

Good Grief: Giving Out of Love
[Luke 10:25-28](#)
[Luke 21:1-4](#)
[1 Timothy 6:17-19](#)
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 October 30, 2016

More than anything, we don't want to be alone in life. We want to be in relationship. Simply put, we want to be loved. Charles Schulz shows us this very basic need in so many ways in his comic strip, Peanuts. Here we see Lucy at the piano with Schroeder.

(Lucy is leaning on the piano, talking to Schroeder, who is playing.)

Lucy: How come you never send me flowers?

Schroeder: (stops playing) Because I don't like you.

Lucy: The flowers wouldn't care.

(Schroeder starts playing again.)

Sometimes I think you don't realize that you could lose me...

Are you sure you want to suffer the tortures of the memory of a lost love?

(Schroeder looks up. Lucy gets mad when he doesn't react...)

It's awful!

(She pounds the piano and stamps her feet. It knocks Schroeder off the piano bench.)

It will haunt you night and day!

You'll wake up at night screaming! You can't eat! You can't sleep!!

You'll want to smash things! (She's throwing a temper tantrum!)

You'll hate yourself and the world and everybody in it! Oooooo!

(She pounds her head on the ground... Then she goes over to him...)

Are you sure you want to risk losing me?

Poor Lucy. She just can't get Schroeder to give her the time of day! She bosses everyone else around, but ironically, she can't get Schroeder to pay her any attention. The "Gospel according to Peanuts" teaches us about different kinds of love—
 In the case of Lucy and Schroeder, we see Lucy's unrequited love. It's a would-be romantic love, at least the kind children have, like the crush you had on a boy or girl in the second grade. Lucy is furious because she can't make Schroeder love her. But love really isn't something that can be forced on someone.

Schroeder's love for Beethoven and the piano is another kind of love: true devotion. Nothing captivates Schroeder like music. He loses himself in the melodies and rhythms; he's an artist, albeit a young one. Though music doesn't replace a human relationship, it does speak to Schroeder and functions as the object of his devotion.

Charlie Brown shows us what it feels like to be unloved. You'll remember two weeks ago, Charlie Brown's skit started with his saying, "I've come to the conclusion that there's nothing worse than being unloved." Charlie Brown's biggest problem is that he doesn't love himself. Lucy says to Charlie Brown, "Discouraged again, eh, Charlie Brown? You

know what your trouble is? The whole trouble with you is that you're **you!**"

"Well, what in the world can I do about that?"

Lucy says, "I don't pretend to be able to give advice...I merely point out the trouble!"

Another time, Charlie Brown asks Linus, "Perhaps you can give me an answer, Linus, what would you do if you felt that no one liked you?"

Linus answers, "I'd try to look at myself objectively, and see what I could do to improve ...that's my answer, Charlie Brown."

"I hate that answer," says Charlie Brown.

He goes to Lucy's booth for "psychiatric help," saying, "I can't help it, I feel lonely [and] depressed..."

Lucy says, "This is ridiculous! You should be ashamed of yourself, Charlie Brown! You've got the whole world to live in! There's beauty all around you! There are things to do...great things to be accomplished! No man trods this earth alone! We are all together: one generation taking up where the other generation has left off!"

Charlie Brown responds, "You're right, Lucy! You've made me see things differently...I realize now that I am part of this world...I am not alone...I have friends!

"Name one!" Lucy says.

Charles Schulz occasionally spoke about his own times of feeling alone: "I know something about loneliness...I was very lonely after the war. I know what it feels like to spend a whole weekend all by yourself and no one wants you at all" (quoted in *The Parables of Peanuts*, Robert Short, 116). This tragic aspect of life is really a very adult notion, though Schulz portrays it with little children in the comic strip. Haven't we all had times when we were desperately alone: going away from home to summer camp, hanging around on the first days at college in the dorm, entering a church for the first time, spending evenings alone after the death or divorce of a spouse, losing a friend. It's like feeling at "loose ends."

Charlie Brown doesn't smile a lot in Peanuts...unless he's with Snoopy. Most of the time he feels desperately unhappy, but now and then we find him enjoying the simple pleasure of Snoopy's companionship. Sitting under a tree with Snoopy, Charlie Brown says, "Here we are, two old friends, sitting together sharing a sandwich... I can tell you, it just doesn't get any better than this!"

Snoopy's thinking, "It doesn't?"

From Snoopy, Charlie Brown receives unconditional love. He doesn't have to prove himself. He doesn't have to pretend to be more than he is. He can just be together with Snoopy. "It doesn't get any better than this."

Isn't this the kind of relationship we want with God? The comfortable sense of companionship. The notion that we are truly accepted for who we are—nothing more, nothing less. There may be times when we catch a glimpse of God pursuing us as a lover, desiring us and responding to our needs. There may be times when we find ourselves completely devoted to God, when we are humbled and held prisoner to God's love. I think, though, there may be more times when we simply want to be in God's company. We don't want to be alone.

A hospital chaplain told me that quite often a patient who is all alone in the hospital just wants to know that the chaplain will be there after the surgery. Even though the chaplain was basically a stranger, it made all the difference when he said he would be there and that he and the patient would be together again after the operation. People want to know they won't be alone. This is a kind of love that is compassionate and dependable.

I wonder what kind of love prompted the poor widow in Luke's Gospel to put two small copper coins into the treasury. I wonder what kind of love moved her to give "out of her poverty everything she had, all she had to live on" (21:1-4). She must have loved God as she would have loved a faithful spouse or a precious child—someone she would have gladly died for. She must have loved God with a blind devotion, not thinking of practical daily needs, but eager to empty herself completely. She must have loved God as a partner and friend, one whom she could trust beyond doubt, one with whom she would be happy to share her life.

This is how we store up for ourselves treasures in heaven. Not earning our way into God's good graces, but giving out of abundant love, generous love, compelling love. "[We] store up for [ourselves] the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that [we] may take hold of the life that really is life."

We give to God in many ways and out of more than one motivation, surely. We have been talking these three weeks about giving out of obedience, out of gratitude, and out of love. We give because to be a faithful follower of Jesus means to build the Church of Jesus Christ. It means to create the "beloved Community," Martin Luther King's name for the Body of Christ where love and justice reign. It means to bring about the Kingdom of God, a radical notion that God—no other ruler—is Lord of our life. This is giving out of obedience. It may be what comes first for many of us—a sense of doing what is right, following in the footsteps of others who already are faithful givers.

Then after practicing obedience, we may understand our giving in relation to the blessings we receive. This is giving out of gratitude. Of course, only when we are aware of God, will we learn to appreciate what we have been given. Giving out of gratitude is like paying back a debt. From those who are given much, much is expected.

The third reason for giving—giving out of love—is not because of God's commandment nor because of God's blessings. Giving out of love is self-initiated. It is simply because we are in love with God and God's Church. We can't help ourselves—we desire a relationship with God and with the community—it's a joyful thing! We love ...just because. It doesn't get any better than this.

One last Peanuts strip: Snoopy is dancing around as Lucy looks on. Lucy says, "You're not as happy as you think you are! Nobody could be that happy!" Snoopy thinks, "Perhaps she's right...On the other hand, maybe I've set a new record!" And off he goes to continue to dance! Nothing can stop Snoopy; he's in love with life! It's "the life that really is life." It doesn't get any better than this.