

LOVE CAN TRANSCEND

2 Peter 3:3b-5, 9, and Luke 6:27-36

Intro: [MLK, Jr.] It was Good Friday, 1963. It was a dark day in the struggle for civil rights in America. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, along with two other black Christian ministers and civil rights activists, were arrested for exercising their Constitutional right of free public assembly, and Dr. King was thrown into solitary confinement. Someone was able to smuggle to him a newspaper in which some fellow Christian ministers, joined by rabbis, wrote a critique of his actions which they self-righteously entitled "A Call to Unity". Discouraged and alone, Dr. King read their disparaging words. Just when it seemed things couldn't get bleaker, they were indeed getting bleaker. The white clergymen couldn't seem to see that the principles for which Dr. King stood were the same principles espoused by their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He had nothing else to do, so he began to write a response, known to us now as "Letter from Birmingham Jail." Dr. King's letter was an epistle of some 22 pages. Here is perhaps the greatest theme in the letter. Dr. King writes,

"You speak of our activity in Birmingham as extreme. At first I was rather disappointed that fellow clergymen would see my nonviolent efforts as those of an extremist... But though I was initially disappointed at being categorized as an extremist, as I continued to think about the matter I gradually gained a measure of satisfaction from the label... Was not Jesus an extremist for love: 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you'... Was not Martin Luther an extremist: 'Here I stand; I cannot do otherwise, so help me God.' And John Bunyan: 'I will stay in jail to the end of my days before I make a butchery of my conscience,' and Abraham Lincoln: 'This nation cannot survive half slave and half free.' And Thomas Jefferson: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal...' So the question is not whether we will be extremists, but what kind of extremists we will be. Will we be extremists for hate or for love?"

That question is before us every day. During our *Love Can* series we have been considering the extreme and extravagant love of God that we find in Jesus Christ.

On Easter, we talked about how Love can triumph – how it did and how through love the power of resurrection is at work in all of us.

Darrell led us in thinking about how Love can transform.

Last Sunday we talked about how love can heal. By the way, I want to stop for a moment and say, what a moving time of worship that was at the end of services when people came forward for prayer for healing in their lives. That same healing God that was present last week is here today as well!!!

And today, we are going to consider how God's amazing, triumphant, transformative, healing love can transcend in our lives, in the lives we touch, and – even perhaps – throughout our nation and our world.

LOVE CAN *WHAT*?

1. What does “transcend” mean? Merriam Webster defines “transcend” as “to rise above or exceed the limits of something,” or “to overcome.” Often that something is ideological or basic to human existence.

WALL-BREAKING LOVE

1. Love transcends ***personal*** barriers (personal barriers)
 - a. Luke 6:27-29
 - b. Love even for your *haters*
 - c. Love even for those who *hurt you* (Note: we do not believe that this is advice for you to stay in an abusive relationship where you or loved ones are in danger.)

What is your response to being hurt? Take revenge? Run away? Jesus suggests that neither is the best.

- d. Love even for those who *unjustly take*.
2. Love transcends ***positional*** barriers.
 - a. Luke 6:30, 32-35
 - b. Love Expects *no reward*

WORLD-CHANGING LOVE

1. God's ***Plan***, 2 Peter 3:9
 - a. God is *patient*
 - b. God wants *no one* to perish
 - c. God wants *everyone* to *repent/ come to repentance*

2. Greatest example of transcending love: Jesus Christ
3. Human (only) Examples from my FB page [I asked same question on church FB page and NO ONE REPLIED]: E Stanley Jones, the great missionary to India from Asbury College in Kentucky; Ravi Zacharias, a modern day Christian apologist who respectfully engages people of other religious viewpoints while still holding to the truths of Scripture; the great Scotsman George MacDonald who used literature to engage generations; Martin Luther King Junior; Jimmy Carter for his Habitat for Humanity work; Corrie Ten Boom who cared for and hid Jews from the Nazis in Amsterdam during WW2, and the recently deceased Billy Graham.

WILL-SHAPING LOVE

Story of Amy Carmichael, founder of Dohnavur Fellowship (combination of stories found below).

1. When we live out this transcending love, we **imitate God** , Luke 6:35-36
2. When we live out this transcending love, we find **great reward beyond right here right now**. (Luke 6:35)
3. What about me? *What barriers are challenging for me to overcome? What barriers do I have that keep out my fellow man? What barriers do I have to keep God from being too personal with me? What barriers have I built to keep me from dealing with my own pain?*

AMY'S STORIES: FROM Christianity.com:

"Please help me! Please don't send me back!" screamed 7-year-old Preena as she jumped into Amy Carmichael's lap, clinging to her neck. The little girl had just escaped from a Hindu temple in the middle of the night while her guardians were sleeping. She tiptoed quietly through an unlocked door and pushed open the heavy gate running as fast as she could.

Preena's mother had given her to the temple priests in hopes of winning the favor of the gods. Amy did not know what was going on, but she knew this little frightened girl needed her love and protection.

Amy Carmichael had come to India as a missionary to reach those who did not know Jesus. Amy was sure that God did not want her to marry and have children of her own. That decision had been settled many years before. But was He now asking her to settle down and become a mother to an unwanted Indian child?

Life in Ireland

Amy Carmichael grew up in a wealthy family in Ireland. Her father owned a flour mill business. She went to the best boarding schools and had many fine things.

But one day Amy's life changed without warning. Her father's business began to lose money and it closed. Mr. Carmichael worried so much about his business that he became ill and died.

The family could no longer afford expensive things. Amy had to drop out of school. She spent the next ten years helping her mother take care of her younger sisters and brothers.

Life-Changing Events

One cold, dreary day as the young Amy, her mother and brothers left church, Amy saw something that changed her life. An old beggar woman came staggering out of the alley. Her clothes were torn and mud soaked rags covered her feet. Amy felt sorry for the woman. She and her brother helped the old woman down the alley. When she saw other people from church pass by them, she was embarrassed to be seen with the woman and hid her face. As she continued to walk with the beggar, Amy noticed a fountain in the center of the road. She studied it closely. Then she heard a voice say, "Gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay and straw -- the fire will test what sort of work each has done. If the foundation survives, he will receive the reward." She turned to see who was speaking, but saw no one. Amy knew that she appeared kind by helping the old woman, but she knew her heart was wrong. From that moment on, she decided to hold her head high. She was no longer embarrassed. When she got home, she searched the [bible](#) and found the words she had heard. Amy knelt by her bed and promised God that in the future she would only do things to please him.

Another time she and her mother stopped to have tea and biscuits in a restaurant. As they ate, Amy saw a dirty little beggar girl with her nose pressed against the window. The poor little girl, with no food, touched Amy so much that she made another promise. She promised that when she grew up she would give her money to the poor.

The Shawlies

Amy Carmichael became very excited about doing what God wanted her to do. On Saturday evenings, she would go with her pastor to the poor neighborhoods to hand out tracts and food to the poor people known as Shawlies. The Shawlies made so little money that they could not afford hats so they used their shawls to protect their heads from the cold. They were eager to learn about God. Amy's heart went out to them. She moved into their neighborhood and slept in bug-infested beds to be closer to the people. She prayed about building a church for them to attend but didn't know where she would get money for such a large job. She did not want to

ask the rich people in her old church who didn't seem to care about the Shawlies. Instead she and the Shawlies asked God to provide it. God answered their prayers and a new church was built.

Time to Move On

Amy began to sense that God wanted her to tell people in other countries about him. There was one problem though. Amy had an illness that made her so sick she had to stay in bed days at a time. Despite her health, she knew she must obey God.

Life In India

Amy traveled the India countryside telling anyone who would listen about Christ.

One day Preena, a little Indian girl, was collecting water for the temple near where Amy was speaking. Preena stopped to listen as Amy told the ladies about her God who loved everybody the same. He did not put people in different classes as the Indian caste system did. Preena was very interested in what Amy was saying but knew she must not be seen listening to the stranger. She tucked Amy's words into her memory and hurried back to the temple.

Indian girls were often unwanted and were given to the temple to serve as prostitutes. Because of this, when Preena arrived at Amy's door, Amy knew she could not send her back. The little girl would be beaten, even killed, if she were returned. Amy could have been charged with kidnapping and thrown into prison. But it was a chance she was willing to take.

Over the 50 years she spent in India, Amy Carmichael took in hundreds of unwanted children. She became known as "Amma" or mother to them.

From Boston University School of Theology, Department of Missiology website

Carmichael, Amy Beatrice (1867-1951)

Founder of the Dohnavur Fellowship

Born in Belfast Ireland, to a devout family of Scottish ancestry, Carmichael was educated at home and in England, where she lived with the family of Robert Wilson after her father's death. While never officially adopted, she used the hyphenated name Wilson-Carmichael as late as 1912. Her missionary call came through contacts with the Keswick movement. In 1892 she volunteered to the China Inland Mission but was refused on health grounds.

However, in 1893 she sailed for Japan as the first Keswick missionary to join the Church Missionary Society (CMS) work led by Barclay Buxton. After less than two years in Japan and Ceylon, she was back in England before the end of 1894. The next year she volunteered to the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, and in November 1895 she arrived in South India, never to leave. While still learning the difficult Tamil language, she commenced itinerant evangelism with a band of Indian Christian women, guided by the CMS missionary Thomas Walker. She soon found herself responsible for Indian women converts, and in 1901, she, the Walkers, and their Indian colleagues settled in Dohnavur. During her village itinerations, she had become increasingly aware of the fact that many Indian children were dedicated to the gods by their parents or guardians, became temple children, and lived in moral and spiritual danger. It became her mission to rescue and raise these children, and so the Dohnavur Fellowship came into being (registered 1927). Known at Dohnavur as Amma (Mother), Carmichael was the leader, and the work became well known through her writing. Workers volunteered and financial support was received, though money was never solicited. In 1931 she had a serious fall, and this, with arthritis, kept her an invalid for the rest of her life. She continued to write, and identified leaders, missionary and Indian, to take her place. The Dohnavur Fellowship still continues today.

Jocelyn Murray, “Carmichael, Amy Beatrice,” in *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions*, ed. Gerald H. Anderson (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 1998), 116.

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“Ammai” of orphans and holiness author

Amy Carmichael was born in Ireland in 1867, the oldest of seven children. As a teen, she attended a Wesleyan Methodist girls boarding school, until her father died when she was 18. Carmichael twice attended Keswick Conventions and experienced a holiness conversion which led her to work among the poor in Belfast. Through the Keswick Conventions, Carmichael met Robert Wilson. He developed a close relationship with the young woman, and invited her to live with his family. Carmichael soon felt a call to mission work and applied to the China Inland Mission as Amy Carmichael-Wilson. Although she did not go to China due to health reasons, Carmichael did go to Japan for a brief period of time. There she dressed in kimonos and began to learn Japanese. Her letters home from

Japan became the basis for her first book, *From Sunrise Land*. Carmichael left Japan due to health reasons, eventually returning to England. She soon accepted a position with the Church of England's Zenana Missionary Society, serving in India. From 1895 to 1925, her work with orphans in Tinnevely (now Tirunelveli) was supported by the Church of England. After that time, Carmichael continued her work in the faith mission style, establishing an orphanage in Dohnavur. The orphanage first cared for girls who had been temple girls, who would eventually become temple prostitutes. Later the orphanage accepted boys as well.

Carmichael never returned to England after arriving in India. She wrote prolifically, publishing nearly 40 books. In her personal devotions, she relied on scripture and poetry. She wrote many of her own poems and songs. Carmichael had a bad fall in 1931, which restricted her movement. She stayed in her room, writing and studying. She often quoted Julian of Norwich when she wrote of suffering and patience. Many of Carmichael's books have stories of Dohnavur children, interspersed with scripture, verses, and photographs of the children or nature. Carmichael never directly asked for funding, but the mission continued to be supported through donations. In 1951 Carmichael died at Dohnavur. Her headstone is inscribed "Ammal", revered mother, which the children of Dohnavur called Carmichael.

Carmichael's lengthy ministry at Dohnavur was sustained through her strong reliance upon scripture and prayer. Her early dedication to holiness practices and her roots in the Keswick tradition helped to guide her strong will and determination in her mission to the children of southern India.