

## 9. The Tenderness of His Love (2Q 2008—The Wonder of Jesus)

**Biblical material:** Matt. 5:44-48; 9:36; 19:13, 14; 23:37; Luke 10:38-42; John 8:2-11; Acts 6:7.

### Quotes

- We are called to show utter commitment to the God who is revealed in Jesus and to all those to whom His invitation is addressed. *Rowan Williams*
- After the fall of so many gods in this century, this person, broken at the hands of his opponents and constantly betrayed through the ages by his adherents, is obviously still for innumerable people the most moving figure in the long history of mankind. *Hans Kung*
- The dearest friend on earth is a mere shadow compared to Jesus Christ. *Oswald Chambers*
- No one else holds or has held the place in the heart of the world which Jesus holds. Other gods have been as devoutly worshipped; no other man has been so devoutly loved. *John Knox*

### Questions

In what ways does show tenderness in love? Are there apparent ways in which this is less clear? How are we rightly to understand love? What about the bigger picture of the on-looking universe? How do they understand the love of Jesus? In what way does Jesus most clearly demonstrate love?

### Discussion

The lesson list a number of examples of how Jesus exhibited his love: the woman caught in adultery, the children, the family of Lazarus, Jesus' enemies, Israel itself, especially as represented by Jerusalem.

However there are incidents that seem to speak in another direction—the way he spoke to the religious leaders of his time, the Syro-Phoenician woman, his apparent 'abandonment' of John the Baptist, even his own family...

We must be careful in this study not to turn Jesus' love into some romanticized ideal. Jesus was always practical, and his love was often tough. He was not prepared to empower wrong ideas and actions, for any reason. While he always cared, he still told the truth as clearly as the people could hear it. As Ephesians makes clear, Jesus always exemplified the concept of "speaking the truth in love."

"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven." Matthew 5:43-45 NIV. As Jesus comes to the end of his Sermon on the Mount, he gives a final "you have heard that it was said" comment. In his commentary on previous "law standards" Jesus gives the final coup-de-grace to his hearers legalistic attitudes. For he turns the love your neighbor/hate your enemy statement around, and requires love for your enemies. In this way, Jesus completely

undercuts the Pharisaical position. For, as some probably muttered, it is not humanly possible to love you enemies. And Jesus says “yes, that’s true—in your humanity you cannot.” Only the forgiving, healing grace of Jesus can allow us to truly love.

When it comes to all that Jesus did, we can see that love was the fundamental motivator. Even when he expressed himself in strong ways, he still wanted to do whatever he could to help. In fact, it was *because* of his great love for people, even the hard-hearted and bigoted, that he spoke and acted the way he did. He just wanted them to respond to his offer of salvation and healing so that he could help them, and only he could.

### **Comment**

“This is the clash of two kinds of religion. It is the clash between ‘Thou shalt, thou shalt not’ religion and religion which says, ‘Love God and love your fellow men.’ Now, if Jesus was right, all this was completely and totally irrelevant. Obviously the people who had loved this kind of thing thought Jesus was a bad and a dangerous man, and thought that the sooner this man was out of the way, the better. p. 31.

*“Jesus never appeared to anyone except those who loved him... He appeared only to those who loved him. But if you or I had been writing a fictional novel about the Resurrection, who would we have made Jesus appear to? I think certainly we would have made him appear to Annas and Caiaphas and to Pilate. He would have burst into the room, towered over them in glory and said, ‘You have tried to crucify me, but here I am’—what a dramatic confrontation! It never happens, never.”* pp.67-8. William Barclay, Discovering Jesus (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000).

### **Ellen White Comments**

In the life of the disciple John true sanctification is exemplified. During the years of his close association with Christ, he was often warned and cautioned by the Saviour; and these reproofs he accepted. As the character of the Divine One was manifested to him, John saw his own deficiencies, and was humbled by the revelation. Day by day, in contrast with his own violent spirit, he beheld the tenderness and forbearance of Jesus, and heard His lessons of humility and patience. Day by day his heart was drawn out to Christ, until he lost sight of self in love for his Master. The power and tenderness, the majesty and meekness, the strength and patience, that he saw in the daily life of the Son of God, filled his soul with admiration. He yielded his resentful, ambitious temper to the molding power of Christ, and divine love wrought in him a transformation of character. {AA 557}

Jesus’ manner of teaching was beautiful and attractive, and it was ever characterized by simplicity. He unfolded the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven through the use of figures and symbols with which his hearers were familiar, and the common people heard him gladly; for they could comprehend his words. There were no high-sounding words used, to understand which it was necessary to consult a dictionary. He illustrated the glories of the kingdom of God by the use of the experiences and occurrences of earth. In compassionate love and tenderness he cheered and comforted and instructed all who heard him; for grace was poured upon his lips that he might convey to men in the most attractive way the treasures of truth. {CE 126}