

HOLY RELATIONSHIPS – GOD’S HOLY LOVE

by Daphne Austin

Last week Mark preached on Pentecost, reminding us again that the coming of the Holy Spirit heralded in God’s building of His church, One Body, reminding His people of the new covenant, the spirit given to enable us, his people to continue to live out the type of relationship that Jesus had modelled for the new covenant, for the completion of the purposes of God. The type of relationship that Jesus had with his people was now possible for ever – a relationship of deep meaningful intimate love with God, and with one another. So often, as was highlighted last week, what is often focused on from Pentecost is the sign God used, the flaming tongues of fire that danced on the heads of His people, and the languages spoken of every tribe and tongue to indicate unity in diversity, rather than what the signs represented. What is so often missed is the cry of God’s heart for his people and the longing and desire in His heart for that connection with Him, through love and power, for the ongoing unity of the Body, the continuance and health and intimacy of relationship, with a deep connection through the outpouring of His love through His Spirit uniting His Body to Himself, one in Spirit and in Truth, in Relationship, in Love.

Today, and next week, over two messages, I invite us together, to unpack a little more what Holy Relationships, and Holy Love, between God and us, which I propose needs to come first, and then us and his people, really can, not only look like, but be in reality, every day. And it doesn’t have to be as hard as it often is for us.

1 John: 3 1-3

See what love the Father has given that we should be called the children of God – and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved we are god’s children now; it does not appear what we shall be but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And every one who thus hopes in him, purifies himself as He is pure.

This love relationship God has for us of course did not begin at Pentecost, it began at the beginning of time – The first five words of Genesis – In the beginning God created – was when it began, and the peak, the pinnacle of His creation was, man,

with whom he said – he was well pleased. Created in His image, and His image was, and remains at the core of any relationship, bonding Creator, to his created.

In that initially perfect relationship, between God and Adam – and just as an aside, the Hebrew word Adam actually meant both male and female, interestingly, a word to identify the complimentary sameness, & diversity within his created, yet God in His love, went further and created a physical separateness when he said, it is not good for man to be alone, and so from Adam, from maleness and femaleness, he created a helpmate, whom we know as Eve. Together they had a perfect relationship with their Creator, walking in the garden with Him, in intimacy, the meeting of soul and spirit. They were made in His image, except that he was their Creator and they, His creation. They were in essence one with him, no blame, no shame, no fear. They knew who they were in his image, unashamedly walking amongst the other of his creation, the animals, mountains, valleys, sky and seas, no secrets, no gossip, no slander, no blaming, honouring, respecting, truthful and in perfect love being expressed between creator and created.

We know that that all changed in the garden, in what we know as the Fall, and what happened there meant that ever since, we have struggled in coming back to having this holy pure relationship between Creator and created, between God and us. And all through the old testament, how far this Holy relationship between God and his people and one another drifted, in seen over and over and over again in the biblical record. The question begs asking. Can we really experience the oneness that God had with Adam and Eve? Can we really have the oneness and unity that God had with His people at Pentecost in the calling together of His church bringing again through signs Unity in diversity, – that love relationship between He and His people, Creator and created, through His spirit? Yes, we can. If we are prepared to understand what is possible and available, in receiving the fullness of God's love to us, Gods Holy relationship to us. Then, out of that, the sharing of a Holy love with His people. This was the offer given by God in the new covenant, through the gift of His spirit, to recapture and relive, be transformed again, to unite the Body. This was designed by God for the continuance of what Jesus had modelled and to fulfil what he prophesied and said, the kingdom of God is upon me – folks, the kingdom of God is upon us.

When we do not know and as yet have not received the fullness of the relationship God seeks to have in love with us, we are left to try and find fulfilment through our own effort, or to simply try to copy what Jesus did –and find some sort of good loving relationship to satisfy, and of course as most of us would know, we fall short. Why, because we do not have what God offers first to us – the outpouring of His love within us. What perhaps is even more sad, and I would think, sad for God, is that he misses out too and he sees many of us settling for second best.

Relationships lie at the very core of the entire biblical revelation concerning God and his people. Relationships lie at the core of every person to person interaction that we have. Sure, there are different types of relationships, but they are all relationships. The issue of relationship therefore should be one of our most important priorities. So often it's the least.

Being in right relationship with God, the source of Life, is to be alive and fulfilled. To be separated from the closeness and right relationship with God, is to be anything but alive, and certainly never truly fulfilled. We may walk, and talk, eat, laugh, cry, do good things, work hard, but we will never be alive, or fulfilled, without that close relationship with God. Because every person seeks fulfilment, without it, we will spend most of our time trying to find something else, a second best substitute, to keep us alive in spirit, and fulfilled in life. A never ending, tiring, unsatisfying, quest.

Our relationship with God, and with others, are very closely aligned, whether we realise it or not. Not identical because we are called to worship God, exclusively. However, there is a common ground which our relationship with God and with others shares, and justifies what relationship is all about.

Relationship is the mutual sharing of life between two persons.

Mutuality has to occur. In order to have relationship, both parties must contribute something. Sharing life has perhaps, not been, so well understood. Sharing life is a spiritual thing, as well as a physical and emotional thing. James tells us that the Body without the spirit is dead. A relationship without the spirit is dead. Remember when you spoke to someone and you just clicked – the vibes were right, you seemed on the same wavelength. Now remember another time when you spoke with someone and

you felt the invisible glass wall between you. In the first situation, the spirit was engaged, and you connected spirit to spirit, that's really what vibes are about, and in the second, where you didn't connect, that is where another person's spirit was denied. Sharing life involves interaction of spirit – one to another. When a relationship is lacking and distant and not connecting, you are not connecting spirit to spirit – let alone, with anything else. And so it is with God and us.

God wants to have relationship with us, His people, spirit to spirit, and has completed all the work necessary to enable this to occur. It will only work, if we are open and prepared to receive from Him, his spirit. Because he is the only one who can give to us Holy, pure, love, to give to another, then the key to all healthy relationships lies in our having a healthy whole relationship with Him – spirit to spirit. So what does God offer to us in the relationship he seeks to have with us?

I want to propose four cornerstones of His relationship with us, each one needing to be present to establish a firm foundation upon which every other relationship we have, can be built. We will look at the first two today, and the next two next week. The four cornerstones are Holy Love, the most enduring, Trust, the most fragile, Respect or honour – the most neglected, and Knowledge or Understanding – the one that takes the longest to acquire.

On the screen will be an image that once constructed will look like a table with four legs, each leg, representing one of the four cornerstones, and then the table top, becoming the firm foundation on which all other relationships can be built. Remember as we unpack we are looking at this first from what God is offering to us – the question is, have we or are we receiving this from Him, allowing His spirit to connect with ours?

Let's start with love, perhaps the one which we are most familiar with. Perhaps we delude ourselves by the familiarity with which we think we understand love, and perhaps that has in fact inoculated us against a true understanding of Holy love.

God teaches us by saying, we are to love- with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind and with all our strength (Deut 6:5, Matthew 22:37). Love is actually a

response that has to engage all our faculties, not just our feelings. “Love that is only a warm feeling is only sentiment. Love that engages only the mind, is only admiration, Love that is only a matter of will is also cold charity” . Love has to be spirit to spirit, spiritual, and in that, from the heart, emotional, from the soul, behavioural, from the mind, and attitudinal, with a strength of giving, for it to count as a truly, Holy, loving relationship. We all crave for and need this depth of love, and yes, God I believe craves to have this type of relationship with us. We are created in His image, so he offers to us with all his heart, his soul, his mind, his strength, as Christ did to all he connected with, when he came to us, God on earth. God yearns for and offers this to us through the Holy Spirit. Lets look at some aspects of this Holy love he offers, in practical everyday terms.

1. Care: love in action

Caring requires being involved, it is dynamic, it is active. Care is one of the key tests for the presence of love in any relationship. Care is not just about having a warm feeling about something, or someone. Care is attending to their best interests. Mutual care leads to harmony and peace, but when neglected, there is carelessness, lack of peace, lack of harmony. It takes two to care – the Holy Spirit comes to care, God offers his care, through his spirit – and then it requires someone, us, accepting His care. How open are we to receiving His care for us. His Spirit is longing to care for you. God offers this to us.

2. Kindness: Connectedness through kinship

Kindness comes from the same Hebrew root word as kinship. This carries with it the recognition that we are His next of Kin. God’s next of kin. The Hebrew word ge’ol here, which we translate as, Redeemer, literally means, the one who acts as kinsman, and connected to it, is implied kind acts. Kindness heals wounds, kindness, refers to the acts one does seeking nothing in return.

Luke 6:35 says, Do good to others, lend to them without expecting to get anything back, Then your reward will be great, and you will be the children of the Most high because he is kind to all” God’s holy love to us offers his kindness to us, and out of His Holy Love actually asks nothing back. He does it, as unworthy as we are. A good test of whether we know what it is to have within us God’s fullness of the measure of Kindness is do we do acts expecting nothing in return. Is it there within us first, from

God's relationship to us, such that we can do that for others? Do we recognise when God does it for us? How often we miss the kindness done by others, is this because we are missing the kindness given to us by God? God offers this to us.

3: **Liking – love at its most pleasant**

Scripturally, liking is about finding favour in God's eyes. Ruth, had an intimate relationship with God, she knew about this concept of liking – and liking is essential in any relationship where there is desired a degree of intimacy. To be intimately involved with someone whom one actually dislikes, does not find favour with, can be unbearable, if not impossible. Ruth asked of the Lord, May I continue to find favour in your eyes, my Lord. Liking is characterised by that sense of appeal, or interest, of affection, and fondness. It comes from a complimentary exchange of interaction, a desire to be interested in another person's world and stems from healthy communication and togetherness of interest which flows from that interaction. God is so interested in who we are and what we do, and wants to be part of that everyday, friend to friend. How are we with this – or are we the demanding friend who only asks for others and ourselves. Are we interested enough in God, in his world, to receive His favour, his liking to us, that he is seeking to share? God offers this to us. This leads to the next one.

4: **Friendship:**

What passes for friendship in our society is often a poor comparison with the friendship that God offers to us, and with the friendships we see in the biblical record. For example, the friendship between David and Jonathon, or Naomi, and Ruth found in the Bible. Friendships that are about equality, openness, and endurance, through trials and tribulation, through good times and bad, through times of wisdom, and times of weakness. God, through holy spirit love, comes to be our friend, through all these times. Do we have God's friendship to sustain us in our friendships with others. What type of friend to Him are we. Do we sit, just to listen and let him share his interests with us, as we do with our friends?

5: **Tenderness – which we may translate as gentleness**

For tenderness to be present means there needs to be an awareness of the possibility of being hurt, or being vulnerable in a relationship, and within these two things,

relationships are therefore precious and need to be looked after. Western society has stereotyped tenderness as weakness. Tenderness is gentle, but it does not stem from weakness, it stems from strength, and is both protective and reassuring. Have we allowed ourselves to be filled with the tenderness God offers that we may share that tenderness with others. Or have we closed that off, because we have like society, seen that as weakness. God offers tenderness to us.

6: Generosity – this is love at its most liberal.

This is not really about money, which is where most people link generosity to. Generosity first and foremost from God is about time. Within that, the giving of time, attention, assistance, encouragement, and praise. It is by nature extravagant. My hunch is this is one of the aspects of God's holy love that we sell out to God far too much on. God longs and longs and longs, I believe to share time with us, to lavish his attention, assistance, encouragement to us – but we, shortchange him. Remember, relationship is about mutuality and about spirit to spirit – and requires something of both parties. When God longs for our time, hangs out for us, and we are not there for him, not only do we not receive his generosity, and as such, do not have it to give to others, I believe he, like any friend whom we turn down or away from or do not connect with, will be sad and disappointed. In our western society, we are so time structured and ordered, and I include myself in here, that we really leave little for the things that don't seem to matter too much. What priority do we give to God's friendship for us. God offers this to us.

7: Compassion: Love and empathy, and sometimes, sympathy

This is not mere sentiment – compassion requires a response, of feelings and with actions. It requires feeling the sadness and distress of another, and the desire to be with them in their pain, or to move towards an action that offers support or care. If we are hard and cold, and detached, or distanced, we will not experience or allow compassion, neither can we receive it. And hence, we will not genuinely respond to a need. Compassion requires one's presence of spirit, soul, and desire, in time of need being there with another. God offers this to us.

8: Forgiveness: Grace in action

We have spoken much on forgiveness at other times in our messages. Forgiveness is ceasing blame, letting the offender go free of our punishment, leaving any accountability to God, or where necessary to the authorities of the land. It's about not keeping scorecards. You know, if we keep scorecards on others, and bring them up, as weapons in times of trial or conflict, – we have not yet been filled with the fullness of God's forgiveness. God tells us that our sins, once forgiven are as far as the east is from the west. What do we do with the sins of others. Are they that far, have we truly forgiven. Or are they right next to us so that we can use them as swords to cut, and hurt another to make ourselves feel better, or justified? It is only out of that forgiveness that we can forgive others. If we are struggling with constantly bringing up past incidences there is a place for us to allow God to touch us with this aspect of His holy love, his forgiveness in a new way. Perhaps we have missed the depth of His love here for us first. I want to make a bold statement here:

If God is not the love of our Life, – then love, or the seeking of any aspect of it, from others, will become the God of our life.

No other relationship can provide the depth of love we need, for ourselves, and then from within us, to offer to others, that that which first God offers us. Scripture says, We love, because God first loved us. How much are receiving His love. This is what being filled with the Holy Spirit is all about. We cannot find this perfection, this love, in marriage, or friendship, in its fullness through trying to find it in another. We will always be disappointed, or let down. We cannot love, with Holy love, if we first are not filled with and experiencing God's love as he offers it in its fullness to us through His spirit. Our love needs will never be met by another created person, or animal, or object, or work, or ministry. Never.

Many people have had an issue with why should God come first in our relationship, before family. This is the reason – we cannot offer the type of love that is needed one to another, without first receiving it in its fullness from God, through His Spirit – and secondly, when we don't do this, we seek love from others that can never match God's love, and make that seeking, the first thing in our life and when it falls short, we separate ourselves from them, and from God. Why, because we have it the wrong way round. At Pentecost, God sent His Holy Spirit with the cry of His heart to share

His holy love and be in relationship with us, fulfilling us, not only our needs, but offering us this love, to overflowing, that it could be there for others needs. Then we minister out of the overflow that we have talked about before.

Lets look somewhat more briefly at the second cornerstone - trust:

Have we realised that God seeks to trust us, with his relationship with Him, with His creation, his world, with other people whom he entrusts us to be with.

The world would be an impossible place without trust. Sadly there are people who try to live their lives that way, after some bitter experience, or betrayal of trust, they close themselves off. In not trusting others, they lock others out of their world, but not only that, they lose what someone else is offering to them from their world.

All of us as babies were born trusting. The innocent trust of childhood is turned into the wary eyes, distrusting eyes from emotional scars. The difficulty is that we generalise from one or two or sadly sometimes many scars, to all people, including God . Although trust is essential, its nature and requirements are sometimes not understood or even thought about.

Is faith trust? Faith is not trust. **Trust is a condition is which you voluntarily make yourself dependent on another person for some outcome or for some result.** It is about choice, because we cannot be forced to trust. Trust is a voluntary decision. God gave us free will, and in that, he gave us choice, and he does not force us to trust him, or to do anything. However, he offers us His trust, and he would like first, for us to trust the trust he offers, and in that he then, can also, trust us. Can he do that? Have we developed a relationship with him, receiving his Holy love, and in that developing a trusting relationship with Him, to enable us to learn what it is to use his trust, known to us, and offer wise trust with others. Trust is also about attitude, with its beliefs, its feelings of assurance, and behaviours that go with it.

Trust is also about risk, calculated risks. When we go to hospital we trust the doctors, we trust the nurses with our care – yet they are, in essence often strangers – and yet some of us will not trust those who have proved their trust over many years through conversation, and support, and following through on helping us in our needs, and our

hurts. Sometimes we keep people on perpetual probation. Are we doing that with God? Trust requires vulnerability, and it is this state of vulnerability this involvement of someone else that we find the hardest to handle. Most of us try to be independent, self sufficient, to control our own destiny. We even try to be independent of God, that, is lies at the root of much of our fallenness and brokenness. The self sufficiency we seek is never fulfilling and we end up reverting to trusting a shop, in retail therapy, and in what is in it to buy to make us feel good, or to choosing a conversation with a friend to make us feel good, when God is crying out to give us His trust, His vulnerability knowing that we might hurt him, yes, but still he seeks to fullfill us – with trust and love.

The more important the relationship is to us, the more vital a part trust plays. Trust becomes a vital element in leadership, public office, marriage, yet sometimes we do not give it that respectful place. Trust is not finite. Loss of trust has consequences, and when it is we who do not trust when someone has earned that trust, then the consequences we suffer is of being distanced from them , and that is not their doing, but ours. If they haven't earned our trust, that is a different thing. Have we allowed God to give us His trust – to fill us with His trust – can he trust us with his world, with those he too loves. Can he make himself vulnerable to us – do we have his trust to share with others? Let's seek him more this week and spend time receiving from Him.

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HOLY RELATIONSHIP – GOD’S HOLY LOVE
PART 2
RESPECT & HONOUR – (The most neglected)

Great to be back with you today to bring part 2 of our message on Holy Relationships – God’s holy love. Let’s briefly recap from last week.

The cry of God’s heart from the beginning of His creation has been for connection through relationship with His people, and through that, securing the ongoing unity of the Body of Christ, and an ongoing deepening of intimacy in relationship between him and His people, as one experiences in a healthy marriage – between husband and wife, for God, between He, the Groom, and his Church, the bride. Made possible, through His Spirit drawing us to Him in oneness. At Pentecost, which we celebrated a few weeks back, where we recognise the birthing of the Church with the new covenant, this came with the outpouring of the gift of His Spirit to all His people, promised by Christ before His death, in assurance that the relationship that Jesus had with God, and His people, modelled throughout his ministry years, was ours to also have.

We identified that we love because God first loved us. Recognising that when we receive what God first offers to us, and we are in that close relationship with Him, being the Source of Life, means we become alive and fulfilled. When we do not know, or have not received what God is first offering us, we are never fully alive, neither never truly fulfilled. Only God can offer to us the depth of intimacy that we all crave for whether we realise or not, and if we are not receiving from him, then we will try to find it in some other way – either through other relationships, or through other experiences like retail therapy, people pleasing, seeking approval or status. As we explored this Holy Relationship that God offers, we identified four cornerstones or aspects freely given to us. These being God’s holy love, His trust, His respect & Honour of Us, and the giving of Knowledge for us to navigate through this world. Last week we looked in depth in practical ways how God pours out his love to us, and how he offers his Trust in us.

Today we look at the third and fourth cornerstones of this Holy Relationship he seeks to have with us, to then be able to give, back to Him, and to others. The third cornerstone of this Holy Relationship is: Respect & Honour – which is the most neglected in our society. Let’s explore together what is this Respect & Honour that God seeks to give to us that we may give back to Him, and to others?

Respect & Honour is the recognition of worth and value, and from scripture we see that respect and honour is both given to us by God, and commanded of us from God as a life long commitment.

When God bestows honour upon us – as he says in Isaiah 43:4 as he spoke to His people who had been captive, - Since you are precious and honoured in my sight, and because I love you.... I will look after you, and he goes on to tell them how he would do this..., and again in 1 Samuel 2:30 he promised those who honoured him, he would honour. This honour was about God recognising the intrinsic worth of His people, their value as a person individually, and as people collectively, apart from their gifting and what they could do, apart from their possessions and their accomplishments.

Why could he do this? Let's link this to our message last week when we spoke of God creating man in His own image.

When God created man, in His own image, he placed spirit and flesh within Him, so he could commune with Him, and so His people could live in both worlds, heaven and earth. We sing the song, touching heaven changing earth, we could not do that if God had not created us spirit and flesh – In this way God can express himself both to us, and through us to another, that other person also being also created in His image, as we said last week spirit to spirit – and us spirit to spirit in another although on earth, we communicate in the flesh, one to another. The spirit of God within us, when recognised and known, communicates with His spirit. The spirit of God within us, when known and recognised, connects spiritually to the spirit of God in another, and that vibe, that connectedness we experience beyond words, is in fact, our spirits talking to one another if you like, and then we add to that by our verbal and non-verbal communication.

God honours us as His created, and honours us for whom we are, each, His child, made in His image – he looks past what we can and cannot do and past what we have and don't have, and honours us by giving us worth and value – intrinsic honour and respect, as unworthy as we may be in our own knowing and in our own eyes. He made us higher than all the other earthly creatures he had created, and made as scripture tells us, just a little lower than the angels.

How do we understand, or need to understand respect and honour? There are two types of honour – the type of honour that God gives to us – intrinsic honour – which is given, not earned – honour that accepts, affirms, and appreciates a person's eternal value – because above all else because – they are a child of God created in His image. As he gives this to us, so we are to give this to others. I have told this story before, but let me tell again just to give an analogy to help see the difference. If you are given a beautiful puppy for Christmas, and you shower your love on this animal, and the puppy gives you love in return – you value it and give it worth. However when the puppy grows and becomes about 6 months of age – and starts digging up your prized garden, or chews your table legs, or your shoes, you no longer love what the puppy does, but you still love the puppy, because of the puppy's intrinsic value and worth, regardless of its behaviour. This is like what God offers to us – he values us, attributes worth and respect to us regardless of what we do, or cannot do, and he asks us to give that to others.

Then there is the second type of honour: The honour of character and effort – which is earned.

God gives this to us also, as an added blessing – when he says, if you put the effort in to honour me, I will honour you as we read in: 1 Samuel 2:30 or in Psalm 91, where he says: He shall call upon me, and I will answer him, I will be with him and deliver Him, and Honour him, this is the second type of honour, bestowed for glorifying Him.

Further Jesus affirms the Father's honour when he says, in John 12:20 - If any man serve me, him will my father honour. There are many more scriptures we could find that speak of the two types of honour: - the Intrinsic honour God gives to us

unconditionally as His children – of eternal significance, worth and value, and the further added honour as we acknowledge him, and serve him, and then we receive his added honour, his added blessing.

Respect & Honour is something that first has to be received, before it can be given. God of course knew this. Before we can give true respect and honour to another – simply for who they are , unconditionally, then first we must receive it from God, because it is almost impossible to do, without judgement upon another without it. And it is when we do not have this either through not recognising that God is offering it to us, unconditionally, that we do not offer intrinsic honour to another but reserve our honour for only if someone has earned it in our own eyes. This is where we get conditional respect. It goes something like this.

I will only respect you and honour you if you please me, or if I approve of what you do, or if I like you, or if you agree with me or if you achieve something great. We all seek unconditional love, but we find it so hard to give because we first have not received God's unconditional honour and respect of us.

Throughout scripture we see that we were made for honour. God crowned man with honour and glory. This is what is lacking in our world, in our society and in our values, and needs to be returned. We as Christians have a part to play in returning this into our communities, our nation, into the world, and it begins with recognising the intrinsic honour and respect God has for us as His children.

What happens when this does not occur – Paul says in his letter to the Romans 1:21 – For although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God, nor gave thanks to him, and their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. It is very hard to give glory to God, to sing praises to him if we do not know what it is to honour because we do not believe or have not received the honour and respect God has for us as His children. This is not to puff us up – this is for us to know our significance comes from Him, our worth and value comes from Him, wholly from Him – and we do not need to seek it any other way, or from any other person – who cannot give it as God gives, they will always come up short – and we will always be disappointed. God desires to give it to us that we may be honoured as his,- as his child, his next of kin, his family member. It is out of that recognition, out of that affirmation, and appreciation, his recognition, his affirmation of us, his appreciation of us, unconditionally, then, and only then, can we honour Him in return, and honour others.

When we struggle to honour God, to enter into praising him, to entering into his presence, much of this is because we do not believe deep within that he honours and respects us unconditionally, without our need to prove ourselves to him. So we come with hesitation as to whether he will respect and honour us, whether he will really accept us – so we hesitate, and in that hesitation we find any other reason as to why we cannot draw close, but the true reason, is within us, our fear of non acceptance. Please hear me today friends, you are accepted, honoured and respected by God – for he loves you. It will always be hard to truly honour him, and glorify him, unconditionally until you have received this in the core of your being. There is an ongoing cyclical flow that is ours to have.

God's honour and respect to us, ours to Him, Him to us, ours to others, theirs to him, theirs to us, us to him, and so on. A continuous flow of respect and honour, pouring down like rain, pouring down into us, and out into others, and us offering it back up to Him. Are we receiving and giving this yet – that we would receive – touching heaven, changing earth.

In practical terms, how can we convey this honour in a way others can receive – Lets look at some practical examples:

Firstly: it can be conveyed through being fully present when in the presence of another, either verbally, or in action. (Newspaper/book example). If someone has come along, and politely seeks to engage you in conversation, and you have been reading a book or a newspaper or doing something, and you do not look up, or change your focus to include them, then you are not honouring them – you are in fact dishonouring and disrespecting them. Give them eye contact, and listen, without cutting them off or out.

Secondly: Telling people through words, how much they are appreciated – I really appreciate you, conveying to the other how much they are valued, and worthy, respected and accepted – no matter what the circumstance. This is when we can say to another, for example, to our children, I love you, I value you, I appreciate you – I may not love value or appreciate what you do, but I do love, value and appreciate you. That is honour – that is respect. To our spouses, our friends, our neighbours, a shop assistant – thank you, I really appreciate your assistance.

Thirdly; many of us would know that God sometimes, not always, but sometimes, blesses us with additional blessings when he sees our effort and character growth – so we perhaps could also do an act of kindness to another, to just bless them, with no strings attached for anything in return. Here are 3 ways that we can show both intrinsic and secondary honour that will return this lost value into the hearts of others.

Fourthly: last, but in fact this should be first – give honour and glory always to God first, and tell him, for he first has given it to us.

The last cornerstone is Knowledge & Understanding. – the aspect of Holy Relationship that takes the longest to acquire.

All of us have a deep, instinctual need to be understood. Strangely however, we do not have the same desire to know others in the same deep way. There is a line of an old prayer that was turned into a hymn written by Francis of Assisi which says: Let me not seek to be understood, but to understand.

The reason behind this paradox is our own self focus, and within that, our self centeredness. Whether we would like to admit it or not – we do consider ourselves more important than other people. We might pretend to put others needs above our own, or equal to our own, but if we were asked to share with another about someone very close to us, and their needs, and their problems, and their world, and then listen to their honest account, we would nearly all, find we were no-where near the mark. Why, because we have not chosen to cultivate that same deep desire for another, or

considered their needs above our own. We do not seek knowledge from another – four ours, in our own eyes, is more important.

Not only are problems more important, our opinions become more compelling and we nearly always seek to have them validated. This is one of the reasons that it takes a long time for us to really get to know another person – because we automatically put ourselves first. If someone was to ask you how your day was, how often would we stop to say, well, I'm happy to tell you mine in a moment, but I would like to hear how your day went first. And to add to this - we delegate too little time to wanting to receive any additional knowledge or understanding from another, often those closest to us, particularly if there is a chance, it is going to challenge our own opinions or viewpoints.

Why do we seek so much to be understood rather than to understand. We seek because it was placed within us. It is creational. We come back to what we have said so many times throughout these messages - as we are made in His image, God seeks to image and reflect himself in human terms, his life and his nature through us. What is his nature? At the core of His nature is the desire for intimate relationships – God is a God of relationships – a trinity – Three persons, interrelating one to another. Therefore, we as men and women, can never fully be an individual in isolation, fully alive and satisfied alone, because our spirit will always seek to be in relationship. God himself knew this – there is a truth in the trinity that is often missed – that each of us needs another to truly know ourselves – through reflection, through love, through trust, through honour, through knowledge. All these core elements, the cornerstones and foundation for relationship, cannot be acquired without another being allowed to give into our life. Initially, we were created that all these, reflection, love, trust, respect and honour, and knowledge come to us from God, from the relationship God has with us, his people, and then overflowing from us to one another.

God seeks to impart to us principles and knowledge that will guide us to Holy Relationships that are not focused on our own self centeredness and importance but on the oneness, fullness, wholeness, and completeness, found in Him first.

This knowledge God has for us comprises always of truth. For whatever circumstance or situation we may find ourselves in – God will always bring in his understanding and Knowledge truth. But on our part there is something that is required for us to do more than just know its available, more than just hear about it, but to receive it, truly receive it, something has to happen. If we know how hard it is to receive truth from others, embedded in wisdom or knowledge, there has to be a reason why we find it also hard from God.

How is His knowledge, his understanding not only of us, but for us, imparted to us. Let me use a metaphor that might be helpful.

Some of us here will be gardeners so this will be familiar to us. For others, this will perhaps come as a new understanding. I want to speak about grafting.

If we were to watch a gardener who was about to graft a branch of another tree onto a living tree to enhance the fruitfulness of the original tree, there are some necessary

steps to be taken. First he cuts down into the original tree with a very sharp knife at a predetermined place, and creates a clean wound in the side of the tree taking the graft, at a place that is strong enough to take the wound and also accept something placed into it. Then he takes a very fresh, small and seemingly willing branch and places it inside of that wounded place in the original tree that has yielded itself to the gardener. Then, the gardener carefully pushes in and closes the wound, drawing together the original branch around the grafted branch and wraps a cloth around and around the limb, tightly binding it together. If you were to ask the gardener about the grafting, he would tell you that in a day or two the cloth would be completely soaked and would need changing as the tree weeps because it has been wounded, but unless it weeps, and gives up something of itself, there will not be enough sap to support the life of the new little branch grafted into it, or enough space to receive what the grafted branch will offer. The tree gives up something, that it doesn't need any longer, to receive something new that will help it to bear even more fruit. First it has to be wounded, it has to weep, it has to surrender to some initial impartation, to receive more and offer more.

Let's tie these two messages on Holy Relationship together. We began looking at the beginning of creation – so let's think of Adam – for him to have a wife, he was first wounded and something taken from him, a rib, before he could have a helpmate, in Eve. For Christ to have a Church – first he too was wounded, with blood and water pouring from his side into the ground, before he could have a church – His bride.

Pain comes before birth, loss before gain, death before resurrection. Impartation will not come to us, true impartation from God, will not come before we are prepared to be opened up, to be wounded so to speak, so that God can graft, and impart, His Holy love, his holy trust, his holy respect and honour and his holy knowledge into us – how? Let's start with the last cornerstone first: How can he impart knowledge to us?

First: He cannot, until we are really open to doing more than just listening or hearing, but to him having a deep relationship with us, through intimately being prepared to yield to him, opening up, communing with Him, spending time with Him, listening for Him, and speaking with Him, learning to recognise His voice above our own, and yielding our mind to Him. He will impart his knowledge in so many possible ways, and not just through one, but many, and all are available to us when we remain open, or are prepared to be opened up by him, the gardener. His impartation may come just through his presence being beside us in a certain situation, through his word, through messages, through one another, through the marvels of documentaries, books, films, teaching, creation, children, songs, prayers, the list is endless, but none of these will bear any fruit unless there is an opening that we have yielded to him for the grafting to take place. Are we, like the person who does not put down the book or the newspaper when he seeks to commune with us?

Scripture after scripture picks up his longing to be with us in this way, to impart to us – that we might know ourselves, and Him, better.

Romans 1:11 – For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end you may be established and fulfilled.

James 1: 21:22 – Receive with meekness the engrafted word which is able to save your souls – be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

Romans 8:26 - We do not always know what or how to pray, but we should refuse to give way to anything that would hinder the reception of the spiritual impartation.

We long for more life, more love, more trust to be placed in us, we long for more respect and honour to be ours, we long for more knowledge and for being understood, but we are not prepared to bear the cost of being opened up, being wounded in a small way, compared to the wounding Christ received – what is the opening up we need, what is the wounding we must surrender, what is the sap that needs to be lost.

Friends, I believe the word for today is that the sap is our own self-centeredness. As this weeps away, God imparts to us what we deeply seek after, but so often from all the wrong places. When we give up our self centeredness and first, above all else, receive His love, His trust, His respect, His knowledge that he desires in His heart to give, the fullness of His holy love, we, in turn, then can truly give that to others, including, those we love. He loves those we love, more than we do – wouldn't we all like to give them more, he says come, receive my love, that you might love in return. In receiving His love for us, we in turn also have more love to offer back to Him, for his glory.

I want to make another bold statement today. Many people hear just enough of the knowledge God imparts to be touched, but not enough to be changed.

We wade in the shallows of his impartation and knowledge, refusing to go deeper in God because we know that to be transformed, we must be prepared to be spiritually wounded and acknowledge our self centeredness, and give it up to allow God to be the gardener grafting the fullness of His impartation of Himself to us. To have that Holy Relationship he seeks with you and me.

When we are willing to really be touched by the depth of Holy Love that would allow himself to come in human form, as Jesus, to die on the cross for us, to be wounded by the touch of his nail scarred hands – then we will be able to receive the Holy Relationship God seeks to have with us.

As Mark Hanby writes: , “impartation takes place not just when a sermon is delivered or the music is in high praise, or healings are occurring, impartation takes place when God himself is actually received in the core of our being. Impartation requires an open reception and acceptance of divine truth for transformation” for oneness, fullness, wholeness and completion to occur. “In the end, we will not be judged for how much we have heard, or been touched, but how much we have been changed into the image of Christ, bearing fruitfulness”. There is a place in all of our lives where impartation could happen. When we are prepared for our soul to bleed the self centeredness we have, and where our heart can seep the hard heartedness we've had towards God and others, when we can let this happen, God will carve a place where all this can escape and the Spirit of God can enter in, in Holy relationship, bringing all that we need to have. The Lord will not cut a wound in our lives just to bring us pain, but he knows that it is only through the broken and open places, a broken and contrite heart, in our being, that he can instill His power, and plant His love and His

purposes in us. How many times have you felt the presence of God, perhaps the touch of His presence through a song, a word, a message, a sunset, some word spoken by another, perhaps in a film, in creation, you have known God has been present, but then, have refused to let that move to the next place, a grafting experience where God would seek to come deeper into you, and graft His Holy Love through an impartation,

In the impartation of His holy love, his holy relationship into our lives, we will be forever changed – for our good, for the good of those we love, and for His glory. When we are ready and willing to be wounded, to be grafted, and are ready to not let go of the desire for his divine love within us, and come to Him, and wait on Him to receive it, His promise to us is that we will receive, why, because He says, those that honour me, I will honour. Greater than the honour that is yours already, intrinsically, he seeks to give you more, an impartation that he would honour you even more still. God seeks to have a Holy Relationship with you. Will you allow him the honour of imparting this to you today? Will you allow Him the honour of Him receiving the desire of His heart – to have a deepening, more intimate relationship of love with you. If you are hearing this message and experiencing him touch you – please I ask you, do not let that remain a touch only – may you take the courage to allow him to graft an impartation of His love to flow in you today, as you give up something for him – knowing only greater will you receive in return.

Let us pray.

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