



Love Like Jesus



The Collect

Most high, omnipotent, good Lord, grant your people grace to renounce gladly the vanities of this world; that, following the way of blessed Francis, we may for love of you delight in your whole creation with perfectness of joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

First Reading *Jeremiah 22:13–16*

Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness,
and his upper rooms by injustice;
who makes his neighbours work for nothing,
and does not give them their wages;
who says, "I will build myself a spacious house
with large upper rooms",



and who cuts out windows for it,
panelling it with cedar,
and painting it with vermilion.
Are you a king
because you compete in cedar?
Did not your father eat and drink
and do justice and righteousness?
Then it was well with him.
He judged the cause of the poor and needy;
then it was well.
Is not this to know me?
says the Lord.

The Epistle *Galatians 6:14–18*

May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything; but a new creation is everything! As for those who will follow this rule-- peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.

From now on, let no one make trouble for me; for I carry the marks of Jesus branded on my body.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers and sisters. Amen.

Gospel *Matthew 11:25–30*

Jesus said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, 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."



Help us, Jesus, to love like you. Amen.

What does it look like to love like Jesus?

In my early twenties I worked as a missionary in India, years of life that opened up world upon world of weird and wonderful experiences: bucket baths, roof-top bus rides, sunsets from atop the Himalayan foothills, and the great, Indian urban farmyard. If you have had the joy of visiting India yourself, you will know that Indian cities have their own, *daily* procession of the animals, on sidewalks, on patches of grassy land, and on the streets, where you can usually see cats and dogs, goats and chickens, wending their way between the bumpers and along the curb. Animals and humans and all manner of vehicles jostle alongside each other, following the one, sure rule of the road that I knew of in India - get their first - all except one, the cow. You may well know that for Hindus, cows are revered, even sacred animals, and so when a cow in India crosses the road, and decides to sit down halfway through, everything else stops.



My most memorable 'cow-in-the-road' incident happened on an especially hot and humid day in late summer in Kolkata. I had just arrived back in the country, and had taken a cab from the airport. Having lived in India for several years at that point, I now knew that every taxi driver making the journey from the airport to the city had their own preferred route. My particular driver that day evidently had a liking for back streets, and was determined that I should see plenty of them before arriving at my destination.

It was all going rather well until we arrived at a crossroads where traffic had utterly stopped in all directions. Identified obstacle: cows in the road, taking an early morning break. The only real solution that anyone is willing to accept in India for cows in the road that avoids the pious being offended, is for someone to go and fetch a holy man to come and lead the cows away. For us, that summer morning in Kolkata, until that could happen, there was nothing to do but wait.



Did I mention that it was hot. No air conditioning; no shade; and no one moving anywhere, anytime soon. After a few minutes of trying out which position in the backseat of the cab would be least uncomfortable, I finally got over myself and began to look out of the window. In the middle distance, I could make out a small construction site. As was typical in India, among the laborers on the site were barefoot children, carrying rubble on buckets balanced on the tops of their heads. Sitting in what looked like a schoolroom wooden chair and holding what looked like a schoolmaster's cane, a man, whom I imagined to be the foreman, barked orders at the children, taking swipes at them with the cane as they passed by.

At first glance, the servitude of those children looked like so much of what I had seen before of the lives of impoverished children on the sub-continent, yet just a little behind that scene was something else; two girls set back from the to and fro of the construction site offering light to a darkened place. The younger one was seated, the older was standing and gently combing the hair of the girl before her. It was truly an extraordinary sight: traffic stuck in four directions,



people getting angry, shouting and sounding their horns at the cars ahead of them, sacred cows regally immovable, the cruelty and entrenchment of Indian urban poverty, and in the heart of all of that chaos, two girls offered a glimpse of the glory of God. Chaos, transcended by beauty in a moment of intimacy and care. *'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,'* Jesus says. What does it look like to love like Jesus? It looks like two young girls, etching out an opening for grace in a sin-soaked world.

What does your life look like when it loves like Jesus?

As much as cows stopping traffic, and children working on construction sites, may look like another world's cultural milieu, might we see ourselves in this Indian parable too? It's not just the traffic on 285 during rush-hour that might incline us to find ourselves in a story of non-movement. Our 24-7 plugged in and over-scheduled lives have us moving in all directions at once. We move on and on, some of us climbing higher and higher, others of us feeling that for every step we move forward we slide half a step back. Such is the modern



condition. The world spins at a frenetic pace, and a working assumption about living in that world today is that we had better get our running shoes on; we had better prove that we are worth our place in the race.

Behind this picture of reality, though, is a question that Paul is keen to address in his letter to the Galatians: what is it that God values? Who is it that God loves? Galatians explores such questions first by seeking to say what does not matter: circumcised or uncircumcised, Jew or Gentile, free or slave, and we might add: successful or not as successful, recognized by a world of status and power or not, known or little known. For Paul, as he says in the segment of the letter we heard today, all of this has been crucified, all of this valuing of one another has died for him, for he is a new creation. Previously so desperate in his life to prove that he was adequately zealous, that he was enough in a zero-sum religious economy, Paul is now set free from that endless cycle of proving himself lovable, to a life where he can stop and recognize what loving like Jesus looks like.



Yet you and I know that most often, the most challenging person we find to love is ourselves. Turns out that St. Francis, whose feast day we are rather belatedly celebrating today, also felt that challenge. There is a lovely story about Francis and Brother Leo who, as we meet them, are seeking to lead one another in prayer. Francis is particularly keen that Leo should remind him in prayer of how his sins condemn him, asking Leo to say to him the following after each petition:

'O Brother Francis, you have done so many sins and evils in this world. You are deserving of hell'.

However, every time that Francis initiates the prayer, Leo does not offer the response Francis is expecting and instead replies,

'O Brother Francis, God will do great things for you and you will be blessed'.



When this pattern of contrition and affirmation repeats itself, Francis becomes agitated, asking,

'Why do you disobey me, Brother Leo? You are to repeat as I have instructed you'.

Leo answers,

'God knows, Father, that each time I set my mind to do as you say, God then makes me say what pleases him'.

Is that not our business here today, and every day that we meet in the name of the God who loves us: to say what pleases God? For when we do, we come to see the generous economy God calls us to live and love within that assures that we are already enough, that we are already set free, that we are the creation that God delights in. Even Francis needed to learn that, as so do we.



You and I are partakers in the generosity of God; a generosity that teaches us to love like Jesus. A love in us that gives itself away because we have come to know that we too are a new creation. It's exactly what we have been focusing on these past few weeks of our canvass: that God's generosity flows through us, and in the form of our generosity to this church then flows out into the world. In other words, there are really good theological reasons to make that pledge, so please go for it!

All of it comes back to love. What does it look like to love like Jesus? It looks like two young girls caring for another between the cracks of human cruelty; it looks like two monks, centuries ago, teaching one another that in the end, God loves us no matter what we love about ourselves; and it looks like you, God's first love. You and I meet in the name of a profound and life-changing generosity that tells us that we are already enough. Love like Jesus, my brothers and sisters. Love yourselves and love the world; his yoke is easy, his burden is light.