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No Greater Love
December 22, 2013
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Hurt

Twice fallen, twice hurt
I am forever cursed
Heartbroken, feeling dead
Feels like a bullet to my head

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Someone help me, someone save me
I need someone who can save me from me
Someone to hold me, someone to say 'I love you'
Someone to love, never to be hurt by you

[4]
I feel I need a savior, I feel I need love
Lost is how I feel, without someone to love
Twice fallen, twice hurt
I am forever cursed; black tears stain my shirt¹

That was a poem that I found on the internet. It expresses the feelings of someone deeply scarred, someone who is missing **the** most important truth that anyone could ever possess. Without a deep understanding of this truth we destroy ourselves and those around us. The truth that was missing in that very desperate poem, of course, was the fact that the writer **is** deeply loved by God.

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There is a reason why Jesus said that the two most important commandments are “love God, and love people.” He said that all other laws are tied up in these two commands.

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In other words, **the Bible, and life, is about these two things – no more and no less. Loving God, and loving people.** That’s all there is.

I really think that we don’t know just how true this is. If we did we would be absolutely secure in every way. We would have no fear about anything. If we did, we would be more careful with our words. If we did, we would be less apt to try to exalt ourselves at every opportunity. If we did, forgiveness would come easy.

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The most important truth that you can know about yourself or God is that he loves you. Without a real knowledge that you are loved it is impossible to love others – or yourself for that matter.

It’s interesting, though, because the word “love” does not show up in the Bible until the 22nd chapter of Genesis, and even then it is not in reference to God’s love toward His people, but it is Abraham’s love for his son, his only son, Isaac, whom he loved, and whom God had just asked Abraham to sacrifice on an altar. That’s the first time that the word ‘love’ is used in the Bible.

Neither do we find the word ‘love’ at the beginning of the two gospels that carry the nativity story. You will search in vain if you try to find it in Matthew or Luke who both tell of the birth of Jesus. But, nevertheless, love is there.

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God’s love is weaved through every page of Scripture. From the opening chapters of Genesis, where God lovingly created the first man and the first woman in His image, to when He cared for them by clothing them and feeding them, even though they disobeyed the only command He had given them, love is implicit.

And it is there all through the Old Testament and into the New and right to the very last book of the Bible where God tells us that He is creating a new heaven and a new earth in which we can live with Him forever, with no pain, no sorrow, and no tears. God’s love is expressed in great measure on every page of the Bible.

If we want to find out someone’s motive for doing something we ask “why”? Why would God go to all that trouble to bring us back in relationship with Himself? Why would He humble Himself, to the extent that He did?

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It really is a ludicrous idea that’s hard to sell. **Almighty God became like us.** Why would He do that?

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¹ http://gonegothic.com/poetry_buddies.php?user=Isabella7LaVey&page=2

God, **born to a woman, in a stinky stable.** Why would He do that?

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God, **living in human form, serving those who followed Him, and then ultimately laying His life down** for them to bring them back into relationship. Why would He do that?

It's outrageous. It really is foolishness, and a stumbling block, as Paul wrote. It does not make sense.

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Why did He do it? That question gets us to the motive.

He did it because He so loved the world. And I would say that more than any other truth, this is the one that God wants us to really know and believe from our hearts. It is the reason that He gave His life for us.

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A few years ago Ruth wrote some Advent readings, one of which was read this morning, and one of the things that she wrote on this theme of Love was that ***"God's love is transformational, leading us from fear to wholeness."*** That is such a powerful statement. Think about it. ***"God's love is transformational, leading us from fear to wholeness."***

The more that we know the love of God the more we can let go of those things that keep us bound up. The more that we really believe, from our hearts, that God loves us the more we become ourselves.

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Soren Kierkegaard, a Danish theologian, pastor, and philosopher from the nineteenth century lived the earlier part of his life in deep depression and had contemplated suicide more than once. But, God got a hold of his life and he wrote in his journal of the "ever fresh source of joy: that God is love."

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And then he wrote, ***"Now with God's help, I shall become myself."***

The more that we believe that God loves us the more we become ourselves, and fear no longer has any place in us.

And the greater our understanding of God's love the greater our ability to love others. It will be a natural, or supernatural outflowing of his love poured into us and overflowing onto others.

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1 John 4:16–19 (NLT)

¹⁶ We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love. God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them. ¹⁷ And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face him with confidence because we live like Jesus here in this world. ¹⁸ Such love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of punishment, and this shows that we have not fully experienced his perfect love. ¹⁹ We love each other because he loved us first.

And in the New Testament, **John 3:16** tells us that love is the reason that God gifted us with His Son.

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"For God so loved the world that He gave..."

God's motive for bringing peace, joy, and hope to all humankind is His love for His people.

The more that we know and experience God's love the more confidence we have to live life because we know that God has our best in mind. This is what God wants us to know. God could care less whether or not we have an intellectual knowledge of church doctrine if it doesn't translate into a greater love for him and others. He's not going to give us a pop quiz on theology when we get to heaven. He doesn't care if we know what soteriology is. He doesn't care if we know what ecclesiology is. He doesn't care if we believe in consubstantiation or transubstantiation. But, what He does want us to know both intellectually and experientially is His great love for us. He loved us enough to die so that we could have life. That truth changes everything.

Paul's prayer for the Ephesians expresses this desire of God's.

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Ephesians 3:14–19 (NLT)

¹⁴ When I think of all this, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father, ¹⁵ the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth. ¹⁶ I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. ¹⁷ Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. ¹⁸ And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. ¹⁹ May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.

The greatest gift that God has given us in sending His Son is the motive for everything else that He does.

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“For God so loved the world...” That’s the motive. ***“For God so loved the world that He gave.”***

This knowledge changes our lives. That’s why Paul prayed so earnestly that that the Ephesian Christians would know it so completely. There is no other truth that can change your life so completely as knowing that God Almighty loves you personally.

Watch this video that is straight from Scripture about God’s love for you.

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