

God's Favourite

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Ny tian' Andriamanitra indrindra

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Ao amin'ny Fitopololahy

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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

Rehefa fenon'ny fitiavan' Andriamanitra isika dia ho voaro amin'ny tafio-drivotry ny fiainana nefa koa mahatonga ireo fotoana mahafaly ho mahafaly kokoa.

Mialoha ny hanombohako dia aleoko lazaina aminareo fa roa tamin'ireo zanako no torana raha niteny teo amin'ny polipitra, ary tsy mbola nahatsapa ho tahaka azy ireo mihitsy aho raha tsy amin'izao fotoana izao. Be dia be ny zavatra tonga ato an-tsaiko ankoatra ny faniriana te hisitrika anaty lavaka.

Manan-janaka enina ny ankohonanay izay matetika no mifananihany hoe izy no zanaka tiana indrindra. Samy manana ny antony mahatonga azy milaza ho tiana indrindra ny tsirairay amin'izy ireo. Ny fitiavanay an'ireo zanakay dia madio sy mahafeno ary feno. Tsy afaka ny hitia ny iray amin'izy ireo ambony kokoa noho ny iray hafa izahay, fitomboan'ny fitiavana tsara indrindra no tsapanay tamin'ny nahaterahan'ny zanakay tsirairay avy. Takatro tsara ny fitiavan'ny Raiko any An-danitra ahy amin'ny alalan'ny fitiavana ananako ho an'ireo zanako.

Rehefa samy mamerina ny mahatonga azy ireo ho zanaka tiana indrindra izy ireo dia mety ho nieritreritra ianareo fa tsy mbola nisy efitrano fatoriana nikorontana izany mihitsy tao amin'ny fianakavianay. Mihena ny fahatsapana ireo zavatra tsy tomombana eo amin'ny fifandraisan'ny ray aman-dreny sy ny zanaka rehefa mifantoka amin'ny fitiavana.

Misy fotoana, angamba rehefa hitako hoe mirona mankany amin'ny ady ao an-tokantrano izahay, dia miteny toy izao aho: "Eny ary, mandreraka ahy ianareo, saingy tsy hoteneniko ilay izy, fantatrareo hoe iza aminareo no tiako indrin-

is that each one of the six feels victorious and all-out war is avoided—at least until next time!

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

dra.” Ny tanjoko dia hoe mba samy hahatsapa ho nandresy izy enina ary voasoroka ny hanaovana izay handresena amin’ ilay ady ... farafaharatsiny hatramin’ ny manaraka indray!

Ao amin’ ny Filazantsarany i Jaona dia milaza ny tenany ho “mpianatra izay tian’ i Jesoa,” toy ny hoe miavaka izany ilay filazana. Tiako ny mieritreritra hoe satria nahatsapa ho tena tian’ i Jesoa loatra i Jaona. Nanome fahatsapana toy izany tao amiko i Nefia raha nanoratra hoe: “Mirehareha ny amin’ i Jesoakoaho.” Mazava ho azy fa tsy an’ i Nefia ny Mpamonjy ary tsy an’ i Jaona ihany koa, fa ny toetran’ ny fifandraisana manokana nananan’ i Nefia tamin’ i Jesoa “ny” no nahatonga azy hanao io famariparitana feno fitiavana io.

Tsy mahafinaritra ve hoe misy fotoana isika mahatsapa ho tena voamarika sy tiana tanteraka sy manokana? Afaka niantso Azy hoe Jesoa “ny” i Nefia, ary isika koa dia afaka manao izany. Ny fitiavan’ ny Mpamonjy antsika no “ny avo indrindra, ny mihaja indrindra, ny mahery indrindra amin’ ny karazam-pitiavana,” ary manolotra foana izy ambarapahatonga antsika ho “feno.” Ny fitiavan’ Andriamanitra dia tsy ho levona mandrakizay, ary samy maminy avokoa isika tsirairay avy. Ny fitiavan’ Andriamanitra no toerana mampiray antsika, toy ny amin’ ireo faribolana amin’ ny diagramme de Venn. Na misy ampahany amintsika aza miavaka dia ao amin’ ny fitiavany no ahitantsika ny firaisana.

Dia mahagaga ve raha toa ka ny mitia an’ Andriamanitra sy ny mitia ny manodidina antsika no didy lehibe voalohany? Rehefa mahita olona maneho fitiavana ny hafa toy ny nataon’ i Kristy aho dia amiko izany fitiavana izany dia toa misy zavatra mihoatra ny fitiavany fotsiny; fitiavana ahitana ny fitiavan’ Andriamanitra izany. Rehefa mifankatia toy izany isika, amin’ ny fomba feno sy tanteraka araka izay vitantsika, dia miditra an-tsehatra ao amin’ izany ihany koa ny fitaoman’ ny lanitra.

Noho izany raha misy olona iray izay tian-tsika toa lavitry ny fahatsapana ny fitiavan’ Andriamanitra dia azontsika arahina io lamina io—amin’ ny fanaovana zavatra izay mahatonga antsika ho akaiky kokoa an’ Andriamanitra, avy eo manao zavatra izay mahatonga antsika ho akaiky kokoa azy ireo—karazana antso iray ankolaka ny hanatona an’ i Kristy.

Maniry aho ny hiara-mipetraka aminareo ary hanontany anareo hoe inona no toe-javatra mahatonga anareo hahatsapa ny fitiavan’ An-

of service? Where would you be? What music? In whose company? General conference is a rich place to learn about connecting with heaven's 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

driamanitra. Andininy inona ao amin'ny soratra masina, asa fanompoana manokana inona? Toerana mety hisy anao aiza? Hira inona? Miaraka amin'iza? Ny fihonambeny ny Fiangonana maneran-tany dia toerana lehibe ahafahana mianatra momba ny fifandraisana amin'ny fitiavan' Andriamanitra.

Saingy mahatsapa ho lavitry ny fitiavan' Andriamanitra angamba ianao. Mety misy feo maro manakivy sy haizina mitambesatra ao an'etritritrao, hafatra izay milaza aminao fa maratra sy very hevitra, na trotraka loatra sy tsy misy miraharaha, na miavaka loatra na very lalana ianao ka tsy afaka mahazo ny fitavan' Andriamanitra mihitsy. Raha maheno ireo hevitra ireo ianao dia mba henoy izao: diso tsotra izao ireo feo ireo. Afaka tsy miraharaha amim-patokian-tena ny fahatorotoroana izay manakana antsika amin'ny fomba rehetra tsy handray ny fitiavan' Andriamanitra isika, isaky ny hiraintsika ilay fihirana izay mampahatsiahy antsika fa ny Mpamonjintsika malala sy tsisy pentina dia nisafidy ny “ho faty sy ho torotoroina ary noviraviraina ho antsika.” Azo antoka fa esorin'i Jesoa ny henatra rehetra amin'ireo izay notorotoroina. Tamin'ny alalan'ny naha-torotoro Azy no nahatonga Azy ho lasa tanteraka, ary azony atao tanteraka isika na dia torotoro aza. Notorotoroina, irery, noviraviraina, ary novonoina Izy, izay mety ho tsapantsika mi-hatra amintsika koa, saingy raha ny ho tafasaraka amin'ny fitiavan' Andriamanitra dia tsy hahazo antsika. Araka ny lazain'ilay hira iny hoe: “olona notorotoroina; fitiavana tonga lafatra.”

Mety mahafantatra zavatra tsiambaratelo mahakasika ny tenanao ianao izay mahatonga anao hahatsapa ho tsy tokony hotiavina. Na dia mety ho marina aza ilay zavatra fantatrao momba ny tenanao dia tsy marina ny eritreritrao hoe nametraka ny tenanao tsy ho takatry ny fitiavan' Andriamanitra ianao. Indraindray isika masiaka sy tsy manam-paharetana loatra amin'ny tenantsika mihoatra ny mety ho ataontsika amin'olon-kafa. Betsaka no mbola tokony hataontsika eto amin'ity fiainana ity saingy tsy ao anatin'izany ny fankahalana tena sy ny fanamelohana tena mahamenatra. Na dia tsapantsikaho ratsy endrika toy ny ahoana azaisikadia tsy fohy ny tanany. Tsia. Ahinjiny lava foana izany mba “hahatakatra antsika” sy hamihina antsika tsirairay.

Rehefa tsy mahatsapa ny hafanan'ny fitiavan' Andriamanitra isika dia tsy hoe nandao izany. Andriamanitra mihitsy no niteny hoe “na dia

be removed; but [His] kindness shall not depart 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 has?

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

hifindra aza ny tendrombohitra ary na dia hihetsika aza ny havoana, tsy mba hiala amin’[tsika] ny famindram-po[ny].” Noho izany, mba hampazava azy tsara, ilay hevitra hoe nitsahatra nitia Andriamanitra dia tokony ho any amin’ny faran’ny lisitry ny fanazavana azo omena momba ny fiainana ka rehefa nifindra mihitsy ny tendrombohitra sy nihetsika mihitsy ny havoana vao tonga amin’izany isika!

Tena mahafinaritra ahy io tandindon’ny tendrombohitra io ho porofon’ny maha tena azo antoka ny fitiavan’ Andriamanitra. Io tandindona mahery vaika io dia hita ao amin’ny tantaran’ireo izay mandeha any an-tendrombohitra mba handray fanambaranasy ny famaritan’i Isaia “ny tendrombohitra misy ny tranon’i Jehovah” izay “haorina eo an-tampon’ny tendrombohitra.” Ny tranon’ny Tompo no tranon’ny fanekempihavanantsika sarobidy indrindra ary toerana fisintahana ho antsika rehetrasy hahatsapantsika lalina ny fitiavan’ny Raintsika antsika. Tiako ihany koa ny fampiononana tonga ao amin’ny fanahiko rehefa mifikitra lalina kokoa amin’ny fanekempihavanan’ny batisako aho sy rehefa mahita olona mitomany noho ny fahaverezana na malahelo noho ny fahadisoam-panantenana ka miezaka manampy azy aho hihazona sy hikarakara ny fahatsapany. Moa ve izy ireny fomba ahafahantsika miroboka kokoa ao amin’ilay fitiavana avy amin’ny fanekempihavanana sarobidy, dia nyhesed?

Koa raha tsy mandao antsika ary ny fitiavan’ Andriamanitra, nahoana isika no tsy mahatsapa azy foana? Mba tsy hanantenanareo be dia tsy fantatro ny valiny. Saingy nyhoetiana dia tsy mitovy amin’ny fahatsapanaho tiana, ary manana hevitra vitsivitsy aho izay mety hanampy anareo hahita ny valin’io fanontaniana io.

Mety mitolona amin’ny alahelo, na ny fahaketrana, na ny fivadiham-pitokisana, na ny fanirery, na ny fahadisoam-panantenana, na zavatra mahery vaika hafa manakana ny fahafahanao mahatsapa ny fitiavan’ Andriamanitra angamba ianao. Raha izany dia mety handrendrika na hampiato ny fahafahantsika mahatsapa izay zavatra tokony ho tsapantsika ireo zavatra ireo. Hisy fotoana farafaharatsiny mety tsy hahafahanao mahatsapany fitiavany, fa fahalalana ihany dia tokony ho ampy. Saingy manontany tena aho raha toa ka afaka manandrana—amim-paharetana—fomba hafa hanehoana sy handraisana ny fitiavan’ Andriamanitra ianareo. Afaka mihemo-

are looking at the stars and remembering worlds without number and through them their Creator?

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.

tra kely amin'izay rehetra eo anoloanao ve ianao ary angamba handray dingana iray sy iray hafa mandra-pidadasika kokoa ny fahitanao, midadasika kokoa hatrany raha ilaina mandra-pahatonga anao "hisaina amin'ny fomba selestialy"-satria mijery ireo kintana ianao ary mahatsiaro ireo tontolo tsy hita isa, ka hahita ny Mpahary amin'ny alalan'izy ireo?

Ny feom-borona, ny fahatsapana ny masoandro na ny rivotra na ny orana eo amin'ny hoditro, ary ireo fotoana izay anaovan'ny zavaboary ny saiko ho talanjona amin' Andriamanitra, ireo rehetra ireo dia samy anisan'ny nanome ahy fifandraisana amin' Andriamanitra. Mety hana-mpy angamba ny fankaherezana avy amin'ireo namana mahatoky? Sa ve ny mozika? Na ny fanompoana? Moa ve nitana rakitsoratra na diary misy ireo fotoana nampazava kokoa ny fifandraisanao tamin' Andriamanitra ianao? Angamba azonao asaina ireo olona atokisanao mba hizara ny loharanon'ny fifandraisany amin' Andriamanitra eo am-pikarohanao fanamaivanana sy fahatakarana.

Manontany tena aho hoe raha i Jesoa no misafidy toerana iray ahafahanareo mihaona, toerana iray manokana ahafahanao mifantoka tanteraka Aminy, mety hifidy ilay toerana tokana ijalianao manokana ve Izy, ilay toerana misy ny filanao lalina indrindra, izay tsy misy afaka mandeha? Toerana iray izay ahatsapanao ho manirery tokoa ka tsy maintsy ho irery tanteraka ianao nefa tsy tena izany, toerana iray izay mety Izy irery no efa nandeha tao saingy efa nomaniny hihaonana aminao rehefa tonga any ianao? Raha miandry Azy ho tonga ianao, moa ve tsy efa ao Izy sady azo an-tanana?

Raha mahatsapa ho voky fitiavana ianao amin'izao vanim-potoana amin'ny fiainanao izao, dia miezaha mifikitra amin'izany amin'ny fomba mahomby toy ny sivana mitana rano. Afafazo amin'ny toerana rehetra alehanao izany. Iray amin'ireo fahagagana eo amin'ny fitantan' Andriamanitra an'izao rehetra izao ny hoe rehefa miezaka mizara ny fitiavan'i Jesoa isika dia hiaina an'ilay fitsipika manao hoe "na iza na iza no hahavery ny ainy noho ny amiko, dia hahazo izany."

Rehefa fenon'ny fitiavan' Andriamanitra isika dia ho voaro amin'ny tafio-drivotry ny fiainana nefa koa mahatonga ireo fotoana mahafaly ho mahafaly kokoa—ireo andro mahafaly antsika, izay mampibaliaka ny masoandro, dia lasa mazava kokoa noho ilay hazavana ao anaty fanahin-

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

tsika.

Aoka isika ho lasa "hamaka sy hiorina mafy" ao amin'i Jesoa sy ny fitiavany. Andeha isika hitady sy hankamamy traikefa hahatsapana ny fitiavany sy ny heriny eo amin'ny fiainantsika. Misy ho an'ny rehetra ny fifaliana avy amin'ny filazantsara, tsy ho an'ireo faly ihany, tsy ho an'ireo mitanondrika ihany. Tanjontsika ny fifaliana, fa tsy fanomezana avy amin'ny zavatra iainantsika. Manana antony tsara isika entina "mifaly sy ho fenon'ny fitiavana an' Andriamanitra sy ny olon-drehetra." Andeha hameno ny tenantsika. Amin'ny anaran'i Jesoa Kristy, amena.