



Bluebell with rhododendron blossoms

## CLOTHED WITH LOVE

May 2017

*Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.*

Colossians 3:12-14

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When I lived with this picture for a while, I saw a message for me. It reminded me how love should be the most important part of who I am and how I live. To me, the whole photograph speaks of love. Do you see it?

Imagine this bluebell being a collection of all the virtues Paul talks about, compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience and forgiveness. The little blue bells do, after all, form a collection of many parts. The rhododendron, in an unusual way, bends down, gathering its blossoms around the smaller plant, binding everything together. It reminds me of the love Paul talks about.

Paul reminds the Colossians—and us too—of the new kind of person we became when we started following Christ. He lists the fruits of the spirit we received when we first trusted God. I remember well when it happened to me. I felt like I'd magically become a different person. My heart changed through no effort of my own.

Consider these fruits of the spirit, one at a time. Although they are a part of who we are, we need to work, with God's help, to keep them alive and healthy.

Imagine if the bluebells were standing on their own, without the rhododendron blossoms surrounding them. How lonely they would look! What is goodness if not accompanied by love? What would compassion and kindness be? When we gather God's love around us—our compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience—and when we share it with others, we receive it back many times over. God's love will surround us in as beautiful a way as these rhododendron blossoms surround the bluebells.

My prayer for you is that you too will feel yourself surrounded by God's love as you travel through this week.

marja