demands of a relationship, there is always the possibility of doing more than what is expected; thus, the potential of "grace" (חסד) is always open-ended. To be sure, there are divine expectations for human conduct, which are obligatory to maintain covenant relationship.⁴⁴ However, it is also true that the people of God

³⁷ Often the texts note a form of personal address: "young man" Lk. 7:14; "son" Mk. 2:5 par.; "daughter" Mk. 5:34; "Talitha Koum" ("little girl, I say to you, 'get up')."

³⁸ R. Bultmann, "ἐλεος, ἐλεέω," *TDNT*, vol. II, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), p. 477.

³⁹ Bultmann, p. 479.

⁴⁰ Jer. 16:5; Psa. 85:10.

⁴¹ Jer. 2:2; 31:3.

⁴² Psa. 13:5; 85:7; 40:10; 119:41.

⁴³ Isa. 63:7; Jer. 16:5; Hos. 2:21; Zech. 7:9. Psa. 25:6; 40:11; 51:1; 69:16.

⁴⁴ Exod. 20:6; Deut. 7:12; 1 Kgs. 8:23; Hos. 10:12; Psa. 103:11, 17.

constantly failed to fulfill the rightful demands of the covenant relationship. The most notable example is the story of the golden calf (Exod. 32), wherein tragic idolatry occurs immediately after God has affirmed and stated the demands of His covenant relationship with the people of God. What will then occur when the covenantal relationship has been broken by such blatant idolatry (image-making—Exod. 32:1; unbelief—v. 1; false and blasphemous worship—32:5-8; obstinance—32:9? The results are clear—divine anger—32:10; judgment and death—32:28, 35). The divine miracle of grace occurs, even in the midst of rebellion, unbelief, and corrupt worship. God still reaffirms His promise, which He had made to the patriarchs and bestows His sheer unmitigated grace. When God announces His refusal to accompany this people any longer because His holiness threatens their very existence as transgressors, Moses' plea finds a place in God's heart. The tension between God who both judges and extends grace, which is present in Exod 33 will reach a point of genuine paradox (Job 19:25ff.). The giving of the "ten words" a second time is above all a revelation of God's "covenant love." It is a display of sheer grace, as God is slow to anger, and "abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin." Since people continue to be unfaithful to the various demands of covenantal love, they are continually in need of pardoning grace, which comes to them undeservedly.⁴⁵ The term "covenant love/mercy" is often linked with "brotherhood/compassion" (עֲרֻמָּה) and the full array of emotions, many of which are physically experienced; the terms often express the sense of oneness with another.⁴⁶

In the Gospels, "mercy" is expressed as covenantal love, noted in particular by the frequent occurrence of mercy in the context of the Messianic term, "Son of David" or "Abraham." The blind Bartimaeus (two blind men in Matthew) appeal for mercy and address Jesus as "Son of David." In the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, the rich man, in torment, calls out for mercy, based on a covenantal relationship with Abraham.

Matthew 9:27 As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, crying loudly, "*Have mercy on us, Son of David!*"

Mark 10:47 When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, "Jesus, *Son of David, have mercy on me!*"⁴⁸ Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, "*Son of David, have mercy on me!*"

Luke 18:38 Then he shouted, "Jesus, Son of David, *have mercy on me!*"³⁹ Those who were in front sternly ordered him to be quiet; but he shouted even more loudly, "*Son of David, have mercy on me!*"

Luke 16:24 He called out, '*Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in agony in these flames.*'

Other individuals who appeal to Jesus for mercy, use the term, "master" or "lord" (Matt. 15:22; 17:15; 20:31-31; Lk. 17:13).⁴⁷ The link of a cry for "mercy" to an OT figure serves to ground the appeal in covenantal relationship.

In other instances, "mercy" communicates the "plus factor" of grace. It is through an act of grace alone that the master remitted the astronomical debt, which the servant could not possibly repay, even with the desperate plea for more time: Matt. 18:33 Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as *I had mercy on you?* The divine mercy

⁴⁵ Exod. 34:6; Numb. 14:19; Jer. 3:12f.; Lam. 3:22f.

⁴⁶ Am. 1:11; Hos. 2:19; Isa. 63:15f; Isa. 49:15—motherly love; Jer. 31:20—fatherly love.

⁴⁷ The formula is also found in Isa. 33.2.

realizes will go unheeded; He knows the unwillingness of the people to appreciate the unique opportunity, the visitation of God in their midst. The passionate appeal and wail of grief is the language of restraint as well; He respects the freedom of people to make wrong choices, even though He knows that He could save them from impending disaster. Nonetheless, He suffers passionately and voices His passion, a passion, which reflects the very heart of God, who grieves with them.

Jesus' love is patient and He offers a "second chance."

Jesus' love, reflective of God's attitude expresses the divine goodness that allows another chance. The Parable of the Barren Fig-Tree (Lk. 13:6-9) clearly expresses divine grace and divine patience, which allows a "second chance" for the people of God. The parable stands within an eschatological context of warning. Jesus exhorts the disciples to be watchful in view of the coming Parousia (Lk. 12:35-48), the hour of which is unknown. In view of the imminent end, it is all the more important to read the signs of the times (12:54-46), settle with an accuser (12:57-59) and repent, i.e., accept the offer of the Good News (13:3, 5). Jesus refuses to assign blame to the victims of Pilate's massacre of the Galileans (13:1-2) and the Siloam disaster (13:4); instead He points to the eschatological urgency of present, "repent or perish" (13:3, 5). To Jesus, the respective tragedies underscore the urgency of the Gospel because the Son of Man will come soon.⁵⁰

While the cursing of the fig-tree (Mk. 11:12-14; 20:25; Matt. 21:18-22) expresses an immediate judgment over the people of God, the Parable of the Barren Fig-Tree expresses the divine forbearance that allows for a second chance. The parable highlights the "stay of execution" due to the gardener's special pleading for more time.⁵¹ The owner of the vineyard had come searching for fruit from the fig-tree for three years,⁵² but then makes the decision to cut the tree down based on two considerations: 1) the probability of fruitlessness due to prolonged barrenness, and 2) the wasting away of the resources of the soil. The fig-tree (the Holy City within the vineyard [Israel]) is a "glorified weed that exhausts the goodness of the land and yields nothing in return."⁵³ Even though the owner has been patient for the three years, he reverses his decision and allows for a second chance; he listens to the gardener's special pleading and promise to give the tree special attention. The gardener proposes on the fig-tree's behalf, that with special care and the last possible measures⁵⁴ there will be a pay-off the next year. Jesus may well be concealed in the gardener who pleads for the reprieve of immediate judgment. Jesus laments over Jerusalem as an intercessor (13:34) and similarly intercedes for Peter

⁵⁰ Eschatological urgency is carried through the chapter when the festal hall is shut and the word is heard, "too late" (13:22-30) and Jesus' lament over Jerusalem (13:35).

⁵¹ The parable is different from other sayings in which no such grace is extended:

Matt. 3:10 Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit *is cut down and thrown into the fire.*

Lk. 3:9 Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit *is cut down and thrown into the fire.*"

⁵² Maimonides mentions three years as the utmost limit within which a tree should bear fruit in the land of Israel. Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1972), p. 247.

⁵³ H.D.A. Major, T.W. Manson, C. J. Wright, *The Mission and Message of Jesus*, (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 1956), p. 567.

⁵⁴ The spreading of "manure" is not a customary procedure, and therefore the gardener's proposal of digging up the ground and spreading the manure represents an exceptional measure.

(22:32). Apparently, then in Lk. 13:8-9 Jesus is pleading that Israel may have one last opportunity for repentance. While the parable concludes with the gardener's request, the owner's sentiments seem to be concealed in the conditional sentence of v. 9, "and if it bears fruit next year, *fine*, but if not, cut it down." The stay of execution, which is granted by graceful patience, is occasioned by Jesus' special pleading. At the same time, God's patience is exhausted when the final offer goes unheeded. From the parable, the outcome of the next year is ostensibly unknown, although for Luke, the fate of the people of God is hardly in doubt.⁵⁵ Although the parable expresses a lament, the story nonetheless expresses the genuine patience of Jesus in His loving concern for the people of God. He is One who offers a viable second chance and will exhaust every possibility of extending the offer of the Good News. The gardener's special pleading and the owner's decision both reflect God's grace and forbearance. God does not desire the irrevocable word, "cut it down" (13:9) or the final fate, "you will all likewise perish" (13:3, 5).

The patient love of Jesus and His Father is also expressed in the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant. The defaulted servant pleads with desperation, "Have patience⁵⁶ upon me and I will repay you everything" (Matt. 18:26, 29). His anxious cry is not only meant with "patience," but something far more profound, the remission of the astronomical debt. Since the debt is so incalculable, the plea for "patience" and more time is meaningless; instead the servant receives the incredible discharge of the debt, generosity and forgiving grace. Conversely, he is aggressive towards his fellow servant, who makes the plea for "patience" and more time; it is apparent that the reality of "patience" has collapsed upon himself. Instead, the servant is subject to the "wrath" of the king, not the king's patience. His failure of "patience" calls into question his own reception of the gift of the king's patience. The relationship between the divine patience and human patience is indissoluble.

In the Parable of the Widow and Unjust Judge (Lk. 18:1-8), Jesus asks a rhetorical question, "will He delay/keep putting them off (μακροθυμῆ), who cry out to Him day and night?" (Lk. 18:7). The harassed widow is a symbol of the persecuted community, in need of justice. Since the community in this age waits in anticipation of the age to come, the community needs the "patience" of God; the community itself is "dependent upon God's decision, and yet in confidence that they may beseech His righteousness and grace."⁵⁷

Motivated by love, Jesus serves His people.

The foot-washing narrative highlights the love of Jesus for His own, expresses Jesus' servant role, assures the people of God of His forgiveness of sins and supplies the pathway of service that belongs to their future (Jn. 13:1-20). The introduction to the foot-washing (13:1-3) encompasses the entire Incarnation; it takes into purview, Jesus' origin ("come from God"), mission (service, forgiveness, love) and destiny ("going back to God). It resembles a parabola from the field of mathematics. What an incredible

⁵⁵ Lk. 13:34-35; 19:41-44; 23:28-31.

⁵⁶ The verb μακροθυμέω expresses well the relationship of the "majestic God . . . who will restrain this wrath and cause His grace and lovingkindness to rule. The wrath and grace of God are the two poles which constitute the span of His longsuffering." Horst, "μακροθυμία," *TDNT*, vol. IV, p. 376. See Exodus 34:6

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 381.

mystery! The eternal God, who was involved in creation, wants to be known as a "slave"; His self-disclosure is in the dress of a slave, with a washbasin and a towel. "Jesus' announcement to His own of His impending departure is followed immediately by the affirmation of His love for his own (13:1)"⁵⁸ "to the end." The expression "to the end" means "to love to the uttermost, completely" or "the most that anyone could love them," i.e., all the way to the cross."⁵⁹ It is His love that motivates Him to serve His disciples by carrying out the menial task of washing their feet, including the feet of Judas and then, the feet of the other disciples who were doubting and unbelieving. He serves them and through this object lesson, He orients them towards understanding their ongoing need for the forgiveness of sins⁶⁰ and their life of active service focused upon others.⁶¹

The entire passion is driven by the love of Jesus for His own, not by the external forces that bear upon Jesus, nor by political manipulation, not even by betrayal; Jesus is in control of the events and drives the subsequent episodes by His love for His own and for the scattered children of God, indeed of the whole world (3:16). Jesus understands that love provides the only cement for a lasting relationship, which is expressed in service, forgiveness and grace. Lovers know that their love cannot be controlled or legislated but freely given.

The new relationship with Jesus means an experience of His love and friendship.

The allegory of the vine (Jn. 15) promises that love is the dynamic outgrowth when people live in the new relationship with Jesus. Jesus commands His disciples to abide in Him and His love; the command is grounded in several clear statements of fact, all joined together with the adverb "just as" (καθώς):

Just as the branch is not able to bear fruit . . . (v. 4)

Just as the Father loved me . . . (v. 9)

Just as I have kept my Father's commandments . . . (v. 10)

Just as I loved you . . . (v. 11)

The four clauses provide the rationale for the imperative, "abide." A chain is forged between: 1) love of the Father for the Son, 2) love of the Son for the disciples, 3) an experience of love and friendship, 4) brotherly love and a love that thrusts the disciples into the world to bear fruit. Christian love finds a new rationale and dynamic in the experience of being loved by Jesus and thereby, being loved by God. The new relationship with God, portrayed as a mediated union with God, is an experience of His love. The experience of love (receiving and giving) is grounded in being loved by God and by His Son (13:34; 15:12).

The prototype of this love is expressed in the logic of Jn. 15:12-14, which is used as the rationale for the love-commandment, which is inferred:

Just as I *loved* you (v. 12)

The one who supremely *loves* dies on behalf of his *friends* (v. 13)

You are my *friends* (v. 14)

⁵⁸ Story, p. 275.

⁵⁹ BAGD, p. 229a.

⁶⁰ This is expressed through the language of "bathing" (λούω) the entire body and "washing" (νίπτω) a part of the body (cf. 13:5-10).

⁶¹ For Synoptic sayings, see Lk. 22:26-27; Mk. 10:45; Matt. 23:11; Matt. 25:40; Lk. 7:44.

The inference: Because you are my friends, therefore I am about to die on your behalf as an expression of my love for you.

When Jesus says He loved them (v. 12), He looks to His own death, as the greatest expression of love, which He could give to His friends (v. 13). He then identifies His disciples as His friends. The inference, which cries out to be heard is that because they are His friends, He will die for them. Jesus intends to awaken in His disciples a heart-felt appreciation and experience of His love for them. Their experience with Jesus also means a special position of friendship. People become friends of God; if only Jesus had said, that we were to be His servants, that would be enough. But He speaks the language of friendship, even though He knows all about people, "Lord you know all things" (Jn. 21:17). In Jn. 13:14, Jesus uses the slave-master metaphor to underscore the disciples' need to wash the feet of others. However, in Jn. 15, Jesus uses the slave-master metaphor to highlight the new position of being friends with Jesus. What is it that makes for this friendship? Jesus says that it is privileged communication, conversation with Him and the freedom of conversation with God. The slave does not know the why or wherefore of the master's actions, and furthermore, he has no right to know because of his low position. However, among friends, there is no reserve, only open two-way communication. Thus, privileged communication belongs to friendship. Jesus intends to evoke in us, the sense of astonishment, joy and gratitude for the new relationship, new status and privileged communication. The new relationship for God's people means abiding in a "person," an experience of love and friendship—all of which are expressed in privileged communication, "All the things that I have heard from My Father, I have made known to you" (15:15). In turn, the experience of love and friendship is to release them to love one another.

The human response to divine love

The "Eleventh" Commandment.

In Jn. 13:34, love is the new commandment (an eleventh commandment) and the means by which people will know that one is a disciple of Jesus; it is the essential badge of relationship with Jesus and genuine discipleship. All other commandments and directives find their anchor in the love-commandment. If there can be any prioritization, the dual commandment assumes the "top billing." Jesus indicts the Pharisees for their punctilious observance of the Law and tradition; they tithe cooking spices and herbs (Lk. 11:42) but neglect the important priority of "love." The accusation parallels Jesus' statement, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice," when His disciples are accused of breaking the Sabbath (Matt. 12:7). In Mk. 12:33, the dual love commandment is affirmed as "greater than all the burnt offerings and sacrifices." Jesus charges the critics with "majoring in the minors and minoring in the majors."

In the allegory of the Vine, Jesus then commands the disciples to express the love of Jesus (15:12, 17). It is a commandment and yet, it is not burdensome; it flows freely from their experience of Jesus' love.

12 "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

17 I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

Daily brotherly love belongs to the same command as "laying down one's life" (v. 16) and may be more difficult than a one-time event of laying down of one's life. The

commandment is directly related to the "new commandment" of Jn. 13:34 and is new, not so much because love is a fulfillment of the Law (Gal. 5:14), but rather, because effective obedience to the love-commandment depends on the perception and experience of the love of God, revealed so clearly in the life and death of Jesus. The allegory of the vine reveals a chain-like process, beginning with the love of the Father for the Son and culminating in the concern for more fruit.⁶² The fruit of the experience of love is to be found in other people who become aware and experience the love of Jesus. We may ask, "Why does John portray Jesus taking so much time with Nicodemus and with the Samaritan woman and ensuing harvest?" Does this not indicate John's concern for the world (3:16)? While "love in community" is primary to the Fourth Gospel, the emphasis in no way excludes love for the world, from the new relationship, which the disciples enjoy.

The dual-commandment of love.

A scribe challenges Jesus with the question, "Which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" (Lk. 10:25 par.). Jesus poses a counter-question, "How do you read what is written in the Law?" (v. 26). In response to Jesus' counter-question, the scribe responds, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and Love your neighbor as yourself" (10:27). In Matthew's Gospel, a further statement is made that love is the fulfillment and essential center of the entire Law (Matt. 22:34-40; cf. Matt. 5:17; 7:12).⁶³

Love means becoming the neighbor

Love for God inevitably involves love for the neighbor. When the scribe asks Jesus, "Who is my neighbor?" (Lk. 10:29) he does so to justify himself.

The lawyer requires further definition of the *neighbor* so that he would be assured of his own "love of his neighbor"; thus he would be certain of eternal life. He poses problems and raises questions hoping to find a reprieve from action through his religious questions. It is easier to discuss religion than to do it. He invites Jesus to discuss the meaning and nature of the term *neighbor*. Once the term is defined, then one can both include some and exclude others. The question really assumes that treatment will vary according to concentric circles of people originating from one person. Persons who are close to the center will receive better treatment than those who are farther away from the center point. The question implies that the righteous man is not obligated to the person(s) farthest removed from him. According to the Halakah, the term, *neighbor* (עֲרֵב, πλησίον) applied to every Jewish fellow-countryman, but did not extend to a non-Israelite.⁶⁴ The text of Lev. 19:17-18 indicates that *neighbor* means fellow-Israelite, "sons of your people":

⁶² In Jn. 4:36, "fruit" is used with respect to the harvest of Samaritans; in 12:24, "fruit" refers to the effect of one seed dying; it issues in the possibility of fruit. The new life given to others (fruit) is the direct result of Jesus' sacrificial death (seed that dies).

⁶³ With his pen, Jesus obliterates the 613 commandments of the Law and the innumerable commandments found in Jewish tradition and the entire doctrine of performance and reward.

⁶⁴ "Samaritans, foreigners, and resident aliens who do not join the community of Israel within 12 months are excluded." Fichtner, "πλησίον" *TDNT*, VI, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971), p. 315. As Jeremias says, "the Pharisees were inclined to exclude non-Pharisees (*ha-am ha-arets*) the Essenes required that a man 'should hate all the sons of darkness'; a rabbinical saying rule that heretics,

Lev. 19:17 "You shall not hate *your brother* in your heart, but you shall reason with *your neighbor*, lest you bear sin because of him.

18 You shall not take vengeance or bear any grudge against *the sons of your own people*, but you shall love *your neighbor* as yourself: I am the LORD.⁶⁵

Does the lawyer think that as long as the identity of the neighbor is unclear, there is no obligation to practice love? "How can I possibly love when I don't know whom I am supposed to love?" The real advantage of a clear-cut answer is that of security in which one can carefully measure performance and feel satisfied that the demand of the law is met.

Implicit in the question about the identity of the neighbor is the pragmatic concern, "What is demanded of me by way of response?" The lawyer wishes to narrow the circle that encompasses neighbors so that less will be demanded. It is the same question raised by the Christian community, "Who is my brother?" All too often, the Christian community answers the question in a narrow sense. For example, in the Parable of the Sheep and Goats (Matt. 25), the expression "one of the least of these my brothers" has been understood to mean fellow-Christians. Linnemann notes, "The law puts the world in our hands as something perfectly laid out and so basically controlled. One only has to make this control one's own, just as every pupil has to make reading and writing his own, but does not have to invent them."⁶⁶

The subtle and surprising message that emerges from the parable does not outline the parameters for the question. The question is unanswerable in that love does not begin, by defining groups and objects, but discovers them. Thus, the people of God cannot really put the question "Who is my neighbor?" at a distance. While the commandment to love God and the commandment to love the neighbor are two separate commandments, they are necessarily inextricably joined together.

In response to the Lawyer, Jesus tells the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10:30-37) in a matter-of-fact manner. A man falls among thieves and is left to die. Two religious people pass by on the other side and refuse to help the man left half-dead. But the hated Samaritan comes to the needy man and helps. The story then is slowed down when Jesus begins to narrate the Samaritan's actions: "he went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; then he set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And the next day, having taken out, he gave two denarii to the innkeeper and he said, 'Take care of him, whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back'" (Lk. 10:34-35). There is absolutely no "parade of religion."⁶⁷ The hated Samaritan relieves suffering for the broken man without any side-wards glance at God. He responds to a pressing human need; we do not read that he provides the help to

informers, and renegades should be pushed (into the ditch) and not pulled out." Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972), pp. 202-203. The prohibition against charging interest had special application to a Hebrew's Jewish brother: Deuteronomy 23:19, "You shall not lend upon interest to your brother, interest on money, interest on victuals, interest on anything that is lent for interest.

⁶⁵ The text of Deut. 23:19ff. uses the term, "neighbor" to mean "fellow-Israelite" in the context of a prohibition against interest upon a "fellow-Israelite":

Deut. 23:19 "You shall not lend upon interest to *your brother*, interest on money, interest on victuals, interest on anything that is lent for interest.

⁶⁶ Eta Linnemann, *Parables of Jesus: Introduction and Exposition*, (London: SPCK, 1966), p. 52.

⁶⁷ Günther Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth*, (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1960), p. 110.

Love in the Gospels

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the man as a means of loving God. He simply helps another person in dire straits; if he does not provide the needed help, the man will surely die. We find the same idea in the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats (Matt. 25:31ff.). Both the sheep and the goats are surprised by the Son of Man, when he speaks of reward or judgment, "When did we see you a stranger, needing clothes, hungry, thirsty sick, in prison?" (25:38, 44). The actions of the righteous sheep were not intended for the Son of Man but were aimed at relieving the trouble of others. They are not aware of doing anything "religious." The Son of Man then responds with the words, "When you did it to the least of these, my brethren, you did it unto me" (25:40). The text makes it so clear that the essence of a religion of love does not mean a retreat into a stained glass world of symbols, jargon, mystical experience and meditation. It means a readiness and decision to help others in need. Thus, the love of the neighbor is the genuine test of one's love for God.

The Lawyer must have been surprised even shocked when Jesus introduced the Samaritan traveler. Perhaps he could imagine a laymen, in contrast to the religious clerics perhaps, but surely not a heretical half-breed Samaritan. How can the Samaritan be a neighbor? Jews publicly cursed the Samaritans in the synagogues, prayed to God that they would have no share in eternal life, and refused to accept their services or their witness in a court of law. After all, they had defiled Jewish worship and theology and had conspired against Nehemiah's attempts to rebuild Jerusalem. Josephus tells us that between AD 6 and 9 at midnight, during a certain Passover, the Samaritans had defiled the Temple court by strewing dead men's bones in the court of the Temple; as a result, an irreconcilable hostility existed between the two parties.⁶⁸ The book of Sirach calls the Samaritans "no nation". Linnemann says, "The only thing the Samaritan had in common with the Jews in the eyes of the listeners was that he too was human."⁶⁹ But this Samaritan traveler, the victim of apartheid, does not ask the "neighbor-question". He simply responds to human need.

Kenneth Bailey, who has worked extensively with the Lebanese community, says, "The present writer can only confess that in twenty years he has not had the courage to tell a story to the Palestinians about a noble Israeli, nor a story about a noble Turk to the Armenians. Only one who has lived as a part of a community with a bitterly hated traditional enemy can understand fully the courage of Jesus in making the despised Samaritan appear as morally superior to the religious leadership of the audience."⁷⁰

It is neighbor-love that breaks through the religious, social and racial boundaries and "becomes the neighbor." No longer is it possible to talk about the neighbor "out there"; the vital question concerns "becoming the neighbor." The real neighbor is the one who becomes the neighbor. Jesus inverts the original question, "Who is my friend out there?" to become, "Who acted as a friend?" The neighbor is not to be defined and

⁶⁸ *Antiquities*, 18.30. See also Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, (London: SCM Press, 1969), pp. 352-358. Ben Sirach reflected on the animosity between the Jews and Samaritans,

There are two nations that my soul detests,
the third is not a nation at all:
the inhabitants of Mount Seir, and the Philistines,
and the stupid people living at Shechem.

See R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1973), p. 511 (Sirach 50:25-26).

⁶⁹ Eta Linnemann, *Parables of Jesus: Introduction and Exposition*, (London: SPCK Press, 1966), p. 54.

⁷⁰ Kenneth Bailey, *Through Peasant Eyes*, p. 48.

confined; rather, Jesus intends that a question about a defined or undefined neighbor is really irrelevant. The fundamental issue is that a person is to become a neighbor to the one who is in trouble, without thought about who is deserving and who is undeserving. Love is then to be expressed in doing what is necessary for the preservation and wholeness of life. Through the parable, Jesus intends that the lawyer see that love breaks down the divisions between friend and enemy, Jew and Samaritan, neighbor and stranger, religious and irreligious, righteous and unrighteous. In our day, love means helping involvement in the lives of other needy people; it breaks through barriers of race, socio-economic status, position and status, religion, gender and class.

The dual-commandment of love shares in Jesus' passion.

The love for God and the love for the neighbor are not esoteric but include human love (*eros*). Jesus expresses God's passion in His passion; there is a passionate love, which is to grip the people of God. God's passionate desire for people is well expressed in the language of the Old Testament: "All day long I have held out my hands to an obstinate people" (Isa. 65:2). Similarly, the book of Hosea portrays the divine love for His people in the language of passionate love, "Go again, love a woman who is beloved by another and is an adulteress. Love her as the Lord loves the Israelites" (Hos. 3:1).⁷¹ When Jesus tells the Lawyer, "Go and do likewise" (Lk. 10:37), He means that the Lawyer is to be "affected" by the needs and wounds of others. The passion of the Samaritan is expressed by his initial response, "he was moved with compassion" (10:33), which is then translated into physical and practical help for the man. The lawyer, along with the people of God are to be profoundly affected by the needy, feel compassion for the broken and hurting, feel their pain and then to translate that passion into positive action for the well being of others. Compassion, knit together with practical help, will be expressed through countless faces. Human compassion expresses the vulnerability of Jesus and the vulnerability of God in sending His own Son. God is utterly vulnerable, when He exposes His own heart in His Son, who experiences a bloody, shameful and God-forsaken death; God allows Himself to be affected and wounded in His offer of grace and compassion. Human compassion also shares in the vulnerable heartbreak of Jesus when He weeps over a city that rejects the offer of His love. Through the experience of human love, we experience the heartbeat of Jesus and thereby, the very heartbeat of God.

Human compassion

Jesus says that the Christian life and discipleship is not about being right or "good." The heart of the Christian life pulses with the language, vocabulary and feeling of compassion. We can gauge our relative successes by the ways in which we express love towards others or gauge our failures by the ways in which we diminish human dignity and worth. The quality of personal life is directly proportional to the way in which we allow ourselves to be affected by the needs of others and our practical responses to human need. Jesus' word to the Lawyer, "Go and do likewise" (Lk. 10:37) clearly speaks to the expected behavior of Jesus' friends. Love and compassion may be expressed by the way in which we give our time to listen to another, our words to a stranger on a street, our attitude in the check-out line at a grocery store, help with the

⁷¹ Cf. also Hos. 2:14-20; Hos. 2:2; Jer. 2:2; Deut. 7:8; 10:15.

homeless and our ability to absorb the personal injury spoken by another. Our recovery of passion is directly related to our ability to live in a full and free manner; it corresponds with the passion of Jesus and the ongoing passion of God for the people whom He has created in His image.

Human love forgives and serves.

In the foot-washing episode, Jesus orients the disciples (then and now) to two vital expressions of love. Even though the disciples have been "bathed" through their relationship with Jesus, there is the ongoing need for "washing," which expresses the continual need for the forgiveness of sins. The disciples are to follow Jesus' example:

John 13:14 So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.

15 For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Jesus' example is clear; He has washed their feet, which means that He has both forgiven their sins and served their need through His physical action. And Jesus points them to their future continual activity. They are summoned to do for others what He has just done. Later, the community itself is in-breathed with the Holy Spirit; the gift of the Holy Spirit is also vitally linked with the extension of the forgiveness of sins to others:

Jn. 20:22 When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

Even though the community forgives sins, it can do so only on the basis of the redemptive work of Jesus. Thus, the people of God do not possess a "sin-forgiving authority" by themselves, but can only announce and confer that which Jesus has effected. Further, such authority to proclaim or withhold forgiveness is directly contingent upon the reception of the Holy Spirit.

What is the link between love and the forgiveness of sins and the call to service? It is the passionate and vulnerable love of Jesus for His own, which introduces and follows the foot-washing scene (13:1) and the eleventh commandment in 13:34-35:

Introduction: Jn. 13:1 Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own, who were in the world, now he showed how perfect his love was.

Foot-washing: the forgiveness of sins and call to service

Conclusion: 13:34 I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. 35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

The love of Jesus (13:1) and the love of Jesus' disciples (13:34-35) are like "bookends," which provide the context for the foot-washing scene, which is positioned in between. What an entire reversal of the world's standards! Jesus marches to a different drum; He inverts the world system of power, prestige, honor and recognition. Instead Jesus acts for God and says through word and action, "Do you want to know what God is like? Look at me, watch and learn from my example. God does not to you to rule but to forgive sins and to serve. And He calls upon you to do the same." Through the Son, the passionate

love of God reaches people⁷²; this very love is to affect and govern the inner life of the community⁷³ and is to be characterized by the "laying down of one's own life" (15:13).

Jesus enables disciples to love their enemies.

The Sermon on the Mount expresses a love-directive, which stands in opposition to Judaism. Jesus issues a radical demand of love for one's enemies:

Matthew 5:43 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'⁴⁴ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,⁴⁵ so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous.⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?

We can find some parallels in the Rabbinic world; however the statements about love for one's enemies are new. This is a radical demand of the new age that presupposes a new relationship with Him and with God. Jesus argues that the new people of God are to live a life of love in a different manner than the world (Gentiles, tax-collectors). Jesus expects that His people will act on a higher principle than the norm—the "higher road" of "reward," "more" and "grace":

Matt. 5:46 For if you love those who love you, what *reward* (μισθός) do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷ And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what *more* (περισσόv) are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?

Luke 6:32 "If you love those who love you, what *credit* (χάρις) is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them.

What is it that enables Jesus' people to act differently from their environment? How is it possible to love in the midst of hostility, rejection and insult? In Jesus, there is an inner unity and congruity between *being*, *doing* and *words*. Jesus Himself is freed by the inner security of His acceptance as the Beloved Son of God and the intimate experience of a warm, open and unmediated relationship with the Father. From this inner certainty, Jesus is enabled to *be*, *do* and *say*, "The Son of Man has not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many" (Mk. 10:45). The foot-washing scene unites all three aspects: His *being* (Jn. 13:1-3), His *doing* (vss. 4-5) and His *saying* (vss. 6-19). The revelation of the love of God in the experience of Jesus enables Him to become a servant to the disciples, including Judas, His betrayer and enemy. Surely, the pain of betrayal by a disciple is more painful for Jesus than the aggressive response and decision of the religious and civil authorities. Indeed, Jesus offers the morsel of bread as a "last-ditched" effort of friendship to Judas (v. 26). The portrait here of a servant God destroys all images of power, control and external success. Jesus reverses the worldly system of values and success. Jesus' inner freedom and security (being) allows Him to wash the disciples' feet and extend the morsel to Judas (doing) and then instruct (saying) the disciples about the meaning of the event for their future lives. The inner congruity of Jesus' being, saying and doing provides the example of an integrated life.

The essential problem for people, exemplified in Jesus' critics is an incongruity between being, doing and saying. Thus, Jesus repeatedly charges them with an essential

⁷² Jn. 3:16; 17:23ff; 14:21ff.

⁷³ Jn. 15:9.

hypocrisy. For example, in Mk. 7, the critics for instance would ritually wash hands, cups, pitchers and kettles (doing)—v. 4 and hand on the same tradition to others (saying)—v. 13, but be unclean from within in their hearts (being)—vss. 15, 20-23. As Jesus argues, cleanness comes from within the human heart, which will then result in actions and words, which correspond to the inner heart. The new relationship of love begins from within; it is an experience of being "bathed" in Jesus' love and continually "washed" in daily forgiveness. This inner encounter with the Servant Jesus as Servant God provides the security that enables a person to act with freedom and love and to speak the language of love, even in the midst of hostility. It is as if Jesus says, "If you want to know what God is like, look at Me. If you want to learn that your God does not come to rule but serve, watch Me. If you want assurance that you did not invent the story of God's love, listen to My heartbeat."⁷⁴

On the Cross, Jesus petitions His Father, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Lk. 23:34). He pleads with the Father for the forgiveness of His enemies. The pronoun "them" surely includes all those who subjected Jesus to maltreatment--verbally, physically and emotionally: the religious authorities, the civil authorities, Pilate, the jeering crowd, the Roman soldiers, Judas. While revenge is a bittersweet delight in human experience, Jesus proves that prayer for the forgiveness of our enemies can be realized here on earth. Jesus' petition expresses the truth that these people were guilty and in need of forgiveness. Through His prayer for their spiritual wellbeing, Jesus drives away the natural human response of anger and bitter revenge.

The basis for this petition is expressed in the clause, "for they know not what they do." Normally, those who are injured are only sensitive to their side of the injury and cannot or will not see the other side of the injury. "But at the moment when the pain inflicted by His enemies was at its worst Jesus was seeking excuses for their conduct."⁷⁵ To be sure, through the various passion episodes, there are varying degrees of guilt of different individuals and groups: the disciples, Peter, Judas, chief priests, scribes, elders, Caiaphas, Pilate, Herod, the multitude in Jerusalem, the passers by, the Roman soldiers. However, Jesus' prayer includes all, irrespective of their own personal or corporate guilt. The truth is expressed here that ignorance characterizes the sinner. In many ways, the people involved in the trial and crucifixion know what they are doing. Pilate washes his hands (Matt. 27:24), attempting to absolve Himself of the guilt for Jesus' death. Judas' remorse for his betrayal leads to his suicide (Matt. 27:3-10). Peter is likewise guilty for his denial of Jesus in the face of Jesus' prophecy (Matt. 26:31-35, 69-75). However, in a deeper sense, all of the parties involved in the passion narrative do not know the extent of their sin and guilt. Jesus possesses the inner freedom and security of His experience of being the Beloved Son, even amidst His feeling of abandonment on the Cross, which enables Him to love His enemies.

Conclusion

The life, ministry and death of Jesus expresses the very being, nature, personhood and expression of God's character—all of which are expressed by love. Jesus expresses the very real heartbeat of God. God is a Person who is capable of human responses: joy,

⁷⁴ Brennan Manning, *Abba's Child*, (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1994), p. 145.

⁷⁵ Stauffer, p. 116.

frustration, anger, incredible delight and change of mind. The only way that we can come to the certain knowledge of God is filtered through the various "anthropomorphisms," which are used to characterize God, e.g., a "wounded-lover," a "wooing lover," or a parent who grieves over a runaway child. In Jesus, we see God's heart for His people, individually and corporately. In Jesus, we see that God desires for a personal relationship of love with Himself. His love reaches out to each individual person; He refuses to use the power of His position to control people. Instead God honors the freedom of people to make the most important decision of their lives, that of responding to the incredible offer of His love. In Jesus, God's love is vulnerable, expressive, full and free. As the Beloved Son, Jesus acts and speaks for God in His acceptance of sinners and His offer of forgiveness and grace. He enables the open and expressive relationship with God in the paradox of adulthood and childhood. He frees people from legalistic patterns of behavior into the Abba-relationship with His Father. He offers a new relationship with God, which is mediated through personal relationship with Himself. He is interested in restoration of people in their various broken conditions. His acceptance, grace and forgiveness bring healing to the inner person. He intends that the new community find its priorities in the dual love-response towards God and towards others. The new community is likewise to mirror God's nature of acceptance, forgiveness, cleansing and service. Jesus values patience and the "second chance" and directs the community towards the outside world by "becoming the neighbor" to those who are broken and needy. Corresponding to Jesus' inner integration of being, doing and saying, Jesus summons people to an integration of the whole person and He seeks to bring genuine consistency between our person, works and words. Since God is affected by people, Jesus desires that people feel and experience passion for others. He even expects the new possibility of love for one's enemies.

Jesus makes an amazing promise, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our room with him" (Jn. 14:23).⁷⁶ What a statement! God the Father and God the Son will both come to a believer and make their "room" with the believer. This is the same "room" (μονή) noted in Jn. 14, "In my Father's house are many "rooms." The purpose of Jesus' ministry is to bring us to the Father's "house" (οἶκία), and yet, within this "house" there are many "rooms." And each "room" is the dwelling place of God with and within the believer. It is the bond of love that makes such a room a reality that is "too good to be true." Jesus comes to free people from the chains of sin, sickness, possession, alienation and death; these are all negative realities. However, on the positive side, Jesus introduces us into the real intimacy of divine life and divine love. We tend to think and negative realities and neglect the positive purpose; Jesus lifts His people into an eternal circle of fellowship of love. What Jesus possesses He imparts and He will impart; it is given to us to make the love-response to His love.

God offers His safety and security and the pledge of Jesus is certain—He will not break the bruised reed and He will not snuff out the dimly burning wick (Isa. 42:3). He approaches people then and now with an infinite compassion, a grace that is "too good to be true." And He waits for us to make the love-response to His own vulnerability in sending His Son. And He continues with His passion—His ability to be affected by people and their choices. He celebrates with the angels of God when a wayward sinner

⁷⁶ The word "room/abode" (μονή in Jn. 14:23) is linked together with the verb "abide" (μένω).

makes the return home and He also celebrates when a religious person abandons masks, which prohibits an experience of God's love. To the extent in which we experience the intimate, heartfelt compassion of Jesus—we are able to express that towards ourselves, the Christian community and to the world in desperate need of the Christian message of the love of God.