

Dr. Michael B. Brown

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# Jesus Loves Me, This I Know

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MARBLE VISION

Media Ministries of  
Marble Collegiate Church



*Dear Friend,*

*In a world where loneliness is rampant, love is indispensable. In a world where self-doubt claws away at human souls, love is indispensable. In a world where anger and guilt too often rule the day, love is indispensable. Particularly, I think it is imperative to know that we are loved just as we are, warts and all. Christ has promised that His love for us is unconditional. It knows no limits. Let me explore that idea with you in the sermon in this booklet.*

*You are loved.*

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael B. Brown". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal line extending to the right from the end of the name.

Dr. Michael B. Brown, Minister

# Jesus Loves Me, This I Know

<sup>9</sup> “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.  
<sup>10</sup> If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. <sup>11</sup> I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. <sup>12</sup> My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup> Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. <sup>14</sup> You are my friends if you do what I command. <sup>15</sup> I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. <sup>16</sup> You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. <sup>17</sup> This is my command: Love each other.”

*- John 15:9-17*

Perhaps the greatest theologian of the 20th century was Karl Barth, whose volume called *Dogmatics* is still required reading in every 1st-rate seminary in America. Barth defined the neo-Orthodox understanding of Grace. He was a genius and wrote and spoke that way. I love the story of when he was invited to lecture at The University of Chicago. As you can imagine, the center was packed to capacity at standing room only. And, as expected, Barth delivered a magnificent, deep, scholarly address. Afterward there was time for a Question and Answer session. A student in the audience asked: “What is the central truth of the Christian Faith?” Everyone sat poised, pens and notebooks in hand, to try and feverishly record what they knew would be a deeply scholarly response. Barth never hesitated. The greatest Christian thinker of the 20th century answered quickly and in a single sentence. He said, “The central truth of the Christian Faith is this: Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.”

In one simple sentence from a children’s hymn, Karl Barth articulated the heart of our Faith. Christianity is and has always been built on the principle of God’s unconditional, unfailing love for us. How did Jesus say it in our morning lesson? “*As God has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in My love.*”

That’s it, folks – the central truth of the Christian faith and the final installment in our series on “*Life Lessons Worth Learning.*” If we save the best till last, then where else could this series have

concluded than with the good news that God loves us, always and forever? *“As God has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in My love.”*

*Jesus Loves Me, This I Know.* Now, theologically, since *“Incarnation”* means that Jesus gives us a look at what God is like – a look at God’s nature and priorities – then ultimately all these are statements about God. So, let me mention three incredibly important things about God’s love as revealed in Christ – there must be a hundred and three – but let me mention just three.

First of all, that Love is EMBRACING. By that, I simply mean that it chooses us, not vice versa. We do not earn God’s love. God doesn’t love us only when we’re good enough or smart enough or religious enough or anything enough. God loves us most of the time not because of but rather in spite of ourselves. How did Paul put it? *“By this is the love of God revealed, that while we were yet unlovely, Christ gave his life for ours.”*

Years ago I heard a story about a first-grade school girl who brought her very first report card home. It was so early in the year that there wasn’t even anything to grade yet. The teacher just wrote remarks about each child’s adjustments and progress. On this little girl’s card, the teacher had written: “She is so well behaved, so polite, and so nice to everyone. You have a lovely daughter.” Her Dad read those words and was all smiles. He pulled

his little girl onto his lap, hugged her, and said, "I'm so proud of you. I love you when you're good." She looked back and said, "And, Daddy, I love you all the time."

*Jesus Loves Me, This I Know...* and that love exists all the time. It is embracing. It chooses us.

Second, that Love is EMPOWERING. The Christ Spirit in us gives us the strength and the wisdom to do what we could not do alone including, sometimes, to love other people who do not make loving easy.

I often say that every biblical text must be read in context. Certainly that's true about this lesson. Remember where Jesus was when He said these things to his disciples. He was with them in The Upper Room. That very night He would be betrayed. The next morning He would be crucified. And He knew that. So, in that context, what was virtually the final instruction He gave to His friends before he died? "*This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you!*" But love is not always easy, is it?

There is an old story about a man who went to see his doctor and his wife went with him. After the exam, the physician asked the wife to come into his office. He said, "I need to talk to you in private about your husband. His illness is very serious, but it's psychosomatic. It's all in his head. He thinks he is dying, and he will unless you give him a stronger reason to live. So, here's what you need to do. Every morning get up early and fix him a hot



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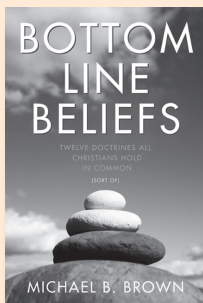
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breakfast. No cereal. Make eggs and bacon and potatoes. Tell him you love him and kiss him as he goes off to work. When he gets home in the evenings, make sure you get home from work first, the kids' homework is done and they're polite and quiet. Greet him at the door each night in a beautiful dress, with your make-up on and your hair just perfect. Have candles lit every night, and soft music, and a four-or-five course meal. Always ask him how his day went, but never complain about yours. We have to totally de-stress this man. And always be romantic, just like you were newlyweds. Do this every day for a year, and I think he just may get well." As they drove home, the husband asked his wife, "What did the doctor tell you?" His wife answered, "He said you're going to die."

Okay, that's a ridiculous story but it actually makes a point. Whereas no one is ever called to make ourselves doormats for anyone else, the simple truth is that loving is not always easy. It may not require as much work as the doctor told that wife, but it does require work. Not everyone is easy to love. Sometimes other people will do things we don't like or say things that offend us or stand up for causes that we stand against or expect too much of us or give too little. But, as Bryant Kirkland used to say, "Whether or not you like the other person, if he's about to fall you still hold the ladder for him!"

*"This is My commandment,"* said Jesus, *"that you love one another as I have loved you!"* And we are not always easy to love, but He loves

us anyhow. So, what about us? Who do you know personally, who do I know, who makes loving difficult? Well, whoever it is, our Faith says that Christ's Spirit within us gives us the power to rise above ourselves and to forgive people, to accept people, to hear them out, to hold the ladder for them, even when they don't make it easy. A famous Irish preacher used to say, "God loves us into loving."

*Jesus Loves Me, This I Know.* And that love is Embracing. It is Empowering. And finally, it is ETERNAL.

Long before that final night in The Upper Room when Jesus talked to His disciples about love, He made a promise not just to the disciples, but to everyone who follows Him. He said this, "*I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever lives and believes in Me, though they were dead, yet shall they live... Because I live, you shall live also.*" In other words, God loves us too much to lose us. And so, in His great scheme of things, beyond this life is another Life in a Place where there is no sickness, no sadness and no goodbyes. God's love is eternal and because of that love so are we.

One bright, warm Saturday this summer, I decided to do something I had not done before. The day was completely open, not one thing scheduled. Page and the kids were out of town. I had just begun reading a new book about baseball. So, I decided to treat myself. I got on the subway and rode to Coney Island. Sun. Sand. Sea. Hot dogs.

What could be better? I took my book and sat on the pier, soaking up sun, watching people swim and reading about baseball. After a bit, a father and daughter sat down at the other end of the bench. They had some sort of gadget with them. Most of the time, they chatted and watched the water. But every once in a while they would pick the gadget up and adjust it. Well, curiosity got the best of me, so I asked, "What do you have there?" They showed me a remote control unit. "See out there, that white thing on the water?" the daughter said, "That's our boat." Then the dad told me about it, a toy sailboat that looked tiny from our vantage point but was actually about the size of a small bathtub. He said they put it in the water and then guided it out near the horizon. Then they let it go. It would ride the waves. It would sail one direction, then the other. Occasionally, they would adjust the remote a bit to keep it from drifting out of their range but mostly, they just watched it sail. Then the father said something, and my preacher's ears perked up. He wasn't trying to be theological, but here's what he said, "We love watching it sail, having its adventure on the waves. Sometimes the water is smooth, and sometimes it's rocky. But our eyes are always on the boat as it makes its way. And when the day ends," he said – now listen to this, "when the day ends, we'll steer it home. And when it reaches the shore, we will be there, waiting." *"I am the resurrection and the life... Because I live, you shall live also."* Beyond this life is another life

that has no end. And when at last our days on this earth come to a close and we reach another shore, God will be there waiting.

*Jesus Loves Me, This I Know.* It was almost His final reminder to us, “*As God has loved Me, so have I loved you. Abide in My love.*” That love is Embracing. It is Empowering. It is Eternal. And that, my friends, is the ultimate “*Life Lesson Worth Learning.*”

~M.B.B. 8/29/2010

Let us pray:

*O God, Who revealed Your limitless love to us through Christ, we ask that somehow You will now reveal that same love to others through us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

# MARBLEVISION

Media Ministries of Marble Collegiate Church

**Dr. Michael B. Brown** is the minister of New York City's historic Marble Collegiate Church. This publication is an edited sermon, originally delivered by Dr. Brown from the pulpit. We believe you will find his message one of encouragement and challenge for growth in your daily life.

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