







greatest delight. You don't mind accepting love, care and generosity from them because you know it gives them pleasure. You can put up with a world and a life that is less than perfect because you have someone to share it all with and you can even grow closer in difficult times. There is all the difference in the world between a relationship of love and a relationship of obligation and many of us are far too easily tempted to sell ourselves short: to place other people in the position of our adjudicators, our judges rather than our friends.

When religion is a relationship of love between God and ourselves then it is not a burden but a delight. When we see the world, our work, our money, our friends, our lives as loving gifts of God to us then it comes naturally to us to share and care in our turn. When God is our best friend, our greatest source of comfort, strength and delight, then finding the time to come to church and the patience to put up with all the other members becomes so much easier. If the tenants in the vineyard had seen the landlord as their friend, they could have made the effort to get to know him, talk to him, share the problems and the joys of their work with him. They could have laughed and sung together at their work, shared out the proceeds gladly and generously, enjoyed themselves, rather than moaning and cheating, stealing and killing. At the end of the day, they were the victims in the story because they sold themselves short and there was no need to do that.

God has done everything he can to show us that he loves us, even to the extent of coming and living among us as Jesus Christ, bearing every pain and injustice we can think of, so as to be able to help us and save us when we need him. God has set the highest possible value on us. And, no matter what the complexities and confusions, the pains and the problems of life, there is no need for us to sell ourselves short. Amen.