

St Mikolas



The Spirit That Calls Forth and the Spirit That Covers

A Journal Reflection by St. Mikolas

Read. Reflect. Respond.

*The heart of God is not divided. He
both calls us higher and holds us
near. He both forms us and covers us.*

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The other day I had a small exchange on the street that stayed with me much longer than the moment itself. A young boy was kicking a soccer ball down the road, and in passing I said something lighthearted and encouraging to him - something like, "You keep doing that and you're going to get good." It was simple, almost playful, the kind of thing you say in motion without expecting it to linger. But the response that came back made me stop inwardly. The woman with him, who I believe may have been his grandmother, answered quickly, "Oh, he is good."

There was no hostility in it. No tension. No contradiction in the deepest sense. In truth, both comments were encouraging. Mine was aimed at the future - at what practice produces, at what a child may grow into if he keeps going. Hers was aimed at the present - at what already lives in him, at the dignity of who he already is. And something about that small exchange opened up a larger thought in me.

It made me think about the difference between calling something forward and protecting what is already there.

It made me think of fathers and mothers.

Not as rigid categories, and not in a way that flattens the beauty and variety of human love, because every good parent carries both strength and tenderness, both vision and protection. But still, there seemed to be something in that moment that revealed two deeply familiar movements of the heart.

One voice says, Keep going - you're becoming something.

The other says, See clearly - something is already here.

One speaks to growth.

The other speaks to identity.

One looks at the seed and imagines the tree.

The other looks at the seed and refuses to let anyone forget that life is already inside it.

And maybe what struck me most is that both voices belong in the kingdom of God.

The kingdom is not divided between who is right and who is wrong in moments like this. It is richer than that. It is the place where truth becomes whole. It is where becoming and belonging meet. It is where calling and covering are not enemies, but companions.

There is a kind of love that sees what someone can become and wants to summon it out of them. It encourages. It strengthens. It speaks toward the horizon. It sees repetition, discipline, growth, and the quiet miracle of time. It says, "Don't stop. Keep going. There is more in you than you know." This kind of love often sounds like the heart of a father - not because fathers alone possess it, but because it carries that steady, future-facing quality of building, forming, and calling upward.

Then there is another kind of love that sees the same person and says, "Slow down a moment. Before you tell him what he can become, make sure you recognize who he already is." This love protects dignity. It guards identity. It resists the idea that worth is always somewhere ahead. It says, "He does not have to prove himself to be precious. He does not have to arrive before he is seen." This kind of love often feels like the heart of a mother - not because mothers alone carry it, but because it bears that fierce, sheltering instinct that recognizes life and covers it.

Both are needed.

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Without the first, a child may never be called beyond comfort. He may never learn that growth matters, that discipline shapes him, that there is joy in becoming stronger, wiser, truer, more skillful, more formed. Without that kind of love, the future can stay unopened.

But without the second, a child may grow up believing that love is always ahead of him, always attached to progress, always waiting at the next achievement. He may begin to think he is only as valuable as his improvement. And that is a heavy burden for any soul to carry.

A healthy heart needs both voices.

You are becoming.

You already matter.

Keep going.

You are seen now.

There is more in you.

There is goodness in you already.

Maybe that is why the moment stayed with me. It was so small, but it revealed something large. It felt, in its own quiet way, like a glimpse into how heaven loves.

Because when I look at Jesus, I do not see Him choosing one of those voices and rejecting the other. I see Him holding both perfectly.

Jesus meets people where they are, but He never leaves them where they are. He sees fishermen and calls them deeper. He sees tax collectors and calls them out of old ways. He sees the fearful, the broken, the ashamed, and He does not reduce them to their present condition. He speaks into their future. He names what can be born, what can be restored, what can still awaken. In that way, there is a fatherly strength in the voice of Christ - one that calls sons and daughters into maturity, trust, courage, and transformation.

But Jesus also does something just as powerful: He reveals worth before performance. He honors people before they are polished. He speaks to the woman at the well before her life is cleaned up. He allows children near Him before they can offer anything back. He sees Zacchaeus in the tree before Zacchaeus has made restitution. He calls people beloved before they become impressive. In that way, there is also a deeply mothering tenderness in the life of God - something that covers, protects, receives, and says, "You are not invisible to Me. I see you now."

This makes me think, too, of Mary and Joseph.

Scripture does not give us every detail of their inner lives, but it is hard not to imagine that even in the home where Jesus was raised, there would have been these same holy movements of love. Mary, treasuring things in her heart, holding mystery close, bearing the hidden wonder of what had been entrusted to her. Joseph, steady and faithful, providing structure, protection, obedience, and quiet strength. Neither one complete without the other. Neither one enough alone. But together, a covering and a calling. A home where identity could be guarded and purpose could be nurtured.

And perhaps that is what all good love is trying to become.

Not merely correction.

Not merely affirmation.

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But the union of both.

We live in a world that often tears these things apart. Some people only know how to speak to potential. They are always pushing, always measuring growth, always seeing what is missing, always reaching for the next step. They may sincerely want the best for others, but if that is all a person hears, then life becomes exhausting. They begin to feel loved for what they might become, but not for who they are now.

Others only know how to protect and affirm in the present. They cover, reassure, and preserve, but sometimes without also calling forward what is still sleeping, underdeveloped, or waiting to be formed. If that is all a person hears, then he may feel safe, but not summoned.

The kingdom of God is deeper than either extreme.

In the kingdom, love does not flatter and it does not crush.

It reveals.

It says, "I see the image of God in you now, and because I see it, I will not stop calling you further into it."

That is what makes this little street moment so meaningful to me. I did not say anything wrong. She did not say anything wrong. In fact, maybe the beauty is that both voices met over the same child at the same time. One blessed his future. One defended his present. One spoke of growth. One spoke of goodness. And in a strange way, the child stood for a second inside both truths.

Maybe that is where we all long to live.

To be told the truth about who we already are in God.

And to be called courageously into all we can still become.

Maybe that is what grace feels like.

Not being excused from growth, but not being denied love while we grow.

Not having our future ignored, but not having our present worth postponed.

So perhaps the deeper lesson is not whether the moment belonged more to a father's heart or a mother's heart. Perhaps the deeper lesson is that the kingdom of God has room for both, and in its fullness, contains both. The heart of God is not divided. He both calls us higher and holds us near. He both forms us and covers us. He both says, "Follow Me," and "Do not be afraid."

And maybe the child kicking a soccer ball down the street needed both voices more than either adult realized.

One to say, "Keep at it - you're growing."

The other to say, "Never forget - you're already good."

That is not contradiction.

That is wholeness.

That is kingdom.

Love, St. Mikolas

Reflection & Response

Take a moment to sit with today's reading. Let these prompts lead you into prayer, gratitude, and honest reflection.

1. Where in your life do you sense God calling something forward?
 2. Where do you most need to remember that you are already seen and loved?
 3. Which voice do you hear more easily - striving or belonging? Why?
 4. How might God be inviting you to offer both truth and tenderness to someone this week?
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My Reflections

Prayer
