



Reflections

February 2015 - *The Gift of Friendship Love*

In the book, *The Four Loves*, C.S. Lewis makes a case for the importance of the love expressed between two friends, that differs from the romantic love of Eros or the Affection a parent feels for a child. He writes,

When either Affection or Eros is one's theme, one finds a prepared audience. The importance and beauty of both have been stressed and almost exaggerated again and again. Even those who would debunk them are in conscious reaction against this laudatory tradition and, to that extent, influenced by it. But very few modern people think Friendship a love of comparable value or even a love at all. I cannot remember that any poem since *In Memoriam*, or any novel, has celebrated it. Tristan and Isolde, Antony and Cleopatra, Romeo and Juliet, have innumerable counterparts in modern literature: David and Jonathan, Pylades and Orestes, Roland and Oliver, Amis and Amile, have not. To the Ancients, Friendship seemed the happiest and most fully human of all loves; the crown of life and the school of virtue. The modern world, in comparison, ignores it. We admit of course that besides a wife and family a man needs a few "friends." But the very tone of the admission, and the sort of acquaintanceships which those who make it would describe as "friendships," show clearly that what they are talking about has very little to do with that *Philia* which Aristotle classified among the virtues or that *Amicitia* on which Cicero wrote a book. It is something quite marginal; not a main course in life's banquet; a diversion; something that fills up the chinks of one's time. How has this come about?

The first and most obvious answer is that few value it because few experience it...Without Eros none of us would have been begotten and without Affection none of us would have been reared; but we can live and breed without Friendship...

Friendship arises out of mere Companionship when two or more of the companions discover that they have in common some insight or interest or even taste which the others do not share and which, till that moment, each believed to be his own unique treasure (or burden). The typical expression of opening Friendship would be something like, "What? You too? I thought I was the only one."...It is when two such persons discover one another, when, whether with immense difficulties and semi-articulate fumbings or with what would seem to us amazing and elliptical speed, they share their vision—it is then that Friendship is born. And instantly they stand together in an immense solitude.

Lovers seek for privacy. Friends find this solitude about them, this barrier between them and the herd, whether they want it or not. They would be glad to reduce it. The first two [friends] would be glad to find a third.¹

C.S. Lewis speaks about friendship from his own experience. He came to faith through the witness of friends and valued that Friendship Love throughout his life, making time to eat with and talk regularly with his friends. The gift of Friendship in our busy, sex- and work-obsessed, frenetic modern world may be a rare commodity yet true Friendship is worth praying for and pursuing.

"Jonathan said to David, 'Go in peace, for we have sworn friendship with each other in the name of the Lord, saying, 'The Lord is witness between you and me, and between your descendants and my descendants forever.'"

1 SAMUEL 20:42a (NIV)



¹ C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*, in *The Beloved Works of C.S. Lewis*. International Press: New York, 1984, pp. 244-248.