



Urban Christian Outreach (Ottawa)

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Update 99

Dear Friends in Christ,

Have you ever suffered from the piercing pain of unrequited love? Most of us probably have. If so, you will be able to relate to my confession. I have experienced this pain in my life this year: sleepless nights, tears that flow without forethought, an ache in my heart that causes me physical pain, longing, grieving...until I call out to our Lord, who wraps his loving arms around me, and washes me with his healing love...until the next time when the pain returns, and I call on Jesus again. In the midst of this pattern of pain and peace, I wondered if this is a small measure of what Jesus feels when our love for him is unrequited? Does Jesus cry when we fail to love him back? Does he feel the sting of rejection? Of longing? Does he miss us so much that it hurts to even think about us? Is our Lord grieving over our lack of love and obedience to him, over our choosing others, or things, before choosing him? We are his chosen, but do we choose him? He loves us more than we can imagine, more than we can possibly love one another, more than we can possibly even love him. Am I causing grief to the One who loves me the most, the one who died for me so that I might have eternal life? How would his pain feel, magnified by the world population? I cannot even bear to think about that. I don't want to be the cause of Jesus' pain and suffering, and yet, I am, in my own humanness, and disobedience, in my own laziness, and wanting, and desires. I must die to self this very day, and every day, every hour, every minute, every moment, so that His kingdom can come, so that he, and not I, can be glorified -not the desires of my own heart, but the painful surrender of my will to His.

Blessed is he who considers the poor; The Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. Psalm 41:1

I want to be found faithful, but I cannot do this alone. I need the Father. I need Jesus. I need the Holy Spirit. And I need you. In my work with UCO, I have been called to die to self in so many ways. We are all called to do so in our lives with Christ. Some challenges feel insurmountable. UCO has been under enormous spiritual attack this past year; we have persevered through two postal strikes, physical injuries, and trials too many to mention, and the burden is so heavy that I sometimes wonder if we can carry on doing the work that God has given us to do, and I wonder if the ministry itself can even survive its financial challenges, and heavy attacks from the enemy, and then I find myself on my knees crying out for mercy and grace, for an outpouring of outstanding generous support, and help with the load. I feel the call to cry out on behalf of Jesus, and it feels unbearable at times. It is a cry – not just a cry, but more of a deep sobbing for help, always thanking God in advance for his mercy and for his grace, trusting for his faithful provision, so that we can continue to help those who need our help, and in doing so, help Jesus. He is ever present among the poor. Jesus is with you, and me as I write. I am no different than the panhandler sitting on the sidewalk asking for help. The only difference is that by Grace alone, I am able to come in from the cold and appeal to you in warmth in front of my computer screen. We need your prayers and offerings.

We need God to raise up his faithful to come alongside us in a new and mighty way. Please, would you prayerfully consider how our Lord might have you help us? I will be praying in faith, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, that God will bless you in abundance as you step out in faith, and as you seek him in new and deeper ways. May we all be found faithful.

And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to Me.’ Matthew 25:40

In the midst of our trials, our Lord encourages us, and he often puts a song on my heart, reminding me of his promises and his faithfulness to those who persevere. The following are lyrics to one such hymn that he has been encouraging me with these past few months:

‘O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go,’ by George Matheson, 1882

O Love that wilt not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in thee,
I give thee back the life I owe,
That in thine ocean depths its flow
May richer, fuller be.

O light that followest all my way,
I yield my flickering torch to thee;
My heart restores its borrowed ray,
That in thy sunshine’s blaze its day
May brighter, fairer be.

O joy, that seekest me through pain,
I cannot close my heart to thee;
I trace the rainbow through the rain,
And feel the promise is not vain,
That mourn shall tearless be.

O Cross that liftest up my head,
I dare not ask to fly from thee;
I lay in dust life’s glory dead,
And from the ground there blossoms red
Life that shall endless be.

As we journey through Advent, and quieten our hearts to ponder and celebrate the birth of our Beloved Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, may we draw ever so near to the One whose love for us is never unrequited, whose love has already been poured out at the Cross, the One we await to come again in Glory. To quote a dear marginalized person whom we are blessed to come alongside, “We need a blood transfusion from Jesus!”
Amen! May we all be transfused with the Blood of Jesus.

Thank you, dear friends, for continuing to walk with us on this journey. Please pray with us, in faith, that after almost 33 years of serving the poor of Ottawa, we may continue to walk with Jesus on the sidewalks of downtown Ottawa.

May our Lord bless you with his Peace and Joy.
In Christ Jesus,
Jill