

## On Love and Happiness

By: Lauren Galvan, '16

This afternoon, I met up with my friend for lunch. He started discussing the Parable of the Talents and how God's love should not be kept for oneself nor hidden. Rather, God's love, must be used for some purpose. It must have direction. It must be shared with others.

As CS Lewis states in Chapter Three of *The Problem of Pain*, "when kindness is separated from the other elements of Love, it involve[s] a certain fundamental indifference to its object, and even something like contempt of it." We can use Lewis' explanation of divorcing and extracting kindness from love to also explain divorcing and extracting love from purpose. Love from direction. Love from others. As Lewis so eloquently and beautifully writes in this chapter, and as St. Thomas Aquinas writes in *Summa Theologica*, love's purpose is to will the good for others

When we divorce love from its very nature, and when we reduce love to something that is not fully love (oftentimes, on college campuses, this takes the form of lust or use), the separation involves a certain fundamental indifference to those whom we share this "pseudo love" with.

My friend and I talked a lot about this today, especially since I was explaining to him how, this year more than ever before, I am concerned with befriending others who will look out for the salvation of my soul, and not simply for my happiness and vice-versa.

Providentially, after lunch, I opened up *The Problem of Pain*, and there I found Lewis' brilliant words: "By the goodness of God we mean nowadays almost exclusively His lovingness...by Love, in this context, most of us mean kindness -- the desire to see others more than the self happy; not happy in this way or that, but just happy."

Lewis knows, however, that this is not love, that "Love is something more stern and splendid than mere kindness," that "There is kindness in Love: but Love and kindness are not coterminous," that willing solely the happiness of others -- desiring only that others "escape suffering" -- is not this radical love that is God. Those things may be components of love, just as kindness is a component of love, but it is not wholly love itself.

What does this mean for a generation of college students who've grown up with mantras like "Do whatever makes you happy" or "As long as you're happy, I'm happy" or "I just want you to be happy"?

We think we say these things out of love, but we need to rethink that. Take "I just want you to be happy." Like Lewis mentioned, this is highly indifferent to whomever it is spoken to. I just want you to be happy? Not excellent in character, not consistent in morality, not perfected by love and for love, but just happy. I will for you only this fleeting emotion that will probably end in a few hours.

In my past, I had grown accustomed to people just wanting me to be happy. And when I sought counsel from them, I would receive a very formulaic response. "If x makes you happy, Lauren, then do x." When I wasn't happy when I followed the formula, I sought counsel again. "If x makes you unhappy, then do the opposite: Do 'not x'." It was like this back and forth, black and white, ping-pong tournament in which the ping-pong ball bounced with the same speed and in the same direction each time it was hit.

I was not going anywhere. I had no direction and I desperately needed it.

It wasn't until I answered God's call to understand that only His love could help me that I felt like my life had direction again. Because God wasn't telling me that He just wanted me to be happy, He was asking me to trust Him and to follow Him so that He could perfect me and my soul.

In the exact moment God revealed this to me, He didn't have to say anything. I felt His arms embrace me when I most needed Him and I felt the Holy Spirit whisper: "Lauren, I am with you. Healing from your past, from your sins, won't be easy. It will be hard. You will be sad. But I am with you through it all."

When I read what Lewis wrote later on in this same chapter, that God is perfecting us in love, the past year or so of my life all made sense. His calls to us are calls to follow Him further, not for the sake of gaining new followers but so that we may be perfected in love for love. So that He may make us more virtuous, more kind, more directed, more purposeful, and more loving so that we can better serve other members of our Body. Holiness is a directed and other-oriented process. Being perfected is a process, and when we say "I just want you to be happy," we're really saying "I don't want to participate in the process of your perfection. I don't want to participate in the deepening of your goodness, in the salvation of your soul."

So we've got to rethink the phrase. What we should say is this: "Because I love you, I will your good. And being good doesn't always make us happy. Sometimes -- most of the time -- being good will be hard. Because goodness requires sacrifice and habitual practice. By definition, virtue requires us to give up our lives so that we may better love others. This sacrifice, this death, will be painful, obviously. But because **I love you, I am with you**. Goodness won't be easy at first. Love won't be easy at first. It will be very hard. It will require work. You may be sad. But I am with you through it all because I love you so very much."