

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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SERIES

Stunning Love

PART

1

TITLE

Love Is Before Love Does

SCRIPTURE

1 Corinthians 13:1-13; 1 John 4:7-12



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Well, it's great to see you. For all of you who are new with us, guests, welcome. We're glad that you are here. If you're new or if you're here all the time, I pray this time is going to be really encouraging to you. I hope that it already has. I know the only thing you care right now is this red ball, so let me pray for us. Father in heaven, we thank you for your great love for each one of us that was perfectly displayed in Jesus Christ. We thank you that in a few moments we'll have the privilege to take the Lord's Supper, to remember and to proclaim what we believe is the greatest expression of love the world has ever seen. You've changed us because of Jesus. We confess to you that we need that change.

We look into the mirror, and we know that we need change. We look on news, Lord, news that we see throughout the entire world, and we know that all of humanity is in desperate need of change from within. We pray for those in Charlotte. We pray for, Lord, college students, for family members, for friends of loved ones who were lost. Many people I know are terrified right now, not just in Charlotte but around the world. We pray for your grace. God, please pour out your grace upon our lives. We thank you for Jesus and pray that as we open up your word, as we read a passage, as we start a new series on love, God, that it would literally transform us from the inside out.

Would you do a miracle? Would you speak through weakness in my tongue? Would you also do a miracle and, God, would you pierce through all of the distraction, all of the weakness, all of the insecurity, all the frailness, everything that we all brought into this room that would keep us from being interested in what you have for us? I pray, Father, that you would knock down all of those things and help us to see the importance of Jesus in our life, bearing fruit of love through our life for the good of others and for the glory of your Son. We pray all of this in his perfect name. Amen. In your Bible, I would love for you to turn with me 1 Corinthians chapter 13. Over the next two months, we'll actually be in this same chapter. We're going to look at each of the traits that we see in verses four through seven one at a time marching through what love actually is.

Today, I want to start by setting the context of what's happening in the entire chapter and even in the book at large. Let me ask you something though as we get started. It's this. If you had the opportunity to move the needle in just one area, if Providence or a church or you personally could actually be known for just one thing and you believed that that one thing would most glorify Jesus Christ and it would most help people, it would most help your family, it would most help the world to see Jesus, what one thing would you choose? As a pastor, I hear a lot of things, "If we could just do music like this, then this would happen. If you could just preach this well, then this would happen. If we had a bigger room, then this would happen." We all have something that we think if we could just move the needle in that one area, things would change. Jesus would be glorified. It would be amazing.

What's interesting is, all of us, we have an answer, including Jesus. When Jesus was on the earth, he said, "By this all people will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another." It's beautiful. He doesn't say facilities. He doesn't say sermons. He doesn't say music. He doesn't say methods. He doesn't say fish symbols or crosses. He says love. Jesus is the greatest who's ever walked the earth. He's the greatest who's ever loved on the earth, and he's called his followers to distinguish themselves by the way that they have love for one another. We have a problem that's illustrated with this beautiful red ball. That is that our nature, our human nature without God's intervention within us is very much like a rubber ball. That is that we can exert force upon it, change it for a time, but eventually we get tired, we release, and our nature returns to its exact shape.

We can come, and we can come to a sermon like this and go, "Okay. Love is patient, so today I am going to be so patient. I'm going to wait in traffic circles. I'm going to do all these kinds of things. I'm going to be so patient." All of a sudden, we get tired, and we let go. Now we're impatient. We learn that love is kind, so we're going to say, "You know, I'm going to be so kind. I'm not going to be rude. It says it's not irritable. It's not rude. I'm not going to be like that today. I'm just going to white-knuckle it. I'm going to change my human nature. This is going to happen." All of a sudden, we get tired, and we keep reverting back to what it feels like we've been our whole life. Something happens, which is really interesting. That is that we tend to improvise. We recognize that we have a problem. That is that we can not change our human nature. We can't change the inclinations of our heart, the "I want these things" kinds of things that bubble out of our heart.

You know what we do is we improvise. We improvise a spirituality that's frankly easier to control. We say, "If I can't do it like this and impress people by the way that I treat people, then you know what I'm going to do? I'm going to go to school, and they're going to be amazed at how much theology I know. I'm going to make all kinds of legalistic rules, and I'm going to hold myself to them, and I'm going to hold other people to them. People are going to go, 'Wow. Look how moral. Look how disciplined. Look how much self-control that person has.'" Sometimes it's roles within the church of, "I am going to be a deacon. I'm going to be a pastor. I'm going to be a life group teacher. I'm going to serve in this way. I'm going to memorize this many verses. I'm going to read this much Bible. I'm going to be here this many days. I'm going to accumulate this many gold stars," all these sorts of things that we do that improvise spiritual power when Jesus says, "If you want to know what I want, it's love."

We have such a hard time with love that we improvise, but this is what happens. Every time we improvise with spirituality by finding something that's easier to control, what we do is we leave love in the dust, which confuses the watching world. It creates Sunday school teachers who know a lot of things, but they're abrasive. It creates children who they go to church and they see where mom and dad serve in their roles, and then they yell at them all the way home. There's so many people who look and, "I'm confused. This person who I respect, they know a lot. They're really moral. They're respected by everybody who says that they love and know this Jesus thing, and yet they don't love. They're not patient. They're not kind. They're rude. They're irritable." This is our problem. We are all in this place.

Our knowledge always outpaces our love, which is why we desperately need supernatural intervention. That is why he talks to this church in Corinth about love. I need an exit plan for this ball, so there you go. This is what he says, “If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth.

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”

We’re going to look at verses four through seven in the coming weeks, but I want to give you the context, and I want to talk about three things that we learn here in this chapter about love. The first is that love is supremely important. It is supremely important. There has never been a more poetic, beautiful, pleasant rebuke ever written or recorded in literature than 1 Corinthians 13. It’s so beautiful that we read this rebuke in weddings. It’s the only Biblical rebuke that we read in a wedding and are inspired by it. It’s amazing. It’s the only Biblical rebuke we cross stitch into our pillows and put on our coffee mugs. It’s remarkable. You see, this list of attributes of love was everything the church in Corinth wasn’t. That’s what we read within the book. You see, the city of Corinth was sort of like the Las Vegas of the ancient world. It was full of vice, full of immorality and idolatry.

What was also interesting was, in some ways, it was also like Raleigh. It was an urban center of great economic potential. It was a city of commerce and the arts and entertainment. It attracted ambitious and talented people. Young professionals flocked to Corinth in order to make a name for themselves, in order to create a world for their family. It was a place of opportunity. Paul comes into this city called Corinth, and he preaches the gospel there. They’ve never heard of Jesus Christ, and he preaches that they can be forgiven of their sin. Many of these young professionals, these talented, ambitious people, they trust Jesus Christ sincerely. They are forgiven of their sin. Then, Paul is so compelled that other people who’ve never heard about the gospel will hear that he leaves Corinth. When he leaves Corinth, these people, they get tired of compressing the rubber ball of their human nature, and so they begin to improvise with counterfeits.

They say to each other, “I know I’m a hot mess, but I’m gifted and ambitious, and so back up and let me teach. Back up and let me lead.” Everything that they were so good at that made them successful outside the church they simply brought into the church. The church became this really, really problematic place. In fact, most of the letters that Paul writes in the New Testament, ordinarily, he will start and say, “You know, I just heard so many great things. I’ve heard you’re loving really well, and you’re believing in Christ. Here’s a few things that you should think about. Here’s a few things about Jesus, but great job. I’m proud of you. I can’t wait to see you.” Not Corinth. Corinth, he just starts and he goes, “I praise God for grace because if not grace, you guys are just a hot mess.” That’s what he says. He says, “You’re a disaster when it comes to everything that God wants to see now worked out in your life and through your life as a people of God.”

He doesn’t say that they’re not Christians. He says that these believers have lost their way because they’ve improvised power in other places. He starts saying in the first four chapters, he goes, “You’re so contentious that you’ve formed all these factions over your favorite teacher.” He says, “You’re like Washington, DC within the church. You’re rooting for your life group, which means that I want all the rest of them to fall so that ours looks great.” He goes into chapter five, and he goes, “Not only are you immoral as a people, but you actually celebrate the immorality of one of your brothers within the church.” You get to chapter six, and he says, “And you’re suing each other without cause.” Chapter seven, he says, “You’re divorcing your spouses without Biblical cause.”

He gets to chapter eight, nine, and 10, and you know what he says there? He says, “All of us, we all enjoy this Christian liberty, and yet you look at your Christian liberty and you look at the conscience of other people, and you say, ‘I don’t care if this violates your conscience. You got to deal with it because I’m doing it because I’m free.’” He expresses to them that they’re chauvinistic, that they’re racist, that they’re proud, that they’re selfish. He even says in chapter 11, he says some people get to the church early on the times when they’re going to have the Lord’s Supper, and they eat it all and drink it all before the rest of the people can come. I mean, that is a mess. Then, he gets to chapter 12. This is where chapter 13 really fits in. 12, 13, and 14 is sort of one section.

He talks about spiritual gifts. He says, “You know what? God has gifted you, every single believer, with a specific gift. We’re like a body,” so he uses this metaphor of a body. He says it’s sort of like we have eyes, and so this gift is like the eyes. Some people are the feet, and some people are the hand. Some people are the back. Some people are the mouth and the ears. All together, we form this one amazing body, but they had a problem. They started saying, “You know what? I want that gift.” It says in chapter 12 verse 15, he says, “Look, if the foot should say, ‘Because I’m not a hand, I do not belong to the body,’ that would not make it any less a part of the body.” What’s happening?

Some people are saying, “You know what? Around this place, the people that get the most applause are the people that get to speak from the stage, but I don’t have that gift, and so I want that gift. I don’t like my gift. I want that gift.” Then, there were some people in the church that say, “You know what? Your gift isn’t so important. These are the important gifts.” He says in verse 21, “The eye can not say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you,’ nor again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you.’” They start separating in their contentious little factions even over their spiritual gifts, saying, “These are the important ones, and those are not the important ones because we’re the ambitious, talented people.”

Paul unloads, and this is really what he says. Listen to me. When our spirituality is merely external, what happens is we become like a house of cards. If you’ve ever built a house of cards, what you do first is you get defensive. Someone walks in the room, and you’re like, “Don’t breathe. Don’t blow on this. Don’t touch it. Don’t move the carpet, nothing. Don’t touch anything.” Then what happens is if it knocks down, you blame somebody else. This is what we do with our life. When our spirituality is merely external, our whole life, our character, it’s like a house of cards that we get really defensive, we get really angry with people all the time. We blame everybody for all of our own problems that actually reside within. We start saying, “You made me impatient,” instead of, “You simply reveal the impatience that resides within my heart.” He comes to the end of chapter 12, and he says, “Look. Let me show you a more excellent way.” He goes, “Let’s talk about these gifts.”

I’m going to put myself in this position. He keeps saying, “If I, if I, if I.” He starts, and he goes, “Look, if I could speak in all the tongues of men and angels.” Now, the tongues, in particular, this time, he’s just talked about speaking in tongues. Acts chapter two, “And God, in his grace, poured out the Holy Spirit.” These people who did not know other languages, they start speaking those other languages. They were people in the city all gathered for this enormous celebration, and people from other places, other languages say, “How can these Galileans speak our language even though they’ve never been to school?” God miraculously gave them the ability to speak languages so that other people could hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is what Paul says. He goes, “If I could stand on stage and I knew every single language in the world miraculously, indeed, even angel talk, but if I have not love in my heart,” he goes, “I’m just noisy.”

Then he goes on, and he puts three in one, prophesy, knowledge, and faith. Prophesy, in the New Testament, prophesy is the ability to look into the word of God, glean insight from it, teach it in a compelling way that other people can understand it, believe it, and act upon it. He says, “If I become the greatest of preachers.” Then, he talks about knowledge. He goes, “If I have the ability to actually understand all knowledge, all mysteries.” In other words, “If I, Paul, were sort of like the wise man of the church and I sat over on the side with a big rock, and I just kind of sat cross-legged, and you just came to me with all your problems, say, ‘Hey, this is what I got. This is what’s going on.’ ‘You need to do this,’ and it was always the right thing because I was omniscient, if I had all omniscience, understanding of all mysteries.” Indeed, he even says all faith to move mountains.

Now, what is this? This isn't just faith to be able to pray. This is faith to be able to move people. This is visionary faith. It's lending kind of faith. It's actually a leadership gift. It's where you say when somebody has the ability, they're so compelling and charismatic that says, "This is where we're going everybody," and everyone goes, "Wow. That looks really amazing. I don't have enough faith, but I can borrow some of his faith or some of her faith right now." It's a lending kind of faith. You have so much of it you can lend it to others until they have enough faith of their own as they begin the journey with you. This is what he's saying. He goes, "If I personally am the greatest preacher in the world, if I was omniscient, and I had perfect leader capacity, but if I do not have love," he says, "I am nothing."

Then he says, "If I take everything that I own and I give it away to the poor, ultimate virtue, ultimate sacrifice, ultimate generosity of my physical things." Then, he even adds to it. He goes, "I'll tell you what. If I became so convinced of my faith that I'd be willing to be burned at the stake for it, ultimate sacrifice," he goes, "but if I have not love within my heart," he says, "I gain nothing from all of it." In other words, this is what he's saying. Talent in the hand is not the same as grace in the heart. Talent in the hand is normally the thing that we look at and we go, "Wow. I want to attribute glory and power to that. That's amazing." Grace in the heart is precisely the thing that your kids most need to see in you. It's the thing that your spouse needs to see in you. It's the thing that your church needs. It's the thing that Raleigh needs from us. They don't need to look at Providence and go, "Wow. What a bunch of talented people."

They need to look and say, "What an amazing people that are marked by love because of something that they are not on their own." See, Jesus said in John 15:5, he says, "I'm the vine, and you're the branches. Whoever abides in me and in him, he it is that bears much fruit." This is Christianity. This is why I always say everything we talk about, it always starts in the heart, not with your hands. It always starts in the heart if it's Christian. We connect to Jesus Christ, and the sap of the Holy Spirit runs up through that vine into the branches. Suddenly, we bear this fruit in order to glorify him. What is the fruit? Fruit of the Holy Spirit is love. The first one is love, and joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control, but it all begins with love. Love is the supreme evidence of Jesus in us. That's why it is so supremely important. Love.

Second, we learn here is this. Love is supremely unselfish. Enormous transition that takes place in the life, in the soul of somebody who is filled with the Holy Spirit. He says, "When I was a child, I spoke and thought and reasoned like a child." Have you ever heard a child speak, a little child? They say me, mine. It's not fair. It's very self-oriented, isn't it? In fact, when you look at this picture, all of us, we have these things. We're at a park. We got a friend. We got ice cream. It's in our hand. Somebody else wants that ice cream. We're like, "What are you doing?" It's only natural. Now, let me ask you something. What has to happen in the heart to move from this picture to this next picture? It's grace, grace in the heart. Now, it's interesting. This happened in all three services. Every time we move that picture, people go, "Aww." Do you know why? It's because love is stunning. It's noticeable. It's compelling. It's creative. It's eye opening.

In a dark world, love is very bright. It makes you go, “Wow. That’s different.” Most kids, they say, “No, that’s my ice cream,” as opposed to sharing their ice cream. You see, over the coming weeks, we’re going to look at this trait, each of these traits. Just notice how each one of these is fundamentally unselfish. That’s why he says, “But when I became an adult, I put childish ways behind me.” He says love is patient. What’s patience? Patience just says, “You want to move this fast. I want to move faster. Instead of making you move, I’m going to wait.” That’s unselfish. He says love doesn’t envy. That’s another one of these characteristics. Envy says, “You have something that I really wish that I had.” A lack of envy says, “Not only am I really glad you have it, but I want to give you something that I have so that you can enjoy what you have even more.”

All of these characteristics, they’re marked by unselfishness. He says it doesn’t insist on its own way. You have a way. I have a way. Let’s do your way. This is a radical shift from a view of love that we find within our culture that says me first, a view in culture that actually says so long as you validate my worth by making me a feel a certain way, then I’m going to declare that I love you. This is how we do it. We start feeling a certain way, and we go, “You know what? I just love you so much. Now don’t you make me lose my loving feeling.” Right? We place our love and make it contingent upon someone else’s performance. That’s selfish love. I’m the point. You’re the means. The Bible turns all of this... In our culture, the words, “I love you,” they normally mean, this is what most people mean, is, “I love me, and I want you. You make me feel a certain way. You do something for me.” The shift moves from me first to you first.

John 15:13, “Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.” How many of you have heard the name Riley Howell? Raise your hand. Riley Howell, have you heard his name? How many of you knew or have heard Riley Howell’s name last week? Two weeks ago? Anyone heard Riley Howell two weeks ago? No. Why? Riley Howell, if you’re like, “I still haven’t heard about him.” Riley Howell was a college student down at Charlotte that charged the gunner, jumped on him to tackle him, and he died. He did so to try to save his friends, to protect. He gave up his life. He loved his friends so much that he wanted to protect them. He sacrificed himself.

Love is stunning. Everyone’s talking about it. It’s all over the news, Riley Howell, and it should be. Matter of fact is most of us are not going to give our life for somebody because we’re not going to need to, but we’re frequently asked to give our ice cream. Whether you’re asked to give your life or your ice cream or whatever it is, your time, your talent, your treasure, whatever it is, you have to understand that all of these expressions of genuine Biblical sacrificial love, unselfish love, they’re all embodied perfectly in the person of Jesus. The Bible tells us this about his love and what our love is supposed to be. It says, “Be imitators of God and walk in love as Christ loved us and gave himself for us.”

That's sacrificial love. The perfect one in heaven came to this earth, and he lived without sin. Yet, he died for ours. He rose from the dead, and he says, "If you'll believe in me, not only will I forgive you of your sin and give you my righteousness, but I'll bring you into my family, fill you with the Spirit so that you can live a different kind of life, so that you can be marked by love." This is the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Christian love is so stunning because it says, "You first, not me." It says, "I'll sacrifice my desires for your desires." It says, "I'm going to find my joy in peace and your joy in peace." We know here that love is supremely important and supremely unselfish.

The last thing is it's supremely durable. It's durable. Verse eight, he says love never ends. Some of your Bible translations says love never fails. It literally means love does not lose its tread. It doesn't lose its petals like a rose. Now, listen to me. This is so important you hear this because some of you say, "Love always wins." No, it doesn't. That's not what this means. The fact that love never fails does not mean that love always wins because, in this world, our love can be met with a spouse's infidelity. Our love can be met with a child's rebellion. Our love can be met with a friend's betrayal. How do we know this? Look at Jesus. The night that he was betrayed by Judas, he washed his feet. You know what John's gospel says was taking place in that moment before he washed his feet? John 13:1 says, "Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end."

Then, it says he took off his garment, and he got down on his hands and knees, and he washes each of the disciples' feet. Jesus's love was met by a friend's betrayal. Paul was not saying that love can not be rejected. He's saying that a changed heart will find a way to keep loving. It's like a spring. Water finds its way out. You put a rock on it, water finds its way out. You put another rock on it, water finds its way out. If love is within the heart, it finds its way out even if it's met with a lack of love by people who are responding to it. We keep loving. To make this point, he contrasts love to things that will cease over time. Did you notice? He starts with three different of the gifts. He says prophecy, tongues, knowledge, they're all going to stop. You know why? Because in heaven, we don't need preachers.

No one's going to ask me to teach anything in heaven. There's Jesus. Lesson, thank you. Class is over. That's it. It's Jesus. That's not needed. You know what else is not needed in heaven? Faith. Faith is not needed in heaven. Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. We're going to see it all. He says right now we look through a glass dimly but not then. We're going to see it all. Hope is the expression of our life when we're anticipating, but heaven will be a complete fulfillment. Do you know what's going to last forever and ever and ever in heaven? Love. It's going to be durable. Forever, we will love. You know what's amazing? I'm like, literally, once we get to heaven, you will never have to make a decision to be patient. It will be the perfect inclination of your heart and kind. All that love is, it's going to happen perfectly forever. It's going to be so good.

What do we do with this before we take the supper? First is this. Let's search our heart for love in the presence of so many counterfeits of spirituality like theology and seminary degrees and legalism and moralism and in the presence of the fact that each of us are skilled deceivers. You say, "That's a harsh thing to say." This is what I mean by that. Okay? I'm not saying that you're a liar. I'm saying we're all liars. Every single one of us, every one of us, we give an impression to other people that's not the full truth. No one says, "This is everything I've ever thought." We tend to hide things. Here's the reality. In the presence of so many false counterfeits of spirituality and the fact that we are not an open book before every single person, the one person we must be an open book before is ourselves. Search your heart for love. Is it there? Do you see it there? Because it's so easy to fake it.

Do you remember Judas? Jesus and the 12 merry men, they needed someone to hold the money, a treasurer. Do you know who those disciples picked? Judas. They said, "Who among all of us do we trust the most with the money?" They said Judas should keep it. They get to the very last night when he's going to betray Jesus, they're having the Lord's Supper, the very first one, and he says, "One of you is going to betray me tonight." They don't all instinctively go, "I know it's Judas." They all said, "Well, who?" They had no clue because our heart can be so camouflaged, which is why Jesus says in Matthew chapter seven, he says, "On that last day, many people will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' Then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you.'" In other words, "You danced so close, but we had no friendship. You didn't love me."

Ask yourself. This is so important. Eternity is too long to get this wrong. Do you have love in your heart for Jesus Christ? You say, "Well, how would I know?" Love is patient. Are you patient with Jesus? Do you blame his timing? When your life doesn't happen the way you want it to, at the pace, things aren't happening the way, do you say, "God, I don't understand what you're doing. I can't stand your plan," or is there just a friendship? You see, Jesus is not idea. He's a person. You can spurn ideas. Do you love him? Are you patient with him? Are you kind to him? He says it delights in the truth. Do you know what that means? It means that we love to talk about what we love. Some of you just won't stop talking about your football team. You know why? Because you love it. There's nothing wrong with that.

Let me ask you something. Does anyone know you love Jesus? That's one of the evidences of our love for him. Do we love to talk about him? We have to ask ourselves, "Is love in me?" This is so important today. You should ask yourself, "Is there evidences of love?" Let me just say, as a pastor, I am so grateful that the greatest expressions of love that these eyes have ever seen outside of my physical home with my parents and my wife I see here. I'm so grateful that I see so much love in you, imperfect but persistent. Second thing is this. After we search our heart, let's pray for it. Let's ask God, "God, we need to love more. Give us love." If it's so vital, we should ask for it.

Paul prayed for it. Philippians 1:9, he says, “It is my prayer that your love may abound more and more with knowledge and all discernment.” Do you know what I pray for you every time I speak? 1 Timothy 1:5, “The goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.” You know what this means? Sometimes I don’t preach a series on love, do I? Sometimes it’s a good conscience. Sometimes it’s a pure heart. Sometimes it’s the attributes of God so that you have a clean, good faith. No matter what we’re talking about, what I’m saying is, God, whatever it is, your theology, my theology, is only as good as it helps us love him and others. God, help them love.

I would ask you to pray for me, love for your pastors, your leaders, your husband, your wife. Pray for love. Pray for me, that my love would be deeper, that my skill and my humility would be greater than my platform. Last is this. Let’s search for love. Let’s pray for love. Last is let’s draw near to Jesus. The sermon title is Love Is Before Love Does, which I know was kind of a weird title. We naturally think, “Okay. I hear love. I see love. I’m going to go do love.” Before you do love, you must meet love. That’s why he personifies it. It’s a person he’s talking about here. We must know the person of love before we can love. You notice the first base is not doing love. It’s having love. That’s why he keeps saying, “If I have not love, if I have not love, if I have not love.”

Have you ever seen a lawyer’s bookshelf? It looks like this. There’s just books everywhere, all these laws. Do you know why we have this many laws in America? It’s because we can’t keep 12 written on stone. Do you know why God needed to give us 12 written on stone? Because Jesus said because we couldn’t keep two. A lawyer came up one day to Jesus and says, “What’s the most important commandment?” He says, “Love the Lord your God with all of your heart, soul, mind, and strength. This is the first and greatest commandment. The second is like it. Love your neighbor as yourself.” Then he says this, “On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets.” You know what that means? We wouldn’t need the 10 commandments, we wouldn’t need the law of Moses, we wouldn’t need most of the Old Testament if we simply loved God and each other. That’s it, love.

How do we love? We learn to love by being loved. It’s the only way. We’re a little baby, we don’t look up and go, “Mom, I love you.” No, mom picks us up, and she loves. Dad loves. Yet, mom’s love and dad’s love is imperfect, so we need a perfect love. Whose is that? That’s Jesus. 1 John four says, “God is love, and we love because he first loved us.” See, what you see here in verses four through seven is a portrait of Jesus. Take love out and put Jesus in. Jesus is patient. Jesus is kind. Jesus is not rude. Jesus is not irritable. Jesus forgives. It’s Jesus. He’s kind. He looked at a thief, and he says, “Today you will be with me in paradise.” He keeps no record of wrongs.

He looks, and he says, "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they're doing." You know, Jesus has two kinds of attributes. I'm going to finish here. He has attributes that we call in theology incommunicable, which means we can't catch them, things like omnipresence. He's omnipresent. There's people worshiping him in Africa and here, and he's with them both. You can't, I can't do that. We're not going to catch that with growth. There's also communicable attributes. That's what he's talking about here. Patience is a communicable attribute. We talk about a disease that is communicable. What does that mean? It means it can be caught. How is it caught? It's caught by proximity.

Here's the point. If any of this you get inspired to love, don't run out of here and say, "Okay. I'm going to work hard to love." Run out of here and say, "I must draw close to Jesus," because the closer you get to him, the closer his love spreads over you like a disease, takes every part of you, begins in the heart, and moves out to where you can see it in physical effects of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness. God has given us the Lord's Supper to be able to remember the greatest expression of love. We're going to do that now. For those that will be serving us, if you want to head to the back. For those of us who will be waiting to be served, let me encourage you with the words that the New Testament gives to us. It's this. He says to each one of us that when we take the Lord's Supper, we're supposed to remember what Jesus has done and we're supposed to proclaim to each other that we believe what Jesus has done.

If you're here today and you've never trusted Christ as your Savior and Lord, we would love to help you to do that after we're done, but the Bible actually instructs us to invite you to let these things pass because to take them is to treasure them. It's to say, "I believe in Jesus." If you don't, just let it pass today. If you know Christ as Savior and Lord, we welcome you to this table. Let me just invite you as things are being passed to search your heart and ask God to do so so that you can take it with a clear conscience as you confess your sin to him. Let me pray for us. Father in heaven, we love you and we thank you that you have shown us how to love. We confess to you that our love is imperfect. We get tired so quick. I pray that you would help us right now to remember the depth of your love for us, a love that is so durable. It will never, ever cease. We love you. Would you search our hearts now? We pray this in Christ's name. Amen.



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