

# EXTRAVAGANT LOVE...

Sometimes I imagine how I would respond if I were there 2000 years ago sitting on a grassy hillside and hearing Jesus tell one of his parables. Would I get it? Would I see how bountiful and overflowing God's love and generosity are? Probably I wouldn't.. it would seem too good to be true. There had to be a catch somewhere, I'd tell myself.

Take the parable of the weeds and wheat. Why doesn't the owner want to pull up the weeds like any respectable farmer would? Why does he let the wheat grow with the weeds, maybe crowding it out? Or maybe he believes the weeds, like our flawed and broken selves, may diminish and the wheat grow more abundant. What great patience he has.

And what sense does it make for the sower to spread his seed on all kinds of ground trusting that some can take root even in unwelcoming soil? It seems such a foolish wasteful chance, yet we are told the seed can blossom and flourish thirty, fifty, to one hundred fold..

What about the landowner who pays the same amount to those who worked just a few hours and those who labored for hours in the heat of the day? Is he being unfair or generous? I know that if I worked the full day in the broiling sun, I'd feel like I deserved more. It seems it's not the amount of time but the showing up that counts.

The father who is constantly awaiting the return of his wastrel son who turned his back on him and squandered his inheritance on frivolous things is another example. He runs to his son, embraces him and throws a party. Who would do that? I know that if I were that son I'd melt in that embrace and soak up that love. Unfortunately I'm more like the elder brother who kept the rules and can't understand such seemingly foolish love.

As one who often doubts and struggles with faith, it seems that having a tiny mustard seed of faith that can move mountains is just ridiculous. Yet that is exactly what the Scripture says and I've had times in my life when I made choices that seemed foolish that turned out to offer new opportunities and moved my life in a direction I never would have imagined.

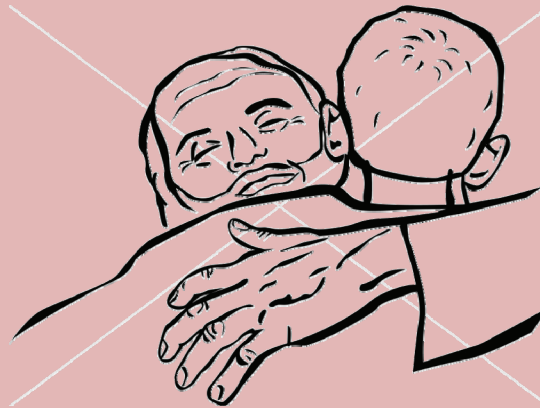
To put it simply, more often than not I just don't understand God's way of thinking. I'm very much like Jesus' followers—I get it and then quickly forget.

The older I get, the more I want to be more merciful and forgiving, and I'm finding that I'm also becoming more grateful and aware of God's goodness and overflowing love—grace on top of grace as the first chapter of John's gospel says.

I'm also beginning to believe—really believe that God desires good for me—a future and a hope (Jeremiah 11:29) And I agree with St. Paul who tells us that God's power now at work within us can do infinitely more than we ask or imagine. I've seen God's bountiful, unearned love.

If there were a time-back machine I'd like a chance to go back to Jesus' time and listen—really listen as he talked. Maybe I'd get it this time.

By: Angela Anno



FOR I KNOW THE PLANS I HAVE  
FOR YOU, DECLARES THE LORD.  
PLANS TO PROSPER YOU AND NOT  
TO HARM YOU, TO GIVE YOU A  
FUTURE AND A HOPE.

JEREMIAH 29:11

