

Jesus loves me. Jesus **loves** me. Jesus loves **me!**

Jesus loves you. Jesus **loves** you. Jesus loves **you!**

Is there any greater news for us than that? It just makes me smile and fills me with joy to think about it. It makes me feel good to know that Jesus, God's only begotten Son, the Messiah, Savior, Prince of Peace, King of Kings, Lord of Lords, and granter of grace; teacher, healer, miracle worker, friend to all; with the power to calm storms, walk on water, turn water into wine, bring death to life, feed thousands, love even his enemies; "light of the world", "bread of life", "the way, the truth, and the life", "the good shepherd", "the gate", "the resurrection", and "true vine", **loves me, loves you, loves us all!!!!**

I pray we never take that for granted and never forget it.

It is likely that when you see the three words together "Jesus Loves Me" you immediately think of the hymn, maybe even the music rings in your heart.

Did you know that of the many famous stories about this hymn, one of the most memorable came from the Swiss-German theologian Karl Barth? Barth is considered one of the most influential theologians of the 20th century and his writings and teachings remain in high regard today.

Karl Barth delivered one of the closing lectures of his life at the University of Chicago Divinity School. At the end of the lecture, the president of the seminary told the audience that Dr. Barth was not well and was very tired, and though he thought Dr. Barth would like to open for questions, he probably could not handle the strain. Then he said, 'Therefore, I'll ask just one question on behalf of all of us.' He turned to Barth and asked, 'Of all the theological insights you have ever had, which do you consider to be the greatest of them all?'

"This was a remarkable question to ask a man who had written tens of thousands of pages of some of the most sophisticated theology ever put on paper. The students sat with pads and pencils ready. They wanted to jot down the premier insight of the greatest theologian of their time. "Karl Barth closed his eyes and thought for a while. Then he smiled, opened his eyes, and said to the young seminarians, "The greatest theological insight that I have ever had is this: Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so!"

“Jesus Loves Me” explores the profound love and acceptance that Jesus Christ has for all individuals, regardless of their faults or shortcomings. It serves as a reminder of the unwavering love and compassion that can be found in the teachings of Jesus, bringing comfort and solace to believers worldwide.

“Jesus Loves Me” is a timeless truth, a timeless truth that includes life-changing assurances:

Jesus loves me... God loves me...

I belong to God...

I am weak but God is strong...

Jesus died for me...

Heaven’s gate is open wide for me...

My sins are washed away...

I am saved by Jesus...

God’s love for us goes back to the beginning of creation...

I am invited to sit on the knee of God, on the knee of Christ my Lord and Savior...

How do I know? The bible tells me, Jesus tells me, God tells me, so...

In reflection of the power of “Jesus Loves Me”, one author reflects,

“We usually think that mostly children sing, “Jesus Loves Me,” but I know lots of older people who like to sing it too. In fact, it was the very last song that José ever sang. José lived in a small village in Bolivia. He always wore a bandage over his nose because the disease of leprosy had eaten away part of it. And the ends of his shoes were empty because leprosy had eaten away his toes. The first time we visited José’s home, we were a little nervous. We had never been in the house of a leper before. But it was not long before the Bibles and hymnbooks were out, and José sang of God’s wonderful love and read from God’s precious Word. But José was very old, and not long after this we heard that he was very sick and about to die. He no longer knew who his wife was and was too weak to eat ... but he could still sing. And the song he sang was, “Jesus Loves Me, This I Know!” Just a few years later another older person, a lady in Bolivia, was also about to die. We called her “Sister Maria” and our children went with us to visit her on what turned out to be her last day on earth. Although she was too weak to get up, she knew who we were, and as our children sang, she began to sing with them, “Jesus loves me, this I know, For the Bible tells me so.” Those were also the very last words that Aunt Ola sang, slipping away into God’s arms. Have you ever stopped long enough to think why this hymn would cheer up people when they are sick and weak and about to die? Why would someone want to sing something so simple in their last moments on earth? I’ll tell you why — because the love of the Lord Jesus is the most important thing we can know in all the world! Fun times, friends, and even family can completely fade away, but the love of the Lord Jesus never changes and will last when everything else is gone.”

Hear this... Jesus' declaration of love is for you!!! Jesus' love is not a really strong like, nor is it only reserved for cute and innocent children. Jesus' love is a deep, steadfast, unconditional, compassionate, peaceful, love for all. Jesus' love is a love that transcends all human reason and logic confined to space, time, circumstance, and emotion.

There are some, and maybe you have considered yourself one at times, that wonder whether you might be outside or beyond Jesus' love. Maybe your life, and therefore, you, have become shady, desperate, discouraged, fearful, suffering, grieving, tormented, spiritually weary, imperfect. Maybe you think this because others have shown you no love. NO! Jesus is not like others. Jesus is divine and you are to hear and know "Jesus Loves You". And not only hear and know it, but live with this good news and live into this timeless truth.

Three words, "Jesus Loves Me," may be simple, but the truth that Jesus loves you is the foundation of faith. God loves us so that we would be filled with life. Christ tells us he loves us so that we can be empowered and compelled to love God, love Christ, and love others in return. We can tend to make theology and life much more complex than this. We can tend to make our relationship with God and our relationships with others much more complex than this. We don't have to. "Jesus love me!" "Jesus loves you!" We are called to do the same.

Prayers of the People

Loving God, we are grateful for your divine and steadfast love, and we are grateful for the love of Christ exemplified for us in his birth, life, ministry, teachings, death, resurrection, and ascension. Your love indeed gives us life and even though we may not always act like it, your love empowers and compels us to love in return: love you and love others.

We pray this morning that in the foundation and sharing of this good news, we may live with and into the love you have given us. As we encounter one another, those we know, those we associate with regularly, and even those we don't know or wouldn't associate with regularly, may we faithfully embody your love to all through what we say and choose not to say, what we do and choose not to do.

Through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit, we pray God that you will continue to mold us, fill us, and use us, like a potter at the wheel making priceless art. We pray God, as Tanner is received into the membership of Christ's Church, that we will faithfully fulfill the promises we have all made this day, beginning with the act of love. May we all seek further faithfulness in our baptismal covenants with you.

As we pray this day, we may be reminded of many who are not well, many who are ill and suffering, many who are in pain, many who are grieving, many who are searching and longing for answers, many who are bewildered with life and circumstances. We pray for your grace and love to be with all, in all, and work through all according to your will and way. We pray each of your children all around the world would know of your love and feel the rhythm of "Jesus Loves Me" in their hearts.

In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, let all God's people say... Amen.