

LOVE

In our minds many of us have an idea of the person that we could fall in love with. What kind of a character he or she has, and the way they dress. What he or she looks like, the colour and the shape, the demeanour. What they like and what they don't like. What they consider important and what they do not, and so on. And every now and then we may meet someone who fits our dreams by half or perhaps even more, and we think that maybe we could fall in love with such a person...

But there's something wrong with that idea. It can never really be love, because we have not really fallen in love with another person, but with fantasy that we imagined in our own minds. We may only love the person to the extent that they fulfil that fantasy, and so it is not them that we love but our fantasy... ourselves. She's not the woman of your dreams, she just bears a resemblance. And it is not her that you love, but yourself and your dreams. This has got more to do with masturbation, if anything, the illusion of romance between the individual and himself/herself.

This vision of love assumes that the idea is to find somebody who makes you happy. This vision of love also has almost no concept of time. It is a feeling to be experienced. It is a quasi-euphoric state that alights on the passive individual until love has run its course. It is extraordinary how little this ideal of love has to do with any other person. They are the necessary apparatus. This ideal of love is weak, passive, fatalistic, self interested and, frankly, lacking any balls at all. It is ultimately rooted in selfishness, which can only be the opposite of love.

Having said all that, what else could love be, besides someone who makes us very happy? The love of someone above and beyond self? The love of someone regardless, or in spite of self? Maybe even to the detriment of self? The individual and his happiness is the highest value of western society, so we don't really know what to do with the idea of selfless love. Many people will flat out deny even the possibility of any selfless human action. They say that, whether its love or hate, or crime, or sex or charity, that a person will always do what they think is best for themselves. Our culture has nearly killed off our belief in the possibility of love altogether. And so, all our relationships, romantic, economic, communal, and even familial become tainted with a faint distrust. We have the sense that if people do seem to like us, it's only because we are pleasing to them, for the time being.



So we're told that this is the way of the world, and maybe it is. In the light of this, Jesus presents us with the greatest blaspheme, the most heretical, subversive and catastrophic rebellion the world has ever seen. It is seen in his story, and it is seen in his revolution. For one man or woman to love another regardless of self is an offence and an anathema to us. But the story that his contemporaries died to preserve is that God had become a man and died for the love of mere human beings who were so much lesser than himself, not because they fitted the fantasy that he had in mind, but because they did not. What a story! Kings do not die for their people, people die for their kings. What God, then, in his right mind would die for his people? The story of Jesus is the expression of love proper - the love of something other than self.

The revolution that many continue to live and die for is the ongoing practice of Jesus' rebellion: the love of the other. Loving relationship with God, loving relationship with people, loving relationship with the world. It is a reckless and dangerous but totally secure, selfless and unrelenting, enquiring and endlessly fascinating, and quite unlike the safety, convenience and self interest that the West now calls love.

