

**My song is love unknown, my Saviour's love to me;
love to the loveless shown, that they might lovely be.
O who am I, that for my sake my Lord should take, frail flesh and die?**

Take time to read and re-read these words connecting with the idea that the love that is shown to us in Jesus is itself unknowable and indescribable. And if you have Songs for Worship available read the whole of hymn 278.

Experiential/Personal Reflection

In the Gospels the word Father, as it applies to God, appears many times, especially in John's gospel when Jesus speaks of his relationship to the Father. Now the term Father relates to the very being of God, the I AM WHO I AM, and so to the love that is God. To try and experience this meaning of Father we need to read through John chapter 14 verses 6 to 14 two times.

Firstly read it just as it is written and reflect on how Jesus is talking about the Father.

Secondly read it again, but this time, carefully substituting the word 'Love' for 'the Father' and 'my Father' and also 'him'. Here is an example from verses 6 and 7:

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to **Love** except through me. If you had known me, you would have known **Love** also. From now on you do know **Love** and have seen **Love**."

Reflect on what you have read and feel how changing 'Father' to 'Love' transforms an already beautiful passage to one that takes us to the heart of what Jesus is saying about himself and his relationship to the Love that is I AM WHO I AM - the Love that is being itself and the ground of our being.

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Five Essentials - Aspects of Loving - a focus for the Church
2nd Essential: Part 1: Relating to Love - the ground of my being
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Relating to Love - the ground of my being



**Then Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM."
And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"**

Exodus 3:13,14

Moses said, "Please show me your glory." And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The LORD.' And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live."

Exodus 33:18-20

The first of the above passages comes from the very well known account of Moses experiencing the presence of God in the 'burning bush'. This took place when Moses was looking after his father-in-law's sheep and had led them through the wilderness to the mountain at Horeb. God speaks to Moses 'out of the bush' and expresses his great love for his people who are suffering in Egypt and promises to deliver them from it to a land "flowing with milk and honey". But God needs Moses to lead the people, something Moses is very reluctant to do. And then come the words above from Exodus 3:13,14 in which God says to Moses: I AM WHO I AM.

The second passage comes just before the people, under Moses' leadership, are about to leave Sinai. Moses has received the Ten Commandments whilst on Mount Sinai but the people have become so fed up with his absence that they make a golden calf. When Moses sees the calf he breaks the two tablets of the Ten Commandments and tells the people they have sinned. And in a long further conversation between Moses and the Lord Moses is told - "you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live."

These two passages and the surrounding verses in which they appear in Exodus tell us a great deal about the nature of the very being of God - the 'I AM WHO I AM'. They show us that Moses' first real experience of God happened because God wanted to show him his great love for his people - "I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey"



But God's love needed Moses to express itself through the task given to him of leading the people out of Egypt. And how did Moses relate and react to that expression of love? Well, he completely doubted his ability to do anything about it - But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?" His doubt and his protestations continued until God said - I AM WHO I AM and then said to Moses - "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

At this point Moses realised he would not be acting alone - it would be God's love, the very being of God, that would be working through him and supporting him in his great task of leading the children of Israel out of Egypt. And yet much later on Moses would be reminded of God's love with a warning - "And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live."

In a very real sense the love that is the very being of God cannot be directly seen or experienced. It is a love that so transcends our ability to understand experience and relate to it that it must remain directly unknown and unknowable. But when it takes form and is expressed in life - then we know what God's love is and in a very real way we know God.



Bible focus

Read through Exodus chapter 3 and Exodus 33:12-23 and then reflect on the following passages from John's gospel and the first epistle of John.

For the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me. And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me. His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen ... John 5:36,37

Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me - not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father. John 6:45,46

Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us."

Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? John 14:8,9



Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. 1 John 4:7,8,16

Teaching Focus

Jehovah God is Being in itself, because He is I am, the very, sole and prime source, from eternity to eternity, of everything in existence, which allows it to exist. In this and no other sense He is the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last, Alpha and Omega. True Christian Religion 21

God only, thus the Lord, is love itself, because he is life itself, and angels and people are recipients of life ... because the Lord is Uncreate and Infinite, He is Being Itself which is called Jehovah, and Life Itself or Life in Himself. Now because life and love are one ... it follows that the Lord, because He is Life Itself, is Love Itself. Divine Love and Wisdom 4 extracts

He with whom there is Divine love, which was with the Lord alone, is God; thus His Human was made Divine when He received in the Human the love of His Father, which was the being of His life. Arcana Caelestia 6872:2

Meditation

In 1664 Samuel Crossman, a minister to both Puritan and Anglican congregations, wrote the words to a hymn which has remained very popular to this day. It is traditionally sung in Holy Week and seeks to describe the love - an unknown love - that can be known in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

Here is the first verse.