

+

C. S. Lewis writes in his book, *Mere Christianity*, *God's love for us is a much safer thing to think about than our love for him. Love, either toward God or toward man, is an affair of the will. If we are trying to do his will we are obeying the commandment 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.'* He will give us feelings of love if He pleases. We cannot create them for ourselves, and we must not demand them as a right. But the great thing to remember is that though our feelings come and go, his love does not. It is not wearied by our sins, or our indifference: and therefore, it is quite relentless in its determination that we shall be cured of those sins, at whatever cost to us, at whatever cost to Him.¹

These past few weeks, we have celebrated the feast of Pentecost, the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles, we have celebrated Trinity Sunday, in which we celebrate the unity and love of God as revealed to us in the Holy Trinity, the Feast of Corpus Christi in which we celebrate the Love of God shown to us through the Eucharist, through the bread and wine which is spiritually transformed into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ for our spiritual benefit and salvation. And this past week the Church celebrated another great feast which we are in the octave of, the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. But let us not get carried away with any preconceived sentimental notions or emotions, for the fact is that the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is the celebration of the great truth of Jesus' Divine and perfect human love for all mankind. The Sacred Heart reminds us again that God was made flesh, that through the Incarnation, God is made man, and God has a human heart. Yet, the Sacred Heart of Jesus is inseparable from the greatest act of sacrifice ever in human history, that God Himself died for us and for the whole world, and that even after death, the Sacred Heart of Jesus was pierced through with a spear, pouring out blood and water, foretelling the birth of the Church, which washes as many as comes to it in the water and blood of Christ. Just as Adam fell asleep, and according to the book of Genesis, Eve was fashioned from a rib from his side, so was the Church taken from the side of Christ, when Christ fell asleep in death on the Cross.

Just as the descent of the Holy Spirit, the revelation of the Holy Trinity, and the Spiritual Real Presence of Christ in Holy Communion are great mysteries of the faith, so is the Sacred heart of Jesus, and His great love for us a great mystery of the Faith. It is not a hidden love, not a love that is hard to win, but a love so great and so deep it is hard for us to comprehend it with our mortal minds. This is

¹ Lewis, C. S. (2001). *Mere Christianity* (1st ed., pp. 132-133). Harper Collins.

because, as C. S. Lewis puts it so well, *our feelings [of love or affection] come and go, [but God's] love [for us] does not. It is not wearied by our sins, or our indifference: and therefore, it is quite relentless in its determination that we shall be cured of those sins, at whatever cost to us, at whatever cost to Him.* It is hard for us to understand this level of unconditional love.

We find in the lessons this morning that regardless of our ability to love, God's love comes with the expectation that we will grow to imitate His love in return. In St. John's Epistle we are reminded that we know the love of God, *because He laid down His life for us [on the cross]: and we ought also to lay down our lives for the brethren.* God knows that we love imperfectly and yet He calls us to imitate His great love for our fellow man. St. John reminds us elsewhere that because of God's great love for us, *let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed, and in truth.* St. John, the beloved Disciple, makes it clear, if we claim to love God, *then we must love each other,* for salvation comes from loving *God with all of our hearts, with all of our souls, and with all of our minds, [and loving] our neighbors as ourselves.* We pray that God will instill in us Charity for all people, just as our Lord loved and sacrificed His life for all people. St. John's Epistle for today has plenty more to say on the Sacred Heart of Jesus, *If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother...how can he love God? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.*

The Gospel for this morning warns us also that the Love of God is self-sacrificial and that we are called to this same level of self-sacrifice. Yet it seems at first glance that in this parable the love of God did find a limit. The parable ends with the Lord of the feast saying that those men which had been invited, and gave excuses at the last minute, and rather poor excuses at that, would not be admitted to the feast, *none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.* Jesus gives us a parable this morning showing us what happens when we fill our hearts with worldly possessions, business, and earthly pleasure instead of God. Yet, the Love of God cannot go unanswered, and the Host invites as many as can be compelled to come into the feast. *Behold this heart which has so loved men.* The lame, the halt, the maimed, the blind, those who were seen as less than and unclean are invited into the great feast and seated with honor. The Host thinks nothing of sacrificing what others may think of Him by bringing in these from the highways and byways, just as our Lord thought nothing of eating with sinners and publicans either. This is no great thing when we put the feast into the perspective

of our Lord's death and sacrifice for sinners. And like the feast in this morning's parable, the Lord's act of sacrificial love on the cross goes unheeded. Excuses for turning to the cross abound. There is nothing lacking in the cross and every sin is covered. There is nothing lacking in the feast either, a symbol for the Kingdom of Heaven. What is missing is the character and nature of our priorities. One can only imagine how it must grieve our Lord that the very ones He died for would fill their hearts with earthly possessions, business, and pleasure over the Love of God.

And yet Isaiah the prophet tells us what God in His infinite love desires for all mankind regardless of their sins. Isaiah Prophecies, *In this mountain, [in the Kingdom of Heaven] shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast...and He will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces.* And all those that the Lord has drawn unto Himself in the Kingdom of Heaven will proclaim that this is the Lord our Salvation. We see that Lewis is right, that God, *is quite relentless in [His] determination that we shall be cured of those sins, at whatever cost to us, at whatever cost to Him.* May we be inspired this morning to clear away whatever in our hearts is keeping us from the Heart of God. May the Lord make our hearts more like His most Sacred Heart. May we learn to love the Lord our God with all our hearts with all of our minds and with all of our souls, and our neighbors as ourselves. May we not offer the Lord excuses but accept His invitation to the feast of Heaven. Let us pray,

We beseech thee, O Lord, that the Holy Ghost may inflame us with that fire which our Lord Jesus Christ from his innermost Heart sent upon the earth, and with which he doth wish our hearts to be ardently enkindled. Amen.