

## Sermon Archive 145

Thursday 13 April, 2017

Knox Church, Christchurch

Lesson: Psalm 116: 1, 10-17

Preacher: Rev. Dr Matthew Jack



**Reflection:** Because I love you . . .

Darkness has come, and we have drawn the circle, my God. We've turned on the little lamp in the great space of this world, and gathered the whanau. On the edge of our gathering there are strange sorts of thoughts – like angels might be whispering words like “end”, “put out the light”, “good night sweet man”. But they're doing it with love, and love seems to be taking possession of heart and mind. I want to give myself to love.

I love you Lord. I love you because of all the good things you have done for me. As I look back on it all, there is just such wonderful kindness running through it. In giving me into the hands of Mary and Joseph at the start, you gave me a deepest blessing – my nurturing, my protection, my cherishing – people who thought I was the most important person in the world. Mum had such courage and faith, such love. It was like she saw her caring for me as a sacred duty – as if one day long before, with total integrity, she might have made a vow “Here I am, the servant of the Lord”. She truly was your handmaiden – and I was blessed because of it. I love you because of her.

I love you, Lord. I love you because you gave me an eye to see beauty around me – flowers of the fields, birds of the air, glory on the mountains. Face to face with other people, you gave me an eye to see not sinners and devils, but the work of your hands – yes, sometimes flawed people with far to go, but still the work of your hands. You gave me friends. You gave me flesh of my flesh, bone of my bone, deep placement in the miracle of re-creative company. The blind will see, the lame will walk, the mute will sing! And you enabled me to be part of that. I love you for all the good things you have done for me.

I love you, Lord. I love you because whenever I called upon you, you inclined your ear to me. You listened to me. I'm not able, Lord, quite to explain what it means to want to be **heard** by you. It's not about speaking with words. It's more like wanting to know that all I am, all I wonder, all I hope, all I fear, is somehow cared for, respected, understood. There's just so much within me longing for patient audience, for unconditional hearing. There's just so much unexpressed stuff needing somewhere to go, some safe harbour in which to berth. And without words, when I have offered it, it has felt like you have turned to me and listened - listened to the heart that I have opened.

I love you because you have heard the voice of my supplication, and because whenever my being has called upon you, it feels like you have listened.

I love you, Lord. I love you because you have freed me from my bonds. Life hasn't always been simple. There have been things into which I've stumbled, propensities that could have entangled me. Pride. Shame. Greed. Laziness. Making too much wine at the wedding. Taking too little bread to the banquet. Throwing myself from the towers of the temple. Worshipping One not worthy. Calling the Samaritan woman a "dog". Declaring "no, I'm not caring for that ethnic group – only for my own people". I've had so many possibilities for getting it wrong and becoming entangled in what might demean me and those around me. But somehow you have freed me from my bonds. Opened my eyes just a little, opened my heart just a little, opened my hands just a little, kept the saving vision before me – just a little. And in all the "just a little" mercies, I have been able to remain free to be who you created me to be – to be part of what you do: the forgiving Word, the befriending Word, the redeeming Word, the life-giving Word, the Word that moves with love. I love you because you have kept me free.

I love you, Lord. I love you because you have enabled me to see that precious in your sight is the death of your servants – and I am your servant. On the edge of our gathering, there are strange sorts of thoughts – like angels are whispering "end", "put out the light", "good night sweet man" – like beyond our little light, the darkness is deep. I love you Lord,

because you have enabled me to approach my ending with the gentle yet strong hope that it will not be marked by silence, nor by not-caring. But that it will be marked by your saying “precious”. Precious is this ending. Precious was this life. Precious is my servant. When I am robbed of everything – of breath, of light, of life, you will say “precious”. So I will love you, Lord.

How will I repay you for all the good things you have done for me?

I will offer you a sacrifice of thanksgiving.

I will make and fulfil vows in the presence of all your people.

I will seek your house.

I will call upon your name

and lift up the cup of salvation.

I will invite your many beloved peoples

to a table for eating and drinking,

for remembering

and for celebrating your love.

I will break bread and give it to them,

pour out wine for their blessing.

With my whole heart, soul and strength,

I will celebrate your love for us.

And though it be night,

and though the darkness is coming,

together we will say our last supper “Hallelujah”.

-ooOoo-

Darkness has come, and we have drawn the circle. We’ve turned on the little lamp in the great space of this world. And you have given us moment for gratitude.

On the edge of our gathering, with strange sorts being whispered, we love you, Lord. Receive our praise.

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