



I Have Loved You With An Everlasting Love

... the LORD appeared to him from far away. I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you. (Jer. 31:3)

Not long ago a pastor preached a sermon telling the story of a man walking down a street in New York City. Well, actually, it was about a little girl. As the man walked along a piece of paper fluttered down before him. He looked up to see where it had come from, and there he saw a little girl pressing her face against the window of a tenement building. She looked lonely. She could not come out into the street so she dropped her note from the window.

The gentleman opened the paper and there in scrawled printing were the words, “TO WHOEVER FINDS THIS – I LOVE YOU!”

These words are very much like the message we send out with our mites, prayers, and acts of love. In these cases, we often do not personally know those to whom our love goes. But many times there are those who “look up” searching for your face or mine, searching for concern and love. Do you wonder about the little girl? Was she lonely? She must have received some love, or else how would she have love to give? Was she without toys or without something to occupy her time? Yet she gave herself in a way that is hard to match.

And what about the man walking along the street? Was he so preoccupied with business problems he only looked up to make sure something dangerous would not fall on him? Or was he troubled and in need of support, reassurance, or encouragement?

In whose shoes do you find yourself? Maybe most of us would have to admit God permits times in our lives when we would easily fit the part of the little girl AND the man. But isn't it comforting to know God is in His heavens, dropping daily notes of reassurance, “To whoever – I love you!”

That's what the prophet Jeremiah needed to hear: “I love you!” Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, had been called by God to the hard and thankless job of fearlessly preaching the judgment in store for God's people: the destruction of Jerusalem and the Babylonian captivity. But God also permitted Jeremiah to fill the people with the fullness of God's grace – His promise of a new covenant in Christ.

God said, “I have loved you with an everlasting love.” That makes all the difference in the world, knowing that God's undeserved love was given to His people at Jeremiah's time and is given to us day by day ... into eternity.

Because He first loved us, passionately and without equal, we too are asked to love (1 John 4:19). The love we are privileged to share is not the “fall into” kind. It is not an emotional, sudden thrill. It is not the “Recipe for Love” detailed with bold letters and colors in a magazine telling us to win our dear one’s heart with “delicious chocolate cheesecake with a dollop of whipped cream on top”. It is not the myriad of love songs that have always found their way to the top of the charts. It is none of these.

Christian love is really God’s love shining through His people. It is intentional, because He first loved us. First Peter 2:21 tells us God left us an example so that we might follow in His steps. How do we know what love really is? Jesus Christ laid down His life for us (1 John 3:16). Jeremiah began and ended with the promises of God. We begin at the foot of the cross where we see and feel God’s everlasting love for all people.

Loving others may mean some heart pain and some shattered hopes, but even when there is no response to a loving approach, we will grow by taking the risk of loving. We are alive when we reach out in love and we grow in our ability to love each time we love (1 John 3:14b). Pray that as we give of ourselves daily, offer our ceaseless prayers and serve as God directs us, the Holy Spirit will fill us with a holy zeal, freeing us to be God’s joyful, celebrating people who have the message on their lips, “To whomever needs me – I love you because my Savior first loved me!”

Written by: Pauline Groerich, Denver, CO
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