

# Love

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Preacher: Pastor Tom Kraft

[ 0 : 00 ] Thank you.

Hallelujah, Hallelujah Couple came to Bethlehem, inspecting child, researched the inn To find a place for you were coming soon There was no room for them to stay So in a manger filled with hay God's Son was born Oh, Hallelujah Hallelujah, Hallelujah Hallelujah, Hallelujah The shepherds left their flocks by night

To see this baby wrapped in light A host of angels led them all to you It was just as the angels said You'll find Him in a manger bed Emmanuel and the Savior Hallelujah, Hallelujah Hallelujah, Hallelujah I know you came to rescue me This baby boy would grow to be A man one day he'd die for me and you

My sins would dry the nails in you The ragged cross was my cross too Still every breath you drew was hallelujah Hallelujah, hallelujah Hallelujah, hallelujah Hallelujah, hallelujah Hallelujah, hallelujah Hallelujah, hallelujah

We're going to sing a couple songs while we're waiting for everybody else to get here I know the bus from the Bills game is just arriving It should be in the parking lot in another five minutes So we can start service on time But we're going to go ahead and start out by singing some songs to get ourselves Oh, kind of in the mood to worship God This one's called My Soul Magnifies the Lord Good news of great joy For everyone and every man History of signing you A big morning breath for hands Come and worship Do not be afraid A company of nations Glory in the highest And earth peace alone

[ 4 : 55 ] Those who disillusioned His favor ends Come and worship Come and worship Do not be afraid No, no My soul, my soul Magnifies the Lord My soul Magnifies the Lord He has done great things for me Great things for me Great things for me Great things for me Great things for me Great things for me Great things for me Until you a child is born When trust the Son is being And every heart prepare his throne In every nation under heaven God and worship It's like you And every day Who has been So long and worship Do not be afraid My soul, my soul

Magnifies the Lord My soul Magnifies the Lord He has done great things for me Great things for me Great things for me God and that's God Has done great things for me Great things for me God is gone, and we know it is that we sing with his righteousness, and he shall be in his own, and his name shall be from this day.

Wonderful Counselor Everlasting Father Wonderful Counselor Everlasting Father My soul, my soul Magnifies the Lord My soul, magnifies the Lord He has done great things to me Great things for me My soul, my soul, magnifies the Lord My soul, magnifies the Lord

He has done great things to me Great things for me But will we hold this solid night A king has born in Bethlehem Our journey long we seek the light That leads to the autumn major town What joy we felt in the silent age For a hundred years can he be found What hope and pride of baby's cry Rejoice in the love of the Lord Emmanuel Heavenly Fatherentee in the flood of the Lord

All Eg Michener God, I am His servant He has led to Nimient His servant, He is the Lord Emmanuel The Holy War Emmanuel Rejoice in His servant Emmanuel Emmanuel Emmanuel to dwell, Emmanuel, Emmanuel.

[ 9 : 01 ] Praise his name, Emmanuel. Emmanuel.

Son of God, we appointed thee, a crown of thorns with pierce his brow, and we have his offering.

Exalted now, the King of kings, praise God for the hallowed nature crown. Emmanuel, Emmanuel.

God incarnate, here to dwell, Emmanuel, Emmanuel.

Praise his name, Emmanuel. Praise his name, Emmanuel.

[ 10 : 14 ] Praise his name, Emmanuel. Please, O Lord. Let me have my come to you, Emmanuel.

On the phe riktör. If y'all raised His spernt, lha choose my Christ' worldC bodies.

everybody if there was a day that the Lord would make it would be today as we are here to celebrate his birthday so this is the day that the Lord has made we will rejoice and be glad that any kids would like to come up and sing the welcome come on up and join us this is the day that the Lord has made let us rejoice and be glad in it this is the day that the Lord has made let us rejoice and be glad in it this is the day good evening welcome to Pendleton Center and our annual Christmas Eve service if you are new to our service please pick up a welcome packet that you can find the back of the sanctuary at the connection site and for everyone we would like for you to fill out a friendship card if you would like to receive our newsletter be sure to fill in your address on the back you can put down prayer concerns blessings or notes to the staff so may you feel the warmth of Christmas and the love of family and friends during this special time thank you for coming and Merry Christmas two announcements to make one is that tomorrow morning if you're coming back for church we have one service at 10 o'clock and next week for New Year's weekend we have a service on New Year's Eve at 5 o'clock but then on New Year's day we've got two services 930 and 1115 you eight 15 people we just don't figure anybody's getting up so we will we will be back to our regular schedule the week after that if you want to take your poinsettias by the way tonight you're going to get your we're absolutely welcome and encouraged to take them but please take the ones that have the green foil the red foil the red foil that's what I said the red foil because these gold ones back here they're not real so don't take those okay because if you do then you're going to be disappointed and we're going to go what happened to our fake ones they're all gone you know okay so take the ones with the red tin foil let's turn to the Lord in prayer shall we dear God we have to take the red tin foil we thank you for the blessings you give to us for bringing us to this place and we just pray now that you'll pour your spirit into the into our hearts into our worship that in all that we do and all that we're about we might honor you and be a blessing before you because it's in Jesus name that we've got amen

I'd like to invite the Patterson family forward as we light our advent candles this evening hear these words from the gospel of Luke chapter 2 verses 1 through 7 in those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world this was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria and everyone went to their own town to register so Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea to Bethlehem the town of David because he belonged to the house and line of David he went there to register with Mary who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child while they were there the time came for the baby to be born and she gave birth to her firstborn a son she wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger because there was no guest room available for them this is the word of the Lord thanks be to God

I'd like to invite you if you're able to stand as we're going to sing together angels we have heard on high here in the insights value to Jesus the first time Jesus Jesus Jesus Jesus Jesus Jesus Jesus Jesus Jesus Angels we have heard on high Sweetly singing o'er the plains And the mountains in reply

- [ 15 : 49 ] Echoing their joyous friends Gloria in excelsis Deo Gloria in excelsis Deo Gloria in excelsis Deo Shepherds, why this jubilee While your joyous strains prolong What the gladsome tidings be Which inspire your heavenly song Gloria in excelsis Deo
- Gloria in excelsis Deo Gloria in excelsis Deo Gloria ant ■■■■ Network GI dumping my King.
- Gloria in excelsis Deo. Gloria in excelsis Deo.
- See Him in a major late, whom the choirs of angels praise. Mary Joseph lent your aid while our hearts in love we raise.
- Gloria in excelsis Deo. Gloria in excelsis Deo.
- [ 18 : 29 ] Gloria in excelsis Deo. Gloria in excelsis Deo.
- Gloria in excelsis Deo. Take a moment if you're willing for your mate with the peace of the spirit. While the kids come up and put an ornament on the tree or just come up and join me if they'd like to.
- The kids can come up and put something on the tree. Come up and sit with me if you want to. Come on over here when you're done, guys.
- How are you doing tonight? That's good. They're busy putting them on the tree, aren't they?
- Come on up here when you're done, guys. Come on over. Any other kids want to come up? They're welcome to join me. Do you have any idea what tomorrow's going to be? Christmas? Really? Tomorrow?
- [ 20 : 03 ] Yeah, it is Christmas Eve. It is Christmas Eve, isn't it? So, yeah, so tomorrow, like, there's a whole bunch of presents, right? Yeah, so what kind of presents did you get for Jesus tomorrow?
- Yeah? Well, I mean, because tomorrow's Jesus' birthday, right? You got a candy machine? Yeah, it's Jesus' birthday tomorrow, so you went out and bought him a real nice gift, right?
- Yeah? It's your mom's birthday, too? Yeah, that's cool. I guess. Kind of grummy when you're a kid. Yeah, you know what?
- You're not supposed to give gifts to Jesus on his birthday. You know why? Because he doesn't need any of your gifts. Well, yeah, but he's alive again, which is good.
- Yeah. It's confusing, isn't it? Maybe I should talk about that later. Yeah. Yeah. Kids got Easter down already. We're moving on here.
- [ 21 : 18 ] All right. So here's the thing. Giving him a gift would be kind of, he can, like, make anything he wants because he's Jesus, right? Right? So what you could do is this. And here's what I've got an idea for you.
- Tomorrow, before you open your gifts, the best gift you could give would just be, say, happy birthday to Jesus. You think he could do that? And you know what? Your mom and dad would go, cool. They actually heard Pastor Don.
- Yeah. Because it's all you, you don't have to, like, make it a big deal. Just say, happy birthday, Jesus. Okay, let's rip open the gifts, right? You know? And then he would be happy. Because that means he remembered him on his birthday.
- Because we always like to be remembered on our birthday, right? Okay. I see you guys got candles. We're going to light candles up later, okay? So you're going to go out for a movie or something like that. And then you've got to come back in and join us for the candle lighting, all right?
- But before we do that, do you want to share what you're thankful for tonight? Anybody want to share something? Raise your hand. My family and friends.

[ 22 : 23 ] I'm thankful for my mama. Good. Good. Good. I'm thankful for my whole family, my friends, and my dog.

I love Jesus. Jesus. Family and friends. Okay, anybody else? All right, let's pray. Lord, we thank you for tonight.

We pray that you'll help us to sleep real well and be real good. And have wonderful presents tomorrow. And remember that tomorrow is your birthday. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Okay, you guys can all go out to church school, all right?

Kids are all... I didn't put Jesus in there, did I? There we go. Merry Christmas!

Merry Christmas! What a wonderful blessing to have all of our children here, to be able to gather here. Let's continue to worship as we give thanks to God, offering our gifts, tithes, and offerings.

[ 23 : 36 ] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

The stars in the heavens look down where he lay. The little Lord Jesus asleep on the day.

The cattle are lowing, the poor may be wastes. But little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes.

[ 24 : 54 ] I love thee, Lord Jesus, look down from the sky. And say, by my cradle till morning is nigh.

Ooh. Be near me, Lord Jesus.

I ask thee to stay. Close by me forever and love me, I pray.

Bless all the dear children in thy tender care.

And bid us for heaven to live with thee there.

[ 26 : 04 ] Ooh. Ooh. Ooh. Ooh. Ooh. Ooh.

Ooh. Ooh. Ooh. Ooh. Ooh. Ooh. Ooh.

Ooh. Ooh. Ooh. Ooh. Ooh. Dear Heavenly Father, we give you thanks and praise for this night.

For your Son that you sent into the world to be God with us, the greatest gift anyone could ever give. Lord, we offer these gifts to you and all of the gifts that you have blessed us with.

We pray that you will bless them. We pray that you will give us wisdom to know how to best use them for the furtherance of your kingdom. We desire that many would come to salvation in Jesus Christ through the work that you called this church to.

[ 27 : 42 ] Be with us and bless us, Lord. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Please be seated.

Amen. We do want to remember some of the folks who are having some troubles this Christmas.

We're all here and able to be here. We're going to have a wonderful day tomorrow. But we have some folks who are at home and who are infirm.

Sam Matina is in the hospital for a few days. And so he's going to be there over the holiday. And we want to keep him and his family in our prayers. And also all of those folks who are battling cancers and battling these different kinds of things that really keep us down.

We want to lift up them. We want to lift up their families. If you would join me in prayer, let's go and turn to the Lord. Heavenly Father, the excitement of this day and the excitement of this evening, we take time right now to quiet ourselves before you.

- [ 29 : 01 ] We take a breath to remember that you are our God. In the midst of everything that is going on in our lives, you are with us.
- Help us to remember, Lord. Help us to trust in you, to put our hope in you. Fill us with your joy. Let us know your peace.
- We pray, Lord God, for all of those who are sick and infirm. Those who are in need of a healing touch from you, we just ask, Lord God, that you would make them whole from the tops of their heads to the soles of their feet.
- Draw them into perfect relationship with you, that they would be well in their spirits, in their souls, and in their bodies. Help those who are caring for them, Lord.
- Help them to be patient. Help them to be wise with wisdom that comes from you. Help them to know how to care. Love them, Lord, as they love those that you have given them to care for.
- [ 30 : 32 ] Lord, we pray for those who are grieving losses. At this time of excitement and joy, Lord, for so many, there is a sense of emptiness inside.
- A sense of loss. Father, we pray that you would fill that emptiness. That your spirit would just rush in and bring comfort.
- Your spirit would rush in and bring peace and blessing. Father, we pray this beautiful time when there is light shining in the darkness.
- The light that Jesus came to be. To overcome the darkness of this world. We just pray that we would be that light.
- Shine your light in us, Lord. And let it burn bright wherever we go. Let us be your witnesses. Let us show forth your love.
- [ 31 : 52 ] Your peace that passes all understanding. Your joy, which is our strength. And your hope. It's the hope that we have of eternal life with you.
- The hope that we have to share with those. Whose lives are right now hopeless. Be with us, Lord God, as we hear this message.
- As we hear the word. As it washes over us and transforms us into your image. The way you have intended for us to be.
- Be with Pastor Tom as he delivers the message that you have given to him. Let it be a blessing to him and a blessing to us.
- And Lord, make all of our worship this night to be a blessing to you. That is why we came. In Jesus' name we pray.
- [ 32 : 57 ] Amen. Amen. Shall we hear from the word of the Lord? Amen. Merry Christmas.
- The reading tonight is from Luke chapter 2, verses 8 through 20. There were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night.
- An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them. And they were terrified. But the angel said to them, Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.
- Today in the town of David, a Savior has been born to you. He is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you. You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.
- Suddenly a great company of heavenly hosts appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.
- [ 34 : 13 ] When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph and the baby who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child.

And all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

This is the word of the Lord. This is the word of the Lord.

This is the word of the Lord.

[ 35 : 53 ] This is the word of the Lord.

This is the word of the Lord.

This is the word of the Lord.

This is the word of the Lord.

This is the word of the Lord. This is the word of the Lord.

[ 38 : 13 ] From 1 John 4, verses 7-16, Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.

Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us. He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.

This is love. Not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

No one has ever seen God, but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

This is how we know that we live in him and he in us. He has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testified that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.

[ 39 : 27 ] If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.

God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God and God in them. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Amen. Amen. I'll have a blue Christmas without you.

I'll be so blue just thinking about you. Decorations of red on a green Christmas tree.

Won't be the same, dear, if you're not here with me. Won't be the same, dear, if you're not here with me.

[ 40 : 44 ] He does a pretty good impersonation of me. I will say that, you know. Christmas. Christmas loves stories.

It's not the same if we don't have all those stories happening. Has anybody been watching the Hallmark Channel lately? It's like hour after hour after hour after hour of the same story.

It really is, you know. It's about a woman who's engaged to be married to some guy who's a dweeb. And she goes off to visit some hometown where she finds this rugged-looking great guy from her past.

But she doesn't like him, but she does. And we all know she loves him and eventually will fall in love with him. And through the whole story, we're just waiting for him to say those three words, right?

I love you. But then there'll be a little glitch just before he says them. Just because, you know, that's what happens in it. And then they fix that and he says, I love you.

[ 41 : 52 ] And the whole movie's over and they just do the credits and that's it. But you watch them over and over and over again. All these little love stories, right? I love you. Very simple, yet profound.

This past few weeks, we've been studying the fruits of the Spirit. Any of you remember them? Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

You know, we had one woman who had somebody else embroider on a bathtub all the fruits of the Spirit. So she'd give it to a friend to remember. I thought that was kind of cool, actually. Love is actually the first one.

And according to 1 Corinthians 13, it's the greatest of these. The most important. It's incredibly complicated. It's difficult. It's elusive.

And it's also the simplest thing. The easiest thing. The most available. We love all sorts of things. I love my new car. I love my house.

[ 42 : 59 ] I love my dog. I love my job. I love my dreams. I love the Buffalo Bills. Well, maybe not. I love cocoa.

You know, if you haven't been with me the last few weeks, I've been making something. Today, it's cocoa. And it's good. I know I didn't bring enough to share this time either.

I love cocoa. I don't know about you. Especially on a cool winter's night, you know. Christmas. This is the kind of drink you want to have. Nice, rich cup of cocoa.

I love my family. I love my grandson. I love my wife. I love God. But these are all different things and the same word.

They don't mean the same things. And sometimes, love is disappointing. And we don't really know what to do with it when it doesn't turn out the way we want.

[ 44 : 03 ] In the story of Mary and Joseph, Joseph is going back to his hometown. Like going to a high school reunion. You ever been to one of those? They're usually disappointing.

We have all these ideas of what it will be like. And we build up this sense of what we think will happen. And when we get there, people don't even recognize who we are.

And if they do, they remember stories we don't want to remember. Right? Joseph is going home. To his hometown. Bethlehem. He's got to have relatives there.

And friends there. You can see him. He's excited about it. He's telling Mary, where do you see? Where do you see Sam? He's the greatest guy. Where do you see Billy? And I've got to introduce you to Mary. She's just so great.

Right? He gets there. And he's like, nobody's interested in him. They don't have a room for him. They don't have a place for him to stay.

[ 45 : 00 ] They put him out in the barn. That's not the idea of Christmas that we have. That's not the idea of homecomings that we expect. We expect that it's going to be perfect.

This week I'm going to go down to see my siblings. We haven't been together in three or four years. And so we're going to get all of us together. And my sister's got it planned to the moment.

Every single moment. Exactly how it's going to work out. I know in her mind it will be perfect in her mind. And then us boys will show up. Go change that.

That's the way it always is, right? That's like love is like this. It always works out perfectly. Because everybody who's in love, there's never a flaw.

1 Corinthians chapter 13 says love is patient. It's kind. It doesn't envy. It doesn't boast. It's not proud. It doesn't dishonor others.

[ 45 : 57 ] It's not self-seeking. It's not easily angered. It keeps no record of the wrongs. That's what it's like in your house, right? That's what your spouse is like. Your kids are like that. Your parents are like that, right?

There's no problems. It always comes out just perfect. Nobody ever messes up. But somehow it doesn't seem to be that way.

My brother actually did that once. And he visited with some lady for about a half hour. They figured out that they weren't related to each other. They didn't get beat up, though.

See, we have this image that love will be perfect. And the problem is we're not dealing with real love. We're dealing with an artificial, hallmark, made-up kind of thing.

And that fake love doesn't last. The love that God wants us to experience is a genuine, wonderful thing. Romans chapter 1, verse 25 says, People have exchanged the truth about God for a lie.

[ 47 : 03 ] And they worshiped and served created things rather than the creator who is forever praised. That somehow confuse an idea of a passion or an emotion or what they think they want to experience with what love is according to God and the Bible.

I haven't even told this story to too many people. It happened a long time ago. Involving people you wouldn't know at all. I was sitting in my office and I got a phone call from the Border Patrol.

And they said, we've got a guy here who says he'll only confess a crime to a United Methodist pastor. And I went, what? That sounded interesting, right?

So this guy gets on the phone and he tells me that he stole \$1.2 million because he had this wife with very expensive tastes.

And he couldn't keep up with her expectations. And so he ended up stealing \$1.2 million from one of his clients. And he got down to \$400,000 and decided he was in trouble.

[ 48 : 15 ] So he faked his death out in the Atlantic Ocean. And he had actually gotten up to Toronto with \$400,000 in cash. He was gone. Everybody thought he was dead.

And he had an attack of conscience and came back to the border and confessed to me. Okay? Plus, of course, the border guard who was listening to every word. So the handcuffs went on him.

And he told me, can you call four people for me? I want you to call my wife, my lawyer, my sister, and my pastor. So I said, sure, I'll call him.

So I called his lawyer and he thought it was a joke. He says, who is this? This is the most honest guy I know in the world. There's no way you could have done this. I said, he's in a jail in New York State. You've got to help your buddy out here, okay?

And I called his wife. I can't say exactly what his wife said in church, okay? I'll try to give you just an approximation.

[ 49 : 11 ] You mean the son of a is still alive? Now what am I supposed to do? And I said, well, if I were you, I'd get as much money together as you can find and hide it because you're going to be broke.

Really? Really? That would be the reaction you'd have to finding out that your spouse, who you thought was dead, is now alive. It's kind of like not giving Jesus gifts on his birthday.

Did you hear that? I don't know if you all heard that. While we were laughing, the little boy, I asked, why don't we give Jesus gifts on his birthday? And he said, because he's dead. That's why. All right.



I'm sorry. That's just, you know, off into another direction. Excuse that. Side digression. The idea is that some people, they have an idea that love is what makes us feel good.

What makes our world work. And that's not love. That's abuse. And that's not the kind of love that God wants us to connect with, not only with him, but with each other.

[ 50 : 19 ] We've got all sorts of words in Greek about love. And many of them have to do with passion or feelings. But the love that God wants us to have for each other and with him is one that will accept the person no matter what.

Even when they fail. Even when they fail. Even when they're broke. Now it says that Mary went up to Bethlehem with Joseph. You've got to think about that.

She's nine months pregnant. Ladies, if your husband said he wanted to go visit the boys back home and you were nine months pregnant, would you take a three-week journey on foot to go with him?

I think most ladies, I imagine, would say, you go have fun with that. I'm staying here. And then complain about every minute he was gone.

But Mary went with Joseph. Now that's love. Mary went with Joseph up to Jerusalem, up to Bethlehem rather, put up with this treatment that they received.

[ 51 : 24 ] Christmas is about God loving us. If you will, God putting up with us. In this passage from 1 John, it talks about God making an atonement with us.

Making us one with him. Being willing to be with us. Even in the middle of our brokenness. God sent Jesus in a manger as a little baby.

Something we wouldn't be frightened of. So that we could connect to him. And that child, that child brought love.

And that love requires trust and it's risky and makes us vulnerable. And that child caused Joe and Mary a lot of trouble.

I'll tell you about that a little bit later. And yet in the midst of that, they stuck by him and they taught him what real love was. Just as God in heaven taught him and teaches us.

[ 52 : 27 ] In verse 7 it says, Dear friends, let us love one another for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Or in other words, you can't really know what real love is unless you know God.

You might have an emotion. You might have a connection. You might have a feeling towards someone or something. But you can't really know what real genuine love is unless you know God.

Because as it says in verse 8, God is love. So if God is love and love is God, then we need to know God to really understand what this kind of love is.

Christmas is about a life with God. God being born. Not into this world, but born to us. In verse 10 it says, This is love.

Not that we love God, but that he loved us and sent his son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. God is willing to give up. Not a selfish love, but a love that's willing to surrender for us.

[ 53 : 34 ] God gave up his perfection. Gave up his right to get things just the way he wanted. God gave up his right to get things just the way he wanted to do. It's like what we do with children. Now, most of you have heard me ask this question before.

Children, for all we do for them, we feed them. We give them a house to live in. We take care of them. We love them, right? The least they can be is perfect.

Don't you think? Amen? I think that that's fair. They should be absolutely, completely perfect. But obviously, love says we're going to look beyond that.

Because we know what children are. Because we're the same way with God. God loves us in spite of our faults. In spite of our failings.

And that's what real love is. In the Greek, they have all these words. The word, in this case, is the word agape. Which is a love that gives of itself.

[ 54 : 36 ] Unmerited love. Let's go back to that 1 Corinthians chapter 13 again. And just put a different word in. God is patient. God is kind.

God doesn't envy. He doesn't boast. He's not proud. He doesn't dishonor others. He's not self-seeking. He's not easily angered. And he keeps no record of the wrongs.

Or you could insert somebody in your life. Love would be that person. Love is what God gives to us.

Not what we do for him. But what he does for us. He loves us first. And then teaches us what love is. Now, I love Coke.

I don't know about you. It's good. You should get yourself some. But that's not the same love I have for my family.

[ 55 : 34 ] It's not the same love I have for this church. It's not the same love I have for God. Because those are about relationships. And true love lives out in relationships.

And you see it when we see how people really are willing to give for each other. Like these kids. This year for Christmas, what are you hoping to get?

A computer. Big, giant. Barbie house. A trophy case. Xbox 360. Minecraft Legos. What do you think your mom or dad want for Christmas? My mom would probably want a ring.

She's never really had a ring. Jewelry. She loves jewelry. A new TV. My watches. So, we actually did buy an Xbox 360.

What in the world? That one is this. Okay, you really got this for me? A new laptop. What? It's a necklace. So, we also bought a necklace because he said you also wanted to get a necklace for your mom or your auntie.

[ 56 : 37 ] The catch is that you can either get a gift for yourself or you can pick a gift for your mom and dad. I need you to pick one.

Now, before you answer... Oh, I bet that's hard. Is that a really hard question? Mm-hmm. What gift do you pick?

I choose this. I got a gold story. What gift do you pick? That one. That one. The dress.

I'll choose this for my mom. I'll choose this one. It's a really tough question. I'll give him this. You already know? Tell me why. Because Legos don't matter.

Lego... Your family matters. Not Legos, not toys. Your family. So, it's either family or Legos, and I choose family. I get gifts every year from my family, and my mom don't get anything.

[ 57 : 47 ] If I get a laptop, my mama wants something. She helps me when I'm sick. She helps me with my homework. She gave me a house to live in.

They look out for me and do stuff for me, so I need to get back to them. Now, I have the opportunity to give them something. We love because God has taught us how to love.

And without God, we wouldn't know how. By the way, guys, did you notice that they were asking, would you rather give it to your mom or keep it for yourself? If it was us, they would have thrown us right under the bus.

I'll take the Legos. I hope not. God is love. And we know that God is in us if we know how to love.

It goes the other way around. It says, dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God, but we love one another.

[ 58 : 48 ] If we love one another, God lives on us, and his love is made complete in us. If we know how to love each other, then we'll know that we have God in us.

Because God dwelling in us shows us and teaches us how to love. God is love. Without God, we can't know love. We can know feelings. We can know emotions.

We can know passions, but we can't know the genuine power of love. And when those blue snowflakes start falling, that's when those blue memories start calling.

You'll be doing all right with your Christmas of white. But I'd love to have a blue, blue, blue, blue Christmas.

Yeah, sometimes that's what we feel like, isn't it? Because love can be frightening. It makes us vulnerable. It means that we have to trust, and we have to get intimate, and we have to take a chance on people that might disappoint us, that might hurt us, that might break our hearts the way we've done with others, and the way we've done with God.

[ 60 : 07 ] God is calling us to trust again. Take a chance. And love. So I call up those other two people. I called the sister.

And she said, we don't care what he's done. He's alive. Just tell him whatever it is. We'll take care of it. We'll work it out together. Oh, it's so wonderful. My brother's alive.

That's what the wife should have said, right? Then I called the pastor. They'll like this one. I called the pastor, and he said, Tom, it's Paul. I said, yeah, I know. I called you. He says, no, no, you don't understand.

It's your mother's pastor. This guy went to my mother's church. What's the odds? Right? He lives in the Carolinas. What's the odds? And he goes to my mother's church. He says, it can't be this guy.

He just gave us a donation for \$120,000. He tithed the church. He might have stole from that guy, but he's not going to steal from God.

[ 61 : 09 ] We work out our own thoughts, don't we? I got to tell you. I haven't stayed in touch with him, but I did follow up a little bit to find out that, yes, the family gathered around him, supported him.

And even though he had made a big mistake, his church accepted him and loved him, and he ended up getting himself back, straightened around. It took a while. He had to pay his penalty.

But the surrounding love made the difference. God wants to surround us with love. And it's not some kind of phony, easy, no problem thing.

It's messy. It's not perfect. But it's real. Real love comes in relationships.

It comes in people we care about, we live in, and we even struggle with. Joseph and Mary had this little baby, Jesus.

[ 62 : 09 ] Within the first couple of years, they found out that there was a king who wanted to kill Jesus. So they had to spend all their money and go live on the run in Egypt because of this little baby.

When he turned 12, which is the next story we hear about Jesus, they're having a family visit to Jerusalem, and he just decides to hang around, doesn't tell them.

And after they look for him for three or four days, his answer is, well, where did you expect me to be but in my father's house? Like you little punk, I didn't even know your father's house.

And then there was a point at which it says in the Bible, Jesus' family decided he was crazy. You know when he started doing all this preaching stuff? I got a family like that.

And basically, they went to bring him home. They said, you know, you're crazy. You can't do this, Jesus. And finally, they had to watch him die as a criminal on a cross.

[ 63 : 11 ]    Embarrassing. A public humiliation, not just for him, but for the whole family. But Mary was there to the very end. And Jesus is love.

He knew how to love, and he lived in a family that knew how to love. Because they knew how to get through even the difficult things. God isn't looking for a perfect person.

He's not looking for you to get everything right. He's just looking for you to stay in relationship with him. They call it repenting when we turn around. What that means is, if we're facing the wrong way, God can't do anything with us.

You know in the Bible, they say there's only one unforgivable sin. Have you read this? It's in Matthew chapter 12. It says, I tell you, every kind of sin and slatter can be forgiven. But blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven.

What does that mean? That means that when you turn your back on somebody in a relationship, they can't fix it. And when we turn our back on God, God can't fix it.

[ 64 : 27 ]    But the good news is, is all he really wants us to do is turn around and love him. Take a risk on it. Real love and relationship.

You know, it's not about you deciding to love God. It's about you deciding to let God love you. It changes everything.

I've been a pastor here for a long time. 27 years. Some of you I've known most of your lives. Some of you I've known for a while. Some just a short time.

In that time, I find that relationships are what this is all about. Do I get it right?

Do I do everything perfect? How many of you would give me an amen on that? Yeah, right. Do you get it right? Do you make it perfect? Do you never make a mistake?

[ 65 : 23 ]    Of course not. But you see, we're supposed to love like God loved us. And we're supposed to accept God's love. Which means that we need to figure out a way to get past the brokenness and on to the healing.

That's what God wants us to do. Put that aside and become one with each other again. And experience, most of all, the love that God wants for you.

If you've been facing the wrong way, maybe you had some reasons you did that. It's time to turn that around. Right now, tonight, it's time for you to decide to let God love you.

If you've been struggling with people you should love, it's time for you to stop struggling and start loving. Now, maybe you've been abused by somebody who's hurtful to you even though you're loving.

I'm not talking about that. But we have a world that's looking for the wrong thing in love. God is love. Receive God. Let that baby born in Bethlehem be born to you.

[ 66 : 31 ]    And God will change your life. Not just today, but forever. It started long ago in a little town called Bethlehem. Coco's good for singing, right?

Oh, little town of Bethlehem.

How still we see thee lie. Above the deep and dreamless sleep, the silent stars go by.

Yet in the dark streets shining the everlasting light. The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

For Christ is born of Mary and gathered of above. While mortals sleep the angels keep their watch of wandering love.

[ 67 : 55 ]    All morning stars together. All morning stars together proclaim the holy birth. And praise and sing to God the King and peace to all on earth.

How silently, how silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is given. So God impides to human hearts the blessings of his heaven.

The Lord will be the Lord. No ear may hear his coming. But in this world of sin. Where meek souls will receive him still.

The dear Christ enters in. O holy child of Bethlehem.

Descend to us, we pray. Cast out our sin and enter in. Be born in us today.

[ 69 : 11 ] We hear the Christmas angels. The great glad dining stand. O come to us.

Abide with us. Our Lord Emmanuel. Won't you please recite the Nicene Creed with me.

We believe in one God. The Father, the Almighty. Maker of heaven and earth. Of all that is seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ.

The only Son of God. Eternally begotten of the Father. God from God. Light from light. True God from true God.

Begotten, not made. Of one being with the Father. Through him all things are made. For us and for our salvation.

[ 70 : 14 ] He came down from heaven. Was incarnate of the Holy Spirit. And the Virgin Mary. And became truly human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate.

He suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again. In accordance with scriptures. He ascended into heaven. And is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead. And his kingdom will have no end. We believe in the Holy Spirit. The Lord, the giver of life.

Who proceeds from the Father and the Son. Who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified. Who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in the only holy Catholic and apostolic church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

[ 71 : 15 ] We look for the resurrection of the dead. And the life of the world to come. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Joyful of the nations rise, Join the triumph of the skies, Weep and cheer in hosts proclaim, Christ is born on Bethlehem, And the arrowed angels sing, Glory to the new born King.

Christ my highest heaven adored, Christ the everlasting Lord, Late in time behold him come, Offspring of the virgin's womb.

Veiled in flesh the God at sea, Hail the incarnate deity, Pleased as man with man to dwell, Jesus and Emmanuel.

Lord the herald angels sing, Glory to the new born King. Hail the heaven of Prince of Peace, Hail the sword of righteousness, Light and life to all he brings, Risen with him in his wings.

[ 73 : 23 ] Mild he lays his glory by, Born that we no more may die, Born to raise us from the earth, Born to give us second birth, Heart of the herald angels sing, Glory to the new born King.

Jesus Christ invites all those who seek after him to come to the table of the Lord tonight.

It doesn't matter if you're a member of our church, or this is the first time you've walked into our church tonight. It's God's table, And he invites you to come and make that connection with him.

The table of his blessing, His love, His forgiveness. Not because of us, Not because of who we are, But because of who he is for us. As we come to the table, We come with a heart repentant, To repair our relationship with God.

So we start with a prayer of confession. Shall we confess together? Dear God in heaven, Dear God in heaven, I have sinned. I have sinned. I've broken your heart. I've broken your love.

[ 74 : 48 ] Forgive me Lord. Turn me around. Teach me to do what's right. And bless me, With your love, That I might love in return.

In Jesus name we pray. Amen. God wants to start all new tonight. God wants to take any brokenness, Anything that's wrong, Anything you've ever done wrong, And wipe it clean.

You know, there's nobody that does that in our world, But God will do it for your world. He will start with you afresh tonight. New beginning. Just like the baby in Bethlehem.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Your sins are forgiven. Glory to God. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. And now let us join together in the great thanksgiving of our Lord. The Lord be with you. And also with you. Lift up your hearts. We lift them up to the Lord. Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

[ 75 : 57 ] It is right to give our thanks and praise. It is right and a good and joyful thing always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.

You created light out of darkness and brought forth life on the earth. You formed us in your image and breathed into us the breath of life. When we turned away and our love failed, your love remained steadfast.

You delivered us from captivity, made covenant to be our sovereign God, and spoke to us through your prophets. In the fullness of time, you gave your only Son, Jesus Christ, to be our Savior.

And at his birth, the angels sang, Glory to you in the highest and peace to your people on earth. And so with your people on earth and all the company of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn.

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of power and might, Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

[ 77 : 05 ] Hosanna in the highest. Holy are you. Blessed is your Son, Jesus Christ. He was born in a stable, as a little baby, so we wouldn't be frightened of him.

Although he is the King of glory and holds the world in the palm of his hand. He grew to be a man who taught us and tried to share his love with us. Did miracles. Blessed the people.

But others hated him for that, because they wouldn't receive his love. They hung him on a cross and crucified him. But he rose again, that we might have life and he might show us the way to it.

But even in the midst of his struggles, he showed his love. And the night when he was betrayed by one of those closest to him. When he was denied by Peter.

When the other apostles ran away. Jesus gave them this meal of love. Anyways, he took the bread. He gave thanks to God and he broke the bread.

[ 78 : 07 ] He broke the bread. He gave it to his disciples and he said, Take and eat. This is my body which is broken for you for the forgiveness of sin. Eat of this, remembering me. When the supper was over, he took the cup.

He gave thanks to God. And then he gave it to his disciples and he said, Drink from this all of you. This is my blood of the new covenant. Poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sin.

Drink from this, remembering me. And so in remembrance of these mighty acts of Jesus Christ, We offer ourselves in praise and in thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice in union with Christ offering for us.

As we proclaim the mystery of faith. Christ has died. Christ has risen. Christ will come again. Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here. And on these gifts of bread and wine.

Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ that we may be for the world. The body of Christ redeemed by his blood. By your spirit make us one with Christ.

[ 79 : 18 ] One with each other and one in ministry to all the world. Until Christ comes in final victory. And we feast at his heavenly banquet. Through your son Jesus Christ with the Holy Spirit and your holy church.

All honor and glory is yours. Almighty Father, now and forever. Amen. And now as confident children of God, let us pray as he taught us and sang. Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses.

As we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation. But deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever.

Amen. For those who are assisting with communion, come forward at this time, please. Amen.

[ 80 : 53 ] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. We will be serving communion at six stations tonight.

one on each of the far sides and four in the middle. You can go to any station that's open. I just ask that you do me a favor. Either come up the outside aisles or the center aisles and go back these aisles.

If you try to come up the middle aisles, then we'll get into that fight. Then the whole reason for preaching tonight just goes right out the window. You know, you're already angry at each other. You know, you lost the whole thing.

So come up the center aisles and the outside aisles and go back these other ones. I got to come up with a name for them. That would be good. All right. You're welcome to stop at the rail for prayers for healing and anointing or to light a candle.

[ 82 : 56 ] Come and join us with the Lord. temporary sentences, let's shake out those Kaito-lives.

And in the Djurgi, there must be a 6-3 priests in mummy. I have endured two children in Brisbane, so they're them only here for 9-10 year but when she tenga feet, she grasped the word to the lake.

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