

### **Love's very nature**

- It would seem strange to picture Jesus as a beggar, but that's what love makes of us.
- Love, by its very nature, renders us vulnerable.
- It has been said: "If you love something, let it go. If it returns to you, it's yours. If it doesn't, it never was."
- In other words, we cannot force the object of our love to love us in return. No amount of bullying, driving, coercing or punishment is going to achieve that.
- This means that we risk the pain of rejection. But it also means that the beloved is honoured with the freedom to choose.
- This is the nature of God's love, expressed in Jesus.
- In rendering himself vulnerable, Jesus bestows true freedom upon us, his beloved. He takes the risk of being hurt by allowing us the choice to accept or reject his love.
- The Gospels are saturated with this principle, in Jesus' very way of life: obedience to the Father, compassion, to his choosing to die rather than impose conditions on his love.
- And so it is now. Jesus is, in a sense, allows himself to be at our mercy.
- Like so much of the Gospel narrative, this turns upside down every concept of a powerful God.

### **Superman God or loving God**

- One of the accusations levelled at God is that God allows bad people to do bad things.
- So why doesn't he intervene, stop the bullets and prevent the atrocities.
- Strangely enough, the answer is unconditional love.
- If God intervened in that way, God would be placing conditions on his love for, e.g., terrorists, and their freedom to choose his love would be forfeit.
- It doesn't mean that God isn't working in the lives of the these people. He is. But his work is subtle, and needs to be supported by the work and prayers of those who do accept his love.
- In other words, God needs our cooperation, just as he needs the cooperation of the terrorists.
- Besides, an interventionist God would also intervene in our own lives, preventing us, for instance, from having that extra glass of wine because we were close to the limit and had to drive home.
- I wonder how long that would last before we rebelled?

### **Natural disaster**

- What about earthquakes, fire, illness, tsunamis, etc.?
- For some events there seems to be no answer to the question, "Why?" The only course is to enter into tough dialogue with God at the time, in our own situation.

## Begging bowl



Jesus comes,  
begging bowl in hand;  
hungr to love,  
hungr to be loved.

Love comes,  
begging bowl in hand,  
as love can onl come.

- But in order to do this, there must be a willingness on our part to seek God out, and to listen to what he has to say.
- The answers may not be what we want to hear, but if we live with them for a while, they will prove to be the gift that meets our very needs.
- Sometimes events will leave us completely broken, with no strength to overcome the grief and depression caused by our circumstances.
- But Jesus still holds out his begging bowl, to be filled - not only with our wealth, or our few coins - but our empty, broken selves.
- He gives us permission to trust his love, crawl into the bowl, curl up and be taken into his heart.
- Christ's love is not only for us when we are in control or have all the answers. It is also for when we, like him, have been put to death; when we, like him, have no more tears left.
- In bringing our poverty to Christ, we make ourselves beggars, and know his passionate solidarity with our pain.
- Only then will we understand Love's depth and meaning.
- Only then will we be able to reflect that unconditional love in the world without resorting to power and coercion.
- That love, found in Christ's begging bowl, is our way to healing and peace. And that love will never let us down.

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