

Dear Friends,

Today I want to write about love.

Not the pale reflection of real love that is often paraded in front of our eyes, ears, hearts and minds in the run up to St Valentine's Day (14th Feb) but the true, strong, constant, ever-to-be-trusted love of God.

The love that we read about in two of the most profound verses of scripture:

'For God so loved the world that God gave God's only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send him into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.' (John 3:16-17)

I was reminded of this recently when reading some work by Nadia Bolz-Weber. She shared some of her writing following an invitation she'd had to contribute to a series of work by Elizabeth Gilbert entitled 'Letters from Love'. Elizabeth encouraged Nadia to light a candle and write, as naturally as she could, an imagined response to the question, posed to Love/God – "Love, what would you have me know today?"

Here's a couple of extracts from her writing dated 16th Jan 2024 (and in case you haven't heard of Nadia, she's an American Lutheran Minister, Author and Public Theologian):

Nadia? Is that you? It's so nice to hear from you.

I guess first I want you to know that you can check in more, baby girl. I mean, I'm not saying this to shame you of course (that's never my vibe), just to remind you that the distance between us never changes, to remind you that I am always here, as close as your next breath.

And a bit later, she continues:

I want you to know that I very rarely hang out with your ego. I mean, she's okay, but she's a little manipulative, you know? She will try to tell you that you will finally feel loved and whole IF you get all the attention you crave, and IF you achieve more, and IF you beat your body into submission, and IF everyone treats you exactly the way you think they should, IF IF IF. That's her word, baby. That's not mine. That's how you can tell us apart. There are no 'if-then' propositions with me. I'm more Wizard of Oz than that. I'm because because because because because. Because you are already worthy of love, there's nothing you can do to earn it. Because I, Love, am woven throughout all things, you do not have to muster up warm feelings toward any of those people you don't like. I've got them covered. Because I am stronger than fear, you can relax.

So that's what I've got for you today, sweetie. You are whole. You are loved.

And let's talk more real soon.

I adore you.

I wonder what your response is to her written piece?

I wonder what you would write if you did the same thing...sat down, lit a candle and imagined the God who is Love, who came in love to save the world, and loves YOU – was speaking directly to you about whatever it was that God thought you needed to hear today?

Maybe it's worth a try...?

And then to take it one step further and use what God says to you, in love and for love, and try to live in its revelation!

It reminds me of many other passages of scripture but let me offer you one more and a poem that might just help you in your reflections...

'In this is love, not that we loved God but that God loved us...No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and God's love is perfected in us.' (1 John 4:10a & 12)

GEORGE HERBERT – Love (III)

(Noting the original language in line 2 of the second stanza, please feel free to insert a suitable replacement word or pronoun that helps you make this poem resonate with you.)

LOVE bade me welcome; yet my soul drew back,
 Guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-eyed Love, observing me grow slack
 From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning
 If I lack'd anything.

'A guest,' I answer'd, 'worthy to be here.'
 Love said, 'You shall be he.'
'I, the unkind, ungrateful? Ah, my dear,
 I cannot look on Thee.'
Love took my hand and smiling did reply,
 'Who made the eyes but I?'

'Truth, Lord; but I have marr'd them: let my shame
 Go where it doth deserve.'
'And know you not,' says Love, 'Who bore the blame?'
 'My dear, then I will serve.'
'You must sit down,' says Love, 'and taste my meat.'
 So I did sit and eat.

May the God who loves you, bless you today and through you, bless others too!

Love & Peace,

Sam.

Resources/Good News

The Inclusive Language Guide

The Methodist Church has produced an inclusive language guide to help Churches hold conversations, without making assumptions or inadvertently causing upset.

In this blog, the Assistant Secretary of the Methodist Conference, the Revd Michaela Youngson, explains why words are important and how the guide affirms traditional terms such as husband and wife while allowing people to express themselves using the language that is right for them. It also includes a link to the guide.

[The Inclusive Language Guide](#)

Yamaha Organ

Guildford St. Mary's have a Yamaha C- 35.C- 55N Electone Organ.

We would very much like it to go to a good home/hall/church etc. It is free!

It is the size of an upright piano.

Please contact Promila Skelton peterandprom@hotmail.com for more information.

