

God's Favourite

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Paborito ti Dios

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Ti Pitupulo

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Being filled with God's love shields us in life's storms but also makes the happy moments happier.

Before I begin, I should tell you that two of my children have passed out whilst speaking at pulpits, and I have never felt more connected to them than in this moment. I've got more on my mind than just the trapdoor.

Our family has six children, who sometimes tease one another that they are the favourite child. Each has different reasons for being preferred. Our love for each of our children is pure and fulfilling and complete. We could not love any one of them any more than another—with each child's birth came the most beautiful expansion of our love. I most relate to my Heavenly Father's love for me through the love that I feel for my children.

As they each rehearse their claims to be the most loved child, you might have thought that our family had never had an untidy bedroom. The sense of blemishes in the relationship between parent and child is diminished with a focus on love.

At some point, perhaps because I can see that we are heading toward an inevitable family riot, I'll say something like, "OK, you have worn me down, but I am not going to announce it; you know which one of you is my favourite." My goal is that each one of the six feels victorious and all-out war is avoided—at least until next time!

Ti pannakapno iti ayat ti Dios salaknibannatayo iti bagyo ti biag ngem pagbalinenna pay a naragragsak dagiti naragsak a kanito.

Sakbay a mangrugiak, nasken nga ibagak kadakayo a dua ti annakko a natalimudaw bayat ti panagsaritada iti pulpito, ket ita laeng nga ad-adda a mariknak nga agpapadakami iti daytoy a kanito. Saan laeng a trapdoor ti adda iti panunotko.

Adda innem nga annakmi, a no dadduma aggiinnangawda nga isuda ti paborito nga anak. Tunggal maysa ket addaan iti sabasabali a gapu no apay isuda ti paborito. Natarnaw ken makapnek ken naan-anay ti ayatmi iti tunggal maysa kadagiti annakmi. Saanmi a mabalin nga ipangpangruna nga ayaten ti asinoman kadakuada nga ad-adda ngem iti maysa pay—gapu ta kagiddan ti pannakayanak ti tunggal anak ti kapintasan a panangpadakkel iti ayatmi. Mainaigko unay ti ayat ti Nailangitan nga Amak para kaniak babaen ti ayat a mariknak para kadagiti annakko.

Bayat ti panangibaga ti tunggal maysa dagiti gapu no apay nga isuda ti paborito unay nga anak, mabalin nga impagarupyo a ti pamiliami ket saan a pulos naaddaan iti narugit a siled. Ti panagdillaw kadagiti mulit iti relasion ti nagbaetan ti nagannak ken anak ket maksayan no naitalimudok iti ayat.

Iti maysa a punto, nalabit a gapu ta makitak a mapankami iti maysa a saan a maliklikan a panagapa iti pamilya, mangibagaak iti maysa a banag a kapada daytoy, "Sige, binannogdakon, ngem diakto ipakaammo daytoy; ammoyon no asino kadakayo ti paboritok." Ti panggepko ket marikna ti tunggal maysa kadakuada nga innem a nagballigida ken maliklikanda ti dak-

In his Gospel, John describes himself as “the disciple whom Jesus loved,” as if that arrangement were somehow unique. I like to think that this was because John felt so completely loved by Jesus. Nephi gave me a similar sense when he wrote, “I glory in my Jesus.” Of course, the Saviour isn’t Nephi’s any more than He is John’s, and yet the personal nature of Nephi’s relationship with “his” Jesus led him to that tender description.

Isn’t it wonderful that there are times when we can feel so fully and personally noticed and loved? Nephi can call Him “his” Jesus, and so can we. Our Saviour’s love is the “highest, noblest, strongest kind of love,” and He provides until we are “filled.” Divine love never runs dry, and we are each a cherished favourite. God’s love is where, as circles on a Venn diagram, we all overlap. Whichever parts of us seem different, His love is where we find togetherness.

Is it any surprise that the greatest commandments are to love God and to love those around us? When I see people showing Christlike love for one another, it feels to me as if that love contains more than just their love; it is love that also has divinity in it. When we love one another in this way, as completely and fully as we can, heaven gets involved too.

So if someone we care about seems distant from a sense of divine love, we can follow this pattern—by doing things that bring us closer to God ourselves and then doing things that bring us closer to them—an unspoken beckoning to come to Christ.

I wish I could sit down with you and ask you what circumstances cause you to feel God’s love. Which verses of scripture, which particular acts of service? Where would you be? What music? In whose company? General conference is a rich place to learn about connecting with heaven’s

kel a gubat—uray agingga laeng iti sumaruno a gundaway!

Iti Ebangelhiona, iladawan ni Juan ti bagina a kas “ti disipulo nga inayat ni Jesus,” a kasla naidumduma dayta a kasasaad. Kayatko a panunoten a daytoy ket gapu ta narikna ni Juan a talaga nga ay-ayaten isuna ni Jesus. Inted ni Nephi kaniak ti umasping a rikna idi insuratna, “Arag-oak kenni Jesusko.” Siempre, saan laeng a ni Nephi ti makaibaga a ni Jesus ti Mangisalakanna kas met ken ni Juan, ngem ti personal a kasasaad ti relasion ni Nephi ken ni “Jesusna” ti nangiturong kenkuana iti dayta a nadungngo a panangiladawan.

Saan kadi a nakaskasdaaw nga adda dagiti gundaway a mariknatayo ti kinaan-anay ken personal a madlaw ken maipatpategtayo? Mabalina nga awagan ni Nephi Isuna a ti “Jesusna,” ken mabalintayo met nga aramiden dayta. Ti ayat ti Mangisalakantayo ti “kangatuan, katan-okan, kapigsaan a kita ti ayat,” ken mangipaay Isuna agingga a “mabsogtayo.” Saan a pulos maibus ti nadiosan nga ayat, ket tunggal maysa kadatayo ket maipatpateg a paborito. Ti ayat ti Dios ket sadiay a, kas kadagiti sirkulo iti Venn diagram, ay-ayatennatayo amin. Aniaman kadagiti paset-tayo ti kasla naiduma, ti ayatna ti pakasarakan-tayo iti panagkaykaysa.

Nakaskasdaaw kadi a dagiti kaindakanan a bilin ket ti panagayat iti Dios ken panagayat kadagiti adda iti aglawlawtayo? No makitak dagiti tao a mangipakpakita iti ayat a kas ken Cristo para iti tunggal maysa, mariknak a kasla dayta nga ayat ket naglaon iti ad-adu pay ngem itiatyadalaeng; ayat daytoy nga addaan pay iti kinadios. No aginnayattayo iti kastoy a wagas, iti awan kurangna ken naan-anay agingga a kabaellantayo, makipagkaykaysa met ti langit.

No ti maysa a tao a pakaseknantayo ket kasla adayo iti rikna ti nadiosan nga ayat, mabalintayo a surotan daytoy a pagtuladan—babaen ti panangaramid kadagiti banag a mangyas-asideg kadatayo a mismo iti Dios ken kalpasanna panangaramid kadagiti banag a mangyas-asideg kadatayo kadakuada—maysa a saan a mayebkas a panangawis nga umasideg ken ni Cristo.

Kayatko koma ti agtugaw iti abayyo ket agdamagak kadakayo no ania dagiti pasamak a nangiparikna kadakayo iti ayat ti Dios. Ania kadagiti bersikulo ti nasantuan a kasuratan, ania dagiti partikular nga aramid ti panagserbi? Sadi-no ti ayanyo? Ania a musika? Asino ti kaduayo?

love.

But perhaps you feel a long way from the love of God. Maybe there is a chorus of voices of discouragement and darkness that weighs into your thoughts, messages telling you that you are too wounded and confused, too weak and overlooked, too different or disoriented to warrant heavenly love in any real way. If you hear those ideas, then please hear this: those voices are just wrong. We can confidently disregard brokenness in any way disqualifying us from heavenly love—every time we sing the hymn that reminds us that our beloved and flawless Saviour chose to be “bruised, broken, [and] torn for us,” every time we take broken bread. Surely Jesus removes all shame from the broken. Through His brokenness, He became perfect, and He can make us perfect in spite of our brokenness. Broken, lonely, torn, and bruised He was—and we may feel we are—but separated from the love of God we are not. “Broken people, perfect love,” as the song goes.

You might know something secret about yourself that makes you feel unlovable. However right you might be about what you know about yourself, you are wrong to think that you have put yourself beyond the reach of God’s love. We are sometimes cruel and impatient toward ourselves in ways that we could never imagine being toward anyone else. There is much for us to do in this life, but self-loathing and shameful self-condemnation are not on that list. However misshapen we might feel we are, His arms are not shortened. No. They are always long enough to “[reach our] reaching” and embrace each one of us.

When we don’t feel the warmth of divine love, it hasn’t gone away. God’s own words are that “the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but [His] kindness shall not depart

Ti sapasap a komperensia ti kapintasan a pagteng a mangmangted iti adu a gundaway a pakasursuran maipapan iti panangikonekta iti ayat ti langit.

Ngem nalabit mariknayo nga adayokayo iti ayat ti Dios? Mabalín nga adda maysa a koro dagiti timek ti pannakaupay ken kinasipngat a mangpadagsen iti panunotyo, dagiti mensahe a mangibagbaga kadakayo a nalaus a nasugatan ken natikaw, nakapuy unay ken nabaybay-an, naisabsabali unay ken awanan iti direksión tapno makanamnama a maipaayan iti nailangitan nga ayat iti ania man a pudno a wagas. No mangngenganyo dagita a kapanunotan ngarud denggenyo koma daytoy: biddut laeng dagita a timek. Mabalintayo nga agtalek iti aniaman a wagas a saan a lapped kadagiti pagkurangantayo tapno maikaritayo iti nailangitan nga ayat—tunggal panagkantatayo iti himno a mangipalagip kadatayo a pinili ti ay-ayatentayo ken awan pakapilawanna a Mangisalakantayo ti “makabkabil, masugatan, [ken] mapirpirsay para kadatayo,” tunggal umawattayo iti tinapay a napirpirsay. Awan duadua nga ikkaten ni Jesus ti amin a pannakababain manipud kadagiti nasugatan. Babaen ti pannakasugatna, nagbalin Isuna a perpekto, ket mabalinnatayo nga aramiden a perpekto iti baet dagiti pannakasugattayo. Nasugatan, nalidayan, napirpirsay, ken nakabkabil Isuna—ket mabalín a mariknatayo a datayo met—ngem saantayo a naisina iti ayat ti Dios. “Nasugatan a tattao; perpekto nga ayat,” kas kuna ti kanta.

Mabalín nga adda ilemlemmengyo maipapan iti bagiyo a gapu no apay a mariknayo a saankayo a maikari nga ayaten. Kasano man ti kinahusto maipapan no ania iti ammoyo maipapan iti bagiyo, biddut ti panangipagarupyo nga inkabilyo ti bagiyo a saan a madanon ti ayat ti Dios. No dadduma naulpit ken ditayo naanus iti bagitayo kadagiti wagas a ditayo pulos ipagarup a maaramidtayo iti asinoman. Nakaad-adu pay ti aramidentayo ditoy a biag, ngem awan iti dayta a listaan ti pananggura iti bagi ken nakababain a panangkondena iti bagi. Kasano man amabalintayoa mariknaa nasugatatayo, dagititakiagnaket saan nga ababa. Saan. Kanayon nga umdas ti kaatiddogda a “[mangdanon] iti madanon-tayo” ken arakupenda ti tunggal maysa kadatayo.

Uray no ditayo marikna ti bara ti nadiosan nga ayat, saan a napukaw daytoy. Kinuna ti Dios mismo a “mabalín a pumanaw dagiti bantay, ken mabalín a yakar dagiti turod; ngem saanto

from [us].” So, just to be clear, the idea that God has stopped loving should be so far down the list of possible explanations in life that we don’t get to it until after the mountains have left and the hills are gone!

I really enjoy this symbolism of mountains being evidence of the certainty of God’s love. That powerful symbolism weaves into accounts of those who go to the mountains to receive revelation and Isaiah’s description of “the mountain of the Lord’s house” being “established in the top of the mountains.” The house of the Lord is the home of our most precious covenants and a place for us all to retreat and sink deeply into the evidence of our Father’s love for us. I have also enjoyed the comfort that comes to my soul when I wrap myself more tightly in my baptismal covenant and find someone who is mourning a loss or grieving a disappointment and I try to help them hold and process their feelings. Are these ways that we can become more immersed in the precious covenantal love he shed?

So if God’s love does not leave us, why don’t we always feel it? Just to manage your expectations: I don’t know. But being loved is definitely not the same as feeling loved, and I have a few thoughts that might help you as you pursue your answers to that question.

Perhaps you are wrestling with grief, depression, betrayal, loneliness, disappointment, or other powerful intrusion into your ability to feel God’s love for you. If so, these things can dull or suspend our ability to feel as we might otherwise feel. For a season at least, perhaps you will not be able to feel His love, and knowledge will have to suffice. But I wonder if you could experiment—patiently—with different ways of expressing and receiving divine love. Can you take a step back from whatever is in front of you and maybe another step and another, until you see a wider landscape, wider and wider still if necessary, until you are literally “thinking celestial” because you are looking at the stars and remembering worlds without number and through them their Creator?

a maawan [kadatayo] ti kinasayaat[na].” Isu a, tapno agbalin a nalawag, ti kapanunotan nga insardengen ti Dios ti agayat ket adda koma iti kababaan a listaan dagiti mabalin a panangilaw-lawag iti biag tapno iti kasta ditayo mapanunot daytoy agingga a makapanaw dagiti bantay ken mayakar dagiti turod!

Talaga a magustuak daytoy a simbolismo dagiti bantay a pakakitaan iti kinaawan duadua ti ayat ti Dios. Dayta nabileg a simbolismo ket mangabel kadagiti salaysay maipapan kadagidiay mapan kadagiti bantay tapno umawat iti palti- ingken ti panangiladawan ni Isaia ti “bantay ti balay ti Apo” a “naipasdek iti tuktok dagiti bantay.” Ti balay ti Apo ti pagtaengan dagiti kapatgan a katulagantayo ken maysa a lugar a papanantayo aminken amirisentayo a nasayaat ti pakakitaan ti ayat ti Amatayo para kadatayo. Nagragsakak pay iti gin-awa a sumangbay iti kararuak no ad-adda a tungpalek ti katulagak iti panagbuniag ket agsapsapulak iti maysa a tao nga agladladingit iti pannakapukaw wenno agladladingit iti panna-kaupay ket padasek a tulongan ida a mangteng-nel ken mangproseso iti riknada. Dagitoy kadi ti wagas tapno ad-adda nga agtalinaed daytoy iti napateg a katulagan ti ayat a, hesed?

Isu a no kanayon nga ay-ayatennatayo ti Dios, apay a ditayo kanayon a marikna daytoy? Tapno saankayo unay a mangnamnama iti sungbat: Diak ammo. Ngem tipanagbalina maay-ayat, ken adda sumagmamano a kapanunotak a mabalin a makatulong kadakayo bayat ti panag-sapulyo kadagiti sungbatyo iti dayta a saludsod.

Nalabit a marigatankayo iti panagladingit, depresion, panangliput, panagliday, panna-kaupay, wenno dadduma pay a nabileg a tubeng iti kabaelayo a mangrikna iti ayat ti Dios para kadakayo. No kasta, dagitoy a banag ti mabalin a mangpakapuy wenno mangpasardeng iti kabaelayo a mangrikna iti nasken a mariknatayo. Adda uray maysa a panawen a nalabit a saanyonto amariknati ayatna ken nasken nga umdas ti pannakaammo. Ngem pampanunotek no mabalinyo ti mangpadas—a siaanus—iti nagduduma a wagas ti panangipeksa ken panangawat iti nadiosan nga ayat? Mabalinyo kadi ti umaddang nga umadayo manipud iti aniaman nga adda iti sanguananyo ken nalabit nga umaddangkayo iti maysa pay ken maysa pay agingga a makitayo ti nalawlaw a buya ti daga, lumawlaw ken lumawlaw pay laeng no kasap-

Birdsong, feeling the sun or a breeze or rain on my skin, and times when nature puts my senses in awe of God—each has had a part in providing me with heavenly connection. Perhaps the comfort of faithful friends will help. Maybe music? Or serving? Have you kept a record or journal of times when your connection with God was clearer to you? Perhaps you could invite those you trust to share their sources of divine connection with you as you search for relief and understanding.

I wonder, if Jesus were to choose a place where you and He could meet, a private place where you would be able to have a singular focus on Him, might He choose your unique place of personal suffering, the place of your deepest need, where no one else can go? Somewhere you feel so lonely that you must truly be all alone but you aren't quite, a place to which perhaps only He has travelled but actually has already prepared to meet you there when you arrive? If you are waiting for Him to come, might He already be there and within reach?

If you do feel filled with love in this season of your life, please try and hold on to it as effectively as a sieve holds water. Splash it everywhere you go. One of the miracles of the divine economy is that when we try to share Jesus's love, we find ourselves being filled up in a variation of the principle that "whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."

Being filled with God's love shields us in life's storms but also makes the happy moments happier—our joyful days, when there is sunshine in the sky, are made even brighter by the sunshine in our souls.

Let's become "rooted and grounded" in our Jesus and in His love. Let's look for and treasure

ulan agingga a literal nga "agpampanunotkayo iti celestial" gapu ta kitkitaenyo dagiti bituen ken laglagipenyo dagiti lubong a saan a mabilang ken babaen kadakuada ti Namarsuada?

Ti kanta dagiti tumatayab, pannakarikna iti init wenno puyupoy ti angin wenno tudo iti kudilko, ken dagiti panawen a namagsiddaw kaniak dagiti panagriknak iti Dios—tunggal maysa ket addaan iti akem iti panangipaay kaniak iti nailangitan a koneksion. Nalabit makatulong ti liwliwa dagiti matalek a gagayyem. Nalabit maysa a musika? Wenno panagserbi? Naitalimengyo kadin ti maysa a rekord wenno nakapagsurat-kayon iti journal maipapan kadagiti panawen a nagbalin a nalawag kadakayo ti koneksionyo iti Dios? Nalabit mabalinyo nga awisen dagidiay a pagtalkanyo a mangibinglay kadakayo kadagiti pamataudan iti nadiosan a koneksionda bayat ti panagsapulyo iti gin-awa ken pannakaawat?

Pampanunotek, no pinili ni Jesus ti maysa a lugar a mabalin a makipagkita Isuna kadakayo, iti maysa a pribado a lugar a mabalin nga Isuna laeng ti pokusyo, mabalin kadi a pilienna ti naidumduma a lugar ti personal a panagsagaba, ti lugar ti kaunegan a kasapulanyo, ti lugar nga awan ti asino man a makapan? Iti maysa a lugar a mariknayo a nakalidldidaykayo isu a kasla agmay-maysakayo uray saan met, maysa a lugar a nalabit nga Isu pay laeng ti nakapan ngem iti kinapudnona ket nakasaganan a mangsabat kadakayo sadiay inton sumangpetkayo? No ur-urayenyo Isuna a sumangpet, mabalin ngata nga addan sadiay ken maasitgan?

No mariknayo a napnokayo iti ayat iti daytoy a panawen ti biagyo, padasenyo koma ken kumpetkayo iti daytoy a kas iti kasamay ti maysa a pag-sagatan a mangtengtengngel iti danum. Iwarsim daytoy iti sadinoman a lugar a papananyo. Maysa kadagiti milagro ti nadiosan nga ekonomia ket no padasentayo nga ibinglay ti ayat ni Jesus, masarakantayo ti bagitayo a napno iti maysa a panagduduma ti prinsipio a no "siasinoman a mapukawna ti biagna gapu kaniak masarakananto daytoy."

Ti pannakapno iti ayat ti Dios salakniban-natayo iti bagyo ti biag ngem ad-adda met a pagbalinenna a naragragsak dagiti naragsak a kanito—dagiti naragsak nga aldawtayo, no adda silnag ti init iti tangatang, ket nalawlawag gapu iti silnag ti init iti kararuatayo.

Agbalintayo koma a "naramut ken natibker" iti Jesustayo ken iti ayatna. Sapulen ken

experiences of feeling His love and power in our lives. The joy of the gospel is available to all: not just the happy, not just the downcast. Joy is our purpose, not the gift of our circumstances. We have every good reason to “rejoice and be filled with love towards God and all men.” Let’s get full. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

ipategtayo koma dagiti padas a nakariknaantayo iti ayat ken pannakabalinna iti biagtayo. Ti rag-o ti ebangelio ket magun-od ti amin: saan laeng a dagiti naragsak, saan laeng a dagiti naupay. Ragsak ti panggeptayo, saan a ti sagut ti kasasaadtayo. Addaantayo amin iti nasayaat a rason nga “agrag-o ken mapno iti ayat iti Dios ken iti amin a tattao.” Mapunnotayo. Iti nagan ni Jesucristo, amen.