

God's Favourite

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O Mea e Sili ona Pele i le Atua

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O Le Fitugafulu

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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!

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

O le faatumulia i le alofa o le Atua e malupuipua ai i tatou mai afa o le olaga, ae e faia ai foi ia sili atu ona fiafia ia taimi fiafia.

Ae ou te le'i amata, e ao ina ou ta'u atu ia te outou e toalua la'u fanau na matapogia a o lauga atu i pulelaa, ma talosia ia aua foi nei ou matapogia. E tele atu mea o loo i lo'u mafaufau nai lō na o le faitotoa mailei.

O lo matou aiga e toaono le fanau, ma o nisi taimi e faalili ai e le tasi le isi faapea o ia e sili ona pele. E tofu le tagata ma mafuaaga eseese e manatu ai e pele. O lo ma alolofa i le taitasi o le ma fanau e mama a'ia'i ma faamalieloto ma atoatoa. E le mafai ona ma alolofa i se tasi o i latou e sili atu nai lo le isi—o le fanau mai o tamaiti taitasi, e oo mai ai le faateleina matagofie o lo ma alolofa. E sili ona ou malamalama i le alofa o le Tama Faalelagi mo a'u e ala i le alofa ou te lagonaina mo la'u fanau.

A o tofu fai mai i latou o le tamaitiiti e pele, atonu tou te manatu faapea e le'i i ai lava se potumoe gasu o lo matou aiga. O le manatu i faaletonu o mafutaga i le va o le matua ma le tamaitiiti, e tuuitiitia pe a tula'i atu i le alofa.

E i ai nisi taimi, atonu ona ua mafai ona ou vaai ua matou agai atu i se misa faaleaiga o le a le mafai ona 'alofia, ona ou fai atu lea faapea "LELEI, ua ou lēlavā, ae o le a ou le ta'u atua; ua outou iloa le tagata o outou e pele." O la'u sini ia tofu lagona e le toaono lea le manumalo ma faaoga ai soo se auala e manumalo ai—se'ia oo foi i se isi taimi!

I lana Evagelia, o loo faamatala ai e Ioane ia lava "o le soo ua alofaina e Iesu," e faapei sa tula'gaese lena faatulagaga. Ou te mafaufau faapea na

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 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

ma’fua ona sa lagona e Ioane le matuai alofaina e Iesu. Na tuuina mai foi e Nifae se lagona faapena ina ua ia tusia, “Ou te olioli ilo’u Iesu.” Ioe, ua lē na o se Faaola o Nifae, e faapei foi ona lē na o se Faaola o Ioane, ae o le natura patino o le sootaga a Nifae ma “lona” Iesu na taitai atu ai o ia i lena faamatalaga faamomoiloto.

Pe le o se mea matagofie ea le i ai o taimi e mafai ai ona tatou matua’i lagonaina o le amana’ia ma le alofaina patino? E mafai e Nifae ona ta’u o Ia o “lona” Iesu, ma e tatou te mafaia foi. O le alofa o lo tatou Faaola o le ituaiga o alofa “sili-sili ona maualuga, malualii, ma malosi,” ma Na Te tuuina mai pea lava seia oo ina “faatumulia” ai i tatou. E le mafai lava ona matūtū le alofa faale-Atua, ma e pele ma alofaina i tatou taitoatasi. O le alofa o le Atua o le mea, e pei o li’o i se ata Venu, tatou te fesopoa’i uma ai. Tusa foi pe i ai ni vaega tatou te eseese ai, ae o Lona alofa tatou te laugatasia ai.

Pe o se mea ea e ofo ai ona o poloaiga sili o le alofa i le Atua ma le alofa ia i latou o vagaia i tatou? Pe a tatou vaaia tagata o faaalua le alofa faakeriso o le tasi mo le isi, i lo’u lava lagona o lena alofa o loo i ai ma isi mea nai lo le na o lola-toulava alofa; o le alofa o loo i ai foi le faaleatua. Pe a tatou faalofani i lea ala, i le mae’ae’a ma le atoatoa tatou te mafaia, e aofia ai foi ma le lagi ia.

Afai la e foliga mai se tagata tatou te alofa i ai e vavamamao mai se lagona o le alofa faaleatua, e mafai ona tatou mulimulita’ia le mamalu lea—o le faia o mea e aumaia faalatalata ai i tatou lava i le Atua ona faia ai lea o mea tatou te latalata atu ai ia te i latou—se geno lē lēoa e sau ia Keriso.

Ma’imau pe ana mafai ona ta saofafa’i ma ou fesili atu pe o a tulaga ua afua ai ona e lagona le alofa o le Atua. O a fuaiupu o tusitusiga paia, e faapitoa ona e lagona ai le alofa o le Atua? Mata o fea e te ono i ai? O le a le musika? Faatasi ma ai? O le konafesi aoao o se nofoaga mauoa e aoao ai e uiga i le fesootaiga ma le alofa o le lagi.

Pe atonu ua e lagona se mamao ese mai le alofa o le Atua. Pe atonu o i ai ni mau leo o le faalotovaivai ma le pogisa o mamafa i ou mafau-fauga, ni feau o loo fai atu ia te oe ua tele naua ou manu’aga ma le fememea’i, ua e vaivai tele ma e lē o amana’iaina, e ese a oe ia pe ua e matua faalufesasi e te maua ai le alofa faalelagi i soo se ala moni. Afai e te faalogo i na manatu, ona faamol-emole lea faalogo mai i le mea lenei: ua matua’i sese lava na leo. E mafai ona tatou lafoa’ia ma le mautinoa le nutimomoia i soo se itu ua faaleaga-

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 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

vaaina ai i tatou mai le alofa faaleatua—o taimi uma tatou te usuina ai le viiga lea e faamanatu mai ai ia i tatou faapea o lo tatou Faaola pele ma le lē ponā na filifili ia “faalava’au ma puapuagatia mo i tatou,” o taimi uma tatou te aai ai i le areto e tofitofi. E aveesea moni lava e Iesu le maasiasi uma mai le lotonutimomoia. E ala i Lona tu’imomomoina, na Ia atoatoa ai, ma mafai ai ona Ia faaatoatoaina i tatou e ui i lo tatou nutimomoia. Na momomo o Ia, tuulafoaiina, saeia, ma puapuagatia—tatou te ono manatu foi ua faapena i tatou—ae ua vavaeese mai le alofa o le Atua, e leai. “Le nuu ua nutimomoia; le alofa moni,” e pei o upu o le pese.

Atonu e te iloina se mea lilo ia te oe lava, e afua ai ona e manatu e lē alofaina oe. Peitai, atonu e te sa’o i le mea ua e iloa ia te oe lava, ae e te sesē i lou mafaufau faapea ua e tuu oe lava i se tulaga faapea ua le oo atu i ai le alofa o le Atua. O nisi taimi tatou te agaleaga ai ma lē onosai ia i tatou lava i ni ala tatou te le mafai ona manatu i ai mo se isi lava tagata. E anoanoai mea e tatau ona tatou fai i lenei olaga, ae e lē o i ai le inoino ia te oe lava ma le ta’usalaina o oe lava ma faamasiasia, e lē o i ai i le lisi. Po o a lava faaletonutatuote ono lagonaina otatoui ai, e lē faapuupuuina lava Ona. Leai. E lava lava le uumi o Ona aao e “[āu] mai ai ia i tatou” ma opomau i tatou taitoatasi.

Pe a tatou le lagonaina le mafanafana o le alofa faaleatua, e lei alu ese lava. O afioga a le Atua lava ia e faapea “e mavae atu o atumauga, e luluina foi mauga; ae o [Lona] alofa e le mavae atu mai ia te i [tatou].” O lea la, tau ina ia faamani-no atu, o le manatu faapea ua taofia le alofa mai o le Atua, e tatau ona matua’i maua lalo lava i le lisi o faamalamalama e mafai ona i ai i le olaga ma tatou te le oo lava i ai, seia vagana ua leai ni atumauga ma ua mou atu foi mauga!

E ese lo’u fiafia i le faatusa lenei o atumauga o se mau i le mautinoa o le alofa o le Atua. O le faatusa mamana o loo maua i tala o i latou e o i le mauga e maua mai ai faaaligama o le faamatalaga a Isaia o “le mauga o le fale o Ieova” na “faatuina i tumutumu o mauga.” O le fale o Ieova o le maota lea o a tatou feagaiga aupito sili ona taua ma o se nofoaga mo i tatou e mapu i aima faamagoto loloto ifo ai i le faamaoniga o le alofa o lo tatou Tama. Ua ou olioli foi i le mafanafana e oo mai i lo’u agaga pe a ou ‘aui a’u lava i a’u feagaiga o le papatisoga, ma maua se tasi o faanoanoa i se maliu pe o tiga i se mea na le fiafia ai, ma ou tau-mafai e fesoasoani i ai ia taofimau ma faasolosolo

them hold and process their feelings. Are these ways that we can become more immersed in the precious covenantal lovehesed?

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?

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?

o latou lagona. Pe o auala ea nei e mafai ai ona tatou saga tofufu ifo i le alofa taua faalefeagaiga, o le heseti?

O lea la afai e le tuua i tatou e le alofa o le Atua, aisea tatou te le lagonaina ai i taimi uma? Tau ina faafoefoe o outou manatu: Ou te le iloa. Ae le alofa e matua'i ese lava mai le lagonaina alofaina, ma e i ai ni nai o'u mantu e ono fesoasoani ia te outou a o tulitulimataga uina a tou tali i lena fesili.

Atonu o loo e tauivi ma le tiga alofa, popolevale, faalaina, tuatoatasi, le fiafia, po o isi lagona malolosi i lou gafatia ona lagonaina le alofa o le Atua mo oe. Afai o lea, o mea nei e mafai ona punitia ai pe aveesea ai lou gafatia ona lagonaina e pei ona sa tatau ai. Mo se vaitau pe a, atonu o le a le mafai ona elagonaina lona alofa, ma ua lava le na ona iloa. Ae ou te iloa pe mafai ona e faata'itai'a—ma le onosai—i ni auala eseese le faaali atu ma le mauaina o le alofa faaleatua. Pe mafai lava ona e la'a tasi i tua mai se mea o loo tu i ou luma, pe toe la'a tasi, ma se isi laa i tua, seia oo ina lautele atu le faataatiaga o lau vaai, saga faalautele pea seia i'u ina ua e “mafau faalesitila” moniaua o lena ua e vaavaai atu nei i fetu ma manatua ai lalolagi e le mafaitaulia ma iloa atu ai lo latou Foafoa?

O le tausagi o manulele, ma lagonaina le la po o le agi malu o le savili po o le timu i luga o lo'u pa'u, ma taimi e faatulaga ai e le natura o'u sane e maofa ai i le Atua—ua tofua aumaia e nei mea uma ia te a'u se sootaga faalelagi. Atonu o le faamafanafana mai o uo faamaoni o le a fesoasoani. Pe o musika? Po o le auauna atu? Pe o e tausia se faamaumauga po o se apitalaaga o taimi na manino atili ai la oulua sootaga ma le Atua? Atonu e mafai ona e valaaulia i latou e te talitonuina e faasoa mai ia te oe a latou faapogai o sootaga faalelagi, a o e sailia se toomaga ma le malamalama.

Ou te mafau, pe ana fai e filifili e Iesu se nofoaga e mafai ona oulua fetui ai, se nofoaga tuma'oti o le a mafai ai ona e taulai patino atu ia te Ia, mata Na Te filifilia lou nofoaga tulagaese o sou mafatiaga patino, le nofoaga o lou manaoga aupito loloto, lea e leai se isi e mafai ona alu i ai? Se mea e te matuai lagona ai le tuatoatasi lea e tatau moni ona i ai na o oe, ae e le o patino tonu, se nofoaga atonu sa na o Ia na savalia, ae o le mea moni ua leva ona saunia e fetui ai ma oe iina ina ua e taunu'u? Afai o e faatalitali mo Ia e sau, pe mata e le'i i ai o Ia iina ma o loo i le li'o e au

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 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.

atu i ai?

Afai ua e lagona le faatumulia i le alofa i lenei vaiata o lou olaga, faamolemole aua le taofimauina mo oe lava ae faasoa atu i isi. Faasoasoa atu i mea uma e te alu i ai. O se tasi o vavega o le tamaoaiga faalelagi e faapea, a tatou taumafai e faasoa atu le alofa o Iesu, tatou te mauaina i tatou lava ua faatumulia e faapei o le mataupu faavae faapea "o ai e faamaimauina lona ola ona o a'u na te mauaina."

O le faatumulia i le alofa o le Atua e malupuipua ai i tatou mai afa o le olaga, ae e faia ai foi ia sili atu ona fiafia ia taimi fiafia—o o tatou aso fiafia, pe a i ai le lasusulu i le lagi, e atili ona susulu e ala i le susulu o le la i o tatou agaga.

Ia tatou "maua'a ma faavae" i lo tatou Iesu ma Lona alofa. Ia tatou saili mo ma teuina aafia-ga o le lagonaina o Lona alofa ma le mana i o tatou olaga. O le olioli i le talalelei o loo avanoa mo tagata uma: e le na o e fiafia, e le mo na o e pagatia. O le olioli o lo tatou faamoemoega lea, e le o le meaalofo o o tatou tulaga. Ua ia i tatou mafuaaga lelei uma e "olioli ai ma ia faatumulia i le alofa i lo tatou Atua ma tagata uma." Ia faatutumuina i tatou. I le suafa o Iesu Keriso, amene.