

# Love Entrusts All No Matter What

Good Friday 2019

## Message

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Paul of Tarsus

## Introduction

About 10 years ago I first heard people in this church talking positively about what others were posting on 'Facebook'. I thought, "I need to check this 'Facebook' out." - so I signed on and made friends.

I began to read and see all manner of things that I would never have known about people in our congregation through their various postings. Along with so many pictures of food I was amazed at how often some people changed their profiles and how much fuss was made of that!



Social Media

Social media like this has changed the way I get to know others. Last century I would be more often in a group sharing some food or in face-to-face meetings with social dynamics at work to regulate and highlight what was happening. It was more FaceTime or Skype than Facebook.

Now I get to follow conversations from several parts of the globe involving many people I have never met but am linked to through a mutual acquaintance on topics of common interest.

It's a different experience with gains and losses. I have less real community but I get to hear and see more from more people than I did before. It is a daily dose of what novels and magazines were for learning about how others think and feel.

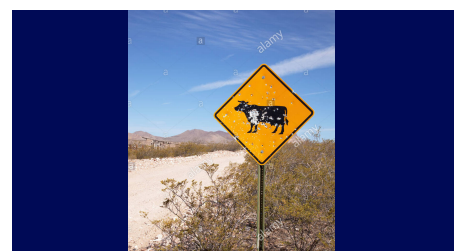
Meanwhile it seems that during the rise of social media in our lives this century the world has not become a more peaceful place. My life has certainly not been made more peaceful by it. The more people comment on social media, the more anger and verbal violence I recognize. There are so many people full of anger and venom waiting to bite hard at anything that presents as a possible target. What percentage of the population they form I do not know but angry people click.



The comments on stories and reports I follow often remind me of what I see in New Zealand where defenseless road signs are peppered with bullet holes.

For some reason a simple necessary road sign becomes a valid target to angry people with a gun who cannot find what they are looking for.

Sometimes there is an odd logic to be seen but generally it is seems to be venting some twisted rage within someone with a gun. It's a bit 'redneck'.



## Humanity

Jesus knew about this human tendency. He knew he had to keep himself safe and keep his little flock of disciples safe. At the end of chapter two of John's Gospel we read about Jesus.



<sup>23</sup>When he was in Jerusalem during the Passover festival, many believed in his name because they saw the signs that he was doing. <sup>24</sup>But Jesus on his part would not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people <sup>25</sup>and needed no one to testify about anyone; for he himself knew what was in everyone.

Jesus knew what was in everyone and concluded that no one was worth his complete trust. That was chapter 2 yet in chapter 4 for the first and only time he did entrust his significant identity as the Messiah to an unnamed Samaritan woman.

Then when teaching those who would be his disciples in the great Sermon on the Mount Jesus spoke about being careful when he said:

“Do not give what is holy to dogs; and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under foot and turn and maul you.” <sup>1</sup>

In our age this is sometimes expressed by Americans as: “No good deed goes unpunished.” Which seems very cynical but agrees with Jesus who was in agreement with Jeremiah when he said:

The *human* heart is devious above all else; it is perverse - who can understand it? <sup>2</sup>

Jesus and Jeremiah were talking about us – you and me. We are all villains. We are all twisted and perverse – none of us are worth a drop of good blood.

At the same time we are also victims of our selves and every bad thing that comes down to us – each one of us. We are victims of the powers that enslave us, albeit sometimes willing victims. Yet as is now widely recognized, as victims we tend to reproduce the abuse that we may have experienced to become villains against others. It's a vicious circle as abuse breeds abuse.

Jesus frequently recognized all this in people and it often moved him not to judgment but compassion. One day he saw this at a wholesale level in crowds of people and was moved with compassion. He saw the crowd as harassed and helpless people, like sheep without a shepherd. <sup>3</sup>

The word ‘natural’ is often used very positively in marketing but what I have just described is humanity in its natural fallen condition: twisted and lost, angry, hurting and vengeful when offended. This is what I see played out on social media. It's a place where disordered desires and subversive thoughts click in rage at whatever seems to irritate and come within range.

## God's Love

The good news is about a reality greater than all this: The heart of God is love; love for his creation and love for those assigned to bear his image to re-present him in joyful fellowship.

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 7.6

<sup>2</sup> Jeremiah 17.9

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 9.36

God lives with pure love and the sober knowledge that whatever he says in love, whatever is given in love will be largely resented, despised, thrown back, trampled and worse.

That is the risk we ourselves take frequently in communication and social contact especially with people we do not know well. A game devised by the secular Pharisees of our age that plays on this is political correctness. Whenever someone or some group can claim to be offended the cry of protest goes up and some sin is alleged. Offending is supposedly inherently bad and unacceptable.



The problem is that all communication and all social contact is potentially offensive. Offended people often seem to think -or simply assume- they need to silence the offender and overcome the offense whatever it may be. There are various ways to do that.

So for the loving God to reach out socially and relationally to the victims and villains he loved was never going to be easy. There was going to be offense and backlash. Whatever God did, heaven was bound to offend the world. That was the inevitable risk undertaken with eyes wide open.

The inexhaustible self-giving love of God for the humanity of this world had a depth of passion I would dare to describe as '*Kamikaze*'. God's deep love is not to be stopped by the risk of someone claiming offense and will be poured out no matter what. In Christ Jesus God was sent to get through whatever it cost him.

A verse that says this well is John 3:16a

<sup>16</sup> 'For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, ...

### **The Cross**

Today we mark the moment when that passionate compassion in the eternal love of God for this victimized and villainous world engaged head-on at The Cross. This was God's chosen 'Ground Zero'.

In Jesus Christ God's self-giving love was offered to humanity and the world was largely offended. God's outreach offends every base human instinct because it calls us to be clear and honest about ourselves which is usually too much to ask. To cope with this Jesus was variously condemned as politically incorrect. He suffered the accusational strategy that if more and more mud is thrown, some of it will stick.

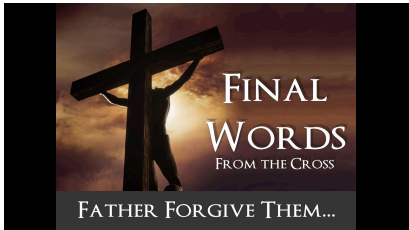
He who knew the heart of humanity saw it coming. His disciples were worried and tried to divert him but Jesus does not back away. This is God so loving the world that he gives himself in His only Son to the point of inevitable destruction by the offended.

Genuine sacrificial love is prepared to be vulnerable to reach the other, even trusting the untrustworthy. This is bad management but deep redeeming devotion by the lover. Despite what he knew, in Christ Jesus, God entrusted himself to the world of humanity as it actually is. That was the point and purpose of this seed being planted among us to bring new life for all.

Apart from a small welcome, the response that prevailed was indignant brutal savagery and the complete violation of God's image in human form. Jesus was destroyed. Even when he came to his his own people they did not receive him.<sup>4</sup>

It's the redneck with a gun and the troll with his mouse: Death to Jesus whoever he is and whatever they say he has said and done. 'Away with him' and make it hurt!

Jesus received in himself the full impact of offended humanity's rage, the venom of people caught up in the power of evil as victims and villains. His death was inevitable. Thus he who knew no sin became sin.<sup>5</sup> He who came in love was destroyed in hate. He who loved as a lion was slain as a lamb.



But within this love of God for humanity was a power that could not be destroyed. Jesus saved this for his last moment, when all had been said and done to him that could be done - when we was shamed and broken as far as people can imagine - when death was imminent and evil apparently triumphant and in control:

Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.'<sup>6</sup>

When the offended had unleashed all sin's power on him, Jesus did not take offence. When all his trust had been betrayed. "Father forgive them." In his love he could see the role of ignorance in twisted minds and hearts. Those who killed him, Romans, Jews, men and women were 'harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd'.

In terms of current civil law he understood that people not in their right mind are not legally responsible and should not be charged for their crime. "Father forgive them."

The 'them' he was talking about includes us, which is potentially offensive in itself. At the cross we were represented by Jesus as a faithful human to the Father and represented in our sin by those executing Jesus. The good news and game changer is that God was represented to us in Christ who persisted in loving people stupidified by sin in mind and heart, not counting our sins against us.<sup>7</sup>

This is core to the victory of the cross: The offense at God's outreach in love did not snuff out or overwhelm God's love manifested in Jesus the Christ. The darkness could not overwhelm it. Even when the worst had been done, God in his Christ was love in overflowing abundance.

The cross is where this defining encounter of God's love and sinful human offended-ness met and God's love triumphed.

There is thus nothing we can do to separate ourselves from the love of God as shown victorious in the Cross of Jesus. This is the power of the cross.

It is the place we may meet God as we really are to discover who God really is.

It is the place Jesus choose to meet us all whatever we have done, who ever we are and whatever offense we hold against him.

This is where God chooses to reconcile us all to himself in Christ – then and now

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<sup>4</sup> John 1:11

<sup>5</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:21

<sup>6</sup> Luke 23:46

<sup>7</sup> 2 Corinthians 5.19 ...in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them...

*Barbara is coming to bring a short reading to lead us into worship and our personal engagement with The Cross of Jesus.*

Hebrews 4:14-16

*Jesus the Great High Priest*

<sup>14</sup> Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. <sup>15</sup> For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. <sup>16</sup> Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.