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## **The Sanctity of Human Life (Tearing the Last Page From a Love Story)**

Genesis 2:7

July 1, 2007

Peter Hiett

Several years ago Michael Cusick told me about an incident that happened down at the Hospice of St. John in Lakewood. Some of you are very familiar with that hospice, and some have worked with Father Paul, its founder.

Well, some time ago Father Paul received a call. It was from a first-year medical resident at Denver General. “Do you take prostitutes?” he inquired. “Not as a rule,” Father Paul replied. But he inquired a bit further. Father Paul was uncomfortable with the label “prostitute” and congratulated the young doctor when he began to refer to her as a patient.

The young doctor went on to inform Father Paul that the patient, a forty-year-old woman, was a known prostitute. She had been admitted to the intensive care unit after having been gang raped, kicked and beaten, and then left to die. No one knew the circumstances of her attack: a trick turned violent, drug deal gone bad, gang initiation rites.

After multiple surgeries to remove her spleen and a kidney, and to stop massive internal bleeding, she remained unconscious. Tubes and wires were inserted throughout her broken body: a tracheotomy for breathing, feeding tubes, irrigation tubes, intravenous fluids, and a catheter. She was not expected to live beyond a week.

“We’d love to have her,” said Father Paul. “I’ll come over and talk to her, and we’ll have her transported tomorrow.” The young doctor replied, “You don’t understand. She’s unconscious.”

“No, no, Laddie,” said Father Paul. “*You* don’t understand. We talk to unconscious patients. I want you there when I do.”

Her name was Maria. When he arrived, Father Paul talked to Maria, assured Maria. Out of respect for Father Paul, the young doctor did too. It was clear he thought the priest a bit zany. He informed Father Paul the family had been contacted. “By the way,” he said, “they won’t have anything to do with her. They won’t visit. They won’t take any responsibility.”

Her family was a strong, Roman Catholic family. They had disowned their daughter “the harlot.” Still, Father Paul called them and begged them to come visit. Still, at the hospice they turned Maria every hour. They bathed her with compassion and tenderness. They talked to her words of love, blessing, and hope. Yet still she was unconscious, unproductive, weak, dependent, and alone without a story, without a family, without a lover.

Why not let her die? We all die. We let my terminally ill eighty-four-year-old father die. Why not kill her?

It's a challenging question. In some cases, the cost of keeping a person alive in a vegetative state is enough to feed thousands of orphans in Africa. Thousands of orphans . . . or one person in a vegetative state. That's a brutal choice. Kind of like thousands of orphans . . . or a luxury car.

Well, having said that, why not end Maria's life? I mean, what kind of life was it?

- The quality of her life was incredibly poor.
- She barely had a shred of human dignity.
- She was dependent and an unproductive burden on society, weak, least fit to survive . . . and didn't she get what she deserved?
- She was a prostitute, and now not even that. No story, no meaning, and it appeared that she mattered to no one.

So was Maria really even human? If you quietly placed your hand over her mouth, would it be murder?

Genesis 9:6: "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed. For God made man in his own image." The thing that makes man sacred, the thing that makes killing a person different from killing a chicken, is that image of God.

In the last few months preaching through Genesis, we've been talking about various aspects of that image. So today is something of a review.

Genesis 2:7: "Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man [adam] became a living being."

A few weeks ago we talked about the "I" in me, the "I" that observes me, the "I" that makes choices and leaves an imprint in dirt, which "I" refer to as *me* or *myself*.

- That "I" can't be known simply as a thing in this world.
- I am not dust, chemicals, or matter.
- I did not create "I."
- I am not my accomplishments, in the past or in the future.
- I exist in the present.

*I am* . . . so I can only be known *now* in subjective encounter, personal relationship, spirit to spirit, I-contact. I AM that I AM breathed "I" into me: eternity into temporality, necessity into contingency, Spirit into dust.

I AM breathed breath into me, "neshawma" in the Old Testament, translated breath or spirit. And according to the Old Testament, it appears that when Adam was exiled from the garden, the "neshawma" was exiled with him and stayed with him until his "dust returned to the earth and his spirit returned to him that gave it" (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

That's a mystery to me, but in John 20 the resurrected Jesus in His resurrection body *breathes* on His disciples saying, "Receive the Holy Spirit"—breath or wind, in

Greek; “pneuma.”

Adrienne Rensink, who often plays in our worship band, has the word *proskuneo* tattooed on one foot, which means “to worship,” “to kiss” . . . like God kissing Adam. She has the word *neshawma* tattooed on the other foot. It’s to remind her of a night not many years ago when she lay dying of cancer in a hospital bed. She felt Jesus come into her room and breathe into her mouth. She says it was the coldest air she’s ever felt. And she was healed by the breath—the Spirit.

- Scripture says, “Be filled and keep on being filled with the Spirit.”
- In Acts 2, tongues of fire descend on the disciples, and the Church is filled with the Holy Pneuma—Holy Spirit.
- In the Old Testament, the Spirit fills the temple.
- In the New Testament, we find that we *are* the temple—living stones.

Paul writes, “We have this treasure in earthen vessels.”

- In the temple in Jerusalem, there was a treasury. Everyone knew the treasure was in the temple treasury.
- In Matthew 6, Jesus literally says, “Don’t treasure treasure to yourself on earth; treasure treasure to yourself in heaven.”
- Jesus said to the rich, young ruler, “Sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in Heaven.” Jesus also said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for of them consists the kingdom of heaven.”

Maybe treasure in the poor *is* treasure in heaven. Yet we all know we can’t physically store treasure in a poor person. But maybe you can store faith, hope, and love in a poor person and receive it into yourself *from* a poor person.

Well, Jesus says the stuff about treasure and then says, “The eye is the lamp of the body, so if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light.” Like, if you can see the treasure in others, you’ll be full of treasure yourself.

So we have this treasure in earthen vessels, life is like a treasure hunt, and treasure is something that passes from one earthen vessel to another.

So turn to the person next to you, make eye contact, and hold the eye contact. If you don’t have a partner right now, join a small group and do this later. Now, let me take a shot at describing the person you’re looking at:

1. They are way worse than you think. But don’t get cocky, because I just told them that *you* are way worse than *they* think. Well, let me tell you about them. It’s not just the obvious sins you see, but:
  - They think about themselves a lot.
  - They worry about themselves a lot.
  - They may say they worry about others, but that’s because they think they are the *savior* of others. You see, they’re self-centered.
  - They’d probably enjoy a new car more than the thought of a thousand orphans

eating dinner. In fact, right now they are trying to justify themselves. And right now they want to avert their eyes, because they want to hide in fig leaves, good deeds, religious works, and the letter of the law. In other words, they want to hide their naked spirit . . . hide it in more dust and ashes, more dirt, more flesh. And how do I know this about them? Because I am just like them, and just like you.

2. But now make eye contact again and let me tell you something else: They are infinitely more valuable than you think. And now I just told them that *you* are infinitely more valuable than *they* think.

- This earthen vessel before you contains the very breath of the uncreated Creator—eternal treasure.
- The Lord God “jealously yearns over the spirit that he has made to dwell within them” (James 4:5).
- They are so valuable to God that He literally gave up *everything* on their behalf. God the Father gave up His only Son for them, just them. God the Son gave up His life and descended into hell, just for them.
- The Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit may dwell inside them, even as we speak. For if they believe in Him, God makes His home in them. They are His temple—His Bride—His Body.
- So although they are worse than they think, they are also far better. They don’t remember it, but at moments they forgot themselves and loved another . . . perhaps they gave a cup of water to a child, perhaps they welcomed a stranger or smiled at a beggar, but for a moment, they loved. And “he who loves is born of God and knows God.”

The person you are looking at is an absolute treasure in an earthen vessel. If you believe that, it will change the way you treat them. It will change every relationship you’re in.

Did you know there are two ways you know people? First, you can know *about* people: their titles, their degrees, their resume, their accomplishments, and their failures. You can know their dirt—their earthen vessel. Secondly, you can encounter their spirit. You can know *them*. Usually it happens through I-contact.

When my kids were infants, they didn’t know my title, my resume, or my degrees, but they knew me. And even though they had no title, resume, or degree, I knew them.

Sometimes the less dirt a spirit has,  
the easier they are to know.

Last week I gave communion to a friend dying of cancer, a very capable, gorgeous woman. But now her flesh is mostly gone. She couldn’t speak, but she was there, and she looked at me. I left her house happier than I’d been all week. It was as if I’d just found treasure.

There’s treasure in these earthen vessels, and sometimes when there’s less earth, or the vessel is broken, the treasure is easiest to see.

Father Paul down at the Hospice of St. John believed that. So he called Maria's family. He used his title of priest to scare them. "You'd better come see her; she might just live ten days. She's very sick. You ought to come see her." "Yes, Father, whatever you say, Father," they responded. "Absolutely, Father."

But the ten days turned into six months, and the family still hadn't visited. And to the amazement of the hospice staff, Maria was still alive.

Then one day in June her vital signs suddenly dropped. Father Paul was now furious with the family. He dialed her family's number. He didn't even give Maria's father a chance to speak before he blurted out, "Get your damn bodies down here to visit this girl, or else you'll go to hell and roast, and I'll guarantee it!"

Having been cussed out by a priest, the family showed up the following day, conscripted into service. They sat defiantly against the window, far away from the bed, drinking coffee. For three months they visited weekly under compulsion, never once speaking or acknowledging their daughter's presence.

One day, Father Paul and a nurse turned Maria, spoke to Maria, cared for Maria in the family's presence. The nurse kissed Maria and said, "We'll be back in an hour." As they walked out of the room, Maria's mother muttered out loud, "How can you kiss that filthy bitch?"

Father Paul turned and said, "That's a dreadful way to speak of the daughter you carried inside of you. She's our Maria now too. I don't want you to speak to her like that again."

Two more months passed. By November, the family began to soften, but they still wouldn't go to the bedside until one day toward the end of November (a day Father Paul will never forget). He walked into the room to find Maria's mother at the side of the bed. The rails were

down, and she was stroking her daughter's hand and weeping.

I don't know exactly what those tears were: forgiveness? compassion? a prayer? Whatever they were, they were at least love. And God is love, and we are being made in His image.

Genesis 1:26: "Elohim said, 'Let us make man in our image.'" God is a plurality in a singularity we call the Trinity.

Genesis 1:27: "In the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." Man is a singularity called to live in a plurality called a community.

Remember this picture?

C. S. Lewis wrote: "The statement 'God is love' really has no meaning unless God is more than one person, for love is something one person has for another person." God is three persons and one substance. That substance is love. He is a co-unity or community of love.

“Like a drama or a dance,” writes Lewis, “each one of us has got to enter that pattern and take his place in the dance.”

So God is love, and He makes us in His image. He breathes a bit of Himself into an earthen vessel and makes man (adam). When Adam trusts God’s love, he loves others. Adam is male and female in God’s image, fruitful and multiplying in God’s image. We’re not just talking about a physical family but also a spiritual family. You call it church or a small group. A community of love is God’s image.

But what does Adam *actually* do? What does man do? He gets anxious about himself. He gets self-conscious. He takes from the tree of knowledge and tries to hide in fig leaves. He wraps himself in more flesh, more dirt, more degrees, titles, awards, possessions, addictions, and idols until he’s trapped in his own private hell, unable to love.

We’re trapped until by that breath we call out, “God save!”—“Yeshua!” And God sends His Son, who dies for us and with us. We die to ourselves, to our independence, ego, and pride.

The Son gives us His Spirit. We cry, “Abba Father!” until we are filled with all the fullness of God. Because He loved us, we are able to love others and live.

But this is what I want you to see: It’s when we have the most self that we’re most impervious to love.

But:

When the dust and ashes are especially thin;  
When the earthen vessel is cracked;  
When the pride is stripped away;  
When we stop trying to justify ourselves;  
When we come to the end of ourselves . . .

. . . it’s then that we are most vulnerable to love. Then we are most liable to make I-contact and enter the dance. That dance is love, and love is life.

Jesus said, “Whatever you do to the last and the least of these you do to me.” Perhaps the treasure is closest to the surface in the last and least of these.

It’s ironic, because the world sees it the other way around. The world thinks that the dirt is the treasure. But the dirt *hides* the treasure.

Therefore it’s in the field with the least dirt that you’re most likely to stub your toe on treasure. Jesus said the kingdom of heaven is like that.

So it’s when people become last and least; it’s when we empty ourselves of self and become last and least; it’s when our ego, pride, and flesh have been stripped away, when the earthen vessel cracks; it’s then that treasure is revealed; it’s then we’re vulnerable to love.

And *that’s* when the love story turns . . . when someone surrenders to grace and someone gives grace. That’s when love happens: person to person, spirit to spirit, deep calling to deep.

It’s when Cinderella admits she’s a peasant and Prince Charming loves her even more. That’s when the love story turns; that’s when the meaning is revealed.

Genesis 1 revealed there is a beginning and an end and a plot (a *logos*). Our life is a story that God is telling. He's making us in His image. His image is love. Your life is a love story God is telling.

No one tears the last page from a love story.

Do you see why Maria's life is sacred?

1. It has something to do with spirit (treasure hidden in dirt).
2. It has something to do with God's image, this dance—this communion—this community of spirit called love.
3. Spirits in love: We're being made in the image of love. Life is a love story that God is telling. *He* is the author; not you.

In life, it's tempting to take a life or take your own life when you feel like you've cracked or come to the end of yourself. But if your life has an author, and His story is love . . . well, no one tears the last page from a love story. That's when the story turns and the meaning is revealed.

So Father Paul walked into the room and found Maria's mother stroking her daughter's hand, broken and shattered at the end of herself. Maria's mother sat by the bedside of her broken and shattered daughter, stroked her hand, and wept . . . spirit to spirit, deep calling to deep.

Father Paul put his hand on her shoulder and thanked God for the miracle He was working.

Just then, to everyone's surprise, a fifteen-year-old boy, whom no one had ever seen before, came banging through the closed door. He pushed Father Paul aside. He pushed Maria's mother out of the way. He wrapped his arms around Maria and gently, tenderly lifted her from the bed.

She hung limp in his arms. She looked dead. The boy shook as he sobbed and cried, "Mommy, I love you! Mommy, forgive me! Mommy, I love you."

No one even knew Maria had a child. It turns out he hadn't seen his mother for ten years.

And then Father Paul says this is what he'll never forget. "I circled the bed," he says, "to put my arm around the boy. When I did, I caught a sudden glimpse of Maria." (Maria, who had lain unconscious for almost a year.) "I caught a sudden glimpse of Maria, and her face was streaked with tears."

Thirty minutes later, Maria's story in this world came to an end. *The end*. And the story of her family took a dramatic turn toward the kingdom of heaven.

We don't always get to read the meaning of that last page from our perspective in this world. But if God is the author of your story, the meaning is always the same. The meaning is love. In other words, the plot is Jesus. He is the revelation of love, and He is The End . . . which is just the beginning of happily ever after.

You know, we should be grateful that Maria's life is sacred, because we are an awful lot like Maria: dead in our trespasses and sins, unable to do one good thing. That's a tremendously low quality of life. Not dignified but depraved; trapped in our own dirt.

You know, a prostitute deals in dirt and neglects the spirit. God accuses Israel—His people—of prostitution. When we use God and neglect His Spirit, when we get religious and refuse to love or be loved, that's prostitution.

It happened long ago in a garden when we chose knowledge of God over knowing God. So why didn't God abort us? euthanize us? kill us? Instead, "at just the right time, when we were without strength, Christ died for the ungodly" (Romans 5:6). God wrapped Himself in flesh in dust and ashes, but then at the right time sacrificed the dust and ashes, revealing His heart—eternal treasure.

Do you understand? When we were broken and vulnerable to love, He was broken and revealed God who is love.

Jack Kevorkian said, "Jesus would've died with more dignity in the back of my van." Yes, he would have

. . . more *human* dignity. But stripped of human dignity, He exposed God's dignity: relentless love and life, poured out as liquid treasure flowing from a shattered earthen vessel.

On the sixth day, the day Jesus was crucified, He took bread and broke it saying, "This is my body broken for you. Take and eat. Do this in remembrance of me." And in the same manner, after supper He took the cup and having given thanks said, "Drink of it, all of you. This is

my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."

And so, Maria, Bride of Christ, sold into bondage, come receive your Lord's love. Let Him fill you. Let Him make you in His image. You're not forgotten. You're not abandoned. You're not unwanted. Even though you've committed harlotry, you're not a harlot. You're the Bride of Christ!—treasure in an earthen vessel.

In Jesus' name, come.

[Communion]

"Bride"

By Brian Cheney

Children of Israel, you people of Jacob,  
Who grope in the dark of the night  
Listen, for to you a long-distant calling  
Is speaking of glimpses of light  
You are a nation who's been born into bondage,  
You are a people of tears  
Caught in a circle of wandering and failing,  
Caught in a prison of fear  
You are dreading the outcome, not knowing that someone  
Is coming to make you His bride

Have you forgotten the depth of the covenant



You entered when you were betrothed?  
Have you abandoned the Bridegroom,  
Who offers to save you and make you His own?  
Have you been running to the arms of another,  
Allowing your lust to be split?  
Are you the harlot who offers her body  
To those who have promised to fill?  
Are you bleeding and broken, believing that no one  
Is coming to make you His bride?  
Wake up your children, announce to the nations  
His coming is soon to begin  
The ruler is sending His only begotten  
To come and to pay for your sin  
The One you've rejected is the One who is coming  
With unending love in His eyes  
The wounds He is taking for His maiden's adultery  
Are piercing His hands and His side  
So, behold Him, the Lover you've long been forsaking  
Is coming to make you His bride

Coming to win you, coming to woo you, coming to conquer your heart  
Coming to wash you, coming to rid you of sin that has torn you apart  
Coming to clothe you in the robes of redemption,  
To anoint you with fragrance and oil,  
Coming to take you to His chambers forever,  
Coming to enter your soul  
To present You as radiant before all of creation  
He is coming to make you  
Coming to make you  
Coming to make you His bride

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You ingested the Plot. That means that your life is a story God is telling. It's a love story. The cross is the last page. Jesus is the end. The end of the story gives meaning to every other page.

So when you're walking through this world and you see body broken and blood shed, when you see earthen vessels cracked and stripped away, you don't have to fear. It might hurt, but it's an invitation. It's the school of love. There's treasure waiting for you.

And when you get to the point when you realize *your* body will be broken and *your* blood will be shed and *your* earthen vessel will be washed away, you understand the meaning. You've already been to the end. You know the plot. Yes, it's scary from *this side*. But, you see, this is the edge of the seventh day. It's the edge of happily ever after. [Peter walks behind the communion table.] From the other side of the table, it's the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

## Relevant Texts and Quotations (from bulletin)

### **The Sanctity of Human Life**

Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for God made man in his own image.

~ *Genesis 9:6 (RSV)*

You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire.

~ *Matthew 5:21-22*

### **The Breath**

Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

~ *Genesis 2:7 (RSV)*

Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

~ *John 20:21-22*

Thus all the work that King Solomon did on the house of the LORD was finished. And Solomon brought in the things that David his father had dedicated, the silver, the gold, and the vessels, and stored them in the treasuries of the house of the LORD.

~ *1 Kings 7:51*

Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.

~ *1 Corinthians 3:16-17*

For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us.

~ *2 Corinthians 4:6-7 (RSV)*

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light.

~ *Matthew 6:19-22*

The young man said to him, "All these I have kept. What do I still lack?" Jesus said to him, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me."

~ *Matthew 19:20-21*

The master became a legend in his lifetime. It was said that God once sought his advice: "I want to play a game of hide-and-seek with humankind. I've asked my angels what the best place is to hide in. Some say the depth of the ocean. Others the top of the highest mountain. Others still the far side of the moon or a distant star. What do you suggest?" Said the master, "Hide in the human heart. That's the last place they will think of!"

~ *Anthony DeMello*

But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom and our righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

~ *1 Corinthians 1:27-30*

### **The Image**

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. . . ." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

~ *Genesis 1:26a, 27 (RSV)*

In the unity of the Godhead there be three Persons of one substance, power and eternity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.

~ *The Westminster Confession of Faith*

All sorts of people are fond of repeating the Christian statement that "God is love." But they seem not to notice that the words "God is love" have no real meaning unless God contains at least two Persons. Love is something that one person has for another person. . . . And now, what does it all matter? It matters more than anything else in the world. The whole dance, or drama, or pattern of this three-Personal life is to be played out in each one of us: or (putting it the other way round) each one of us has got to enter that pattern, take his place in that dance.

~ *C. S. Lewis, Mere Christianity*

By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

~ *John 13:35*

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

~ *1 John 4:7-8*

"And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?" And the King will answer them, "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me."

~ *Matthew 25:39-40*

I remember one of our sisters who had just come from the university. She came from a well-to-do family. As we have in our rules, the very next day after the girls have joined the society, they go to the Home for the Dying. Before they went, I told them, "You saw the priest during Mass: with what love, with what delicate care he touched the body of Christ! Make sure you do the same thing when you go to the Home, for Jesus is there in the distressing disguise." And they went. After three hours, they came back and one of them, the girl who had come from the university, who had seen so much, so many things, came to my room with such a beautiful smile on her face. She said, "For three hours I have been touching the body of Christ." And I said, "What did you do, what happened?" She said, "They brought a man from the street, covered with maggots, and I knew, though I

found it very difficult, I knew that I was touching the body of Christ."

~ *Mother Teresa, My Life for the Poor*

### **The Story**

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. . . . So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all his work which he had done in creation.

~ *Genesis 1:1, 2:3 (RSV)*

God created man because he loves stories.

~ *Elie Wiesel*

The word “story” comes from “storehouse.” So a story is a store or storehouse. Things are actually stored in the story, and what tends to be stored there is its meaning.

~ *Michael Meade*

A disciple once complained, “You tell us stories, but you never reveal their meaning to us.” The master replied, “How would you like it if someone offered you fruit and chewed it up for you before giving it to you?”

~ *Source Unknown*

The life of every person is in My book, and their lives are a book that will be read by all of creation for all eternity. The history of the world is the library of God’s Wisdom. My redemption is the demonstration of Our love, and the cross is the greatest love that the creation will ever know. Even the angels who stand before My Father so love the story of redemption that they, too, long to dwell with men. They marveled when We made man in Our image. They marveled when men chose evil, even in the midst of the Paradise We had made for man. Now, because of redemption, the marred image of God is restored and is revealed even more gloriously in mankind. The glory is still in earthen vessels which makes the glory easier to see for those who have eyes to see.

~ *Rick Joyner, The Call*

Over the years I can say that there was not a drop of pain for me left in Oliver’s reality. He did not change much. He grew to the size of a ten-year-old child. His hands and feet were those of a five-year-old, but he had a thick beard that had to be shaved. He never left his bed. He lay on his back, unable to lift his head, unable to speak, unable to learn anything.

Oliver was always a “hopeless” case, yet he was such a precious gift for our whole family. “God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.” (1 Corinthians 1:27) This child had no apparent usefulness or meaning, and the “world” would reject him as an unproductive burden. But he was a holy innocent, a child of light.

Looking at him, I saw the power of powerlessness. His total helplessness speaks to our deepest hearts, calls us not merely to pious emotions but to service. Through this child, I felt bound to Christ crucified—yes, and also to all those who suffer in the world. While caring for Oliver, I also felt that I ministered, in some mysterious way, to all my unknown brothers and sisters who were, and are grieving and in pain throughout the world. So, through Oliver, I learned the deepest meaning of compassion.

I have made my peace with the coming of Oliver’s death. I cannot see it as a tragedy. I know that the child who lived in apparent void and darkness sees God, lives forever in health, beauty and light. Here on earth, he was loved. His presence among us was a mysterious sign of that peace the world cannot give. . . . The meek and humble of heart do all of us a service when they call us to respond in love. For Jesus said, “What you did for the least of the brothers, you did for Me.” . . . And now it is over. A love story, thirty-three years in the making.

~ *Christopher de Vinck,*

*The Power of the Powerless*

My spiritual understanding received an answer, which was this: “Do you want to know what your Lord meant? Know well that love was what he meant. Who showed you this? Love. What did he show? Love. Why did he show it to you? For love. Hold fast to this and you will know and understand more of the same; but you will never understand or know from it anything else for all eternity.” This is how I was taught that our Lord’s meaning was love. And I saw quite certainly in this and in everything that God loved us before he made us; and his love has never diminished and never shall. And all his works were done in this love; and in this love he has made everything for our profit; and in this love our life is everlasting. We have our beginning

when we were made; but the love in which he made us was in him since before time began; and in this love we have our beginning. And all this shall be seen in God without end, which may Jesus grant us. Amen.

~ *Julian of Norwich,*

*Revelations of Divine Love*

## **The Sanctity of Human Life (Tearing the Last Page From a Love Story)**

Genesis 2:7

Pastor Peter Hiett

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