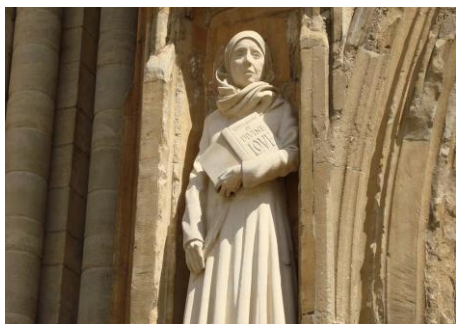


2025 09 14/ Psalm 16: 7-11  
Rev. Dr. Hae-Jeong Yoon

## Beloved of God



The word “Beloved” holds a profound significance that I often emphasize. Today, we will explore this concept through the lens of Julian of Norwich, a remarkable figure who lived during one of history’s most devastating pandemics, the Black Death. This devastating plague claimed the lives of nearly half of Europe’s population, leaving her surrounded by immense suffering. Amidst the chaos of the Hundred Years’ War, religious inquisitions, famines, floods, and economic collapse, Julian experienced a series of profound revelations from God, which she referred to as “showings.” It is unimaginable how much human suffering she must have witnessed throughout her life.

She emphasized that the root of all suffering lies in a misguided perception of God’s rejection of humanity. While suffering is an inherent part of being human, what makes it so soul-destroying is our ignorance or forgetfulness of God’s immense love for us amidst it all. When we spiritually forget our divine love, our lives spiral into greater darkness, destroying ourselves and others, which in turn exacerbates the suffering we endure.

She likened humanity to someone who has fallen into a ditch and cannot see where they are. Their body is full of pain and distraction. They feel isolated because they cannot see that they are intimately connected to God and to all beings. Julian says that the worst part of all of this is that such a person has forgotten God’s tender and unconditional love for them and for all creation. She said, “And of all this, the greatest hurt which I saw him in was lack of comfort, for he could not turn his face to look on his loving lord, who was very near to him, in whom is full comfort.” It is our truth. If we could understand and know how we are adored and cherished by God, and If we could reconnect to God’s love for us, we would still suffer, but it would not be so overwhelming.

In my life there was a moment that I experienced a powerful encounter to God of Love. My mother was very sick, at the cancer last stage. I was searching for God. I was asking God whether God exists or not constantly. I thought I would continue until God shows up. I talked to God, “If you exist, please show me your presence.” God responded to my sincere request.

On a spring day, when I sat at the desk to study Latin language, I looked at the sky. I thought whether the world has evolved as we learn in the school or created as the Bible says. At that moment from the sky, thousands of volts of power came into my room, and talked to me with a tender and gentle voice that I cannot describe; “This power of creation doesn’t harm you but surrounds you with love.” Whose voice is this?”, I asked, and I turned my head around. There was nobody. I knew it was God. I walked to the shelf, took the Bible, wanted to read to know the love of God. The Bible was too thick, I didn’t know where to open! And God talked to me again, “Read Isaiah!” When I open the Bible, from the Bible all the words came alive and entered into my heart and brain. It became a literally living word, jumping word into my heart. The Holy Spirit explained them all. I never forget that moment!

This encounter with divine presence changed me radically. It was my big metanoia event. In other words, it was a resurrection moment not at the end of life, but in its midst. A new world opened. I started to feel the vivid guidance of the Holy Spirit. I was communicating with God’s breath through dreams, visions, and every-day moments. God answered many questions of life. I was like a thirsty deer looking for water as in Psalm 42.

This love allowed me to endure the next stage of life by holding God's hands tightly. It was a profoundly difficult time. Despite God's love for me, it didn't alleviate my suffering. However, I wasn't overwhelmed by it as God promised in the Bible. The suffering was bearable because I knew who I am—the beloved of God, a cherished creation whom God loves so much. This metanoia helped me get through the hardest part of my life. I became a strong person whose heart doesn't easily change depending on situations.

There was a question. I loved God when I was a child. I believed in God. What was then the difference between before and after?

I thought I loved God and believed in God. I had heard many times that God loves me, but those words never truly resonated with me. I couldn't connect to God on a deeper level at all; it was just a mental understanding. Similarly, you might think you believe in God, but you have unconsciously accepted the identity that society, school, work, and the world have given us. The deep and quiet self-identification that you are unlovable, not intelligent, or good enough, etc., is what the school and the world have instilled in us. God becomes an appendage to this false identity. It means God is not truly present in our hearts. God is peripheral. In this state, you cannot have connection to God personally. So, even if you're a believer, you're still lost in God until resurrection happens in your soul.

What other cause contributes to the state of mind where God is peripheral? It's our self-centeredness, self-gratification. We often believe in God to fulfill our desires. Is that true? When we delve deeply, we uncover such aspects within ourselves.

These aspects are interwoven in our lives as *world, flesh, and devil*. The devil employs deceptive ideas to exploit the *flesh*, disordered human desires or self-gratification. Those are then normalized by the sinful world or culture. This unified attack of lies, desires, and societal pressures works to form people away from God and into a self-focused existence. These are all very heavy on human life.



Theresa of Avila describes the soul as a wonderful, beautiful, diamond-like structure with many chambers winding toward a center of inexplicable beauty. At the center of the "interior castle" the Bridegroom dwells, waiting for us. We hold the divine within us all the time, even if for the most part we do not know or remember it. For Teresa, our deepest problem is that we have spiritually forgotten the great beauty of our soul and who dwells there.

Without knowing how precious God created us, how beloved you are as a child of God, we are misunderstanding ourselves! We are like the goose-girl in a fairy tale. You are a princess who was to marry a prince. But you were cheated by an evil servant next to you. Your right to be a wife of a prince was taken away by the evil one. The story continues, but eventually the goose-girl becomes the wife of the prince. Imagine yourself, how it is so beautiful to become a bride of King of Kings, the King of the Universe. Many fairy stories talk about spiritual truth of humanity.

We came into the world with inability to remember who we were. We forgot! Until we receive the love into our heart, and life start to turn around and to journey toward true self, contemplative prayer let you find the way in union with God. It means to be in his presence and to be wrapped by the presence with the presence of God.

What is on the road of our wild journey through many chambers after you turn toward God? There are constant aspects of world, flesh, and devil. Caused by three interwoven enemies, we will have angers, frustrations, and desires inside and outside. We will go through such life's illusion and confusion, suffering and indignities. And also, while we pursue a thousand pleasures, we will be anxious over real and imagined difficulties. However, God will walk with us holding our hands. Showing us the way toward truth. Until we fully arrive at our destination, the center chamber, to the space of union with the Bridegroom.

On your part, do your best to abide in the Holy Presence. Contemplative practice. Align your words, thoughts, and actions to the word of God, as beloved. If you cannot do it, request help for the next chance to do better. Do not beat yourself up. It is another trap by the devil. Sincerely confess your mistakes, stand up and walk again. Always firmly trust you are the Beloved of God. It gives you peace and relief.

When you accept that you are the Beloved, all the time and in all circumstances, your provision will always rise to your perception of who you are in Christ, the beloved. Receive the presence. You and God are inseparable, joined together by the cross, united in sacrificial love. There you find your true self, united with God.