



## Broad Street Presbyterian Church

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### “Where Does Love Go?”

John 20:1-18

Easter Sunday, April 1, 2018

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“Ask a Grown Up” is a video series created by online magazine *Rookie*. Teenage girls send in questions they have about life and love, and an artist, musician, or comedian answers some of the questions on video. Most of the questions submitted have to do with friendships and relationships, questions like:

- Do you think girls and guys can really be just friends?
- How do I leave one friend group and join another?
- Do you have any advice for starting high school?
- How do I tell him I don't want to go out with him, without ruining our friendship?
- Does the amount of kisses on the end of a text show how much a guy likes you? I've been texting a boy I like for about three months, and he sends five to seven kisses even though I always send four.

The grown-ups who answer—people like Paul Rudd and Carly Ray Jepsen and Jimmy Fallon—take the questions seriously and do their best to offer good advice.

And then there is this question submitted by a girl named Clem.

My mother died a few months ago and that has completely messed up my whole perception of reality because I lost the only person who really loved me. I keep wondering, when someone dies, where does that love go? I just feel completely alone and unloved, which is horrible because I used to be reminded every day that someone loves me.

Everything seems pointless because the only person who had real love for me is gone and I didn't make the most of it when I could.

Is there any way to come to terms with that? Signed, Clem<sup>1</sup>

Now, that's a question. A good question. A powerful question. When someone dies, where does that love go?

I wonder if Mary asks a similar question that first Easter. That morning, Mary goes to the tomb to pay her respects to her dead friend. She has brought burial spices and her own battered and broken heart. She weeps over the loss of the one who knew her completely and loved her utterly. What do you think it was like to actually spend time with Jesus, to be in the presence of love incarnate, love divine, the embodiment of God's love? Mary had a front row seat to watch Jesus heal and preach and teach, to witness his love in action. It must

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.rookiemag.com/2013/09/ask-a-grown-woman-tig-notaro/> She actually signs the question “C,” but later identifies herself by the name Clem. I first learned of her story on the podcast *This American Life*. <https://www.thisamericanlife.org/612/ask-a-grown-up>

have been amazing, unlike anything we can imagine. What would it feel like to lose all that love? I'm betting that Mary can relate to Clem's question: "When someone dies, where does all that love go?"

Clem's question was answered on video by Tig Notaro. She is a stand-up comic and writer and a lot of her work has been about coping with her mother's death. You can see why *Rookie* magazine asked her to answer Clem's question. This is what Tig says on the video:

...First of all, I am very sorry about your mother. As far as your mother being the only person that truly loved you, I'm certain other people in your life love you tremendously and that's where the love can go. And a really great gift to give your mother is to truly spend time with good people around you and cherish the time you have with them and appreciate who they are and what they are in your life. That's a really great gift to you, your mother, and other people.

So being present and aware of your time with people—that's really where the love can go. That's what I'm doing, and it's helpful. I hope this [answer] has been helpful.<sup>2</sup>

It's a good answer, a helpful answer. Would you say something different? How would you answer Clem's question? I've been asking folks that a lot in recent weeks. Here are some of what you would say to her.

- Clem, no one will replace your mother. You will miss her every day.
- Clem, it's an amazing thing to be loved so deeply and well by another person. Treasure that always.
- Clem, many people will show up and fill in for your mother's love. People step up and you end up with more love.
- Clem, your mother's love is not gone. Now, that love is in you.

And my favorite answer,

- Clem, death doesn't end love.

Which brings us to Easter.

This is a good day to address Clem's question. Because this day is all about love. Because God is all about love. Let's start with the big picture. Throughout the history of humanity, God had been slowly but surely bringing more and more of the world under the influence of God's love. First God loved one man and his family and soon it was a whole people. But that wasn't enough for God. God kept scooping up more and more people. "I want to love the Egyptians as well as the Israelites," God said. "The Ninevites, the Caananites, the Samaritans, yeah, I will love them, too."

I'm thinking God grew tired of this haphazard, piecemeal approach to loving humanity. So in one bold act that we call resurrection, God said, "I will love all of you—every last one of you." It was a surprising turn of events. The story of Jesus was over. All that was left of the hopes and dreams ignited by his life was a dead body sealed tight in a cold tomb. Somehow, some way, God broke into that heavily guarded tomb and brought out life and love. Lots of love.

Because of Easter, we know that God's love is not a zero sum game. There is no risk of running out or coming up short or using up our allotment. There is an unending reservoir of love, an unlimited supply, a perpetual fountain of love, a bottomless cistern, a love battery that never runs out of energy... Pick your metaphor.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.rookiemag.com/2013/09/ask-a-grown-woman-tig-notaro/>

Death does not end love. Love is alive and walking around the garden. Just ask Mary.

This Easter love—it is not abstract. It comes to us through family and friends, through the words of novelists and poets, through the power of music, through words of comfort and support offered on social media, through time spent with those who know and love us best.

And because of Easter, we know where love goes. Where God's love goes. It goes where it is needed. It goes where it is needed. So, God's love can be found just about anywhere. Suburbs and cities, protest marches and board meetings, hospital waiting rooms and basketball arenas. God's love can be found at kitchen tables, in middle school cafeterias, in the aisles of grocery stores. God's love can be found in prisons, at 12-Step meetings, in refugee camps. Those are just some of the places that love goes. God's love can even be experienced through videos posted on *Rookie* magazine's website.

Clem watched Tig's video. We know that because she left a comment on the website.

This is what she wrote:

I would just like to say that this has been the most wonderful thing. I sent that question to *Rookie* about my mother a few months ago. I eagerly... clicked upon every 'ask' article that appeared expecting an answer or just an indication that I had been heard. After a bit my enthusiasm began to wane as my question wasn't featured. I completely forgot about it, in fact, until this video. I am now shaking and crying. The mere fact that someone has replied is amazing, but the enormous deal that TIG NOTARO has answered is... mind-blowing. I have been through so much... and been stuck in this tiny bubble of despair and self-hatred, feeling so small and weak and the fact that someone cares is crazy and has kind of taken me out of that, so I would just like to say a major thank you from the bottom of my heart. You have no idea how much you have helped me...<sup>3</sup>

That's the kind of thing that happens when love is unleashed on the world.

In his final week on earth, Jesus gathers into himself all suffering and loss and pain and heartbreak and fear and disappointment and self-hatred and despair. He gathers it all up—he holds it in his broken body—he carries all of that into the tomb.

And three days later—this I can't really explain—it's kind of a mystery—I don't understand the mechanics of it—but three days later, Jesus is alive and love is unleashed on the world.

That is good news. This is good news this Easter morning.

Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. Amen.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.rokiemag.com/2013/09/ask-a-grown-woman-tig-notaro/>