

Greetings church,

In his concluding comments Henri calls to our attention, though indirectly, a chagrined Peter's conversation with the risen Lord. Living as the Beloved, he contends, is, like Peter, saying "yes" repeatedly. Jesus spends his entire earthly ministry telling everyone and anyone, from the highest to the lowest, from the most religious to the most irreligious, that God loves them. I find myself reminding you all, consistently and regularly, that God loves each one of you. We forget about the risen Lord's *questions* to Peter. It is not just that God loves each and every one of us but each and every one of us is asked in return "Do you love me?". Henri is convinced that most cultures, especially our American one because that is his context as well, have it backwards. Living is not about achieving or proving one's worth of value. Instead, living is about saying yes repeatedly to the voice that says, "you are my beloved child and with you and I am well pleased" and asks "do you love me?". Henri then goes on to remind us that "at every point of the journey there is the choice to say 'Yes' and the choice to say 'No'"<sup>1</sup>. Believe it or not, as free moral agents, we can actually choose to say "no" to God. Adam and Eve did it. Jonah did it. Ananias and Sapphira did it. What the scriptures reveal is not that God is irrefusable but that the consequences are quite grave when He is.

What Henri is ultimately trying to convince his friend to do, and the rest of us for that matter, is to believe that *both* good consequences exist when saying "yes" to being the beloved and loving in return and bad consequences exist and come as a result of saying "no". The life of the beloved is the life that says "yes". It's Hannah. It's Mary. It's Peter, James, and John. It's Paul and Lydia. All of these folks who chose to say "yes" when asked, either directly or indirectly, "do you love me?". Living as the Beloved is, like they did, choosing to say yes, repeatedly. Henri further contends that saying yes to God is saying yes to unity and saying no to the diabolical "forces of darkness ... that split, divide, and set in opposition"<sup>2</sup>. It sounds to me like Henri is saying that the way forward, as it always has been, is by saying "yes" to the good, loving God whose steadfast love for all of creation never ceases. Saying "yes" to God's love enables and equips us to love one another into unity.

I hope you will accept Henri's invitation to continually say "yes" both to being the beloved of God and to loving God in return. There is nothing but life to be gained from it.

In Christ's Service,  
Pastor Eddie

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<sup>1</sup> Nouwen, Henri J.M. Life of the Beloved: Spiritual Living in a Secular World. The Crossroad Publishing Company; New York, NY: 1992. p.134

<sup>2</sup> *ibid*, pp.134-135