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### The Joy to Be Loved

Damon Owens

*“Man cannot live without love. He remains a being that is incomprehensible for himself. His love, his life is senseless if love is not revealed to him, if he does not encounter love, if he does not experience it and make it his own, if he does not participate intimately in it.”* That's Pope Saint John Paul II from the "Redeemer of Man", Redeemer Hominis, Redemptor Hominis number 10.

My name is Damon Owens and what a joy to be back with you for this Pray More Healing Retreat. My theme is joy. Really the Joy To Be -was our first meditation presentation. This is the Joy To Be Loved, because we're making the connection now with this, this creation for joy, this desire of Jesus Christ in John 15:11 to receive His joy, the joy that He has from the Father. And we know that joy is the fruit of love. So in this episode, in this reflection, I want to dive a little deeper into this love that brings joy, this mission to love. So, let's begin with a prayer to love itself.

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son and the Holy Spirit. Lord, we know that you are love, you don't just love, you don't just have love, but you are love and in your perfection and in your prodigal, your lavish gift, you created us in your image and likeness, from love you, for love, in love, with love, to love. And love rightly understood gives us the eyes to see, the heart to know and the courage to form our will and our virtues toward this great goal. Lord, we ask that you make that so, not from our own power, but from yours, that in our true weakness, we can be strong than in our natural now, we can share in your supernatural gift, really a divinization as you have promised and as you've willed. Lord teach us to love. We love you, but teach us. Show us what it is to be like you, to become what we are. All these things Lord we ask in zeal and in humility as your sons and daughters inviting the Holy Spirit to infuse us, to inspire us, to be with us and to make what's known as our advocate all that is good, true and beautiful. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen. St. John Paul II, pray for us.*

I love that quote from the "Redeemer of Man" and again, the connection we're making here in our meditations is receiving this, this reality of being created for joy through the mission to love. But what is love? When with joy to be and now our new ministry, Joyful Ever After. We really latched on to joy because it's far less controversial when you think about it. There may be disagreements from misunderstanding about what love is, but when it comes to joy it's one of those

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things people just kind of go "mmh yeah, I want that." So, the question now becomes, how do we love in a way that we can receive the joy that we desire? And this is about the joy to be loved.

What is love? This mission to love again begs the question about love and in English language, we have one word for love. You know, I love pizza, I do. I love my wife. I love my kids. You know, God is love. We literally have one word that describes everything from pizza to God. So, it's hard to get that distinction and nuance that we know is in there. Broadly here's the pivot that love is self-gift. It's an act of the will, meaning it's a drawing out of ourselves by either attraction or by the will for a real or a perceived good. Let me say that again.

In a very broad sense love is self-gift, meaning it's a drawing out of ourselves by either attraction, we'll talk about Eros in a moment or by the will, friendship, philia, agape, for a real good or even a perceived one. I love pizza because it smells and tastes good to me. It delights me through my senses. I love my wife, Melanie, because she is good. Yes, she usually delights me too, but you know after 30 years her good is no longer determined by that. We kind of know each other. God is love because He is the perfect self-gift. This Trinitarian communion church talk, of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and we'll talk more about that later.

Here's the pivot that we come to know through experience or through faith that all loves are not the same. All love is good, but not all loves are equal or the same. Some loves are ordered to more good than others. They're even false loves or counterfeit loves, you know, the kind of look good and feel good, it sound good, but they're not good in sound. There are attractions or acts that are not actually ordered to any good at all. So, true love, like that phrase, or truth and love come together, the truth of love are acts that must engage our mind, so that we know what is good. They must engage our will, so that we can choose and do the good and our passions to desire the good, so that's that conversion of heart, so the very inmost being desires and has a passio, it's happening to us where we're attracted to that good, like a gravity.

As I said all love is good. All love is from God. Only God is good, but not all loves are equal or the same. But, how do we know? And while we may have a limited vocabulary on a vocabulary on love, the ancient Greeks actually had at least four different words for love that can still help us understand and distinguish our different experiences of love. So I want to go through these Greek words for love, not because we're doing some academic exercise, but because you know even as noble pagans, they had a really good sense of the natural world. They unlike us, they looked at the natural world and received it as it was and had a genuine

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curiosity for what things are. Now that's not a left hand snap to us but in the modern mind, we come to know the natural world so that we can dominate it. We want to know how things work so we can make it work the way we want it to. It's a whole different, different worldview.

The Greeks really looked and had a reverence for the world as it was and when it comes to love, the first Greek word for love is Eros, Eros, E-R-O-S and Eros is the root word for erotic and we commonly associate it with romantic or sexual love because of its passionate power. In the natural, we know the kind of love that's so spontaneous, it's unexpected, it's unwilled and yet it's powerful and we don't choose it. We fall into it, right? Fell in love as if we're walking down the street and kind of fall into a pit, right? Or Eros can be experienced, Eros can be experienced as love at first sight. Like again, you're just minding your own business, walking down the street, live in your life when you see him, you see her and bam! You know, cue the music. You get hit deep right in the heart. How many love stories and songs begin with some version of, "The first time, ever I saw your face." That's one of my favorites, but you have your own, right?

Eros is a passion. Meaning it's passion not only in the common sense of power and intensity, but also because it shares the same root as passive, like the passion of Christ what, meaning something that happened to Him that happens to us. Eros at least at the conscious level just happens to us. Eros is fun; it's exhilarating and terrifyingly wonderful. Some people just love to fall in love. And when we're in love, all of our senses are heightened, they're heightened. We see differently, smell, hear, taste, touch, more, just amped up, right? And again without being too reductionist, when we're under the influence of Eros, -intoxicated, our brains get intoxicated with this, this flood of hormones like dopamine, norepinephrine, serotonin, oxytocin in women, vasopressin in men. It's adrenaline that races our hearts, shortens our breath, dries up our mouths and makes our hands clammy. Our whole body experiences the love Eros. But what do we know about Eros? Eros will come and Eros will go.

And left on its own, it just, it just is a passing, it's just a happened, it's like the Greek said that, that Cupid in later Greek periods is this mischievous little buck naked god who just hit us with his arrows and we'd fallen in and just as mysterious as we fall into love, we fall right out and exhilaration of Eros gives way to boredom and often the relationship's annoyance. The thrill is gone. "Thrill is gone baby."

Eros needs a friend. Eros needs a friend and your Eros's friend is the other Greek word for love phileo, philia or phileo. And you recognize this word as the city that

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I live closest to, Philadelphia. -The city of brotherly love. Philia is a Greek word for love that speaks of affection, fondness of friendship. Adelphos in Philadelphia means brother. So, you know how a different friendship is from romantic love. You don't fall into friend, right? You don't make, there's no friend at first sight. Friends take work. It takes work to make a friend, it takes work to keep a friend and to grow in friendship. Friendship is primarily not a passion that happens to us, it's an act of the will, it's choosing and it never just happens, but it's interesting how the love of friendship, philia can begin with a smile, a handshake or a compliment. Some kind of gift of ourselves to another and that gift must be received by the other and then reciprocated or returned with their own gift. This gift of self-giving, received and returned is a love. It's willing the good. It's developing a communio.

The depth of this love of friendship is determined by the depth of the self-gift given, how much of yourself do you give? How well are you received? And what is the depth of the gift returned? And this is why we have such a wide range of friendships, you've got acquaintances, your friends, good friends, best friends and the distinctions can really be understood as a scale of intimacy, forged really by this mutual self-gift and the Greeks call that love philia.

The third Greek word for love describes that strong love of mothers and fathers for their children and the Greek word is storge, S-T-O-R-G-E strange word, but it's a Greek word that gets to this iconic love and the icon for this is a mother and her child, but it can also extend to the love within the family both the, you know, nuclear family and the extended family, in a certain sense, it's a type of philia, a special friendship, but it has its own character and storge is marked by bonds, connections of kinship, right? Being in the same blood family, blood or legal family and we're connected and here's the key, we belong to one another and not just in any way. In storge we belong to each other in an irreplaceable way. Key, key truth, that we're unique and unrepeatable and so is our relationship with you. So connected and belonging to one another in some irreplaceable way, there's a, it's also a shared sense of duty and responsibility to each other and for one another, that's not to be broken. It's as if there's something greater than each of us, that both of us have a bond to, and our duty and fidelity to that, it connects us to one another.

Now, there should be affection, fondness, friendship, but it really is marked by a family ties that bind us together and you see like sports teams even talking about how "how'd you win? How'd you win the great championship?" "Well, we were like a family, you know and we really, we lived and accepted one another." So there's an icon it's even in our culture, still recognized by family life and the Greeks called this love storge.

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The fourth Greek word for love is agape, A-G-A-P-E and this agape love even to those noble pagans was a love that they held up as what is most noble in the human person, in a man most noble, no beast could do this. To do what? Well, to give themselves without any condition or reservation for the good of something or someone other than themselves.

See the nobility in that? It's the acknowledgement that there is something good in the other, good in something else, your nation, your tribe, your army, your team and it's an unconditional gift. "I give myself, I will lay down my life for my country. I will defend my children by my life, my family." And the Greeks held this up as noble, because it is, -agape.

And this is the important part. All love is good. All love is from God, eros, philia, storge, agape, whatever the names you put on it, God is love. So all love is good, all love is from God, but not all love is the same. And in the Christian proposal, what we believe that Jesus Christ revealed God to man and man to himself. This is who we truly are. This is who the Father is and reconciled literally allowed us to remember who we are, whose we are and why we're here. And in the Christian proposal, we take these human experiences of love, not in isolation from God, but as a lens. So, the human experience has become a lens, a window in order to see the fullness of them in God and in how God is calling us to Him and to them, this love of agape and all these loves, is perfected in where? In Jesus Christ on the cross. It's perfected by Jesus Christ Himself when He calls us to be a free, total and a faithful gift to one another.

When we're free, total and faithful in our self-gift to one another, that kind of love by its nature is life-giving, meaning it gives life to the giver, makes the free total faithful gift to the lover. The beloved who receives the love and to the beloved who turned and reciprocates this love to the other. And in those beautiful encounters that are free total and faithful, the gift is given, it has the capacity to create a third, that has never existed before that will live eternally. Now, here we're talking about a very special friendship, a very special kind of love, marriage, which we'll get to in a, in a later reflection. In fact, it'll be our last reflection I believe, the final one to give to the joy to be for, right in marriage. But this love of man and woman, this free total faithful gift one to the other literally has the ability to give life. This is the connection inseparable between life and love.

You see love itself is not only a human reality, it's something we delight in, it's something we long for, just like joys that desire that God puts in our hearts, our proposal is that love, both its desire and its fulfillment, can be understood as a mission and as a vocation, as a state of life of what it means to be human, made

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male and female in the image and likeness of God who is love, right? Genesis one, Genesis two, we say God is love. We don't just say God has love. Our mission to love like being created for joy, flows directly out of our creation in his image and likeness. Being made male and female as human persons, as creatures carries with it a nobility, a dignity, a value, a worth that we're called to not only acknowledge, that's the first step, but to learn how to live it to the full.

The mission to love is not only what he gives us, that great joy that we're created for, it fills our life with, with an affirmation. It affirms our identity. As John Paul said in Redeemer, I'm going to say it shows us who we are by experiencing it ourselves. It gives us the capacity to prioritize, how we spend our time, how we treat one another, how we view ourselves and in fact, our very purpose of why we exist. This is big, this is my point.

And our mission to love carries with it a word that we'll unpack maybe in the marriage portion here, it's crucial there and it's a word, it's maybe new to you, probably, I think it's more of the gravity. It gives us the more gravity, that weightiness of what love is to us. And this word is called Munus, M-U-N-U-S, Munus, it's a Latin word and it's one of those words you probably again, probably never heard before. It's, in fact it's a language where it doesn't translate directly. You know, there's some words if you're speaking another language that you can translate directly, aqua, water. And there's some words that only have a specific cultural meaning. Munus is one of those Latin words that's rich in our ecclesial history, in our culture as Roman Catholics.

There's some words like this that we have to understand this context and when we do understand it, it gives us a weighted understanding it's more than just in this case, a task, more than just a role or a mission or vocation, a duty, a gift, a high honor. All those are the different translations you'll see in church documents. In fact, munus is translated, it's used in 248 times in the documents of the Second Vatican Council. Just a word that once you see it, now you're going to see it everywhere.

When we talk about a mission to love, that's choosing one of these definitions, one of these ways for you and I to understand that love is not just some mission that we can choose. It turns out that it's a munus. It's a munus to love and it means that it's given by God who is an authority and our creator with a high honor and a power and a capacity to live that's not only good for ourselves, but it's good for everyone else around us. This is munus. Given by God with the power to accomplish for a great good. our desire for love, whether it's eros, philia, storge or agape, all love is good, but we need to know the distinctions of these loves, so we can live them to

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their full and if we don't know these distinctions of love, it actually brings us deep pain for ourselves and for others. But when we have the order of love, when we accepted this call from God, this munus from God to make a gift of ourselves to others, we see that our relationship to Him, our identity, our relationship to others and our relationship to all of creation and the material world has its proper order. God, others and the material world. Then we're really about the business of learning to love, of actually loving and of experiencing love and allowing Him to bring it to its full. What a great story. This is the gospel. This is the good news and it's a great and noble calling. And this is mission. This munus to love that brings us the joy that we long for. It fills the longing, the desire for joy that God Himself has placed in our hearts. And this gospel, this good news story is a joyful story. And why we say that the joy to be a man and a woman made in the image and likeness of God passes through this call to love, which passes through the understanding of marriage and family as the privileged place where we learn to give it. And that is where we're going to go next.

In our next meditation, we'll talk about the "Joy To Be From." We're not isolated individual atomistic creatures, but we're very relational and our origin story helps us to see that.