

God's Favourite

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Te tāata here-āe-hia a te Atua

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Nō te Hitu 'Ahuru

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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

'Ia fa'ā'ihia i te here o te Atua e pāroru ia tātou i te mau vero o te orara'a, e fa'atupu ato'a rā i te mau taime 'oa'oa i te 'oa'oa rahi

Hou vau 'a ha'amata ai, e ti'a iā'u e parau atu ē, e piti o tā'u mau tamari'i tei matapōirihia 'a paraparau ai rāua i te terōno, 'e 'aita roa atu vau e mana'o e 'āpiti roa atu vau ia rāua i teie taime. E mana'o hau a'e au i te 'ūputa.

E 'ono tamari'i i roto i tō māua 'utuāfare e 'āa nei i te tahi taime te tahi 'e te tahi ma te fa'a'ite ē, e tamari'i here-āe-hia 'oia. E mau tumu ta'a ē tō rātou tāta'itahi 'ia here-āe-hia. Tō māua here nō tā māua mau tamari'i tāta'itahi e mea mā, e fa'atupu i te 'oa'oa 'e te hope. E'ita e ti'a ia māua 'ia here i te hōē o rātou hau atu i te tahi—i te fānaurāhia mai te tamari'i tāta'itahi, 'ua tae mai te tupurāa rahi nehenehe o tō māua here. Tē fa'a'ite hau nei au iā'u iho i te here o tō'u Metua i te ao ra nō'u, nā roto atu i te here o tā'u e putapū nei nō tā'u mau tamari'i.

'A nā ni'a noa ai rātou i te fa'ahiti i tā rātou fa'a'itera'a 'ei tamari'i here-āe-hia, e riro paha 'outou i te feruri ē 'aita roa atu e piha huehue i tō māua 'utuāfare. Te nīno'a mana'o o te hapehape i roto i te aura'a i rotopū i te metua 'e te tamari'i, e fa'aitihia e te hōē fa'atumurāa i ni'a i te here.

I te hōē taime mau, penei a'e nō te mea tē 'ite nei au ē tē haere atu ra mātou i te hōē 'ōrurera'a pāpū o te 'utuāfare, e parau vau te hōē 'ohipa mai teie « nā reira, 'ua fa'arohirohi roa 'outou iā'u, e'ita rā vau e fa'a'ara atu ia 'outou i te reira, 'ua 'ite 'outou 'o vai i roto ia 'outou tā'u i here a'e ». Tā'u fā 'o tē 'itera'a nā tamari'i tāta'itahi e ono i te 'upoōti'ara'a 'e 'ia 'apehia te hōē tātamā'ira'a pāpū mau—nō teie noa ra taime !

I roto i tāna 'evanelia, 'ua fa'ata'a Ioane iāna

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 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

mai « te pipi tei herehia e Iesu », e au ra teie fa’anahora’a ’ua riro mai te mea ra e mea ’õtahi. Mea au nā’u ’ia feruri ē, nō te mea ho’i ē tē putapū nei Ioane ’ua here-tā’to’a-hia ’oia e Iesu. ’Ua hōro’a mai Nephi iā’u i te hōē ā nīno’a mana’o ’a pāpā’i ai ’oia, « tē ’o’o’a nei au itō’ulesu ». Oia mau, ’aita te Fa’aora i riro hau nā Nephi mai ia Ioane ato’a, ’e inaha ra te natura tā’ata nō te aura’a o Nephi ’e « tōna » Iesu, ’ua arata’i iāna i teie fa’a’itera’a marū.

E ’ere ānei e mea fa’ahiahia tē vai nei te mau taimē, i reira tātou e nehenehe ai e putapū ’ua ’itehia ’e ’ua herehia ma te tā’to’ara’a ’e te tā’ata hōē ? E nehenehe Nephi e pī’i iāna « tōna » Iesu, ’e tātou ato’a. Te here o tō tātou Fa’aora ’o « te huru here teitei roa a’e, te hanahana a’e ’e te pūai a’e » ’e fa’arava’i ’oia e tae roa ’ua « i roa » tātou. E’ita roa te here hanahana e pau, ’e ’ua riro tātou pā’to’a ’ei mau tā’ata herehia. Tei reira te here o te Atua, i te vāhi mai te mau porota’a [cer-cle] i nī’a i te nīno’a iti [diagramme] a Venn, tātou pā’to’a e ’ai rēni ai. Noa atu e mau tuha’a tō tātou e au ra e mea tā’a ē, tei roto i tōna here tātou e ’ite mai ai tō tātou hōēra’a.

E mea māere ānei ē te mau fa’auera’a rahi roa a’e, ’o te herera’a i te Atua ’e te feiā e hā’ati nei ia tātou ? ’Ia ’ite āna’e au i te feiā e fa’a’ite nei i tō rātou here mai te au i tō te Mesia te huru nō te tahi ’e te tahi, e au ra iā’u tē vai ra i roto i teie here hau atu i tōrātou here, ’o te hōē here teie tē vai ato’a ra te atuara’a i roto. ’Ia here āna’e tātou i te tahi ’e te tahi mai teie te huru, ’oia ato’a ma te hope ’e te ’i mai tā tātou e nehenehe, e ’āmui ato’a mai te ra’i.

Nō reira, mai te peu te hōē tā’ata tā tātou i au maita’i e au ra ’ua ’ātea i te aura’a o te here hana-hana, e nehenehe tātou e pe’e i teie hōhō’a—ma te ravera’a tātou iho i te mau mea e ha’a’fātata ia tātou i te Atua ’e i muri iho ma te ravera’a i te mau mea e ha’a’fātata atu tātou i te tā’ata—hōē pī’ira’a parau-’ore-hia ’ia haere mai i te Mesia ra.

Tē hina’aro nei au e pārahi i pīha’i iho ia ’outou ’e e ui ia ’outou e aha te mau tupura’a ’o tē fa’aputapū ia ’outou i te here o te Atua. E aha te mau ’irava o te pāpā’ira’a mo’a, e aha te mau ’ohipa tā’a ē o te tāvinira’a ? I hea ’outou e vai ai ? E aha te pehe ? Nā muri i tei hea tā’ata ? ’Ua riro te ’āmuira’a rahi ’ei vāhi faufa’a rahi nō te ha’api’i mai i te fa’atū’ati atu i te here o te ra’i.

Tē putapū nei rā paha ’outou, ’ua ātea ’outou i te here o te Atua ? Penei a’e tē fa’ateimaha nei te hōē pupu reo o te tarapapera’a ’e te pōuri i nī’a i

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 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

tō ’outou ferurira’a, te mau poro’i e parau nei ia ’outou ’ua pēpē ’ino roa ’outou ’e te ’āhuehue, ’ua paruparu roa ’e ’ua ha’afau’ā-’ore-hia, mea tā’a ē roa ’aore rā ’aita e ’avei’a nō te fāri’i i te here o te ra’i noa atu te huru. ’Ia fa’aro’o ānaē ’outou i teie mau mana’o, nō reira tē tāparu nei au ’a fa’aro’o mai i teie : E mea hape anaē teie mau reo. E nehenehe tātou ma te ti’aturi tā’āto’a e tau’a ’ore i te ’ōfatifatira’a noa atu te huru ’o te fa’ata’a ia ’outou i te here o te ra’i—i te mau taime ato’a e hīmene tātou i te hīmene ’o te fa’aha’amana’o ia tātou ē, ’ua mā’iti tō tātou Fa’aora herehia ’e te hape ’ore ’ia « tā’irihia, ’ia ’ōfatifatihia, [’e] ’ia hūhutihia nō tātou », Pāpū maita’i, e ’iriti Iesu i te mau ha’ama ato’a nō te feiā tei ’ōfatifatihia. Nā roto i tōna ’ōfatifatira’ahia, ’ua riro mai ’oia ’ei mea maita’i roa, ’e e nehenehe ’oia e fa’ariro ia tātou ’ei mea maita’i roa, noa atu tō tātou ’ōfatifatira’ahia. ’Ua ’ōfatifatihia, ’ua vai ’ōtahi, ’ua mutumutu ’e ’ua tā’itihia ’oia—’e e nehenehe tātou e mana’o mai te reira tātou—’ia fa’ata’a-’ē-hia rā i te here o te Atua, ’aita ia tātou mai te reira. « Ta’ata fatifati, here maita’i roa », mai tā te hīmene e parau nei.

’Ua ’ite paha ’outou i te tahi ’ōhipa ’ōmoē nō ni’a ia ’outou iho ’o tē ha’aputapū ia ’outou ’ei tā’ata e ’ore e ti’a ’ia herehia. Noa atu te tanora’a mau ’o tā ’outou i ’ite nō ni’a ia ’outou iho, ’ua hape ’outou i te ferurira’a ’ua fa’a’ātea ē ’outou ia ’outou iho i te here o te Atua. I te tahi taime e mea ’ino roa ’e te fa’a’oroma’i ’ore tātou ia tātou iho, mai te huru ra ē e’ita roa tātou e mana’o te reira nō vetahi ē. Tē vai ra e rave rahi ’ōhipa tā tātou e rave i roto i teie orara’a, terā rā te au ’ore iāna iho ’e te fa’autu’ara’a ha’ama iāna iho ’aita te reira i ni’a i te tāpura. Noa atu te huru fa’ahapara’a o tātātou enehenehe putapū, ’aitatōnarima i ha’apotohia. Aita. Tē vai roa noa ra te reira nō te fa’atoro ’ia « [roa’a] ia [tātou] te tauturu » e ’ia tauahi ia tātou tāta’itahi.

’Ia ’ore anaē tātou e putapū i te māhanahana o te here hanahana, ’aita te reira i moē ē. Teie te mau parau iho a te Atua « e tā’a ē ho’i te mau mou’a, e huritumuhia ho’i te mau ’āivi ; e ’ore rā [tāna] hāmani maita’i ia [tātou] e tā’a ē ». Nō reira ’ei ha’apāpūra’a, te mana’o ē ’ua fa’aea te Atua i te here e ti’a i te reira ’ia āte’a ē roa i te tāpura o te mau tātarara’a e vai ra i roto i te orara’a, ’o te ’ore e ra’ehia ia tātou hou te mau mou’a e reva ē ai ’e te mau ’āivi e moē ē ai !

Mea au roa nā’u teie hi’ora’a o te mau mou’a ’ei fa’a’itera’a i te pāpūra’a mau o te here o te Atua. Teie hi’ora’a pūai e ’ite-fa’ahou-hia i roto i te mau fa’ati’ara’a a te feiā e haere nei i ni’a i te mau mou’a

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?

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

nō te fāri'i i te heheura'a, 'e i roto i te fa'ata'ara'a a Isaia nō « te mou'a o te fare o te Atua » tei « ha'amauhia i ni'a i te tupuai o te mou'a ». Te fare o te Atua 'o te fare ia o tā tātou mau fafau'a faufa'a roa 'e hōē vāhi i reira tātou e nehenehe ai e unuhi'e 'ia hapu hōhonu roa i roto i te fa'aitera'a o te here o tō tātou Metua nō tātou. 'Ua fa'ahia ato'a vau i te tāmahanahana tei tae mai i tō'u vauerua, 'ia tāpo'i vī ana'e vau iā'u i roto i tā'u fafau'a o te bāpetizora'a 'e 'ia fārerei ana'e au i te hōē tāata e 'oto ra nō te hōē tāata tei pohe, 'aore rā nō te māuruuru 'ore, 'e 'o tā'u e tāmata nei i te tauturu iāna 'ia tāpe'a 'e 'ia fa'atere i tōna mau nīno'a mana'o. E mau rāve'a ānei teie 'o tā tātou e nehenehe e hapu hōhonu roa i roto i te here faufa'a rahi o te fafau'a, hesed?

Nō reira, mai te peu e'ita te here o te Atua e fa'arue ia tātou, nō te aha 'aita tātou e putapū tāmāu noa i te reira? Nō te fa'atere noa i tō tātou mau tīa'ira'a: 'Aita vau i 'ite. Terā rā 'ia herehia e 'ere roa atu hōē ā huru i te putapūra'a 'ua herehia, 'e e mau mana'o ri'i tō'u 'o te nehenehe e tauturu ia 'outou 'a 'imi ai 'outou i tā 'outou pāhonora'a i teie uira'a.

Penei a'e tē 'aro nei 'outou i te aumihi, te 'āravi, te ha'avare, te mo'emo'e, te māuruuru 'ore, 'aore rā te tahi atu 'arora'a pūai i roto i tō 'outou 'aravihi 'ia putapū i te here o te Atua nō 'outou. Mai te mea o te reira iho ā, e nehenehe teie mau mea e tāmārū 'aore rā e fa'ata'e i tō tātou 'aravihi 'ia putapū mai tā tātou e nehenehe e putapū. Nō te tahi noa tau ri'i, e'ita paha 'outou e nehenehe e putapūi tōna here 'e te 'itera'a 'ua nava'i ia. Tē uiui nei rā vau e nehenehe ānei 'outou e tāmata-mata—ma te fa'aōroma'i—ma te mau rāve'a tā'a 'ē nō te fa'a'ite 'e nō te fāri'i i te here hanahana? E nehenehe ānei 'outou e 'ōtohe ri'i i muri 'ia au i te mea e 'itehia i mua ia 'outou, 'e penei a'e e tu'u hōē tā'ahira'a i mua 'e te tahi fa'ahou e tae roa e 'ite atu 'outou i te hōē huru fenua 'āano a'e, te rahi roa a'e e ti'a ai, tae roa 'ia « feruri tiretiera » 'outou nō te mea tē mātā'ita'i nei 'outou i te mau fetia 'e tē ha'amana'o ra i te mau ao 'aita e nūmerahia 'e nā roto ia rātou i tō rātou Hāmani?

Te hīmene a te mau manu, putapūra'a i te mahanaha o te mahana 'aore rā te mata'i haumārū 'aore rā te ua i ni'a i tō'u iri, 'e te mau taime e tu'u mai ai te nātura i tō'u mau tumu 'ite nō te māere i mua i te Atua—'ua fa'ati'a teie mau 'ohipa tāta'itahi 'ia ha'amaui i te hōē tū'atira'a i te ra'i. Penei a'e e tauturu mai te tāmahanahana a te mau hoa ha'apa'o maita'i ia 'outou? Penei a'e te

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 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.

pehe ? 'Aore rā te tāvinira'a ? 'Ua tāpē'a ānei 'outou i te hōē pāpā'ira'a 'aore rā te hōē buka 'āamu nō te mau taime i reira tō 'outou tū'atira'a ē te Atua i te pāpū-maita'i-ra'a ? Penei aē e nehenehe 'outou e ani i te feiā tā 'outou i ti'aturi, 'ia fa'a'ite mai ia 'outou i tā rātou pū nō te tū'atira'a hanahana, 'a 'imi ai 'outou i te tāmarūra'a ē te hāroaroara'a ?

Tē uiui nei au, 'āhani pai e ti'a ia Iesu e māiti i te hōē vāhi e nehenehe 'outou ē 'ōna e fārerei, hōē vāhi mo'emo'e i reira 'outou e nehenehe ai e rōtahi 'ōtahi i ni'a iāna, e nehenehe ānei 'ōia e māiti i tō 'outou iho vāhi hōē roa o te māuiui, te vāhi o tō 'outou hina'aro hōhonu roa aē, hōē vāhi e'ita roa atu te tahi tāata e tae i roto ? I te hōē vāhi i reira 'outou e putapū ai te 'ōtahi-mau-ra'a e ti'a mau ai ia 'outou 'ia vai 'ōtahi noa, 'aita rā 'outou e vai mau ra, hōē vāhi paha 'ua rātere nā 'ōia ana'e terā rā i reira 'ua fa'a'ineine a'ena 'ōia nō te fārerei ia 'outou 'ia tae ana'e mai 'outou. Mai te peu tē ti'a i ra 'outou iāna 'ia haere mai, e nehenehe ānei 'ōia e vai a'ena i reira ē tē fa'atoro mai ra te rima ?

Mai te mea tē putapū nei 'outou i te 'ira'a o te here i teie tau nō tō 'outou orara'a, 'a tāmata i te tāpē'a māite mai i te reira ma te maita'i pāpū, mai te hōē titi'a e tāpē'a i te pape. 'A ha'apahī atu i te reira nā te mau vāhi ato'a tā 'outou e haere nei. Hōē o te mau temeio o te fa'arava'ira'a hanahana 'ōia ho'i 'ia tāmata ana'e tātou i te fa'a'ite i te here o Iesu, e 'ite tātou ia tātou iho 'ia fa'a'ihia i te raurāa o te parau tumu ē « o tei ti'a iāna i te tu'u i tōna ora iā'u nei, e roa'a ia iāna te ora ».

'Ia fa'a'ihia i te here o te Atua e pāruu ia tātou i te mau vero o te orara'a, e fa'atupu ato'a rā i te mau taime 'oa'oa i te 'oa'oa rahi—tō tātou mau mahana 'oa'oa, 'ia hiti te mahana i ni'a i te ra'i, e fa'a'ana'ana-hau-atu-ā-hia e te mahana i roto i tō tātou vaerua.

'A vaiiho 'ia « a'ahia ē 'ia fa'atumuhia » i roto i tō tātou Iesu ē i roto i tōna here. 'A 'imi āna'e ē 'a fa'aherehere ana'e i te mau 'ohipa i tupu 'o te fa'ati'a ia tātou 'ia putapū i tōna here ē tōna mana i roto i tō tātou orara'a. E roa'a te 'oa'oa o te 'evanelia i te tā'ato'ara'a : 'eiaha noa i te feiā 'oa'oa, 'eiaha noa i te feiā fa'aturuma. Te 'oa'oa 'o tā tātou ia fā, e 'ere i te hōro'a o tō tātou huru tupurāa. E mau tumu maita'i ana'e tō tātou nō te « 'oa'oa ē 'ia fa'a'ihia i te here nō te Atua ē nō te mau tāata ato'a ». 'Ia fa'a'ihia ho'i. I te i'oa o Iesu Mesia, 'āmene.