

## Advent Hymn Devotion from *O Lord, How Shall I Meet You*

Love caused your incarnation; Love brought you down to me.  
Your thirst for my salvation Procured my liberty.  
Oh, love beyond all telling That led you to embrace  
In love, all love excelling, Our lost and fallen race!

Christian Worship 18 stanza 2

Love makes us do exceptional things doesn't it? A young man will risk an acrobatic disaster to get the attention of a certain young woman. A sister will drive for hours and stay up all night, listening and sharing tears because she's needed. A stranger may even donate a kidney to give someone the gift of life. But who could imagine that love would cause God to take on human form and live on earth? Yet God's Word tells us that he "made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant" (Phil. 2:7).

No human act of love could compare to what God has done for us. It was God's love for us (while we were still sinners!) that compelled his plan of salvation; a plan to send his only Son to earth as a human to die for the sins of all people. Love drove Jesus from the glories of heaven to earth - the earth he created with the power of his word. Love moved Jesus to become fully human and live as a man - God's creation shaped from dirt. Who could understand the depth of that love?

And that love wants everyone to be saved. God wants to restore the fellowship he enjoyed in the Garden of Eden! The hymn writer calls it a thirst; Scripture says: "the LORD longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion" (Isaiah 30:8). God thirsted for your soul's salvation not because he was lonely or incomplete but because he is compassionate and loving. It wasn't God's need that caused his desire, but his mercy as he saw mankind's need for a Savior. That compassionate longing procured your freedom.

Procured is a unique word! It means "to obtain by special effort" (a bit of an understatement, don't you think?). The special effort Christ gave meant living a perfect life on our behalf and then dying on the cross to pay for our sins. That's how our liberty was obtained. But this isn't a liberty that gives you rights; it's a liberty that releases you from slavery to sin. The entire race of humanity is born in sin, separated from God who is holy and righteous. We need to be set free from that bondage, and because of God's love and effort, the enslaving chains of sin have been broken.

Love does make us do exceptional things. And this is love beyond all telling! This is the epitome of love, that God would embrace the lost, fallen race of sinful humanity and redeem us through his Son. His love exceeds all other love; his actions define the greatest act of love. That love has a name. Jesus. And He loves you.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for your amazing love, a love that brought you down to me. Thank you for your love that transcended the heavens and came totally undeserved. I am amazed that you thirsted for my salvation. Knowing that you came to be my Savior is such a joy; knowing that you died to forgive my sins is so humbling. Fill my heart with love in response to all you've done; let it overflow to others that I

may tell them of the forgiveness you've won for all people. Most of all, fix my heart and mind on the beautiful message of your grace. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

This devotion was written by Naomi Schmidt and reviewed by Prof. David Sellnow.