

## Dad's Smile – Trinity Sunday

*Exodus 34:1-8; 2 Corinthians 13: 11-13; Matthew 28:16-20.*

I read a book recently called "By The Way" by Irene Voysey and I share a little from it.

*The first time I was sent to India on assignment, I took a day off, hired a battered old taxi and left Bangalore to visit Kolar Gold Fields, about 120 kms away. That was where my father worked as an accountant and where I spend a happy childhood. As we approached a town called Whitefield I told the taxi driver conversationally that after India's Independence only two of my father's friends, the McCosh's, who didn't have any children to consider, had remained in India. They'd retired in Whitefield, but I didn't know where they lived. When we reached Whitfield, the driver stopped a passer-by, there was a rapid exchange of Tamil, an arm was raised, a finger pointed, and after much head wagging we set off again and stopped shortly afterwards outside a bungalow. The driver announced that this was the McCosh's house.*

*I knocked on the door; a vaguely familiar figure opened it and said. "Yes?" he was obviously impatient to get back to the cricket commentary from Lord's, now pouring out loudly of the open door. I said with a smile, "Hello Mr. McCosh!" that's what I'd called him the last time I'd seen him, when I was a teenager. He was now looking at a woman in her forties so he was understandably puzzled and began to say, "Do I know you?" but then he stopped and said amazed, "Your Cecil Evan's daughter! I'd know his smile anywhere!"*

*I was deeply moved to be known by my father's smile. I had a strong bond with my Dad, but he died at the age of forty-eight, just two years and three months after joining us in Australia, when I was twenty-one. I don't have a single memory of my Dad without a smile for me on his face.<sup>1</sup>*

That story touched me because it made me think about how we are, or can be, known by the smile on our heavenly Father's face.

For God is a God of relationship. Of the sort of relationship Jesus prayed for us to have as the Trinity have. The One in whose name we are baptised and as the Gospel reading tells us in whose authority we go out to make disciples and teach them to obey what our God has given.

It is the smile of the Father who goes running to scoop up the prodigals into His arms. It is the smile of the Son, the Good Shepherd, who leaves the 99 saved ones to find the lost one. It is the smile of the Holy Spirit who brings the fruit of love, peace and joy into our lives.

---

<sup>1</sup> Voysey pp 204-5

The Great Commission in Matthew's gospel is to all of us – it is not given as a job description to just the paid evangelists, to the clergy or the missionaries. It was handed down to the apostles and to the church through the generations to all followers of Jesus. The two great Commandments – to love God and each other and the Great Commission are our commission wherever we are at any time and all times.

Christ is risen! This is to be celebrated everywhere. His Spirit is not only present in our times of worship in our church buildings and in the lives of missionaries overseas. "He is also active in our buying and selling our chats with neighbours over the fence, our work in a bank, a hospital, and office, and wherever else we go on our ways."<sup>2</sup>

Many are afraid of outreach or evangelism. Yet in the gospel today we are reminded of what the risen Christ asked. For His work on earth to be continued by His followers. I love the reading in 2 Peter 3: 9 where we are told, "*The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*"

How can people come to repentance and no longer be separated from God if we don't tell them the good news? If we don't reach out to them? If we don't take seriously the Great Commission?

But we must remember outreach doesn't begin with us.

God first loved us and has always reached out to human kind first. Beginning with Genesis, we can see clearly God's reaching out to His people, obvious again in today's Exodus reading.

For the joy set before Him, the Son of God was the most effective outreach possible. The smile of heaven came to earth when the angels in the fields told the shepherds; "*I bring you good news of great joy...*" and announced that "*you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.*"

We all smile at a baby smiling at us. This gift of Jesus to save the world is the smile of the Father to us through His Son. The gift of the Holy Spirit given to us at Pentecost, and still being given to us as often as we ask, is the smile of the Father and the Son for us – and for all we share the good news of Jesus' outreach with.

We are to smile and share the good news of Jesus everywhere we can – and the Holy Spirit working in cooperation will do God's work of outreach for us. We just have to be willing and take the opportunities.

---

<sup>2</sup> Voysey, p 162

When I was having our second baby I went to childbirth classes with just a group of Canberra parents or parents to be. I clicked with another woman whose baby was born 24 hours before our son. We became friends and she told me she was the daughter of a vicar in England but no longer had any belief and in fact was quite angry with God. I prayed for her and one day felt I was to fast for three days like Queen Esther and then ask her to lunch. Which I did. Then at the lunch I was hoping for a chance to say something about God but couldn't see how to bring it up without it being totally out of context. Do you know – I don't remember any obvious conversation about my belief but soon afterwards she became a committed follower of Jesus and has been in strong lay leadership positions and disciplined many, many others for nearly 30 years. What did I do? I prayed, I fasted and I obeyed the idea of asking her to lunch and simply sharing hospitality – God did the outreaching and the touching of her heart. Later she introduced me to someone as the one who led her to Christ. Thirty years ago I didn't know how to do that but it wasn't hard – I just had a desire to share the Father's love with another that I had grown to love as a friend.

That is all we have to do – look for opportunities to share our Father's smile.

But to share it – we need to know it for ourselves. How well do we know our heavenly Father and His love for us? How well do we know Jesus and His love for us? How well do we know the Spirit and His love for us?

God has made Himself known to us – through His Son and by His Spirit – but how much do we put into the relationship to get to Know Him. How much do we thirst and hunger for more of the living God?

Moses did. Once he met God at the burning bush and He asked His name, from that time of meeting God, back when Moses was unsure God would be with him if he went to see Pharaoh and that he couldn't talk for God without Aaron's help. From that time on Moses learnt to listen to God and to obey God. I have a theory that God stays quiet if we don't obey what He tells us – perhaps for our own sakes so that we don't have to face His wrath for continued disobedience.

Moses learnt to stop and be with God. Moses spent time in the tent of meeting with the Lord Exodus 33. Ex 33:11 *“The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend...”*

Just before today's passage in Exodus, when God said He would no longer accompany the Israelites into the Promised Land but would send His angel ahead instead, Moses kept asking God to forgive the sin of the people for worshipping the golden calf and also said that *“if your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here.”* Ex 33:15

Moses knew there was no point going anywhere without God being with them. The Lord says His presence will go with them and that He is pleased with Moses

and knows him by name. In our relationship with the Lord do we seek to do what pleases Him – all the time? Do we know that God knows our name? Personally?

Moses then asks for more in this relationship that he has with God. In ex 33:18 he says, “Now show me your glory”

This is a big ask – talk about wanting God’s smile!

But The Lord promises to do that just before the passage we had today. Then in vv 5 and following we see some words describing some of God’s glory.

Look at the verses – what are some of the elements of God’s glory here?

- He comes in the cloud.
- He proclaims His name – remember His name is hallowed, is above every name.
- His nature is revealed:
  - Compassionate and gracious;
  - Slow to anger’
  - Abounding in love and faithfulness;
  - Maintaining love to thousands;
  - Forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin;
  - Yet He does not leave the guilty unpunished; in fact the punishments has consequences He says to the 4<sup>th</sup> generation.

I mention briefly that part of God’s nature – justice. God is just and ensures justice. We all desire justice. How many times do we hear or think – ‘that’s not fair?’ how many times do we see scenes outside a courthouse with victims families wanting ‘justice’ – which usually is a demand that the perpetrator pay for their crime.

When wrongdoing has occurred justice has to be done. That is the good news of Jesus. For on the cross He who was innocent of any wrongdoing, or any wickedness or sin; He took the blame. He stood in the dock for us and for all the mega-billions who have lied, gossiped, stolen, raped, murdered, blasphemed, abused, tortured, or been uncaring, selfish, swindled or any other wrong – Jesus took all on Himself and took the wrath of God **for all** along with it. So that we now stand in the place of ‘*no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus*’ (Rom 8:1). But others will face that wrath unless they are in Christ. That is why it is so important to share the Father’s smile with them, the good news of His Son and the gift of His Spirit to help us live holy and redeemed lives.

Sin separates us from God. Our loving Father allowed the sin of the world to be laid on His Son. Jesus faced, and paid for, the consequences that would have had to go to the 4<sup>th</sup> generation. He faced our Judge, the One whose Cup of wrath Jesus asked in the garden if it be possible not to have to face. He did for us on Calvary and took the condemnation obediently in our place.

And He knew it would glorify the Father. For there is no greater love than this.

Yes in Exodus when God showed his glory Moses bowed down and worshipped at once (v8) and asks God to go with them, to forgive their wickedness and sin, and to take us as His inheritance.

No wonder we have much to smile about and to reflect our Father's smile. Our sin has been forgiven, our God is with us always and we have become His inheritance. We are adopted into God's heavenly, eternal, royal family, and been betrothed to His Son. 1 Peter 1: 3-4 *"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade, kept in heaven for you..."*

Let us never forget that we have been charged with sharing His love and this good news with others – all nations. But we can smile again for *"His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him who called us by His glory and goodness."* (2Peter 1:3). Our Trinitarian God is the one who does the outreach, we just need to Know and love Him enough to want to tell others about all He has done for us.

I finish up with the words of an old hymn that sum up the privilege we have in partnering with our God this way:

*Thank you, Oh my Father, for giving us your Son, and leaving your Spirit, till the work on earth is done."*

Let our Father's smile be known through us.

Let us pray: