

A Beloved Flash Mob

Matthew 3: 13-17

Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."

A few years ago, I went on a silent meditation retreat. For three days I didn't say anything to anyone. Not a single word. It was odd to eat with others in silence and being curious about people while not being able to ask them any questions. I even had a couple of roommates. Which was a very strange thing. But I remember one of the facilitators saying that while we were meditating or walking or eating in silence, she wanted us to focus on one thing and only one thing: "Just be" she said, "and receive God's unconditional love." Now before any of us go thinking *oh, how nice it must be*. You should know that it is one of the most difficult and painful things I have ever had to do, spiritually or otherwise. Why? Because at the end of the day, I realized I'm not very good at receiving God's love for just sitting there doing nothing.

I think it is how most of us operate. For many of us we were taught from a very young age that our worthiness of being loved hinged on what we did or how we behaved. The grades we earned at school, or the rules we were asked to follow at home, or the career paths we ended up choosing. A lot of the time we did these things because they helped us to feel loved and affirmed and like we belonged. And while it may have served us for a time, it also set us up for not understanding how we could be loved for simply just being who we are.

[Verse 1]

When you try your best but you don't succeed,
When you get what you want, but not what you need,
When you feel so tired, but you can't sleep,
Stuck in reverse.

[Chorus]

Lights will guide you home,
And ignite your bones,
And I will try to fix you,

In the story, folks are gathering at the Jordan River like a beloved flash mob. People drawn in from all around and being baptized in the name of a fresh start. So when it's Jesus' turn, he gets dipped and when he comes up the heavens explode with a Spirit-dove descending and God's great affirmation: "You are my beloved child in whom I delight. You are loved! Eres Amado!" And in the moment, it is as if even the heavens can't contain God's love which spills all over everything, all at once.

Now what strikes me the most about this moment is that God's doesn't say, "This is my beloved child with whom I'm well pleased because he has proved to me he deserves it." God doesn't say, "I'm well pleased because Jesus follows all the rules and is a good kid." No! You see, Jesus hasn't done anything yet. No healings. No miracles. He hasn't even preached. And yet, still God says, "This is my beloved child." Period. The end. There is nothing more to say. Jesus doesn't have to do anything, except to receive it.

[Verse 2]

And the tears come streaming down your face,
When you lose something you can't replace,
When you love someone but it goes to waste,
Could it be worse?

[Chorus]

Lights will guide you home,
And ignite your bones,
And I will try to fix you,

Well, today we are reminded that this is exactly how it works for us as well. Whether we were sprinkled as a baby, or dunked as an adult, it really doesn't matter. All that matters is that you know you already belong to God and always have. That you are a beloved child who is delighted in. That you have gifts that can help make the world a kinder and more generous place. I'll never forget at a PRIDE parade in Seattle one year there was a big fountain that everyone walked past. The children were playing in it and splashing around. It was a delightful scene to watch. Right behind the fountain was a giant sign draped outside of an affirming church's doors. It read, "God loves you and there is nothing you can DO about it!" There is nothing we can do or say which will make God stop loving us. The only thing we can do is splash around in those waters until we actually believe it.

[Verse 3]

High up above or down below,
When you're too attached to let it go,
But if you never try you'll never know,
Just what you're worth.

[Chorus]

Lights will guide you home,
And ignite your bones,
And I will try to fix you.

I may be oversimplifying things, but here's the thing I'm beginning to wonder. I wonder if there is so much oppression and suffering in our world mostly because there are so many insecure people sitting in schools or at their jobs, or in their homes, or even in churches that tragically don't believe they are loved. There are so many who are told that they have to do something, or be something, or believe something if they are to belong. But what if what needs to be fixed isn't who we are or what we believe? What if the problem is that we believe all the insecure voices in

our insecure world telling us that God's love is contingent on what we do? And what if THAT is what needs to be washed away and healed and restored.

So if you need the reminder that you are loved, we got water.

If you need a reminder that you belong, we got water.

If you need the reminder that you are delighted in and a beloved child of God, we got water.

You are loved. Period. The end. We are God's beloved flash mob.

THAT is who we are. And there is nothing we could ever say or do that is going to change that.

[Bridge]

Tears stream, down your face,
When you lose something you cannot replace.

Tears stream, down your face and I.

Tears stream, down your face,

I promise you I will learn from my mistakes.

Tears stream, down your face and I.

[Chorus]

Lights will guide you home,

And ignite your bones,

And I will try to fix you.