

TO LOVE YOUR ENEMY

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TO LOVE YOUR ENEMY

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Faith Matters: To Love Your Enemy

Loving our enemies is a perfect example of something that Jesus often implores us to do—to go beyond our initial reactions and draw upon our knowledge, our willpower, and the ability to see past what is in front of us and try to view things, as best as we can, from God’s perspective. Jesus both tells us and shows us that hatred and vengeance do not have the final word. It is up to us, and how we respond to actions of harm and wrongdoing to ensure that continues throughout our lives.

As our three authors hint at, there is a difference between what we associate with “love” in a broader sense, and what it really means to love our enemy. When we feel that we have been wronged, it is often easy and immediate to respond in anger. While we cannot command our feelings to come and go in an instant, we can always choose to exercise our willpower in a way that overcomes them. This can take shape in many ways: choosing not to seek revenge or wish for their downfall, or even something as simple as biting your tongue.

Choosing to love our enemies is a process that comes in small, daily decisions, not necessarily big or dramatic ones. Like prayer, it is best done when we can, as often as we can, and it can take shape in many ways. Truly listening before responding, recognizing the role we may play in a conflict, or making a conscious effort to understand the other person’s

perspective are some ways we can practice this. Doing so encourages our humility, and reminds us that we, too, may have been someone’s enemy at some point; we may have been misunderstood or hurt because of it.

At its core, loving one’s enemy demonstrates the belief that no person is entirely reducible to their worst acts, and that reconciliation is possible—even if it doesn’t occur. There is always the space for forgiveness—as Jesus reminds us time and time again. Even when reconciliation is not possible in a particular situation, the refusal to hate and dwell in vengeance preserves the integrity of the heart and prevents us from becoming whom, or what, we oppose. In this way, loving one’s enemy reshapes the one who loves and the one who is loved.

After our three authors—Melissa Ritz, Obren Amiesimaka, and Zoe Matties—gave their thoughts on this question, I got to interview David Driedger about his new book titled *Nothing Will Save Us: A Theology of Immeasurable Life*.



CINNA BARAN

Editor of Rupert’s Land News

And Who Is My Enemy?

MELISSA RITZ

When thinking about what it means to love one's enemy, I am immediately reminded of the man who asks Jesus, "and who is my neighbour?"¹ Ultimately, Jesus' answer is not a description of what a neighbour is, but a command to "Go and do likewise"² to the Samaritan who went out of his way to be merciful to a potentially hostile stranger in treacherous territory. In other words, if I am to be a neighbour to others, then who is my enemy? So, the first part of my answer to this question is that we are called *not* to be an enemy, *nor* to make enemies of others. Broadly speaking, we know this: be kind, compassionate, and empathetic; do good deeds and do not seek to do harm to anyone.

But what about those who actively harm or seek to do harm to me and to others?

Before I tackle that question, we must wrestle with a different question: what do we mean by *love*?

There are so many ways to answer that question, and so many ways it has been answered. In the Greek New Testament, there are at least two different words used that are both translated into English as "love." Not being a Greek scholar myself, I will simply say that they capture quite different aspects of love in one word. In English we add qualifiers, such as brotherly love, filial love, platonic love, romantic love, and erotic love, among others. If I say "I love you" to my mother, it conveys something both similar and yet also quite different than saying "I love you" to my husband. There are similar emotions with both, but I act on those emotions in very different ways. With this concept in mind, I propose that love in the sense of loving our enemies ought to be considered an action or a disposition, not a



Photo: Steve Johnson

feeling or emotion, and that the purpose of love in this sense is to restore dignity and humanize the other.

When we love those who are oppressed or in need, we can easily identify ways to act in love: uplifting, healing, feeding, clothing, and sheltering. Loving our enemies (i.e. those who oppress and create that need in others), however, is less easy to comprehend.

The idea of *loving* our enemies is often conflated with *forgiving* our enemies. Although forgiveness is integral to Christian faith and identity, forgiveness and love are not quite the same thing. The Lord's Prayer teaches us that we are to "forgive those who sin against us." Many of us have been taught that forgiveness is therefore a Christian duty, and that withholding forgiveness goes against what it means to follow Christ. Without going down a theological rabbit hole on the Lord's Prayer, I'm not sure that's entirely accurate. At

¹ Luke 10:29

² Luke 10:37

least, it's not how many of us have learned and experienced that teaching. It's pretty well agreed in pastoral (and other) psychology that forcing someone to forgive someone who has traumatized them is in fact re-traumatizing and an abusive act in itself. I believe it's perfectly acceptable to say to God, "I don't want to forgive X right now. One day, I want to want to forgive them, but just now, I don't and I can't want that." These things take time and work and the Holy Spirit, and with Thomas Merton, I believe that "the desire to please [God] does in fact please [God]."³

It is important that we recognize those times in our lives when we are offered the choice of acting in love even when we feel anything and everything but loving. Love can take many forms. It is quite possible that protesting an oppressive regime can be undertaken in love, so long as the signs carried and slogans shouted do not dehumanize the people in power. It is also possible that one might have the opportunity to interact face-to-face with an abuser and would need to choose between acting with mercy and acting without. For the sake of the oppressed and marginalized we love, holding people to account is essential to enacting both justice and love, and sometimes forgiveness is not even ours to offer—but we can still act with love.

This is why defining our terms is so key. If we think of love simply as filling needs and having warm fuzzies toward others, or as trying to write off or "move past" bad behavior, then to love oppressors and abusers may seem to be impossible and even to go against the foundations of the Christian gospel. But, if we think of love as restoring someone's humanity, then there is space to think of toppling idols and knocking down pedestals. Not in a way that defaces or devalues the image-bearer that person ultimately is, but in a way that seeks to restore them to the human commonwealth, to bring them toward repentance and faith in the God who saves and restores. Speaking truth to power is love enacted if it is done in the Spirit and with openness toward the one being rebuked.

What does this mean practically? Deciding what it means to love should always be pragmatic and contextual, but I suggest that, regardless of context, love (and loving our enemies in particular) should always begin (and continue) in prayer. Prayer is one of the most practical actions a Christian can take. If we believe that God is present with us

³ Thomas Merton, *Thoughts in Solitude* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1956), "[The Merton Prayer](#)," accessed January 16, 2026.



Photo: [Mateus Campos Felipe](#)

and that He wants to act with and for His creation, then to pray is *the* pre-eminent act of love both for God and for other human beings.

Several years ago, I spent some time at a Carmelite convent in England. Carmelites follow a Benedictine rhythm of work and prayer, but where Benedictines believe in balancing work and prayer, the Carmelites emphasize prayer and contemplation over and above manual labour. One of the sisters I met there had originally wanted to join the Little Sisters of Jesus, who are a Roman Catholic order of nuns that work in poor and marginalized communities (similar to Mother Teresa's order, the Missionaries of Charity). Because she was Anglican, she had (mistakenly) concluded that she would not be allowed to join, and after much prayer and

trailing life in several communities, she decided to join this Carmelite convent. Now, after more than a decade of religious life, she felt very strongly that the time she spent in prayer connected her to the world at a profound level, and that the work of prayer and contemplation she did daily was in fact the most effective way she could love others and effect change in the world.

This story has stuck with me, and I think it is particularly relevant to the idea of loving our enemies. Christians tend to be very good at praying for those in need, but to pray for those we dislike, those who have hurt us (or intend to hurt us), and those who use their power and privilege to harm others is an uncomfortable idea for many of us. At the most basic level, praying for others, especially those you might consider



Photo: [Europeana](#)

The Good Samaritan by Cyprián Majerník, 1940



Photo: Mona Eendra

enemies will soften your own heart and will benefit your own relationship with God. I have heard from many people that praying for someone with whom they have an antagonistic relationship has dramatically shifted how they perceive that person. Beyond that, it's impossible to define a consistent framework for how prayer impacts the world outside individual experience, except that it does seem to in many cases. As former Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby has often said (with wry humour, to be sure), prayer "can't hurt, might even help."

In keeping with my working definition of love as humanization, when you pray for your enemies, resist the urge to demonize and dehumanize those you are praying for; they're probably doing a good job of that on their own. This doesn't in any way mean that you need to justify their actions in any way. Rather, simply acknowledge that their humanity makes them capable both of harm and of redemption. Prayer puts things into divine perspective, placing judgement and salvation into God's hands, and in return making the one who prays capable of greater love.

How to love your enemy is not an easy question; if I could come up with a point-form list of tips and tricks for loving your enemies, it would mean this question was also unimportant in the grand scheme of things. It has been my experience that wrestling with these things through prayer and practice is about the only way to begin to grasp at understanding.

So how *do* you love your enemy? Sometimes kicking and screaming, sometimes with wailing and gnashing of teeth, and hopefully, eventually, in concert with God who is already loving them in profound and mysterious ways.



MELISSA RITZ

Melissa Ritz is a theologically-trained librarian with a love for teaching and preaching. Originally from Edmonton, she is relatively new to Winnipeg, where she lives with her husband, an Anglican priest and military chaplain, and their tuxedo cat, Holly.



Photo: Jr Korpa

Love Our Enemies? Yes!

OBREN I. AMIESIMAKA

The idea of loving our enemies can be tough. Some might say it is easy in theory, or when one has not been deeply, glaringly, and unjustifiably wronged. It is not unusual, in human frailty, to want those who have hurt us deeply to experience pain too—to know what it feels like to suffer as they have made us suffer, or to receive some form of what some might call ‘karma.’ Of course, as part of life, we inadvertently hurt one another, even those we love. However, I would not describe this as involving enmity. I would define enemies as those who deliberately seek one’s suffering, who make it their mission to make one’s life difficult, who position themselves as obstacles to one’s peace and progress.

I remember when I was in a class on social systems/issues in middle school, I suggested that I had no enemies. Although I cannot now recall my teacher’s response, decades later, time has taught me that enemies need not be in our personal circles,

but can be those whose actions are malicious on a systemic level and/or are driven by hatred for members of certain groups—such as races, genders, sexualities, abilities, etc.

However one defines enemies, Jesus Christ tells us plainly “...Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.”¹ Indeed, Galatians 5:20 lists enmity amongst the works of the flesh from which Christians must turn away; so, we should not become enemies to our enemies.

The Bible is replete with stories of betrayal, enmity and revenge. However, it also shows many examples of love intervening between the wrongdoing and retribution.

Genesis 27 tells the story of Jacob conspiring with Rebekah, his mother, to deceive Isaac, his father, and steal the blessing of Esau, his twin brother. Isaac, who was blind with age, had said to Esau: “Now then, get your equipment—your quiver and bow—and go out to the open country to hunt some wild

¹ Luke 6:27-28

game for me. Prepare me the kind of tasty food I like and bring it to me to eat, so that I may give you my blessing before I die.”² Esau then set off to hunt game for the meal, but whilst away, Rebekah connived with Jacob to take advantage of Isaac’s dim eyes and hoodwink him into giving his blessing instead to Jacob.

Earlier, in Genesis 25:29-34, Jacob had cunningly got Esau to trade him his birthright in exchange for a stew. So, Jacob’s taste for cheating his brother was well established.

So meticulous were they at plotting that not only did they prepare an imitation of Isaac’s favourite meal using goats from the nearby flock, but they also ensured that Jacob was appropriately costumed to feel and smell like Esau. Genesis 27:11-12 reads: “Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, ‘But my brother Esau is a hairy man while I have smooth skin. What if my father touches me? I would appear to be tricking him and would bring down a curse on myself rather than a blessing.’”

“Then Rebekah took the best clothes of Esau her older son, which she had in the house, and put them on her younger son Jacob. She also covered his hands and the smooth part of his neck with the goatskins.”³

This was key to the success of their cunning plan as even though Isaac was sceptical, saying “The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau,”⁴ he still went ahead to give his blessing.

When Esau returned, he was distraught and begged his father to bless him also. Isaac, realising that he had been deceived, told Esau that although he could not reverse his blessing, which meant that Esau would be subordinate to Jacob, Esau would throw Jacob’s “yoke off [his] neck.”⁵

Unsurprisingly, Esau felt deeply betrayed and planned to kill Jacob after the mourning period for Isaac. Rebekah warned Jacob about this and had him flee to her brother, Laban, for refuge.

As an aside, this story would make for a riveting screenplay.

The story picks up again in Genesis 32 and 33, where we see love in action. Jacob had sent word to Esau that he was coming to see him but received word that Esau was journeying to him with 400 men in tow. Jacob was terrified,



praying “Save me, I pray, from the hand of my brother Esau, for I am afraid he will come and attack me, and also the mothers with their children.”⁶

Upon approaching Esau, Jacob “went on ahead and bowed down to the ground seven times as he approached his brother. But Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced him; he threw his arms around his neck and kissed him. And they wept.”⁷ In turn, Jacob’s family bowed down to greet Esau, and then Jacob insisted that Esau accept the gifts of flocks and herds he brought as a sign that he had found favour with his brother who he had so deeply wronged. Esau chose love which “covers a multitude of sins.”⁸

Amongst Jacob’s sons we find another example of love clearing the darkness of enmity. Genesis 37 introduces us to Joseph, his robe of many colours, and his dreams of his older brothers bowing to him which caused them to sell him into slavery in Egypt - although they would rather have killed him but for the intervention of Reuben, the eldest. From chapters 42-50, we are told Joseph’s journey, from slavery in Potiphar’s

² Genesis 27:3-4

³ Genesis 27:15-16

⁴ Genesis 27:22

⁵ Genesis 27:40

⁶ Genesis 32:11

⁷ Genesis 33:3-4

⁸ 1 Peter 4:8b

Photo: [Jamerlene Reskp](#)

house to prison and then high service in the court of Pharaoh. The story culminates in the return of Joseph's brothers to buy grain during a famine.

At this point Joseph could have taken revenge upon his brothers without obstacle. Joseph was essentially the Prime Minister of Egypt, second only to Pharaoh, whilst his brothers were just common people. However, love stood between their sin and its 'just' reward. Joseph's brothers, after Jacob's death, fearing for their lives, sent a message to Joseph, saying, "Your father gave this command before he died: 'Say to Joseph, "Please forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin, because they did evil to you.'" And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father." Joseph wept when they spoke to him. His brothers also came and fell down before him and said, 'Behold, we are your servants.'"⁹

Instead of retaliation, Joseph chose love and looked at God's grace upon his life, responding: "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones.' Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them."¹⁰

These examples remind us that we must choose love at all times, and in love is forgiveness. This is revealed most fully in Christ's Passion. Sin puts us at odds with God, but His love, exemplified in Christ's coming to die for our sins, reconciles us to the Father, saving us from the wages of sin. This calls to

mind the lyrics of 'And Now, O Father, Mindful of the Love' by William Bright that say:

*Look, Father, look on His anointed face,
and only look on us as found in Him;
look not on our misusings of Thy grace,
our prayer so languid, and our faith so dim:
for lo, between our sins and their reward
we set the Passion of Thy Son our Lord.*

In the Lord's Prayer we ask God: "and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." To love is to forgive. "And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."¹¹ If our Lord could show such love to those actively partaking in killing Him, who are we not to love our enemies? Therefore, to love our enemies is to be like Christ!

⁹ Genesis 50:16-18

¹⁰ Genesis 50:19-21

¹¹ Luke 23:34



OBREN I. AMIESIMAKA

Dr. Amiesimaka declares that he is no theologian, but a lowly follower of Christ, striving to see Him more clearly, love Him more dearly, and follow Him more nearly, day by day. Obren lives trusting in God's mercies and salvation bearing in mind Romans 3:23 "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

What Does it Mean to Love Our Enemies?

ZOE MATTIES

Photo: [Jr Korpa](#)

Today I am not feeling very loving. Today, I am filled with rage at the state of the world. An innocent mother was just shot dead by an agent of the government, the despot over the border has said [insert the latest craziest thing you've heard him say here], and international tensions are through the roof. In the face of such blatant injustice, it feels like a daunting task to try to address the question of what it means to love our enemies. It also feels like it might just be one of the most important questions for people of faith to address at this particular moment in time. As cultural polarization continues to rise, it can feel like enemies are lurking around every corner. Are we a people who believe in the world of us vs. them? Or do we believe that Jesus invites us to a different way of life? And if we believe in Jesus' vision, how in the world do we go about loving our enemies, while at the same time standing for justice for those who have been marginalized by these enemies?

Luckily for us, the Scriptures provide a lot of help in answering this question. Jesus also lived in a world dominated by an oppressive regime. His instruction for

loving our enemies was spoken into the context of a marginalized people living under the thumb of the Roman Empire, and that's what makes it all the more remarkable. The people who heard these words were held captive by the exorbitant taxes of the greedy Roman Empire. They were hoping for a powerful leader to come and deliver them from their enemies. And then Jesus tells them to "pray for those who persecute you,"¹ and "do good to those who hate you."²

At first glance, Jesus' directives could seem to imply a kind of "doormat theology,"³ a theology of letting the enemy walk all over you as they see fit. At times, the concept of loving our enemies *has* been used to excuse the actions of oppressors or force people to stay in abusive situations. I can unequivocally say this is not what Jesus meant when he talked about loving our enemies.

¹ Matthew 5:44

² Luke 6:27

³ Diana Butler Bass, "Sunday Musings," [The Cottage \(Substack\)](#), February 22, 2025

The exhortation to love our enemies in the Gospel of Luke comes after the Sermon on the Plain. In this passage, Jesus stands on “a level place,”⁴ and delivers a message banishing hierarchy and inequality. The Lukan Beatitudes are a beautiful series of blessings God offers to those who are poor, hungry, mourning, and hated. He follows up these blessings with a series of woes to those who are rich, full, laughing, and popular. When we hear these woes, we feel good. We want God to give those people what they have coming to them. We want vengeance. But then comes the “love your enemies” speech, and Jesus flips the script. He says, no, revenge is not the way.

There is a section concerning revenge in Matthew’s Sermon on the Mount. Jesus tells his listeners to turn the other cheek, to give away their clothes, and to go the extra mile. In each of these situations, Jesus is giving his followers a non-violent way to resist the dehumanizing actions of the oppressor. When you turn the other cheek, you are effectively saying to the one who hit you, “I’m not afraid of you.” When you give the person who takes your coat, your shirt, shame is brought upon them when they see you naked in public. When you walk the extra mile, you force the one who makes you walk

the mile to break Roman law.⁵ Loving your enemy means helping them remember that you are human and that you are equals. When the apostle Paul expounds on this teaching in the book of Romans, he says when you do good to your enemies, you “heap burning coals on their heads.”⁶ Jesus’ goal was to overcome dehumanization by shaming those in power through non-violent resistance.

When ordinary people stand up against exploitation, they are expressing deep love for all humanity, including for the oppressor. For the one who oppresses is just as much dehumanized by the harm they do as the oppressed is by receiving that harm. Pastor and theologian Melissa Florer-Bixler writes, “It is the work of liberation to create the conditions of a world where enemies are freed from enacting harm and victims are freed from receiving it.”⁷

⁴ Luke 6:17

⁵ [This video](#) by the theologian Walter Wink, explains these concepts in detail.

⁶ Romans 12:20

⁷ Mark Florer-Bixler, *How to Have an Enemy: Righteous Anger and the Work of Peace* (Harrisonburg, VA: MennoMedia, 2021).



Photo: [Mohammed Ibrahim](#)



Photo: [Miraxh Tereziu](#)

Over a decade ago now, I had the opportunity to hear Dr. Cornel West speak at the University of Winnipeg on the power of love in the face of great evil. One line from his impassioned lecture sticks with me to this day: “justice is what love looks like in public.”⁸ Love in public transforms anger at injustice into action to protect that which is loved. The civil rights movement, Indigenous water protectors, and the clergy and ordinary folk who are protesting ICE in Minneapolis at this very moment are good examples of what loving our enemies looks like in our time. This isn’t an easy path, or a popular one. Revenge is the way of the world, and it takes courage and hope to go in a different direction. Theologian Dorothee Soelle, drawing on Saint Augustine, wrote, “Hope has two lovely daughters, Anger and Courage. Anger so that what cannot be, may not be, and courage, so that what must be, will be.”⁹ Loving our enemies is impossible if we do not first name our enemies and tell the truth about the injustices we see.

In the days after Trump’s second election, I found myself drawn to the Psalms. The Psalms are full of uncomfortable prayers that ask for the destruction of enemies. We tend to be wary of anger, afraid of the impact that voicing these rage-filled passages may have on our hearts—and on the hearts of others. But these prayers are a reminder of the enormity of suffering, and that the world is not as it should be.

In praying with the Psalms, I join with prophets who pray for deliverance from their enemies, and with Mary, the mother of Jesus, who called for the powerful to be brought low, and the rich sent away empty. The anger and powerlessness that I feel find an outlet. In praying these words, I do not become more violent; I become more honest. I give my desire for retributive violence to God, and in doing so, refuse to let that desire shape my actions to work for the kind of world in which enemies are an impossibility.

Jesus was in the business of forming a new kind of people—a people designed for liberation and freedom. Loving our enemies is not about conjuring up a good feeling about the people we see doing damage to the world. It is not about upholding the status quo or softening the demands of justice. It is about refusing to let the rhetoric of domination—of empire—have the final word. It is holding fast to the conviction that God is working to overturn all systems of oppression and usher in the Kingdom of God in which “all things,” including our social and political systems, are transformed and redeemed. This is the good news of Christ, and it is for the whole world. It is for victims and victimizers; it is for the oppressed and the oppressors. May we have the courage to love boldly as we work for the liberation of all.

⁸ Cornel West, [Axworthy Lecture](#), University of Winnipeg, May 8, 2015

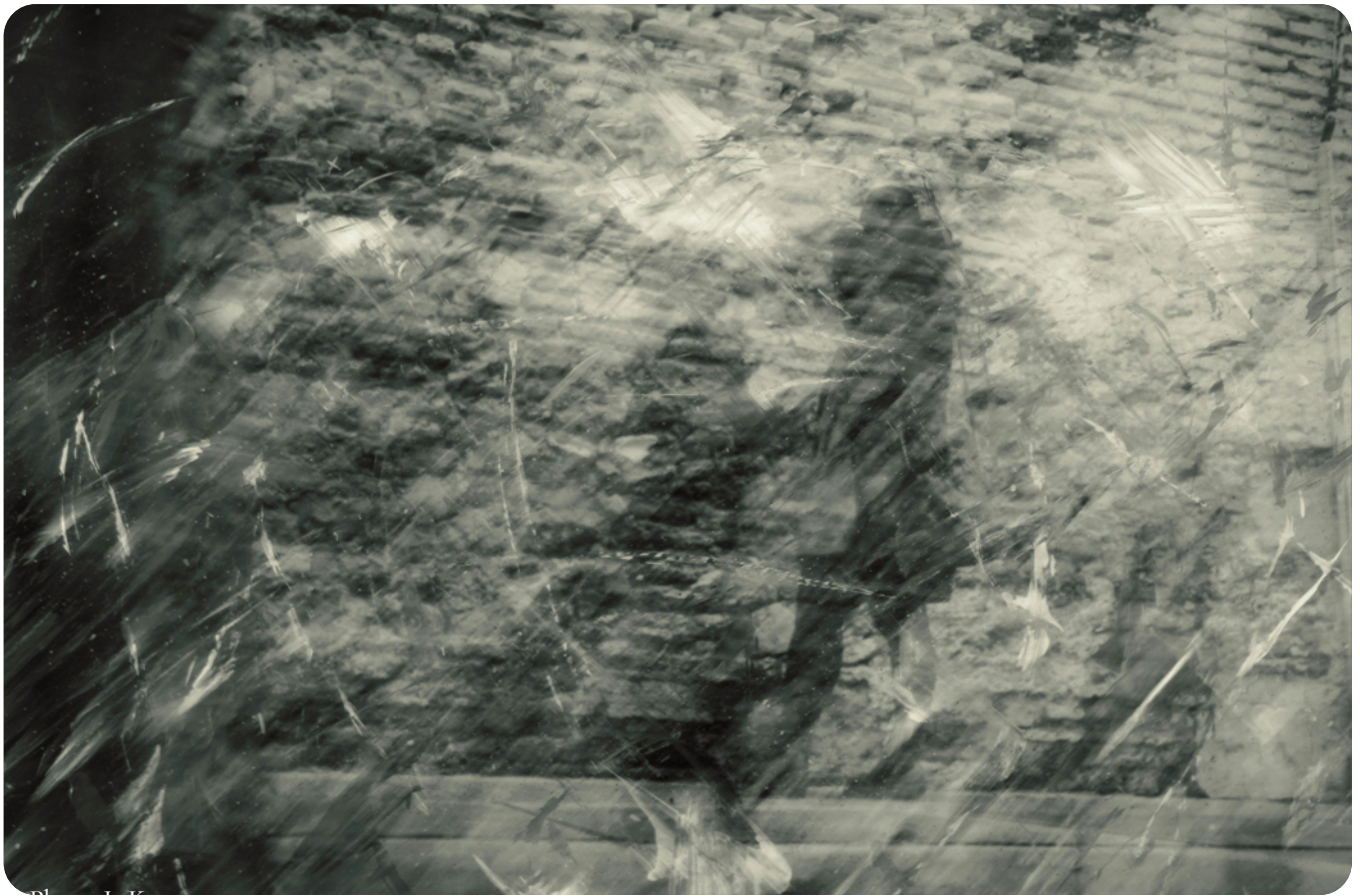
⁹ Dorothee Söelle and Shirley A. Cloyes, *To Work and to Love: A Theology of Creation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984)



ZOE MATTIES

Zoe Matties lives within the watersheds of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers. She enjoys eating veggies from her garden, exploring the woods with her dog, and watching birds. She works for A

Rocha Canada helping people of all ages learn to love and care for the places they call home.



To Be Undone:

An Interview with David Driedger, author of *Nothing Will Save Us: A Theology of Immeasurable Life*

Rupert's Land News: Tell me a bit about how this book came about.

David Driedger: Most of my writing to date, and certainly the writing reflected in the book, is me sort of working out my own theology, coming from a place of restlessness. I grew up conservative, was baptized Evangelical and was formed in liberal churches, but I didn't settle anywhere. I never really enjoyed most of the theology that I've come across, and I've always tended more towards Biblical studies, philosophy, and critical studies. The writing in this book reflects different stages of my development as I've tried to wrestle with an unsettled theology. Over time, I found there was a coherent theology that emerged. Some of the pieces in the book began

ten to fifteen years ago, and some of them were worked on right until the publisher's deadline.

RLN: The title of your book, "Nothing Will Save Us: A Theology of Immeasurable Life " really intrigued me. How does it speak to what the book is about?

DD: The first part, "Nothing Will Save Us," is more of a theological project. It tracks a trajectory where I took seriously, as something pretty fundamental, this prohibition of idols. We often think of the Pentateuch¹ as laden with codes and rules and rituals and symbolism etc., but at the centre of it, in the descriptions for the Tabernacle in the Book of Exodus, you have this line where God says to Moses, "There I will meet with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are upon the ark of the testimony, I will speak with you of all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel."² And the point of that is that you are to put nothing there; you are to keep that

¹ The first five books of the Hebrew Bible.

² Exodus 25:22



Photo: [Andrew Neel](#)

empty to keep the living voice of God present. If you felt that you could determine the form and shape and the value of that space, then that was an idol. So, that was sort of that image of this “nothing,” that there are some things we cannot measure, we can’t determine.

This was sort of paired with the fact that I began to realize that idolatry was sort of the default of God’s people. It wasn’t the exception, that’s just what we did. So, I began to see that as a function of human organization and values that we want to control and determine the values of the world—even the most important values—whereas God is trying to prohibit that.

Then I felt that in the prophetic trajectory and the gospel trajectory, you have, first and foremost, the Incarnation, which is, as Paul puts it, God sort of emptying Himself and coming in the world as nothing.³ A young, unmarried woman, without status, gives birth to God. So, in terms of the gospel, I really lean into the traditions of liberation theology that talk about God’s preferential option to the poor. The places which are discarded by the world—that have no measure—because they have no worth, no value, are actually holy places where we hope to hear God’s voice.

So, for me, that really helped, because I wasn’t comfortable with the conservative theology that I grew up with that always had that edge of judgement and exclusion, and liberalism wasn’t really satisfying either because it tended to be very assimilating, having this idea of “sure, come in, but we aren’t going to make any changes. You can come in our

house, but follow the rules,” that kind of thing. Neither of these were accountable to what I felt the gospel was, which is good news to the poor.

So, part one is sort of the theological unpacking about that, and parts two and three are explorations of how the church has fallen short in that area. They are more standalone essays, but basically, the whole book is me developing that theology of how we can be accountable to God’s holiness, and to the gospel, which are in among the people and places considered nothing by the world. At a minimum, we are called to see where those places of “nothing” are in the world and give our attention to them. We are not called to have answers, but we are called to not turn away from them because that’s where God’s people are called to gather.

RLN: Can you tell me a bit more about this idea of an “immeasurable life?”

DD: Look at the types of demands for wealth, for beauty, for health, for status, etc. There are just these constant demands of measure and value that we clearly can never undo never live up to. In this way, even the people that benefit in our society suffer under these measures. We have created these environments of pressure, and yet there is an idea of potential spaces without measure—a potential to escape the world’s metric or forces. It’s not meant to be naïve; it’s going outside of what society has told us is worthy or of value and recognizing that there is more beyond that.

³ Philipians 2:7

There's a men's group that meets in the north end, which is mostly comprised of folks who have been coming out of prison or are coming from some pretty difficult circumstances. It was basically just a sharing circle, and so it was very clear that I was the odd person out in that space. On one level, I could commend myself in being brave for being there, but it felt like such a holy space that the thought at the forefront of my mind was "Do I belong here?" It reminded me that there are implications and prohibitions around holiness. Wrestling with that was difficult, but the group made me feel undone.

I have a chapter in the book where I talk about Isaiah's vision in chapter 6 where he's in the Holy of Holies, and he says, "Woe is me; I am undone."⁴ Holiness kind of unmakes the world in order to remake it. And sometimes in those spaces, I just feel undone in a way that I hope is undoing some of those forms and measures which the world clings to.

RLN: What is a message from the Gospels that you touch on in your book that you feel is particularly relevant in today's world?

For me, it's about intentionally building relationships. It's about physically being in those places that have been discarded—historically or currently. I have some chapters in the book that talk about the time I spent at the camp and protest on the Manitoba Legislature grounds trying to draw attention to the ongoing impact of Residential Schools and of the kids who never made it home and what that was like. I also have a chapter about meeting with some folks that are a part of the Sex Workers of Winnipeg Action Coalition (SWWAC) and was just learning about what life is like among a group that, again, has been historically stigmatized. And you know, no matter what laws people have tried to make, it just never ends up well for them. So, it's about building relationships, especially with those who are treated as "worthless," and being open to the idea of being shaped by these experiences, instead of having an agenda with them. Allow yourself to be surprised where things might go.

RLN: What are some of the biggest things you hope people will take away from your book?

DD: I hope it makes a particular contribution, a particular voice, at least in our context, outside of some of the more

⁴ Isaiah 6:5

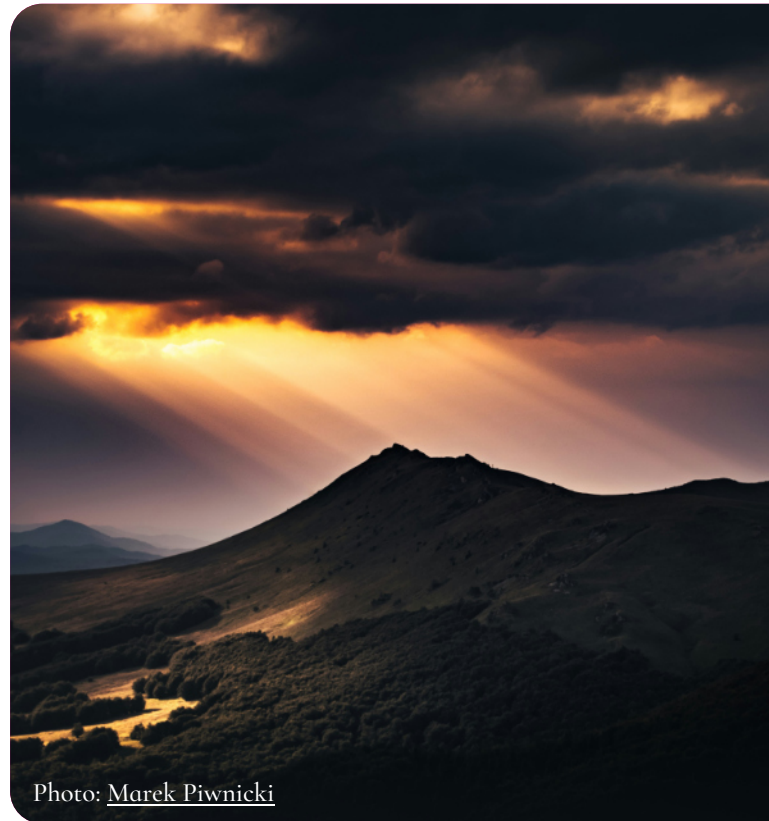


Photo: [Marek Piwnicki](#)

dominant conservative and liberal theologies that I have encountered. I keep coming back to this idea that we are meant to be accountable to the Gospel; I hope people read this and see something in that. Not that it has to be my vision of it, but that there is an openness there to be accountable to the gospel. A lot of the majority churches (especially European) have felt very settled, and I hope this book opens spaces to see the good news and to serve the world—especially for those who have not been served well by the world.

In all four of the Gospels, when Jesus is asked why He talks in parables, He responds by saying "so that people may hear but not understand," which is a quote from Isaiah 6:9-10. It's meant to undo things so that people can become open and be remade.



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