

3-19-2018

## SA Lenten Devotions 2018 “The Love of God” Week 6

Daniel Warner

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, warnerd@csl.edu

John Karolus

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, karolusj@csl.edu

Jonathan Torreson

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, torresonj@csl.edu

Elizabeth Pederson

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, pedersone@csl.edu

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### Recommended Citation

Warner, Daniel; Karolus, John; Torreson, Jonathan; and Pederson, Elizabeth, "SA Lenten Devotions 2018 “The Love of God” Week 6” (2018). *Other Student Publications*. 9.

<https://scholar.csl.edu/osp/9>

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**LENJEN**  
DEVOTIONS

THE  
*Fool*  
THE  
*Beloved*

A CONCORDIA SEMINARY  
STUDENT COLLABORATION  
LENT 2018

## The Love of God

### **Week 6**

This week our writers explore the theme, “The Love of God” from various angles. It is at once more abundant, more steadfast, more truthful, more tender, and more powerful than ours.

May these devotions aid in your reflection on that love of God in all its various forms, but especially that form in which it came to earth and bore our sin that we might be with Him forever.

## The Love of God

**Monday**

Seminarian Daniel Warner, 4<sup>th</sup> Year

**March 19, 2018**

Based on Psalm 103:17

“But the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him.” (Psalm 103:17)

*This guy again! \*sigh\* Here we go! What now? How will you tax my time and energy today? What new burdens will you lay upon me? How long until you leave me alone again or I can excuse myself from this conversation?*

Small doses. That’s all we have sometimes. Most of us have at least one of these people in our lives. We love them because we have to. At some point they rubbed us the wrong way with something they said or did. Their actions and words darkened our view of them. We remember their offenses to us. We remember their abrasive personalities. And now, small doses with this person are all we can stand. They have proven to be hard to love. So now we tolerate them...for a while. We love them...for a while. And at the same time, we forget that we each are hard to love, that we each may often be the very person someone else also merely tolerates and loves in small doses because of our own past offenses.

God’s love is different. While we often measure up a person and love them accordingly, God’s love isn’t dependent on a darkened view of us and our past transgressions. Rather, His love is given freely to us. Despite the fact that we rightly could only be tolerated in small doses, despite the fact that we were unlovable, despite the fact that we even hated Him, His love flowed out freely from Jesus’ pierced hands and feet and side, not in small doses, but in abundance. His steadfast love shown through Christ’s death and resurrection remains eternal for those who fear Him, for those who look to the cross He pours out large doses of His love and forgiveness.

What wondrous love is this,  
O my soul, O my soul!  
What wondrous love is this, O my soul!  
What wondrous love is this  
That caused the Lord of bliss  
To bear the dreadful curse for my soul, for my soul,  
To bear the dreadful curse for my soul! (LSB 543)

## The Love of God

**Tuesday**

Seminarian John Karolus, 2<sup>nd</sup> Year

**March 20, 2018**

Based on Psalm 107:43

“Whoever is wise, let him attend to these things; let them consider the steadfast love of the LORD.” (Psalm 107:43)

As we draw closer to The Friday of Lent, we continue to remember our former state. Our journey has taken us low in repentance, and still we must go lower. A wandering path through the dry wastelands, parched, hungry, and tired. Psalm 107 offers some explanation to this dark and dreary path, I encourage you to read the whole of it now. Go ahead, just 43 verses, many of them very short. It starts out with the all familiar phrase, you may have heard it in worship music, or repeated it before or after meals, “Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good!”

Then the Psalm takes a darker turn, explaining the origins of so many of those who call on the name of the Lord. May we remember the darkness we have been led out of, so as not to forget the dependence we have on God. He gives us a city to dwell in: a city of light. He fills our hungry souls with good things: food that does not perish. He has delivered us from our afflictions, and given us Shalom. We remember our sorry former state in this season of repentance, for it is wise to consider the truly steadfast love of the Lord. For this, we give thanks to our Lord.

## The Love of God

**Wednesday**

Seminarian Trevor Freudenberg, 4<sup>th</sup> Year

**March 21, 2018**

Based on Jude 21

The world and our broader culture have utterly hijacked the concept of 'love'. Whereas love once stood for sacrifice, devotion, and honesty, it is now culturally a pale, maudlin imitation of its former self. Often the world's definition of love, pleasant feelings and comfort, anesthetizes and distracts from the truth of our lives, from the truth of the world around us. 'Love' today often glosses over uncomfortable realities – the reality of the depth of our sin and our own self-deception.

God's love is different – it does not distract from or hide the truth, it is revelatory. Jude prays: "...keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life" (Jude 21). The love of God did not hide the death and sin that lies dormant within us but uncovered it and revealed it. The love of God simply tells the truth: the truth about our sinful lives, and the truth about what it took to remove that sin: the cross of Christ. The cross of Christ is no easy and saccharine reality – it is a bloody, messy affair.

As we journey to the cross this Lent, let us remind ourselves of the love of God shown through the cross, love who sacrificed himself for us. It is an agape love. It is for those who are not worthy, for the unlovable, for us. As Christ's church, let us reflect this love in our lives in and by our pursuit of the truth. We reflect the love of God by speaking the truth in love, revealing what God has revealed to us, telling the truth in a world of lies and deception, and sacrificially loving others in that same unlovable, undeserving world from which we have been called out. The one who truly loves tells the truth. The one who tells the truth is the one who loves. Let us be people of God's love.

## The Love of God

**Thursday**

**March 22, 2018**

Seminarian Jonathan Torreson, 4<sup>th</sup> Year

Based on Lamentations 3:22

The natural knowledge of God is intriguing. When I think of all the ways that God blesses us and so also makes himself known, the image that normally comes to my mind is on from Michigan, where I grew up. I picture the sunset over Lake Michigan, just along the shore. I remember this scene in particular for multiple reasons. Many times my family spent our vacation under that sun, where it seemed like life could not be better. However, sometimes we'd go to the shoreline to watch the sunset after a week of stress, pain, and sadness. I had many laughs under that sun setting past the crashing waves, I also had many tears. But something that never changed when looking at it, that kept drawing us back was its God-given beauty. I remember the times where I could just sit with admiration knowing that the God who created that beautiful sun made all things, and continues to bless me. I remember the times so also sitting under that same sunset with questions for God about the hardships in life, pleading for His almighty help through my tears.

The natural knowledge of God is indeed a beautiful thing; that sunset was a beautiful gift. But yet in such chaotic lives—in such sinfully fallen lives as our own—we can be grateful that God not only gives us the beauty of His creation, but daily gives us many other immeasurably great gifts that we don't deserve. Lamentations 3:22 says, "The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end." It's wonderful that the Lord has blessed us with this creation and all it offers us, the beauty of a sunset, the relaxation of a sandy beach, but his mercies are always new and never coming to an end. No matter how we may feel, He continues to give, and gives more, whether or not we are always aware of such gifts. He gives clothing, shoes, food, drink, family, air to breathe, bodies that exist, grace, mercy, and peace. He gives us Jesus, His forgiveness and His righteousness. Though we are fallen He lifts us up. Though we are weak He makes us strong. Though we are sinners He calls us saints, brothers, and sisters. In this life we will experience pain, sadness, times where we will feel defeated. During these times it's my prayer that God's new mercies would be made clear in our lives, that He would surround us in love, and that our eyes would be focused all the more on Jesus, who was, who still is, and who is to come. Amen.

## The Love of God

Friday

March 23, 2018

Deaconess Elizabeth Pederson, 1<sup>st</sup> Year

Based on Romans 8:38-39

“For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, **nor anything else** in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:38-39; Emphasis added.)

When reading the verses for today’s devotion, we notice that the things on the “list” (death, life, angels, rulers, etc.) are out of our control. We do not know when we will die. We do not know what our leaders are going to do next. We do not know where we will be sent on Call Day. In our not knowing, we are also unable to control. God will demand our lives when He decides. We can write letters to our representatives and leaders in government with little guarantee that the letters will change things.

All right, so we know there is very little we can control! Personally, this drives me crazy, as I suspect it does you as well. Most of us want to know everything right now, not after the fact. And in our worry about what is going to actually happen tomorrow or next year, or just with the outcome of our grades this semester, we find that we are our trust in God being supplanted. Similarly, if things are not going the way we want, then we all too easily can find our trust in God undermined. Thankfully, God calls us back to Himself even when our trust wavers.

In the verses above, I have emphasized “nor anything else.” In a very real sense, this includes ourselves. Short of rejecting His promises to us in Christ, we cannot separate ourselves from God’s love. What joy it brings that God loves us even when we are in the worst of conditions! We can be assured that “nor anything else” includes depression, anxiety, and stress, and also our sins during periods of weakness amidst the difficulties of life. Even when we were *dead* in our sins God sent His Son, to make us alive in Christ. He overcame our complete lack of trust. How much more will He renew the lives and strengthen the trust of us whom He has called His own through baptism! Praise God that He will never abandon us!