

# Discipline and Dancing (in the Light)

Matthew 6:1--6; 16--18

*The Living Law (no. 11 in the series)*

May 10, 2020

Peter Hiett

*Video and audio versions available online:*

<https://relentless-love.org/sermons/discipline-and-dancing-in-the-light/>

*Transcript document prepared by: Heather Eades (eades.heather@gmail.com).*

*This document was prepared by Heather Eades using Peter's notes and the video version of this sermon. If you encounter any significant discrepancies or errors in this document, please let Heather know. Thank you!*

---

OK, hopefully you took advantage of our online giving option during the offertory. And thankfully, because you did, I can just login here with our bank and see how we're doing. [Peter sits down to computer.]

Look at that: the Eades, (Brett and Heather), gave \$550.00—that puts them in the red ribbon club! [Peter writes name on board.] Alan and Jennifer Parsons gave \$347.50—not as good as Brett, but still enough for the white ribbon club! [Peter writes name on board.] Wow! Joe Burnham gave \$5000.00 [Blows pretend trumpet]—Joe Burnham is a Blue-Ribbon Giver! [Peter writes name on board]

Gosh Joe, I know you're out there, and it must feel so good to be a blue-ribbon giver!

Let's pray:

## Prayer

Father, thank you so much for Joe Burnham. Seriously. And Alan and Jennifer parsons, Brett and Heather Eades. Thank you for loving us. Thank you that you are here with us, wherever we are. And now we ask that you would help us to preach your word. Amen.

## Message

Mathew 5:48—that's where we left off last week:

<sup>48</sup>You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. [literally translated: "You will be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."]

**Chapter 6 "Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them [*theathenai*—where we get our word "theater"], for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.**

<sup>2</sup>**"Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites [*hypocritai*: "actors"] do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they**

**may be praised by others** [*ton anthropon*, “The men, the people”]. **Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.** [*apechousin*: It means “paid in full.”<sup>i</sup>]

Oops... sorry Joe. I guess that trumpet blast was your reward. Bummer...

Actually, I was lying about what Joe, the Parsons, and the Eades gave. I actually don't have access to that information, and I'm happy not to have it—unless of course the giver wants to tell me.

Historians doubt that folks actually blew trumpets when they gave in Jesus's day, but they did find ways to toot their own horns. They would toot their own horns when they gave money, sang a song, prayed a prayer, volunteered for a mission project, wrote a book, or preached a sermon—can you imagine that?

Here, Jesus refers to the three cardinal disciplines of Jewish life in his day: fasting, prayer, and alms-giving. Jesus continues:

**<sup>3</sup> But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, <sup>4</sup> so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.**

**<sup>5</sup> “And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others [*ton anthropon*]. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. <sup>6</sup> But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret [*“en... krypto”* in Greek; he's encrypted all around you and even in your room]. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.**

Jesus now talks about prayer, but in v.16 Jesus continues this same idea in regard to fasting. Jesus's disciples did not fast while he was with them, but he said they would when he was absent.

**<sup>16</sup> “And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others [*ton anthropon*]. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. <sup>17</sup> But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, <sup>18</sup> that your fasting may not be seen by others [*ton anthropon*] but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.**

Jesus is saying, “Don't do good deeds to be seen by men...” But just a few paragraphs back, he said, “Let your light so shine before men, that they would see your good deeds and give glory to your Father in heaven.” He's saying, “Don't *try* to shine your light,” cause then, I guess, it's not light. It's dark.

John tells us that “God is Light”<sup>ii</sup> and Jesus is “the Light of the World.”<sup>iii</sup> So Jesus says, “Don't *shine* your light,” but “*let* it shine, you poor in spirit, you meek, mourning, and hungry for righteousness. *Let* your light shine.” It's almost as if we're a mirror reflecting light. Or a lamp containing a light, that's not simply our own.

So... it's our ego that keeps the light from shining.

*“Don’t do this stuff to be seen by people,” says Jesus. “Because then you already have your reward.”* And y’all know that a blue ribbon, a diploma, or a promotion really isn’t all it’s cracked up to be. *“Don’t do this stuff to be seen by people, but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”* He will reward you.

Rewards can be a bit confusing, can’t they?

1. If you think you earned the reward, it isn’t a gift but a wage. It’s not Grace.
2. If the rewards are different for each person, won’t I be jealous of other people’s rewards and anxious over my own when I get them?
3. When people do good deeds to get rewards, they usually end up hating the deeds they do... and the deeds are no longer good.
  - They’re no longer reading for fun, but studying to pass a test.
  - They’re no longer singing for joy, but they’re trying to make the grade.
  - They’re no longer proclaiming Good News, but they’re laboring in the ministry.
  - They’re no longer giving a gift to their Lover; they’re paying taxes to a welfare state.
  - They’re no longer dancing for joy; they’re exercising to lose weight.
- If I do good deeds for some other reward, the deeds aren’t good.
- If I give to the poor, in order to get a plaque or a ticket to heaven, I’m an actor—I’m acting like I love the poor, but I’m using the poor to make myself rich.
- If I use good deeds to gain something other than the good, I’m crucifying the Good, and that’s evil.

Jesus says, *“Don’t do this stuff to be seen by men.”* And check it out: I’m a man. I’m not even supposed to know I’m doing it! How can I do a good deed, in order to get a reward, if I don’t even know that I’m doing it?

*“Don’t let your right hand know what your left hand is doing, so that the deed will be done in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”*

*“Give to him who begs from you... and don’t know that you’re doing it.”*

*“Don’t let your right hand know what your left hand is doing.”— **Now do it.***

[Peter puts his right hand under his shirt. With his left hand, he takes out his wallet, pulls some money out with his teeth, and attempts to drop it in the offering basket.]

Well, that didn’t work... my self-conscious brain, told my right hand what my left hand was doing, that’s why I consciously put it under my shirt. To really give without knowing it, I’d have to be unaware of myself—like outside of myself, or beside myself... unconscious of myself. I’d have to lose myself to do good without *trying*.

Little children are so cute . . . until they become conscious that they’re cute and, therefore, *try* to be cute. Then they’re no longer cute, at least in the way they’re striving to be cute. We call that *growing up*.

In the novel, *Perelandra* by C. S. Lewis, the newly-created Eve on Venus is tempted by the Evil One with a mirror with which she can judge herself. In the Garden, the newly created Eve on Earth was tempted with a tree of knowledge, so she could judge herself and justify herself.

Ever since then, we’ve been striving to be good, because we’ve seen that we’re not good... and we can’t seem to get back to the garden.

Jesus said you must become like children to enter. And did you notice, Jesus keeps referring to these folks on the hillside as children? He keeps talking about “their Father.”

Well, it’s a nice idea to be non-self-consciously perfect, but it’s a bit beyond us.

*“Be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect...”*

*“Give alms without even trying...”* Uh, yeah... right, Jesus!

It reminds me of Hebrews 4:11: “Strive to enter God’s rest.” It sounds like:

*“Work to not be working.”*

*“Discipline yourself to not be disciplined.”*

God is at rest, but let’s hope he’s still working... at least here and now.

- What kind of work is really rest?
- What kind of perfection is also freedom—unrestrained freedom?
  - How could everything move—how could I move my right hand and left hand in perfect harmony, without my conscious effort?
  - How could I lose myself and find myself perfectly coordinated?

Years ago, I was thinking about all these things, when I remembered an old movie clip and couldn’t get it out of my mind. It’s a ridiculous movie about an underprivileged, uncoordinated, white boy whose family spends evenings singing songs on the porch. His family is black; he was adopted and doesn’t know it quite yet.

It plays off of racial stereotypes—that black folks can dance and white folks can’t—of course that’s untrue, and yet, maybe, partly true. The color of your skin doesn’t determine how well you can dance. And yet, arrogance or lack of arrogance might.

It’s usually not the oppressors that do the best dancing; it’s the oppressed. They seem most in touch with the music, for they’re least stuck on themselves.

The boy’s name is Navin, played by Steve Martin, and the movie is “The Jerk.” I’ve played the clip for you in the past, but because we’re live streaming— and they sometimes shut us down for clips—I’ll just describe it to you now:

Navin tries to dance, but he can only kind of jerk himself around... like a zombie; he’s stiff. No matter how hard he tries, he cannot coordinate his feet with the music or his right hand with his left hand. And the harder he tries, the worse it is; until one night, he gives up and a miracle happens.

He’s lying in bed listening to the gospel hour, when a tune comes on the radio. He looks up and notices that his toes are moving to the music.

[image: Navin lying in bed, looking at his feet beginning to move, from *The Jerk*.]

Then he watches his hands start to move and snap to the beat.

[image: Navin surprised and in awe as his hands begin to snap, from *The Jerk*.]

He jumps out of bed and dances into the other room yelling: “Mom, Dad! Look! This music speaks to me...”

[image: Navin in front of his adopted family, showing them how he can snap and dance, from *The Jerk*.]

Then he dances on out of the house and lives the adventure that is his life.

I love that scene because it’s hilarious, and because it highlights the amazing miracle that is a dance.

- It’s when Navin stops trying to dance that he begins to dance.
- It’s when he finally fails, that the music succeeds.
- It’s when he loses himself that he finds himself dancing.

If you’ve studied music theory, or physics, you know that music is extremely logical. It seems mysterious to us because there is more logic than the conscious mind can comprehend. Yet the conscious mind can recognize the order as “good,” that is: *beautiful*.

We can’t comprehend the music, but the music can comprehend us; our bodies can be coordinated by its logic—its “*logos*” (in Greek).

Navin said, “*This music speaks to me!*” and he danced. To some Jewish do-gooders, who weren’t doing any good, Jesus said:

“*My word (logos) finds no place in you.*”<sup>iv</sup>

“*We played the flute for you, and you would not dance.*”<sup>v</sup>

In Scripture, God speaks Creation into existence, or perhaps he sings it into existence—Creation is like a great dance, the manifestation of a Word. And so that Word is encrypted: hidden in and undergirding everything that’s been made.<sup>vi</sup>

Creation is like a dance, but not everything or everyone is dancing... not yet.<sup>vii</sup> Not everything is *free*.<sup>viii</sup> A dance is incredible order—the right hand and left hand are perfectly coordinated—incredible order, and yet it’s all free.

Freedom is a lack of deliberation between two or more wills. When you’re *trying* to dance, you’re consciously imposing your will on each and every member of your body: “*Step right. Step left. Clap. Spin around.*”

“As long as you notice and have to count the steps,” writes C. S. Lewis, “you’re not yet dancing, but only learning to dance.”<sup>ix</sup>

But when you do dance, the rhythm (the *logos*) bypasses your conscious mind, or at least your conscious control, and it animates your body, while you consciously find yourself dancing and thinking: “*Dang! I dig this funky music!*”

A great dance is perfect order, freedom, and a lack of conscious control; it’s Beauty—the manifestation of Grace.

Children dance easily—I mean, they may not have the most sophisticated dance, but at least they dance. Go to a wedding, and all the little kids will be dancing. When my kids were little, they danced just about all the time. Children lose themselves easily and so find themselves dancing.

They lose themselves easily, because everything is bigger than them, and they don't have much self to lose.

The bigger you are, the harder you are to lose. And the less your world is filled with wonder, the less likely you are to be swept off your feet and caught up in a dance. Proud people don't dance well... or at least not easily.

To be proud is not the same thing as being *pleased* with yourself. To be proud is to think you must justify yourself. It is to be occupied with exalting yourself, which is usually diminishing everything else.

To dance is to surrender the self to something larger than the self.

Friedrich Nietzsche said he could only believe in a God who would dance...But nothing is larger than God, so how could God dance? He'd have to somehow limit himself, and still surrender himself, to himself. ...Like a son, dancing in the light of his Father's glory.

CS Lewis wrote, "In Christianity, God is not a static thing—not even a person—but a dynamic pulsating activity, a life, almost a kind of drama. Almost, if you will not think me irreverent, a kind of dance..."

The early church described God as three persons and one substance; God is love. God is three persons and none of them proud, but each one of them humbling the self, exalting the others, and dancing in that light.

"What does it all matter?" asks Lewis. "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. There is no other way to the happiness for which we were made."<sup>x</sup>

Well, anyway, we asked, "*How do you perfectly obey, without consciously making yourself do so?*" We asked, "*What kind of perfect order is also absolute freedom?*"

—Well, how about a great dance.<sup>xi</sup>

And, "*What kind of work is really rest?*"

—Well, how about play?

When little children play, they build things; they expend tremendous amounts of energy; and they suffer pain. But, it's not *work*; it's play—they don't have to *make* themselves do it. It's not discipline; it's more like dance.

They do everything we do, but they have fun. Because I worked at a church, my children played church. Not because they had to, but because they wanted to.

Video clip: Peter Hiett's family home video

*Clip begins as Peter walks into his children's bedroom, with the kids leading the way.*

Peter            K, this is where the church service is, right? OK.

His children   First we're going to pass around the offering.

*His little boy (Coleman) holds up basket, then puts it on his head. Older daughter hops off toybox to put water on forehead from a paper cup.*

Peter           And what does the water do?

Daughter       It clears up your mind, so you can see God better.

Peter           Ohh...well, that's good.

Older son       I'm thinking of the three ninjas.

*Youngest daughter begins leading all in song of "God's love is bubblin' over" with hand movements.*

Older daughter   If you need any praying, you can talk to John—he's right there. He will pray with you in the back of the prayer room.

*(camera pans to John, lying down on the floor who waves at camera)*

Older daughter continues           And today in the children's sermon, we're gonna talk about why God made the earth. How did God make the earth?

Little Coleman   God maked the earth!

Older daughter   Well, yeah—how did God make the earth? Does anybody know? Raise their hand. How did God make the earth?

John (singing)   Heeee---- he used cheese!

*Scene switches to show the children spinning around with ribbon, spinning singing "Hosanna!"*

*Scene switches to little Coleman singing.*

Coleman       And I just know why, God has given us this world...toothpaste for to eat! And Jesus—for to eat! And I'm gonna eat it...

Peter           Thank you! Thank you, Coleman!

I can't show you commercial movie clips because of our live stream, but I can show you this... and as you know, last week, I did. My kids taking an offering, praying, preaching—not so much fasting... but doing religious deeds. I told you: It was the worst church service ever performed, but for me it was perfection; for me it was stunningly beautiful—it was Good.

I know that movies of other people's kids are usually not so good. But when they're *your* kids, they're usually beautiful, even painfully good.

In all honesty, I can hardly watch the home movies that I have in the hall closet, for when I do I just ache with a longing that I just can't describe. I ache to go back to that afternoon with my kids in my daughter's bedroom.

So, I've been asking myself: *Self, what made that afternoon in the girl's bedroom, playing "church"—when you just wanted to get away from church (it was probably my day off)—What made that church service so beautiful... so Good?*

They played "church," not like actors in a theater. They played as children play, as if all their work was recreation, re-creation, a holiday, a holy day— not exercise, but dance. They sang, they prayed, they took an offering, and preached some sermons, practiced righteousness... and it was beautiful.

*But*, if I had said, "Listen kids, no TV tonight unless you sing some worship songs, pray some prayers, take an offering and preach a sermon...Now get to it!" —Well, it would *not* have been fun; it would *not* have been free; and it would *not* have been good or beautiful.

And imagine if I said, “At the end of the service there will be an evaluation, I’ll blow a trumpet, and hand out awards for the one that prays best, sings best, and preaches best.” —Well, that would’ve turned into weeping and gnashing of teeth.

And imagine if I said, “I’ve invited all the neighbors to come watch.” —Well, I know my kids would’ve frozen... no one would have sung, prayed, nor preached, and there would have been *no* spontaneous dancing.<sup>xii</sup>

So, what made that little church service in the girl’s bedroom so beautiful?

Well, to put it in theological language, I think it was this:

- My kids weren’t trying to justify themselves.
  - Instead, they were expressing the joy of their justification.
- They weren’t trying to earn my love.
  - They were dancing in the light of my unconditional love.
- They weren’t trying to be good.
  - They were expressing their goodness.
- They weren’t trying to make themselves in my image.
  - They were delighting in the fact that they *were* my image.

That’s not pride; I think that’s something more like worship. It wasn’t showing off as much as perfect humility.

“Perfect humility dispenses with modesty,” writes Lewis.<sup>xiii</sup>

It wasn’t humility that made Adam and Eve cover their shame after they took the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of Good and evil. It wasn’t humility; it was pride—it was the belief that they needed to make themselves in the image of God. That was the lie that made them hide from God and stop dancing.

It was the thought that they needed to *impress* God that made Adam and Eve *modest*. On the other hand, my children danced so *immodestly*, because they believed that I was already so very *impressed* with them.

Their dance was not perfect in an objective or complete sense, but they were in fact, perfectly dancing... maybe only one step here, and one step there, but it was the dance and it would grow into a kingdom. Most of what we call “Religion” isn’t the dance. But, at least in moments, my children were dancing—they were dancing in the light of my unconditional love, and that love didn’t come simply from me, or Susan, but from our Father in Heaven.

Did you notice that seven times, in just these verses we read today, Jesus informed this non-Christian group of Gentiles and Jews, that God was their Father? —Which makes them *all* God’s children.

He says: *Don’t do your righteousness to be seen by people, including yourself, for then you have already received your reward...* And like we pointed out, rewards can be problematic. But then Jesus goes on to say: *Do these things to be seen by your Father, and you Father who sees in secret, he will reward you.*

Well, what is that reward? I think we can only begin to speculate. But maybe first and foremost:



It's "*to be seen*." Don't we all long to be seen?

Ever since Eve and the first Adam took the fruit from the tree, we all long to be seen; and yet, we're terrified to be seen. And this may be the dirtiest trick of the devil: We all become actors in an effort to get God to look, but it's that very act that hides us from his love. He looks and says, "*I don't know you*," because that's not you; that's an act.

*Piety* hides you from God; and *righteousness* is a communion with God.

Maybe the reward is to be seen and then to see yourself in the light of his eyes.

If you see yourself in the mirror of the law, you'll judge yourself, and try to justify yourself, and so create a false self—an act.

If you see yourself in the eyes of your father, you'll see your true self, and be judged by relentless love, which is mercy.

His eyes are a fire that burns away *the false self*, (which believes it has created its own self) and reveals *the true self*, (created in the image and likeness of God). It's our false self, our *ego*, that keeps us from hearing the music of God's Love. And it's our true self that dances to the rhythm of His Infinite Mercy. You are "*the apple*" of his eye, but you did not create yourself; you are His creation... he sees his creation and declares it is Good.

It is not arrogance to agree with God and enjoy his judgment. It's not arrogance; that's humility.

In Hebrew, the "*apple of the eye*," refers to the *iyshwon*, the "little man" reflected in your Father's eye when he looks at you, and you look at him.<sup>xiv</sup> When you look at him, looking at you, your eyes reflect his glory; you "let your light shine."

The true "you" is so glorious that if you think you must justify yourself, you will be utterly crushed by the weight of your own Glory. You must believe that you have been justified, made right, and paid for... completely and solely by Grace.

So maybe the reward is that you realize you are seen by Love. And then you are able to see yourself in your Father's eyes and rejoice. And then you will join the dance... and the dance is its own reward.

Righteousness doesn't pay for the dance; righteousness *is* the dance that's paid for you and calls you to come join Him in the Dance. There is no reward for Love; Love is the reward. Love is your Creator. The reward is to be seen by Love, made in the image of Love, and then to begin to Love—to join the Dance.

See, I think that church service in my daughter's bedroom was a glimpse of the Garden of Eden. But my kids weren't returning to Eden; I think they were leaving Eden.

John left first, followed by Elizabeth, Becky, and then Coleman.

- They went to school, where they would each get a grade.
- They learned to judge themselves, so they could try and justify themselves.
- They forgot they were good... and tried to make themselves good.

Stated more accurately: They had enjoyed the Good, but didn't yet know they were good, and so were tempted to *make* themselves good. That is, they each were tempted to grow up... and grown-ups hide, and usually stop dancing.

Coleman was the last to leave, and so he was particularly cute in the video... because he was the worst at acting... and so his true self was most exposed. He preached, *"I know why God gave us this world... toothpaste for to eat... and Jesus for to eat... and I'm gonna eat it... amen."*

He had just gotten in trouble for eating toothpaste in the church service, and he was trying to justify himself—but his sermon was a confession. He smiled, and we all said, *"Thank you, Coleman."*

Fifteen years later, he had become better at hiding. Until he got busted by the cops for more than abusing toothpaste—but for smoking pot. (Ironically it was just a few months before it was legal in Colorado.) It was bad, but the experience was so incredibly good. For through all that pain, I got to show Coleman that my love for him is unconditional. And you see, Unconditional Love is the Good.

Unconditional Love is the Logic of the Dance.

We will all return to the garden.

We will *"... arrive where we started and know the place for the first time."*<sup>xv</sup>

We will know the Good, and choose to dance in freedom... That's Life.

We each have experienced the Good, but until we've returned to the tree in the middle of the Garden, until we've been to the cross and learned that unconditional love is Life, we haven't truly known the Good.

Jesus is the revelation and manifestation of the Good.

Jesus is the heart of our Father given to us on a tree

God is the Good and His Word is Life—He is the Logic of the Dance.

The Reward is to be seen by the Good... And to see that the Good has made you Good... And to join the dance, choosing to dance in perfect freedom, for you agree with the Judgment of God your Father: Love is Life and Life is Good.

Actually, you give birth to the Good, for every good deed you do is the fruit of His Spirit within you.

I'm aware that it's Mother's Day, and we've been talking about the Father. According to Scripture, there's actually only one Father.<sup>xvi</sup> And each of us is a mother giving birth to life: the fruit of His Spirit.

When you surrender to the Logos of God, and Dance with God in Jesus our Lord, you give birth to Good deeds—the life of God in human flesh. Those good deeds are also your reward:

1. But do you see, they only come by Grace; they're not a wage, even though they do involve labor.
2. The rewards are different in each person, but there's no need for jealousy, because together we are all one body—even a bride, then a mother.
3. To seek these rewards is not using the Good, but surrendering to the Good, and giving birth to the Good, God in human flesh, the Body of Christ, dancing.

A hundred-some years ago in Ghana, Africa, the Presbyterian missionaries allowed their African converts to worship in their native style during just one part of the service. And that's why to this

day in some African churches they still *"dance the offering."* They say it's the only part of the service where people smile—and that's what makes the offering good.

Now you may say, *"Well, I don't give to the needy, pray, or fast."* If so, you're not dancing. So you may ask, *"Should I make myself?"*

Maybe so, but if you simply make yourself, you're still not dancing. Instead try practicing the steps, but only while listening to the music. *"We love"* only because *"He first loved us;"* that's the music.

If you're not listening to the Good News of your Father's Unconditional Love, you may convince yourself that your dancing, but you're probably just jerking yourself around... and everyone else with you.

Coleman got an electric guitar for Christmas one year and immediately began to practice; he couldn't wait to play. But it's hard to make your left-hand form chords on the neck of the guitar, while simultaneously making your right-hand strum a particular rhythm.

Well, I got the score to an old Elvis tune off of the Internet. (That's knowledge of the steps—good and evil.) I showed him how to position his fingers on the neck for the chords. And I described the strum.

But it all sounded pretty bad... until Coleman discovered a secret: One night he said, *"Dad, you sing, and I'll play along."*

Well, when I sang, his fingers just began to dance: his right hand would strum in rhythm; his left hand would change chords at just the right time... all because he happily surrendered to the Word of his father as I sang, *"I'm just a hunka, hunk-of burning love."* It was at that point that all his discipline turned into dance.

God the Father is singing.  
His Word is Jesus.  
And He'd like you to play along; He'd like you to dance.

## Communion

So, on the night he was betrayed, the Word of our Father took bread, broke it, and said, *"This is my body given to you."* And in the same way, He took the cup, saying, *"This is the covenant in my blood. Drink of it, all of you."*

---

[Band plays, "Burning Love" by Elvis Presley]

---

## BENEDICTION:

So, Lord God, I thank you that you are one hundred percent Love, and you are one hundred percent consuming fire—your burning love. So look at me, God. And I thank you for giving me the courage

to look at you. You're Good. And I thank you that you make us Good. So we can join your dance. In Jesus's name, I thank you. Amen.

So, what am I saying? I'm saying:

- Sing your little songs.
- Pray your little prayers.
- Hold a little fast if you think he'd like you to do so.
- Preach your little sermons.
- Go on your little mission trips.
- Practice all these little disciplines.

But constantly aware that your heavenly Father sees, and his eyes burn with infinite love for you. Then your discipline will begin to turn into dance. And that dance is not little; it is the new creation.

2 Corinthians 5:17 (ISV) "...If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. Old things have disappeared, and—look!—all things have become new!"

That's quite a reward!

In Jesus's name, believe the Gospel. Amen.

## Endnotes

---

—Strong's Lexicon, #586: *apecho*

<sup>ii</sup> 1 John 1:5

<sup>iii</sup> John 8:12, 9:5

<sup>iv</sup> John 8:37

<sup>v</sup> Matthew 11:17, Luke 7:32

<sup>vi</sup> God "dances" creation. He is the dancer, creation is his dance. The dance is different from the dancer; yet it has no existence apart from him. You cannot take it home in a box if it pleases you. The moment the dancer stops, the dance ceases to be. . . . Be silent and contemplate the dance. Just look: a star, a flower, a fading leaf, a bird, a stone . . . any fragment of the dance will do. Look. Listen. Smell. Touch. Taste. And, hopefully, it won't be long before you see him -- the dancer himself!

- Anthony DeMello, *Anthony DeMello*

<sup>vii</sup> When the Lion had first begun singing, long ago when it was still quite dark, he [Uncle Andrew] had realised that the noise was a song. And he had disliked the song very much. It made him think and feel things he did not want to think and feel. Then, when the sun rose and he saw that the singer was a lion ("only a lion," as he said to himself) he tried his hardest to make himself believe that it wasn't singing and never had been singing—only roaring as any lion might in a zoo in our own world. "Of course it can't really have been singing," he thought, "I must have imagined it. I've been letting my nerves get out of order. Who ever heard of a lion singing?" And the longer and more beautifully the Lion sang, the harder Uncle Andrew tried to make himself believe that he could hear nothing but roaring. Now the trouble about trying to make yourself stupider than you really are is that you very often succeed. Uncle Andrew did. He soon did hear nothing but roaring in Aslan's song. Soon he couldn't have heard anything else even if he had wanted to. And when at last the Lion spoke and said, "Narnia awake," he didn't hear any words: he heard only a snarl. And when the Beasts spoke in answer, he heard only barkings, growlings, bayings and howlings. And when they laughed—well, you can imagine. . . .

"He thinks great folly, child," said Aslan. "This world is bursting with life for these few days because the song with which I called it into life still hangs in the air and rumbles in the ground. It will not be so for long. But I cannot tell that to this old sinner, and I cannot comfort him either; he has made himself unable to hear my voice. If I spoke to him, he would hear only growlings and roarings. Oh Adam's sons, how cleverly you defend yourselves against all that might do you good! But I will give him the only gift he is still able to receive."

He bowed his great head rather sadly, and breathed into the Magician's terrified face. "Sleep," he said. "Sleep and be separated for some few hours from all the torments you have desired for yourself." Uncle Andrew immediately rolled over and closed eyes and began breathing peacefully.

- C. S. Lewis, *The Magician's Nephew*

viii For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. – Romans 8:20-23

ix As long as you notice, and have to count the steps, you are not yet dancing but only learning to dance. A good shoe is a shoe you don't notice. Good reading becomes possible when you need not consciously think about eyes, or light, or print, or spelling. The perfect church service would be one we were almost unaware of; our attention would have been on God.

C. S. Lewis, *Letters to Malcolm*

x 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. If God was a single person, then before the world was made, He was not love...

And that, by the way, is perhaps the most important difference between Christianity and all other religions: that in Christianity God is not a static thing—not even a person—but a dynamic, pulsating activity, a life, almost a kind of drama. Almost, if you will not think me irreverent, a kind of dance...

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. There is no other way to the happiness for which we were made.

- C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* p.152-153

xi The dance is a particularly interesting expression of important issues in that it connotes an intensity which avoids the burdensome. This is because dance is a form of playing – not working. . . . The seriousness of play as opposed to the seriousness of work reveals a mode of being totally given to its *raison d'être* while work is always done for the purpose of something else. . . . Play, then, is a highly ordered but totally free experience which can also be said of sacred activity. Freedom and order (the law) are perennially the watchwords in religious thinking. Freedom in its relation to sacred order means freely willed rather than constrained obedience to law. Lewis summarized it well: "For surely we must suppose the life of the blessed to be an end in itself, indeed The End: to be utterly spontaneous; to be the complete reconciliation of boundless freedom with order—with the most delicately adjusted, supple, intricate, and beautiful order?" (*Letters to Malcolm*, p. 94). It is in the dance that the reconciliation of freedom and order can perhaps be most vividly imagined. "The pattern deep hidden in the dance, hidden so deep that shallow spectators cannot see it, alone gives beauty to the wild, free gestures that fill it, just as the decasyllabic norm gives beauty to all the licences and variation of the poet's verse," Lewis writes when talking about Milton's world view. In some sense we could say that the dance reconciles the two poles, but at the same time freedom and order generate the dance. A result of their fusion is a concrete and dynamic third reality, or, more appropriately, freedom and order are a dance. . . . The distinctions, freedom and order, generate the dance: their reconciliation is a dance. The material not only has religious significance in the dance, but is, along with the spiritual, essential to the dance. And this spirituality is not burdensome because the seriousness of dance is the seriousness of play.

- Marcia Tanner, *The Image of Dance in the Works of C. S. Lewis*

xii I remember how cute they used to be, but the moment someone came to visit, and I tried to show them how cute my kids were, all the cuteness just vanished. They became aware of themselves and lost all their cuteness.

xiii C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory* p. 13

xiv Psalm 17:8

xv "We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.  
Through the unknown, unremembered gate  
When the last of earth left to discover  
Is that which was the beginning;  
At the source of the longest river  
The voice of the hidden waterfall  
And the children in the apple-tree  
Not known, because not looked for  
But heard, half-heard, in the stillness  
Between two waves of the sea.  
Quick now, here, now, always  
A condition of complete simplicity  
(Costing not less than everything)  
And all shall be well and  
All manner of thing shall be well  
When the tongues of flames are in-folded  
Into the crowned knot of fire  
And the fire and the rose are one."

---

- TS Eliot

<sup>xvi</sup> Matthew 23:9, Ephesians 4:6, Hebrews 2:11