

BENEATH THE CROSS
Gal 6:14; 1 John 4:7-11
Elizabeth Clephane

Intro:

What is the most common theme of pop songs? Love – finding it, extolling it, or losing it.
With all the songs written to, for, and about love and lovers we still have a “love problem”-

Shakespeare’s Sonnets on Love

Elizabeth Barrett Browning – Sonnet #43 – “How do I love Thee, let me count the ways...”

“Summer of Love” 1967 - “Make Love, not War”

“What the world needs now, is love sweet love”

“All you need is love...”

One Love Manchester concert following the terrorist attack – June 2017

Political speeches, etc - “Love Trumps Hate” (as they riot)

Subaru- “Love, it’s what makes a Subaru a Subaru” – (really???)

The songs, the concerts, the T-shirts, the speeches, the posters and the hashtags have not solved the world’s “love problem” because they have a wrong definition of love and wrong ideas about where it comes from.

Surprisingly, we ARE seeing the impact of love in one of the most violent places on earth – The Middle East, and it’s because of the love of Christians who have the right definition and the right focus.

<https://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/stories/muslims-middle-east-giving-lives-christ-like-never/> June 30, 2017

The Muslim refugees in the that area are seeing the love of God as they hear of Christ for the first time, and they see the love of God lived out through believers. Christians in this region report increased opportunities to show love to refugees fleeing their homes as a result of war. This has resulted in area Muslims coming to Jesus in unprecedented numbers.

One pastor in Lebanon “We have separated this work from our church building.

People who give their lives to Jesus don’t do so because they want a food package.

They come to church because they feel comforted. I heard people testify: ‘Thank God for the war in Syria; it brought us to Jesus.’”

This is not something you’ll hear in the news

These believers have displayed a love that surpasses understanding because they have experienced such a love from God.

Our “love problem” is solved when we grasp the Wonders of Redeeming Love as described in scripture and the Hymn “Beneath the Cross of Jesus”

1 John 4:7-11

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. 9 By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. 10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

Gal 6:14

But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

“Beneath the Cross of Jesus”

Elizabeth Cecilia Douglas Clephane was born in Scotland in 1830 and died in 1869. The daughter of a county sheriff, she lived most of her brief life near Edinburgh.

Though in frail health most of her life, Elizabeth found the strength to help the poor and sick in her town. She and her sister gave all that they could spare to charity including, it is said, selling their horse and carriage for the benefit of the needy. The townspeople of Melrose referred to Elizabeth as “the Sunbeam.”

READ TOGETHER

1. Beneath the cross of Jesus I fain would take my stand,
The shadow of a mighty rock Within a weary land;
A home within the wilderness, A rest upon the way,
From the burning of the noontide heat, and the burden of the day.

Does anyone know what “fain” means??? GLADLY

The gospel is GOOD NEWS because it proclaims a place where we can find a home and a resting place in wilderness. It is where we rest from the burdens of the day.

"A rest along the way," is a reference to the rest that comes from Jesus.

The cross is the ground for the gospel where we hear the call of Jesus ...Matt 11:28-30

"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. 29 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. 30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

<http://birdsoftheair.blogspot.com/2007/05/beneath-cross-of-jesus.html>

Rather than seeing the cross as something unpleasant, Clephane sees it as a home in the wilderness. Gal 6:14 – Paul proclaims the cross as the only thing in which he would boast.

Stan-birdsoftheair blogspot

"A home within the wilderness" depicts the personal nature of our relationship with God, portraying His sufficiency and protection. The phrase also illustrates the separation from the world we live in - "the wilderness." As believers, we are strangers and pilgrims in this weary land.

The cross is a haven of rest because removes the burdens of sin and guilt...and it gives power for putting sin to death in our lives.

I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. Gal 2

William Romaine, The Life, Walk and Triumph of Faith (Cambridge, UK: James Clarke, 1970), 90. Romaine writes,

“No sin can be crucified either in heart or life unless it first be pardoned in conscience, because there will be want of faith to receive the strength of Jesus, by whom alone it can be crucified.

If sin is not mortified in its guilt, it cannot be subdued in its power. . . . This believing view of his absolute mortification in Christ is the true gospel method of mortifying sin in our own persons”

i.e. we won't progress in subduing sin unless we know the reality of forgiveness in Christ.
2 Pet 1:1-9

READ TOGETHER

2. Upon the cross of Jesus, mine eye at times can see
The very dying form of One Who suffered there for me;
And from my stricken heart with tears Two wonders I Confess
The wonders of redeeming love and my unworthiness.

As Paul says in Galatians 2:20, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

Just as Jesus was crucified so we also are crucified with him. The cross makes us part of its story. The cross becomes our story. That is what it means to say, as Luther did, "The cross alone is our theology." Gerhard Forde On Being a Theologian of the Cross. ** "the cross includes all the work of Christ, including Resurrection, Ascension, etc.

Luther, who was a theologian of the cross, projects for us an inescapable awareness of being drawn into the event:

You must get this thought through your head and not doubt that you are the one who is torturing Christ thus, for your sins have surely wrought this.... Therefore, when you see the nails piercing Christ's hands, you can be certain that it is your work. When you behold his crown of thorns, you may rest assured that these are your evil thoughts,

Martin Luther

Thus the cross story becomes our story. Forde p.8

Our unworthiness magnifies the wonder of God's redeeming love, and when we are gripped by that love, then change happens.

Counsel from the Cross – Fitzpatrick and Johnson p. 61

“Don't be concerned that you will spend too much time thinking of his love and forget about your obligation to obey. In fact, you will find that as you think about his love, the opposite will begin to happen: you will find within your heart a passion to love God and others. “

(The only caveat to that is if you define God's love as “only letting me get what I want, when I want it.”)

To speak of “my unworthiness” is a NO-NO in our society that is built on the foundation of our “self-esteem”. The bible is centered on God esteem, then as we understand that we are made in God's image, we can appreciate the intrinsic value of each person. But it starts with God, not with man.

As fallen rebellious people, we don't deserve of God's grace, yet God deems our salvation as equal to the life of His Son. He killed His son so that he wouldn't have to kill us – Oh, THE WONDERS OF REDEEMING LOVE AND OUR UNWORTHINESS.

We are bigger sinners than we dare admit, and more loved, valued and forgiven than we dare imagine.

We can't scold our hearts into obedience; we must melt our hearts into obedience.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3bP38aE1SXU>

An episode of Andy Griffith shows the natural tendency of our hearts to scold ourselves into change:

"FLOYD, THE GAY DECEIVER" S3:E9

FLOYD, the barber, becomes a MEMBER OF Lonely Hearts club, and he has been corresponding with a rich widow, so "in order to measure up and look good to her, I lied to her about my job and income."

Now she's coming to Mayberry and Floyd will be exposed as a liar.

He looks at himself in the mirror and says,

"Floyd Lawson, you're nothing but a liar, a cheat, and a scoundrel, and I hate you. I'm ashamed of you; you're nothing but a lying deceitful..."

Andy, "wait; she's probably done the same thing."

Floyd continues to scold himself by saying "Floyd, you're a miserable deceitful wretch."

Andy enters into a scheme with Floyd to deceive the woman for a day. It turns out that she has done the same as Floyd, and worse as she is trying to scam Floyd.

Floyd has learned his lesson, until a new letter comes and Andy sees that Floyd has passed himself off as a movie producer. He says, "that was from before I learned my lesson."

Andy takes Floyd over to the mirror, looks at him and commands,

"Go ahead, Say it" (4:15 23:10)

(MUMBLING) Floyd Lawson, you're a miserable deceitful wretch

Again

Floyd Lawson, you're a miserable deceitful wretch

LOUDER

Floyd Lawson, you're a miserable deceitful wretch!

When you feel like Floyd, who is your Andy (accuser)?

It isn't Jesus - Rom 8:31

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? 33 Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; 34 who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us;

Through the cross, Jesus is our home and rest in the face of accusation.

Do you feel yourself to be too great a sinner for his promises of love to be true for you? You must remember that Christ did not die for the righteous but for sinners (Matt. 9:13). His love rests on those who know they don't deserve it.

Answer your conscience and your adversary who would accuse you, as Martin Luther did:

Because you say I am a sinner, I will be righteous and saved. . . . I fly to Christ who has given himself for my sins. Therefore, Satan, you will not prevail against me when you try to terrify me by

telling me how great my sins are. . . . On the contrary, when you say I am a sinner, you give me armor and a weapon against yourself . . .for Christ died for sinners. . . . You do not terrify me but comfort me immeasurably. Luther on Galatians 1:4

Luther is displaying that art of SPIRITUAL JUDO, JUIJITSU AND AIKIDO
Judo takes from jujitsu, the *art* of suppleness (or "gentle art"), the principle of using the opponent's strength and movement against him.

<http://www.alljujitsu.com/ujitsu.html> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3bP38aE1SXU>

Because of the cross, even Satan's accusations work against him... "On the contrary, when you say I am a sinner, you give me armor and a weapon against yourself . . .for Christ died for sinners. . . . You do not terrify me but comfort me immeasurably"

READ TOGETHER

3. I take, O cross, thy shadow for my abiding place:
I ask no other sunshine than The sunshine of His face;
Content to let the world go by, To know no gain nor loss
My sinful self my only shame, my glory, all the cross.

SUNSHINE OF HIS FACE – the pinnacle of biblical blessing – The smile of God Numbers 6??

"The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make His face to shine upon you, and give you peace"

The depth of curse biblically is to be cut off– the cross – "Why have you forsaken me"
This hymn points out the excellency and beauty of Christ and calls us to love for Christ.
At the heart of spirituality are the questions, "What do I love? What do I view as excellent above all things?"

Henry Scougal 1677 wrote "The Life of God in the Soul of Man" and in that book he says, "**The worth and excellency of a soul is to be measured by the object of its love**". He goes on to explain that we tend to be molded or shaped into the image of what we love. (kindle 248)

WHAT IS THE OBJECT OF OUR LOVE – God in Christ, or someone or something else?

What does it look like to glory in the cross? i.e to love the cross and be shaped by it Gal 6:14...

What it looks like to be content and hiding in the cross.

Do I know the reality of experiencing God's love and forgiveness?

Do I extend forgiveness easily, as "God in Christ has forgiven me"?

Do I practice "cross-less" spiritual disciplines – i.e. do I pray, worship, etc to make God love me, or to make space to hear how much God loves me in Jesus?

Do my actions display a sacrificial love for others, especially when they are unlovable?

Does my life display supernatural joy and peace or are they dependent on my circumstances?

Do I live for the "sunshine of the face" of others, or of God alone?

Do I seek to make my accomplishments known to others so that they will boast for me?

- Am I critical of others who seem to be enjoying God's blessing even when I know they don't work as hard as I do?
- Do I receive criticism well?
- Am I vulnerable or am I self-defensive and self-protective?
- Is my first response to run to the cross or to seek to restore my resume and reputation?

When our glory is all in the cross then we let go of our agenda. We move from a posture of first seeking to defend ourselves and establish our reputation and our rights to a posture of humility and repentance.

THIS IS EASIER SAID THAN DONE – so we need to remind ourselves of the glory of the cross daily.

The cross must be our only story.

The peace and rest of God are someone we meet and the Face of God is seen in Jesus.

Coming to the Table is a way to boast in the Cross as we remember Christ and what He has done for us.

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