

The Glorious Revolution

Love, like so many words, is tragically misused. I mean, really, what does my wife think when I say, “I love you, too”, immediately after I have just said, “Man, I really this love fried chicken”? Of course, I love my wife more than fried chicken, but my point still stands. We use this word, love, like it’s going out of style...like there’s an expiration date on the word, and if we don’t use it as much as we can, we’ll never be able to use it again. But when we take a step back from our semantic sloppiness, and think deeply about the word love...well then, it just might be possible to incite a lasting revolution in the world.

*“No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”* Jesus said this at some point in his life, but even when he wasn’t speaking about love, he was embodying it. His journey took him from the indescribable beauty of the inner life of the Godhead into the dusty roads of Palestine, a life of perfected bliss traded for a life of pain and hunger. And all of this for love. A love that flowed from the depths of who he was...a love that sought nothing in return...a love that pined for nothing save the release and redemption of the human race. He loved the powerful, not for the power they could pass on to him, but simply because they had a spark of the divine within them. He loved and healed the lepers, not for the affection and devotion they would give him, but simply because he found them beautiful. He loved, and still loves, the world just for the sheer delight of loving it. His love isn’t a violent, twisted love. It doesn’t operate conditionally. It isn’t selfish, loving us so that we might love him back, thereby propping up his ego, boosting a fragile sense of self. That’s the kind of love we see in the world so often...love as a means of gaining something in return. His love...his love is pure. He loved

us even to the point of his own death, because through this love, he knew that we would find the release and redemption that we so desperately needed.

Let this sink in. Let this wash over you. Let this kind of love wiggle its way deep into your bones. Let it set you free from the illusion that you must say the right prayers, or do the right things, or stand, sit, and kneel at the exact right time in order to be loved by God. Let it set you free from that oh-so-tragic idea that you are not worthy of God's love. Let it set you free from the crippling notion that you have to be somebody other than who you are in order to be considered lovable. My dear sisters and brothers, there is nothing...NOTHING that we must do in order to be loved by God. For we have seen, in the face of Jesus of Nazareth, a God so overcome by love for us that he took even the most extreme steps to be near us, to be close to us, to let us know that we are not lost and forgotten.

It's this kind of love...this extravagant, superabundant, frivolous love that lies at the heart of Jesus' summary of the law this morning. *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.* To love something, to truly love something, following the example of Jesus Christ, is to love it primarily for what it is, not for what it can do for us. To quote St. Augustine, "What is not loved in its own right is not loved." To love God, then, is to simply love God because of who God is...to love God for what God has done for us in Jesus Christ, not what we hope God might bless us with in this life and not because of what God might do for us in the hereafter. We do not love God because of the promise of eternal life. We love God because of the salvation we have been given at the Cross. This love overcomes us, it inspires us to take sheer delight in the One who is our beloved, in the One who first loved us and

laid down his life for us. A true love for God seeks nothing in return, but in fact seeks to return back to God the love and joy God first had for us. “*Set me as a seal upon your heart,*” it says in the Song of Solomon, “*as a seal upon your arm; for love is strong as death, passion fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, a raging flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. If one offered for love all the wealth of one’s house, it would be utterly scorned.*”

To burn with passion for God, to be illuminated by God’s beauty, to feel so overcome by a desire for God that it can never be drowned out, even by all of the sorrow and pain of the world. That is what it means to love God with all your heart, soul, and mind. And once we are overcome by this kind of love for God, we can no longer hold it in. We can’t keep it to ourselves, because we know that this is too great a gift not to share. We look into the world, this hurting, tragedy filled world, and we find every opportunity to love those around us with this same kind of love. Like Jesus, who loved powerful and powerless alike, seeking to offer those he encountered true release and redemption, we go out into the world and incarnate, make real, this love of God to anyone and everyone we encounter. For this kind of love, the love God has for us in Jesus Christ, is a love that knows no boundaries. It knows not race, creed, or color. It does not discriminate against gender or sexual orientation. It scoffs at political allegiance, power, and prestige. It unites those trapped by divisions of all sorts. This love, God’s love flowing through us, seeks out those who have become crippled by self-hatred and insecurity and says to them, “You are a beloved child of God, beautiful to behold.”

This is not pie-in-the-sky idealism. This is our mission. These are our marching orders. This love, this is the highest law. To love God and to be overcome by this love to the extent that we say, like the prophet Jeremiah, “*If I say, ‘I will not mention him, or speak any more in his*

*name' ,then within me there is something like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot.*” For no reason, save love itself, God first loved us. For no reason, save love itself, we love God and we love all others. Once the Church figures this out, once the Church truly believes that this love can change the world, then we will see a revolution that cannot be stopped, cannot be quenched, cannot be smothered, cannot be overshadowed by the darkness. The question, then, for you, and me, and all who have been touched by the love of God, is simple, but we ask it at the peril of our lives of comfort and complacency: Why do we tarry at inciting this glorious revolution?