

# The Extravagant Love of God

August 2, 2020

**But God's love is vast; it is boundless; it is extravagant!**



**Sometimes it is difficult to FEEL that God loves us.**

We hear about it, read about it, sing songs about it, but so often life's circumstances seem to contradict His love. During those difficult times we sometimes find ourselves thinking or saying: "If He loves me, then why is this happening, or why did that happen?"

The very nature of God is love. God is so much bigger and greater than we can imagine and this is true of His love, as well. Our human love is often so petty, stingy, and self-centred.

**But God's love is vast; it is boundless; it is extravagant!**

**The only way we can really know this is to depend upon God's Word more than our feelings.** Ask yourself, are you spending more time with your feelings than you are with God's Word? Your feelings are not always the truth, God's Word IS TRUTH!

We serve an extravagant God. On a clear night with the unaided eye you can see 2,000 stars. Astronomers think that in the universe as a whole there are billions of stars.

God made 200,000 kinds of flowers. He made 9,000 kinds of birds.

*When I look at Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have set in place, what is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You care for him? (Psalm 8:3-5)*

It also raises an interesting question: *Why should there be so much out there?* It all seems so... well... **extravagant.**

And yet, God *did* choose to create, and not just the bare minimum (i.e., a single sun and planet, or, for that matter, a single atom). Instead, He chose to create, well, what you see above: *thousands upon thousands of galaxies containing billions upon billions of stars.* He chose to **create extravagantly** and indeed, well beyond extravagantly and quite possibly for no other reason than because that was His free desire.

*God will always*  
**BE THERE**



But this sense of extravagance is not just limited to the creation, be it the diversity in the sky or the diversity we see among life here on Earth, though that may be the most visible example. Throughout Holy Scripture, we see God's extravagance in how He relates to humanity, whether He's showering blessings on the exiled and afflicted, caring (and mandating care) for those who've been left ignored and abandoned on society's margins, or most poignantly and powerfully sending Jesus Christ to be a sacrifice for the sins of humanity, and then pouring out forgiveness and redemption (Psalm 103). Even those who reject God still benefit from this extravagance, in the form of common grace (Matthew 5:43-48) as well as the ability to enjoy and find inspiration in the glory and majesty of His creation.

Yet we never really appreciate the extravagance of God unless we read the Bible and **believe** in His Words. It is filled with extravagant promises: *"My God shall supply all your need."* *"The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin."* *"All things are yours."* *"Come unto me all you who labour and are heavy laden."* *"All things you ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive."*

## **God is so extravagant**

### **How much wine is needed for a wedding?**

For the Wedding at Cana described in John's gospel, the wedding party had run out of wine and the mother of Jesus asked Him to remedy the problem. John reports that Jesus instructed the servants to fill six stone jars with water holding 20 to 30 gallons.

He tells them to draw some out and take it to the headwaiter who tells the bridegroom that he has *"saved the best [wine] till now."* (John 2:10)

**This is Jesus' first miracle, and how extravagant it is!** This would be equivalent to 908.5 bottles.



**This story reflects the extravagant love of God in many ways.** We begin with Mary, the mother of Jesus, interceding with her son for the first time on behalf of a likely friend to save the friend's family from the embarrassment of running out of wine at their wedding.

**God's response to this need was far more generous than required, both in the quality of the wine and its quantity. This is emblematic of what God has in mind for people who respond to Him through His Son.**

Do you want to know how much God loves you? 908.5 bottles of the finest wine worth. The extravagant love of God is poured out as a never-ending stream. In His first miracle, Jesus shows at what lengths God will go to make that love known to us. May you come to experience the over-flowing, overwhelming love of God.

Jesus is the new wine, quite distinct in quality to the old wine offered by the prophets that preceded Him. This new wine allows people to experience God in the flesh, up close and personal. This new wine gives new meaning to the Jewish law, teaching and writings. This new wine reveals the power of God over demons, illness, and the physical elements of wind, storm and sea. This new wine demonstrates the love of God for all people by becoming one of us and then enduring torture and death to free us from sin and leading us to a righteous life through the power of the Holy Spirit.

**God's extravagant love and new wine are available to all who are willing to shed the old wine skin – the old way of life accompanied by sin and self-focus.** (Mt. 9:17) *“Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God.”* (John 1:12)

We will never be able to match the extravagance of God's love. **We cannot out-give him, out-sacrifice him, or out-love him, but we can return His love and generosity by opening the door of our hearts to his gentle invitation.** *“Here I am,”* He says. *“I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come and eat with him and he with me.”* (Rev. 3:20)

It's good to be reminded of one's place in the cosmos *as in* David's words in Psalm 8. But we are never left with a sense of cynicism, that we don't matter in the grand scheme of things.

Instead, we have faith, based on what we read in the Bible, that the One who created, with extravagance, the galaxies and their billions of stars can and will relate to us lowly humans, which are also a treasured part of His creation, with a similar extravagance.

In the scriptural account on which the poem below is based, Jesus draws a symbolic parallel between her action and Jesus' own pouring out of Himself on the cross: *“She has done a beautiful thing to me... She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burial”* (Mark 14:6, 8). We should remember her when we're tempted to be merely moderate, mediocre Christians.

St Paul prays that we grasp God's love, know God's love, and contain God's love, *“to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that we may be filled with all the fullness of God.”* (Ephesians 3:18-19)

This is our payer for the young and old, teens and parents, and all Christians.

**Initiative:** Do something extravagant: for someone else or for yourself.  
Feel God.



Let us reflect on a poem that depicts a contrast between moderate, conventional responses to Christ and a **radical, all-giving act of love**.

### The Broken Jar (Mark 14:3-9)

The ointment with abandon  
 Runs down His cheek,  
 Sweetly joining tears of love  
 Set flowing by her extravagance.  
 Beauty and prescience  
 Are mingled there,  
 While spare and cautious faces  
 Grimace at the waste.  
 They advocate the shorter way -  
 Slipping pennies to the poor,  
 And making sure the books are kept.  
 But Jesus wept  
 That one should share His sacrifice,  
 And break the jar to pour out all.  
 - *Elton D. Higgs*

\*Prescience: Knowledge of things before they happen  
 \*Grimace: An ugly, twisted expression on a person's face



(Excerpt from St Alphonsus Liguori on the “**Love of Christ**” – Feast Day 1<sup>st</sup> August)

Since God knew that we are enticed by favours, He wished to bind us to His love by means of His gifts...And all the gifts which God bestowed on us were given to this end. He gave us a soul, made in His likeness, and **endowed with memory, intellect and will**. He gave us a body equipped with the senses; it was for us that God created heaven and earth and such an abundance of things. God made all these things out of love for us, so that all creation might serve us, and we in turn might **love God out of gratitude for so many gifts**. But God did not wish to give us only beautiful creatures; the truth is that to win for Himself our love, He went so far as to bestow upon us the fullness of Himself. The eternal Father went so far as to give us His only Son. When He saw that we were all dead through sin and deprived of His grace, what did God do? Compelled by the **superabundance of His love** for us, God sent His Beloved Son to make reparation for us and to call us back to a sinless life. By giving us His Son, whom He did not spare precisely so that He might spare us, God bestowed on us at once every good: **grace, love and heaven**; for all these goods are certainly inferior to the Son. He who did not spare His own Son, but handed Him over for all of us: how could He fail to give us along with his Son all good things?

