

The Love of Jesus.

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There is a popular Christian hymn that has for its refrain, "Yes, Jesus loves me..." While sung regularly in churches of many denominations all over the world, we may ask ourselves 'What does the love of Jesus *look* like?' We often hear about the love of the Father, but what about the love of the Son? To answer this fully would take more time (and ink) than we have here; but three short reflections will allow us to begin exploring the idea, and help us discover why this amazing love is the key characteristic of God's greatest revelation - his only Son.

1. Christ loves us in our weakness - right where we are.

In the Gospels, we see regular people encountering Jesus in and around the towns and villages he visited. These stories often involved Jesus healing those whom he met, and welcoming them into new life with him in the Kingdom of God¹. This provides us with a wonderful insight into the love of Christ: he loves people where they are. Jesus doesn't wait until we are pretty, strong, thin, rich, holy, or clean to love us. He knows all people intimately, and in the midst of our brokenness he sits with us, bringing comfort, healing and wholeness.

2. Christ loves us sacrificially unto death - and beyond.

More than just loving, comforting, and healing those who come before him, Jesus loves with a sacrificial, eternal love - a love that opens the gates of the Kingdom to all. Christians describe the final sufferings of Jesus as his 'Passion' (from the Greek *paschein* - 'to suffer'), and rightly so! Christ loves us in a way that *costs* him. St. Paul speaks beautifully about this sacrificial love. Writing to the church in Philippi, Paul reminds them that, "He emptied himself...(and loved) to the point of death - even death on a cross".² In his letter to the Romans³, he reminds them that nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord - even our own eventual death. Indeed, even heaven itself is nothing more than 'being with Christ', sharing in the communion of life and love with the Trinity.⁴ The sacrificial love of Christ provides an open invitation to share in this divine love forever.

3. Christ loves us as friends - even as brothers and sisters.

In spite of all our faults and failings, Christ doesn't relate to us as worthless creatures, but instead he calls us his own brothers and sisters⁵. All who belong to the Kingdom of Heaven are given the privilege of being called 'children of God'⁶, and therefore to call Jesus our brother; he who is the firstborn of all creation⁷. Since we are made in the image and likeness of God⁸, and Christ has loved us back to life⁹ (and life to the full¹⁰), we can rejoice in being part of the eternal family of God, thanks to the love of our Saviour-brother.

When we talk about the love of Christ, we talk about a reality that has neither a beginning nor an end. His love existed before anything else, and when time itself has ceased, it will shine on forever, undiminished. How wonderful and humbling it is that we are all invited to share in such a thing!

¹ Cf. Mk 1:21-28, 40-45, 3:1-6, etc.

² Phil 2:8

³ Rom 8:37-39

⁴ Catechism of the Catholic Church, #1024, 1025.

⁵ Matt 12:49-50.

⁶ Gal 3:26.

⁷ Col 1:15.

⁸ Gen 1:27

⁹ cf. Jn 3:16

¹⁰ Jn 10:10