

"AN 'EVEN SO' KIND OF LOVE" – 1 CORINTHIANS 15:19-26

Resurrection Sunday

By: Reverend Courtney Bryant, Ph.D.

For as in Adam all die, **even so** in Christ all shall be made alive. (1 Cor 15:22, NKJV)

In 1947 the incomparable Etta James recorded in her earnest and sultry way, “A Sunday Kind of Love,” a ballad that longed for a true love that endures. Throughout the song, Sister Etta croons on about a life giving, life affirming, and life changing love that brings security, companionship and fulfillment. A love that rests easy, a love that makes life is soft like long Sunday brunches, or stirs the soul, like Sunday morning worship. A love that reaches all the way down to ones bones, a love that fantasies are made of.

Sister Etta’s “Sunday kind of love” depicts a love many long for, however, on this, one of the highest holy days on our liturgical calendar, on this day that we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ and his victory over the grave. I want to offer that despite the beautiful imagery Sister Etta melodic voice paints, and despite how it gets us all to dreaming about a love that we can soak in, whenever we hear the song, there is an even greater love still.

In Paul’s first letter to the Church at Corinth, hoping to clarify for believers right doctrine and Christian morality he explains that the resurrection of Jesus is the hope of the believers salvation. The New King James version translates, “For in Adam all die, **even so** in Christ all will be made alive.” Interpreters of the verse posit Paul, in his explanation of the miraculous and loving plan of God to nullify the power of sin over the lives of humanity, presents Adam as a conduit of sin, and Christ is a conduit of new life. Both proceed from the choices of God’s first created man Adam and the man God sent – Jesus, his son, who restores what Adam has destroyed through disobedience. Consequently, the scripture can be interpreted-- For in Adam all die, and in the same manner in Christ all will be made alive. And while the methodology of

God in itself is worthy of celebration and thanksgiving, I submit that there is another way to understand this verse.

I am persuaded that in those two little words... “Even so..” lies a deeper meaning. You see we have traditionally understood this passage as the foundation for the doctrine of salvation that renders Jesus the second Adam, sent to us to complete that which Adam could not do – keep the law. Such interpretations help us understand our utter helplessness and powerlessness in securing salvation for ourselves, and the importance of God’s saving work through Jesus Christ.

In the same way this tells of the excellence of our God. It showcases the care and concern with which God watches his children, or as the bible likens the Lord as a hen would watch her chicks. God’s love for us is intentional, methodical, intricate, painstaking...

And while I love that interpretation and what it reveals about God, I am also glad that on this day that we celebrate that the word which was with God and is God is alive that the word of God, that which we read for our growth and edification is alive too!

Which brings me back to those two little words...Even so... These two little words can be interpreted not just as *in the same way*,” as I have explained already, but from the vantage point of our modern-day vernacular, the verse can be heard and interpreted as *in the spite of*. Now when translating *even so* as *in spite of*, or *nevertheless* the verse experience a theological transformation, shifting from an explanation of the intricacies of God’s plan for salvation and blossoms into a love song of its own, that showcases the extravagantly merciful and enduring nature of God’s love; a song that sings of God’s excellent greatness and boundless love.

Sister Etta’s song, “a Sunday kind of love” is sung with great longing, suggesting that the singer is ready for such love, perhaps even deserving. The urgency in her voice suggests that she is ready to be all that her lover desires of her as well. That she too possesses a love that endures, that she too, is willing to reach beyond pleasure and her own needs to guide, to protect, and stand with her love, but there are some of us who cannot say the same. Unlike Sister Etta, some of us want a Sunday kind of love, but we don’t want to give up our Saturday night kind of ways. Some of us want the consistency and security of God, but only want to check in from time to

time. Some of us want the devotion, protection and blessings of God, but we don't want to make the commitment to do the work, or make our lives hospitable to the Holy Spirit. Even today, many will make their way to the house of God, recognizing the spiritual importance of this holiday. We dress in our finery and walk into the sanctuary as though we have come to pay our respects as to a God that is dead. For many, there is no sense of hope, because we have no sense of confidence, no sense of victory in the fact that our Lord is not dead but very much alive!

However, no matter where you are in your spiritual journey. Whether you are the holiest of holy saints, or falling short on holy living, giving your all, or offering way less than you demand from God, completely sold out for Christ or hesitant to completely turn your life over to our Savior and Creator. Deserving or totally in need of God's grace, no matter where you are, I came to tell you that... EVEN SO God stands with his arms outstretched waiting for us to choose him.

Now, I don't know about you but I need an "even so" kind of love in my life. I need the kind of love that only the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords is capable of. I need an "even so" kind of love because my situation seems too bleak, and because sometimes I can't find my way. And sometimes there is no one to call on but the Lord. When life pushes us down, and we don't deserve to be rescued because half of the reason we find ourselves in our situation is because of our own missteps and our own doing. I am so glad that we have a Savior with an "even so" kind of love.

And like a "Sunday kind of love" and "even so" kind of love endures...

That means that though we rejected and, on some days, continue to reject God, though we neglect to diligently pursue the spirit. Though we fail to tell of the goodness of God, though our mouths and our actions don't always reflect the holiness and power of God, though we chose to be in every other place but church on Sunday mornings to extol God for God's tender mercies. Though we take advantage of god's patience, love and mercy.

Even so...

God's mercy endures... FOREVER.

Even so... God is ever ready to be our salvation.

Even so... God preserves our lives through the blood of the Lamb.

Even so... God never stops being on our sides.

God came through with an even so kind of love and offered us and still offers us another way. Despite the fact that we were dead in our sins. Despite the fact that we sometimes find ourselves coasting along and not living into our purpose. Despite the fact that we feel like we have don't deserve his love and that it is impossible for these dry bones to live, be reassured, Beloved, God our Savior specializes in resurrection miracles. In fact, the word says our salvation is God's doing alone.

Despite the fact that Adam fell short in disobedience

Despite the fact that we fall short every day

Despite the fact that enmity was placed between God and God's creation

Despite the fact that even God's own would not receive the son that God sent

Despite the fact that Judas attempted to thwart his plan and betray the Son

Despite the fact that they ridiculed, mocked and spat upon him,

Despite the fact that they would not believe him when he told them you sent him,

Despite the fact that they beat him and killed him,

Despite the fact that there was no breath left in Christ's body,

Despite the fact that his heart stopped and his organs shut down,

Despite the fact that they laid his body in a borrowed tomb,

Despite the fact that the stone was far too heavy for any human to roll away,

Despite the fact that it *seemed* like the situation was impossible and most certainly done

Even so... God by the power of the Holy Spirit raised him up.

Even so... The Lord Jesus did get up with all power in his hands.

Even so... Jesus ascended to heaven and sat at the right hand of God

Even so he was victorious over death

Even so he gave us the right to life in him.

Even so... that same power is available to us.

I don't care that you haven't been to church in years
I don't care that your Bible has 3 inches of dust on it from lack of use.
I don't care that you're more prone to yell out curses than praises
Even so... God considered you worthy of great sacrifice
Even so... You are beloved of God
Even so the resurrection power that got Jesus up as he lay dead can give you new life too.

Oh I can hear you saying now, "I can't do it. "I can't clean up my life, I can't free myself of the sins that hold me down. And to that I declare "Even so." The resurrection of Jesus Christ is a testament to the fact that God can.

Beloved, God will always come to save us. The word says, "The right hand of the Lord does valiantly; the right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord does valiantly." I shall not die, but I shall live. And beloved I want you to know that our lives are made possible not by anything we have done or could ever do, but this great victory is brought to us by God's "even so" kind of love -- the power of his *in spite of*, his *nevertheless*, which has the capacity to make alive that which was once dead.

Though the disobedience of humanity's sin has obstructed our connection to the one who gives us life, though our willfulness, our arrogance, our stubbornness, our lack of focus, our laziness, has us believing we know better

Even so...God continues to actively love us,
Even so...God prepares a way,
Even so... God established a gate through which the righteous shall enter, which is Jesus Christ
Even so... God sent his son to die that whosoever believes in him shall have life eternally with God.

This love...Allows us who were once wretched, we who were without a way out to sing songs of Victory unto Our God. And when we experience this even so kind of love, we can't help but take on an even so kind of attitude, so that we too can walk in agreement and common purpose with God. So that we can live an **“even so kind of life.”**

The kind of life that even though the enemy is vexing you
Even though life is through you curve balls
Even though it seems like your situation won't change
You will know without a shadow of a doubt that God's victory is not only for you, but in you,
That the power and authority of God is in your hand
The power over life and death is in your hand
The resurrection power that rose Jesus to life is in your hand and furthermore all authorities and enemies of God have been crushed and put under your feet.

And it is in that knowing that our song shifts from a song of longing for salvation to a song of victory unto the Lord, for God has done a marvelous thing in our sight, he has saved our souls not only from death but from the crushing burden of sin.

Glory Hallelujah! Through his even so kind of love, Jesus Christ got up, and his even so kind of love declares that we can get up too! So church rise up and sing praises and songs of victory, our lord and King has given us a way of escape, a new life and the power to overcome all things because his love is everlasting, unconquerable and never ending in mercy.

The Reverend Dr. Courtney Bryant is a scholar, preacher and practitioner interested in the movement or the Holy Spirit and its relationship to embodied forms of love. She currently teaches Religion and Womanist Ethics at Manhattan College in Riverdale, NY.