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An Appeal for a 'Love' Offering

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:16

Jesus: God’s perfect gift of love to us. Our precious Jesus, who loves us so much that he chose to suffer unspeakable pain and to die a sinner’s death for us, even though he himself had not sinned. He gathered up all the sin that you and I have ever committed and every sin that we have yet to commit. He took the blame for us and he suffered the consequences that we deserve – all in the name of love, even to death on the cross, dying for us, instead of us. What a perfect gift of love he has given to us – the gift of Eternal life.

As I walked by shop windows filled with Valentine cards, chocolates and flowers, I thought of the poor and lonely, especially those who are feeling sad because they won’t be getting a box of chocolates this year, or hearing the words, “I love you”. Some people will measure their loveliness by the gifts they receive; some will feel the sting of rejection; some will have no one to love them. My heart cries out, “Oh Lord, if they only knew how much YOU love them, that even in the depths of their

despair, they would *know* your love and not be without hope!” I am compelled and called to tell them about Jesus, to share the good news, to share the Gospel message with those who don’t yet know Jesus, to give them the hope that we cling to each day, to introduce them to the One who can carry their pain and give them rest, the one who longs to give them the perfect gift of salvation: our Jesus, whose love is not measured by the world, but by God himself. I want to tell them about the apostle Paul, who, though imprisoned in chains was so filled with the love and joy of Christ, as poured out by The Holy Spirit, the very Spirit of God, and that they too can be filled. Praise God for those on the sidewalks who have heard and have said ‘yes’ to Jesus, those who have given the broken pieces of their lives to Jesus, and who now put their trust and hope in Him.

While watching American Idol the other night, I was saddened when a young man, rejected and in tears, said, “I have nothing left, I have nothing.” You may have witnessed that moment, and cried out to God, as I did, interceding on behalf of this young man, “Lord, reveal yourself to him, please. Surround him with Holy Spirit-filled Christians that will help to point him

to you.” There is so much suffering in this world. We live in a world of technology where we tend to over-communicate with those at a distance and yet miss those right in front of us. A world where ‘busy-ness’ has become a plague, robbing us of our peace, and where performance has become an idol. Even within the church we can sometimes put pressure on one another to play the best songs, to preach the best sermons, to pray the best prayers, measuring our church experience in worldly ways. Yes, we want to give Him our very best, but at what cost? Jesus loves us for who we are, and not for what we have done or will do, and so why do we measure each other by how we perform? Jesus loves the poor and marginalized just as much, including those without jobs, those without homes; those without money, and those without friends.

“Matt 11:28-30

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 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. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Matthew 11: 28 – 30

I recently had the pleasure of sitting with a senior in a downtown coffee shop. After we dispensed of idle chatter, we got to what really mattered, his heart. Broken from the rejection of his son, he was able to share his agonizing pain through tears and sobbing. He would stop crying for awhile only to break down again. What a privilege it was to sit with him and linger for awhile, and in no rush to walk away. This world is so difficult. Each one of us has a story of pain to tell. Sadly, there are not enough people who listen. We sat in the coffee shop for hours, as he poured out his pain. We prayed, and invited God into the pain, asking him to heal his broken heart and his relationship. It is God’s will that we become reconciled one to the other, just as we are called to be reconciled to the Father. If only more of us could share our pain, without being rejected. Why do some of us feel that we always need to appear to have it all together? We wear masks in order that people

might not see that we are, after all, really only human.

By the grace of God, and by having the love of Christ in my heart at that moment, I was able to share God’s love for him, an unconditional love, not because of what we have done for Jesus, or might do in the future, but because of what he has done for us. Yet, I dare to ask, “Can we love Jesus for *who* he is, and not just for what he did for us, as amazing as it was? Can we love him enough to die for him, to put our own will, our own desires to death in order that he can live in and through us?

Like most of our clients, UCO is.. Some months we barely have enough to make payroll, but because of your faithfulness, Urban Christian Outreach is now in its eighteenth year. As we put our faith and trust in Jesus, may I humbly and boldly ask you to search your hearts and to seek Jesus and the will of God in how you might be able to encourage us with a financial gift at this time? In faith, I have called out to God for his provision, asking him to provide for our immediate financial needs, and also to raise up Christians who feel called to help support us with monthly financial gifts. Will you please prayerfully consider partnering with us in order that we might continue to bring the Gospel message to the sidewalks of downtown Ottawa and to those who need the love of Christ? May God bless you in abundance and provide for all your needs.

***With Love and Gratitude,
Jill Wilson***

"The most important one, "answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."
Mark 12:29-31