

The Master's Message

The Newsletter of the Church of the Master

February, 2024

Virtual Adult Bible Study
Wednesday, 7:00 PM
Saturday, 12:00

2783 Lafayette Avenue
Bronx, N.Y. 10465
718-597-6298

Sunday Worship
Sunday 11:00 am

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WWW.COTMBRONX.ORG

Rev. Dr. Melva J. Hayden, Pastor

WE HAVE ALL ASKED, "Why is this happening to me?" Johann Heermann could have asked this question with just cause. In 1611 he became the Lutheran pastor in Köben, Germany, and during his years there, the village suffered numerous disasters. During the Thirty Years' War, plunder by both Catholic and Protestant armies and devastation by fire and plague decimated the population. More than once Heermann narrowly escaped with his life, and several times he lost everything he owned. During these years of horror, he turned to hymnwriting for consolation, especially after throat trouble forced him to stop preaching.

Heermann drew inspiration for this hymn from a Latin text attributed variously to Augustine (354–430) and Jean de Fécamp (c. 1000–1079). But his own years of personal suffering injected the hymn with a genuine depth and clarity. As we look toward the Cross this Easter season, we might well ask, "Why did Jesus have to suffer?" This hymn pronounces the simple answer: "For me . . ."



He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. Isaiah 53:3-4, KJV

Ah, Holy Jesus

Ah, holy Jesus, how hast Thou offended,
That man to judge Thee hath in hate
pretended?

By foes derided, by Thine own rejected,
O most afflicted!

Who was the guilty? Who brought this upon
Thee?

Alas, my treason, Jesus, hath undone Thee!
'Twas I, Lord Jesus, I it was denied Thee:
I crucified Thee.

Lo, the good Shepherd for the sheep is offered;
The slave hath sinned, and the Son hath
suffered;

For man's atonement, while he nothing
heedeth,
God intercedeth.

For me, kind Jesus, was Thy incarnation,
Thy mortal sorrow, and Thy Life's oblation;
Thy death of anguish and Thy bitter passion,
For my salvation.

Therefore, kind Jesus, since I cannot pay Thee,
I do adore Thee, and will ever pray Thee,
Think on Thy pity and Thy love unswerving,
Not my deserving.

Johann Heermann (1585–1647)

Translated by Robert Seymour Bridges (1844–1930)

SPECIAL DATES*

- Transfiguration of Our Lord, February 11th
- Ash Wednesday, February 14th
- Valentine's Day, February 14th
- First Sunday in Lent, February 18th
- Presidents Day, February 19th
- Second Sunday in Lent, February 25th

News From the Pews



Continue praying for:
Ellen McCullough,
Allen Ford, Carole Mahon,
Loretta Byrd, Alice & Alex Rivera

Everyone is invited to join our virtual "**Hour of Prayer Power**" every Friday at 7:00 PM. The conference call-in number is 605-475-4860, code: 371231#

Our **Online Bible Study** meets
Wednesday at 7:00 PM and Saturday at 12:00.
Contact Ron Rivera (917-716-8273)
for information on joining

A repentant heart

Until we taste the bitterness of our own misery, we will never relish the sweetness of God's mercy. Until we see how foul our sins have made us, we will never pay our tribute of praise to Christ for washing us. ... If you would know the heart of your sin, then you must know the sins of your heart!

—William Secker



CHURCH CHUCKLES

God looks out at the Pearly Gates and says, "Welcome to heaven. I want the women to go with St. Peter and the men to form two lines here. All men who think they were in charge of their relationship on earth stand here, and the men who believe their wife was in charge, stand here.

There's much movement, but eventually the women are gone and there are two lines left. The line of the men who were not in charge is miles long. In the other line stands just one man.

God turns to this man and says, "You're the only one in this line. How did you manage this?"

The man shrugs and says, "I don't know; my wife told me to stand here."

Don't worry about the Economy:
Church is still Prophet-able.

A little girl became restless as the preacher's sermon dragged on and on. Finally, she leaned over to her mother and whispered, "Mommy, if we give him money now, will he let us go?"

"What Do I Have?"

What do I have, Lord, that you would need me as a servant?

Eyes, he said,
to see the beauty in all that I've made —
and my children as they travel life's highway.

Hands, he said,
to reach out and touch hurting souls,
to give a hug or encouraging pat on the back.

Feet, he said,
to lead my children through this world of strife
and to help them run from sin and follow me.

Mouth, he said,
to lift up your voice and sing praises to me
so others may hear the joy in your heart.

Ears, he said,
to listen to my still, small voice of love
and to hear my children when they cry for help.

Heart, he said,
so you may know the full love of my Spirit
and love my children as I have loved you.

—Thomas Butler

God's Paintings

The mornings have grown chilly now,
Fog hugs the window pane;
The grass is wet with morning dew
Or was it evening rain?
Gold and red leaves have fallen,
Trees stand tall and bare;
On the woven webs of spiders
Wet droplets glisten there.
Soon the winds of Winter
Will howl throughout the land;
Tree branches will seem to shiver
Everywhere they stand.

Soon Winter snow will softly fall
To cover every tree;
White will be the color
Everywhere we see.
Frost will etch the windows
And seal the windowpane,
Then the Winter sun will shine
To melt it all again.
And so the seasons come and go,
The years pass so swiftly by;
God's paintings on our windows
To pleasure you and I.

Milly Patzer



Meeting needs

"My neighbor's material needs are my spiritual needs," said 19th-century theologian Israel Salanter. In other words, when someone else suffers hunger and poverty, when people endure a natural disaster and lack shelter, when another human being is sick or injured – in all such cases, God calls us to action. And God knows that whatever we do to meet those material needs will meet our spiritual needs at the same time.

It might be our spiritual need to expand our horizons into neighborhoods, cultures or situations where we're uncomfortable. We might need to grow in love for people different from us. By serving others, we might find our own sagging spirits nurtured with a sense of well-being or even joy. And as we reach out to help, surely we'll notice others doing the same thing, and our spiritual need for renewed faith will be met.

—Heidi Mann

Our new home



A preacher who had always feared death felt powerless to comfort others who were facing it. Toward the end of his life, he moved to another house. When all the furniture had been packed, he lingered in the home where he'd raised his children and prepared many sermons. An assistant interrupted those reflections by saying, "Everything's gone, sir, but the new house is better than this one. Come away."

The preacher never forgot this lesson. God has prepared for his children a home infinitely better than earth – "an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands" (2 Corinthians 5:1, NIV).



Thank you
for being you!



LOVE
LOVE
ANOTHER

- “Though our feelings come and go, God’s love for us does not.”

—C.S. Lewis

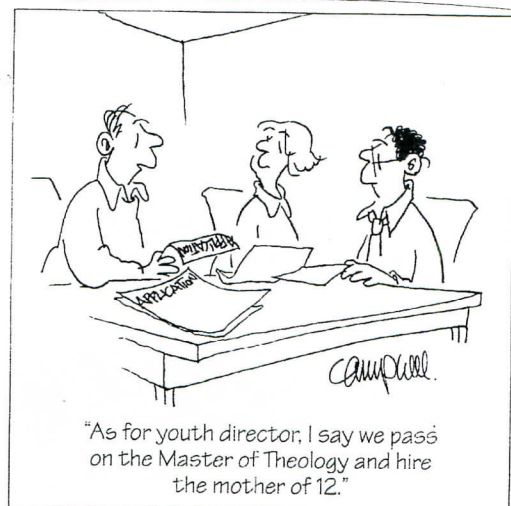
- “Love doesn’t make the world go round. Love is what makes the ride worthwhile.”

—Franklin P. Jones

In awe of God

A feel-good gospel is attractive but not transformative, writes Michael Yaconelli in *Dangerous Wonder* (NavPress). “The nice, nonthreatening God needs to be replaced by the God whose very presence smashes our egos into dust, burns our sin into ashes, and strips us naked to reveal the real person within. A healthy, childlike fear should make us more in awe of God than we are of our government, our problems, ... our doctrines and agendas, or any of our other earthly concerns.”

Yaconelli urges Christians “to become people whose God is big and holy and frightening and gentle and tender and *ours*; a God whose love frightens us into his strong and powerful arms where he dares to hold us in his terrifying, loving presence.”



“As for youth director, I say we pass on the Master of Theology and hire the mother of 12.”

“The Challenge of Re-Creating the Beloved Community in the Seeming Absence of Love!”
****(Reprinted from our February 2021 Newsletter)***

February is noted for Valentine’s Day and thoughts of love and loved ones. But an enduring world-wide pandemic, the divisive November 2022 Mid-Year Elections, and the two-year Anniversary of the shocking imbroglio that occurred in the nation’s Capitol in Washington, DC, on January 6, 2021 that resulted in rioting, vandalism, and the deaths of 5 persons—one a Capitol police officer, love seems to be at best a fleeting aspiration as we enter into this February 2023!

However, as believers on Christ Jesus we must never lose hope and we must choose love at every opportunity and in the face of every challenge—especially whenever and wherever hatred, bigotry and evil rear their wicked heads!

According to the King Center, “*The Beloved Community*” is a term that was first coined in the early 20th Century by the philosopher-theologian Josiah Royce, who founded the Fellowship of Reconciliation.¹ However, it was Dr. Martin Luther, Jr., also a member of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, who popularized the term and invested it with deeper meaning which has captured the imagination of people of goodwill all over the world...Dr. King’s *Beloved Community* is a global vision, in which all people can share in the wealth of the earth. In the *Beloved Community*, poverty, hunger and homelessness will not be tolerated because international standards of human decency will not allow it. Racism and all forms of discrimination, bigotry and prejudice will be replaced by an all-inclusive spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood. In the *Beloved Community*, international disputes will be resolved by peaceful conflict-resolution and reconciliation of adversaries, instead of military power. Love and trust will triumph over fear and hatred. Peace with justice will prevail over war and military conflict” (<https://www.thekingcenter.org>. (Accessed on January 19, 2021)).

Rev. Dr. Dave deFreese of Rejoicing Spirits writes in his article “*Together, We are a Beloved Community*” the following about King’s notion of the *Beloved Community*, “Facing the Challenge of a New Age, Dr. King wrote, ‘But the end is reconciliation; the end is redemption; the end is the creation of a beloved community. It is this type of spirit and this type of love that can transform opposers into friends. It is this kind of understanding good will that will transform the deep gloom of the old age into the exuberant gladness of the new age. It is this love which will bring about miracles.’ Dr. King wrote these words in 1956 and almost 60 years later, the message of transforming love and the beloved community is as current now as it was then” (<https://www.rejoicingspirits.org>. (Accessed on January 19, 2021)).

¹ Fellowship of Reconciliation USA (FORUSA) is an interfaith peace fellowship leading the charge on today’s most pressing human and civil rights issues through advocacy, activism, and educational programs. [It] is the oldest and largest organization of its kind, promoting peace and active nonviolence with a diverse membership spanning many religious, spiritual, and cultural traditions (<https://www.forusa.org>. (Accessed on 1/19/21)).

I agree with Dr. King's definition of the *Beloved Community* and Dr. deFreese's assertion that the message of transforming love and beloved community is as current now as it was then. In fact, the *Beloved Community* is needed now more than ever before! But how do we take on the challenge of re-creating the *Beloved Community* in this present moment when we seem to be bereft of love itself?

The first thing we who are believers of Christ must do to take on the challenge of re-creating the *Beloved Community* is choose to be a member of the *Beloved Community*. By choosing to be a member of the *Beloved Community*, we choose love. By choosing love, we choose to love and to be loved. For, the Bible tells us that "God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. (1John 4:16). Hence by choosing love, we choose to dwell in God. Because God is love, when we choose to dwell in love, we dwell in God and God dwells in us.

The second thing we who are believers of Christ must do to take on the challenge of re-creating the *Beloved Community* is we must reject hatred, bigotry and prejudice. Hatred, bigotry and prejudice are antithetical to love. Hatred, bigotry and prejudice are not of God! How can we say we love God whom we have never seen and yet hate our brothers and sisters? The Bible is clear that "Those who say, 'I love God,' and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen" (1 John 4:20).

The third thing we, the church, must do to take on the challenge of re-creating the *Beloved Community* is be intentional about creating a safe space for grace to be in community and be intentional about being communal. The Greek term for this concept of community is "*koinonia*." The Bible tells us in the Book of Acts, "[N]ow the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of possessions, but everything was held in common...There was no a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need" (Acts 4:32, 34-35). The notion or concept of *koinonia* does not mean that no one should own property or assets today. Rather, it does mean that those believers living in the spirit of *koinonia* in the *Beloved Community* will freely give of their substance to help those within and outside the community who are in need. Those who are living in the spirit of *koinonia* in the *Beloved Community* are committed to being their sisters' and brothers' keepers. Those who are living in the spirit of *koinonia* in the *Beloved Community* are not fearful of those who are different and are outside of the community. The Bible is clear that "[T]here is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whosoever fears has not reached perfection in love." Those living in the spirit of *koinonia* in the *Beloved Community* welcome all!

The last and perhaps most profound thing we, the church, must do to take on the challenge of re-creating the *Beloved Community* is to be the voice to cry loud and spare not

where we see injustice and oppression. This is not to say the church should be political. Let me be clear the church must be intentional—especially in the charged atmosphere and vitriol of our current state of political affairs—about keeping the church separate from politics. But, the church cannot be silent in the face of oppression, poverty, racism, bigotry and prejudice. If we, the church, are serious about taking on the challenge of re-creating the *Beloved Community*, we must speak out and stand up for Jesus where we see wickedness. As Dr. King wrote, “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere!” (“Letter from the Birmingham Jail” (<https://www.kingcenter.org>. (Accessed on January 19, 2021))).

In closing, I remind us that re-creating the *Beloved Community* will not be easy. But this should not prevent us from pursuing this challenge. The Bible tells us “[B]eloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God’s love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another” (1 John 4:7-11).

I unapologetically choose love! The choice is up to each of us as to whether or not we will choose love. The choice is up to each of us as to whether we want to live in the spirit of *koinonia* or chaos. The choice is up to each of us as to whether we are willing to be intentional in doing our part to live and love in the spirit of *koinonia* and thereby help re-create the *Beloved Community*. Happy Valentine’s Day!

Shalom to you now,

Rev. Dr. Melva J. Hayden

Rev. Dr. Melva J. Hayden, Pastor
Church of the Master

• “Nothing is too great and nothing is too small to commit into the hands of the Lord.”

—A.W. Pink

The Devil whispered
in my ear; “You’re
Not Strong Enough to
Withstand the Storm.”

Today I whispered in
the Devil’s ear,
“I AM THE STORM.”

10 biblical ways to love

1. Listen without interrupting. “To answer before listening – that is folly and shame” (Proverbs 18:13).
2. Speak without accusing. “Be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry” (James 1:19).
3. Give without selfishness. “The righteous give without sparing” (Proverbs 21:26).
4. Pray without ceasing. “We have not stopped praying for you” (Colossians 1:9).
5. Answer without arguing. “Better a dry crust with peace and quiet than a house full of feasting, with strife” (Proverbs 17:1).
6. Share without pretending. “Speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of ... Christ” (Ephesians 4:15).
7. Enjoy without complaining. “Do everything without grumbling or arguing” (Philippians 2:14).
8. Trust without wavering. “[Love] always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres” (1 Corinthians 13:7).
9. Forgive without punishing. “Forgive as the Lord forgave you” (Colossians 3:13).
10. Promise without forgetting. “A longing fulfilled is a tree of life” (Proverbs 13:12).

—From various websites; all Scriptures NIV