

Greetings church,

In coordination with our 2025 preaching theme “fear not beloved child” I decided to re-read “Life of the Beloved” by Henri Nouwen and share it with you all. Henri Nouwen is a spiritual theologian and pastor who is well regarded particularly for his work in helping people to understand precisely this; our belovedness. Join me on my reading journey.

Even back in the early 90’s (the book was published in 1992) Nouwen expressed a concern that we, the collective we, have mostly surrendered or given up on our dreams. He expresses this concern in regards to a relationship he began developing with a gentleman named Fred who had been sent by his editor to do a story on Henri. “He looked to me like a prisoner locked behind the bars of a society forcing him to work at something in which he didn’t believe”.¹ 35-ish years later, I’m not convinced that many still don’t find themselves in the same situation. And so I hope that Nouwen will guide us into belovedness as a part of the solution. Nouwen makes the claim that many of us have surrendered our decision making capabilities which coincides with the giving up on our dreams. Maybe because we fail to recognize or embrace our belovedness, instead of choosing to chase and pursue our dreams, we instead, “blame the world, the society, and others for [our] ‘fate’ and waste much of [our] lives complaining”². Perhaps this sounds like yourself or someone you know.

As their relationship continues and priorities change with age, Nouwen notes that as they each individually, and collaboratively, turned to their spiritual resources to deal with the pains of failure, rejection, and separation, “differences became less important, similarities more obvious”³. Eventually, as Henri continues to work through all the things of life with his new friend Fred, Fred comes to the point where he recognizes that his friend Henri has a unique and special way of speaking to spiritual matters in a way that people steeped in secular society can understand. Fred suggested to Henri that he could say something about the Spirit that he and his secular friends “could hear”. Nouwen reflects that “he was calling me to speak a word of hope to people who no longer came to churches or synagogues and for whom priests and rabbis were no longer the obvious counselors”⁴. 35-ish years later, we find ourselves in similar circumstances.

My hope then is that as we accompany Henri on his spiritual journey that you yourself might find some new insight or new way of speaking or understanding such that we, collectively, can ourselves as counselors for others on journey. As well as this, I echo Henri’s hope as well: “I hope that through my being so personal and direct many may want to ‘listen in’ and even join in this spiritual search”⁵. Let’s do it together.

In Christ’s Service,
Pastor Eddie

¹ Nouwen, Henri J.M. Life of the Beloved: Spiritual Living in a Secular World. The Crossroad Publishing Company; New York, NY: 1992. p.13

² *ibid*, p.16

³ *ibid*, p.19

⁴ *ibid*, p.21

⁵ *ibid*, p.26