

# The Love of Jesus

There is a children's chorus that became popular during the Charismatic Renewal. The name of every child present could be inserted in the song. Because we are all children at heart and Jesus loves the childlike (not childish!) many adults sang the words, as well. "Jesus, Jesus loves ---- , Yes, he does, Yes, he does." This repeats three times. There is a last line to the verse but we will come to that later. One morning in our prayers, when we were without visitors, we sang this, amidst much laughter. Each of us was reminded that we are loved by Jesus. There is something very heart-warming in being reminded of that fact.

We have been studying St Paul's letter to the Romans. Coincidentally, that very evening, we were meeting together for our weekly fellowship and we were sharing together on the verses at the close of chapter 8. Here, Paul writes of one thing and one thing only that he is convinced that nothing "will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus, our Lord". He mentions, amongst other things, that 'the sword' cannot separate us from Jesus who loves us. This is quite a statement as he must have known that his own death would, most probably, be by beheading and indeed it was. Nothing that will happen, or is happening to us, in life has the power to separate us from the love of God, in Jesus.

St Paul had written often about faith in the earlier chapters of the letters to the Romans but in these last verses he doesn't mention it. Paul knew, because of his past experience, that there was one fact he could depend on utterly and that was the love of his Lord whatever his circumstances. Most of us face trouble of some kind, or suffering on our journey through life. Circumstances can change very quickly and unexpectedly. Our feelings can change from elation to crushing grief in a matter of minutes but whatever we feel is not important. The great constant is that we are loved by the Lord Jesus.

Some of you will have heard before this story about Karl Barth, the famous theologian, but it bears repeating. Theology to him was not an academic exercise enclosed within the four walls of a university. He was in Germany during the Third Reich. He thundered against Hitler and his henchmen and what he saw quite clearly as a regime opposed to God. He ultimately, not surprisingly, had to flee his adopted country and return to Switzerland where his voice was still not silenced.

Long after the war, in 1962, Barth was at Rockefeller Chapel on the campus of the University of Chicago during his lecture tour of the United States. At the close of his lecture, there was an opportunity to ask questions. A student asked Barth if he could summarize his whole life's work in theology in a sentence. Barth allegedly said something like, "Yes, I can. In the words of a song learned at my mother's knee: 'Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so'".

Yet many of us have difficulty with this simple fact which can transform our lives. "Jesus loves me", we need to say over and over again to ourselves. Sometimes there is resistance, some hidden guilt or shame, or a feeling that we are unlovable. We may feel that we are

unimportant. We are not good at sports, good at our lessons, or even at praying! How can Jesus see us as the most precious of beings and desire us? The truth is – that He does.

The love of Jesus has the power to change us. One Sister tells the story of walking home in a quieter part of a city when an ill-kempt man leapt towards her blaspheming God. Recovering from the shock she took a step towards him and said firmly, “Now, let me tell you something, Jesus loves you”. He quietened and allowed her to walk away. Whoever we are, whatever our past, or whatever our present, Jesus loves us. Mother Basilea, one of the founders of the Evangelical Sisterhood of Mary, advises us to say over and over again, “I am loved, I am loved!” Then, our hearts will begin to sing.

The last line of the song we mentioned at the beginning is, “And he wants ---- to love him, too”. In the gospels, Jesus refers to himself as the Bridegroom. Elsewhere, in the letter to the Ephesians, the church is called the Bride of Christ. We are invited into that intimate relationship. This is true, whether we are male, or female. St John of the Cross wrote, in his well-known poem, “Dark Night”,

“O guiding night!

O night more lovely than the dawn!

O night that has united

the Lover with his beloved,

transforming the beloved in her Lover.”



Precious in His sight!