

Marianne's **Raggedy Ann Talk** (given on her Mission trip to Hungary, April, 2002)

Raggedy Ann Dolls have been around for a long time in the United States. I want to show you a pair of dolls that were made by my mother for my son and daughter. My Mom made a Raggedy Ann doll for me, and I can remember her making Raggedy Ann and Andy dolls for many children in the family who came along when I was growing up.

As you can see, this doll has been around for a while. She has stains on her face, her hair is coming out, and her stuffing is hard. She is no longer soft like the dolls we are making this weekend. The dolls we are making this weekend will be new, soft, clean and adorable. But unless you put your new doll in a glass case, it won't stay that way.

If you give your doll to your son, daughter or grandchild, he or she will be delighted. They will grab it, hug it, and won't want to give it back. They will probably grow to love the doll, and play with it and talk to it, and possibly bring it to bed at night.

Ever wonder why dolls are so popular? It's because they are a lot like us. They are made in our own image. They have arms and legs, and a head and hair. We like dolls. They are fun to play with. We can imagine them as our



friend. We can pretend that they love us. Dolls are good things to have, because they don't get angry with us. They do what we want them to do, and they go where we want them to go. All we have to do is to pick them up and take them with us. No arguments from the doll. No complaints. Only smiles.

Whenever I make a Raggedy Ann or Andy doll and show it to a friend, one of the first things my friend will do is check to see if I put the heart on the chest of the doll. The heart of this doll seems to be the most important part. Love is important to us. Love is something we all desire and need.

Of course it is easy to see that this doll is just a doll. We are taking a little cloth, stuffing thread and yarn, and are being very creative this weekend. The end result will be a doll, we hope. This doll will have a heart that says "I love you" but we all know that this doll has no capacity to love.

When I first found these dolls in a storage box, I picked them up and felt how flat and hard they were. I immediately thought I should fix them. I could take out the old stuffing, (*show stuffing*) and put some new in. I could try and clean up their face, (*demonstrate*

*with a rag*) and even make some new hair, (*show some yarn*) and I could sew her a new dress, or make her an apron which is missing. (*Have material handy*) I could re-create these dolls if I wanted to.

Then it occurred to me that these dolls hold a lesson for us. As my mother was the creator of this doll, we have creator as well in God. He created us in much the same way as we make these dolls.

Psalm 130:13-14 *For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother's womb I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Your works, and my soul knows it very well. He formed you and me. We are fearfully and wonderfully made. We are to be thankful for the way God has made us, because His works are wonderful.*

However, we do have problems, don't we? Like this doll, we are a mess. We are growing old, and sometimes our body hurts and even breaks or fails us in some way. We are dirty and stained by the sin in our lives. Unlike Raggedy Ann we don't offer even pretend love to our creator, nor are we gentle and kind to each other. Our hearts are hard, like the stuffing in this doll, but Christ has come to fix us up.

Unlike dolls, which have no capacity for love, our Maker made us with a capacity to love Him, to obey His commandments and to love others. To do otherwise is sin. I

could show you verse in the Bible that tell us that we have loved ourselves rather than the Creator, that we constantly fail to keep his commandments or love one another, but I probably don't need to for you know your own hearts. You will probably all agree with me that this doll has no life. Like I said before it is just a doll. It has no life. Before Christ comes into our lives, we are dead spiritually, dead in our sins.

Eph 2:1-3 describes our sorry state.

*And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.*

But as dirty and unloving as we know we are in our hearts, God still loves us, much as I still love this doll. Ezek chapter 36, verse 25 describes for us what God does with our hard heart. *"Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. God gives us a heart transplant. He removes the heart that is hard and cold towards him, and replaces it with a heart that loves him.*

Ephesians 2:4-7 continues: *But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*

Here we see that God has loved us with a great love. God's love is a perfect love. Even when we were dead in our sins he made us alive with Christ. How did he make us alive? He died on the cross and paid the penalty for our sin. God's love was not a pretend love - it was a sacrificial love. He demonstrated it by sending His perfect Son to pay the penalty for our sins. The Bible says no greater love can be shown than that which lays its own life down for another's. If there had been any other way God could have forgiven and saved us, would He have sent his beloved Son to the cross?

*Ephesians 2:8-10: For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.*

We also see that we are saved by grace. Grace is God's favor. Something we cannot earn or do not deserve. We see it is a gift. We have no power in ourselves to earn our salvation. We cannot repay Him for our salvation. If you give the doll you are making as a gift to a child, you don't want payment for it. It is a gift, and you expect nothing in return.

John 3:16 says: *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.*

This is our hope, a new life in Christ. This doll will never have life. This doll will never be able to love. It is just a thing. But Christ, who created us, can replace our cold hard heart. He loves us with a perfect love. A love so great that He gave His son to die on the cross that we might live with Him and for Him. All we need to do is to believe in Him, and He gives us eternal life. We can love Him and one another because of His love.

I could wash this doll and re-stuff it and even replace the sewn on heart - but I could not make this doll come to life. Nor could I make it love me on its own. That would take a miracle. Only God can do those things. And that is what He offers to do for you, to wash away and forgive your sin, cloth you in righteousness, and give you a living heart that loves Him in return. That too takes a miracle - the miracle of God's love offered now to you in Jesus Christ.