

AS LORD (“consubstantial with the Father”), JESUS IS LOVE—

so, indeed, “Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so”

Pr 17:17; Jn 1:1-5; Jn 3:16; Jn 15:13-14; I Jn 4:8; Ro 5:8; Heb 7:24-25; I Cor 13

I. FOUR FACETS OF LOVE:

- A. Familial—*storge*: “affection,” especially between parents & children & siblings (sometimes “stuck” in unhappy relationships but still attached, since “blood is thicker than water”)
 - 1. Family: Nuclear/Patriarchal—e.g. Abraham re Ishmael & Isaac; siblings’ tortured ties
 - 2. Clan (extended family)—e.g. Abraham & Lot
 - 3. Tribe—“children of Israel,” “house and lineage of David;” various significant ethnics (and most especially the Cherokee & Sioux!); Universal Church as “family of God”
- B. Friendly—*philia*: “a friend loves at all times” (Pr 17:17)
 - 1. Companionship—e.g. David & Jonathan—shared interests, commitments
 - 2. Subsidiary organizations—clubs; churches (often attracting folks with commonalities, such as age, socio-economic status); civic groups
- C. Possessive, sexual—*eros*: much great literature, from Homer to Hemingway, celebrates *eros* (N.B.: different from *venus*)
 - 1. Singular focus: one person
 - 2. Jealous re conjugal bond
- D. Altruistic: *agape* (cf. I Cor 13); to J. Edwards, benevolence ultimate form of love; no *naturalistic* reason
 - 1. Self-sacrificing, self-giving: “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends. You are my friends if you do whatever I command you” (Jn 15:13)
 - 2. Disinterested dimensions—defying materialistic philosophies (e.g. “selfish gene”!)

II. BIBLICAL DECLARATION: GOD (JHWH) IS LOVE (I Jn 4:8)

- A. Familial/*storge*: Fatherly: Paul: “from one blood every nation” so “We are also His offspring” (Acts 17:26, 28); Jesus: Loving Father & Prodigal Son; Abraham’s lessons re patriarchy
- B. Friendly/*philia*: Abraham a “friend of God” (Jas 2:23)
- C. Possessive/*eros*: The Song of Solomon; Hosea reveals God as Lover, jealous re Israel
- D. Altruistic/*agape*: God so loved, He gave (Jn 3:16)

III. AS LORD, JESUS IS LOVE (the icon of Father—“the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person” Heb 1:3)

- A. Familial: “I’m so glad I’m a part of the family of God” (Gaither)
 - 1. Fatherly: concern for disciples, teaching them as did Abraham, the model Patriarch, “showing his willingness to sacrifice what is his for what is right and good and highest” and loving “only that in his son which is good” (Kass, *Beginning of Wisdom*, p. 349).
 - 2. Motherly: as mother hen Jesus concerned for Jerusalem, i.e. his people (Mt 23:37);
 - 3. Filial—constantly caring for mother Mary at Cana & from the Cross (Jn 19:26);
 - 4. Fraternal/brotherly: insisted that all persons doing His will are His kin (Mt 12:50)
- B. Friendly: “You’ve got a friend, a really, really good friend, in Jesus” (Mahalia)
 - 1. Illustrative bond with Martha & Mary & Lazarus (Jn 11)—laments “our friend Lazarus” (v. 11)
 - 2. Frequently referred to disciples as friends—“I have called you friends” (Jn 15:15)
 - 3. Known as “friend” of publicans & sinners (Mt 11:19)
- C. Possessive: “All to Jesus, I surrender”
 - 1. “The Way” (Jn 14:6) and there is “no other way”—by Him alone eternal life
 - 2. Parables of lost coin, lost sheep, lost son; “No one can snatch them (my disciples) from me” (Jn 10:28)
- D. Altruistic: “He gave His life for thee”
 - 1. Good Shepherd “gives his life for his sheep” (Jn 10:11)
 - 2. Living for Others/Us—Jesus’ words (e.g. to woman at well) & acts (e.g. healing persistent woman with incurable blood flow) reveal *agape*
 - 3. Dying for Others/Us—*Cross* the Ultimate *Agape* Act (Ro 5:8)
 - 4. Now seated at right hand of the Father: “He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them” (Heb 7:24-25).

“The Hound of Heaven”—Francis Thompson

I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;
I fled Him, down the arches of the years;
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind; and in the mist of tears
I hid from Him, and under running laughter
Up vistaed hopes I sped;
And shot, precipitated,
Adown Titanic glooms of chasmed fears,
From those Strong Feet that followed, followed after.
But with unhurrying chase,
And unperturbed pace,
Deliberate speed, mantle instancy,
They beat—and a Voice beat
More Instant than the Feet—
“All things betray thee, who betrayest Me.”
I pleaded, outlaw-wise,
By many a hearted casement, curtained red.
Trellised with intertwining charities;
(For, though I knew His love Who followed,
Yet I was sore adread,
Lest, having Him, I must have naught beside;)
But, if one little casement parted wide,
The gust of His approach would clash it to.
Fear wist not to evade, as Love wist to pursue."

.....
Now of that long pursuit
Comes on at hand the bruit;
That Voice Is round me like a bursting sea:
“And is thy earth so marred,
Shattered in shard on shard?
Lo, all things fly thee, for thou flyest Me!
Strange, piteous, futile thing,
Wherefore should any set thee love apart?
Seeing none but I makes much of naught” (He said)
“And human love needs human meriting:
How hast thou merited—
Of all man's clotted clay the dingiest clot?
Alack, thou knewest not
How little worthy of any love thou art!
Whom wilt thou find to love Ignoble thee
Save Me, save only Me?
All which I took from thee I did but take,
Not for thy harms.
But just that thou mightst seek it in My arms.
All which thy child's mistake
Fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home:
Rise, clasp My hand, and come!"
Halts by me that footfall:
Is my gloom, after all,
Shade of His hand, outstretched caressingly?
“Ah, fondest, blindest, weakest,
I am He whom thou seekest!
Thou dravest love from thee, who dravest Me.”