

Justifying Grace

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Preacher: Pastor Tom Kraft

- [0 : 00] I'd like to invite you all to stand if you're able as we sing together, And Can It Be? piano plays softly And can it be that I should gain an interest in the Savior's blood?
Died He for me who caused His pain, for me who lived to death pursued?
Amazing love, how can it be that Thou, my God, should die for me?
Amazing love, how can it be that Thou, my God, should die for me?
He left His Father's throne above, so free, so infinite His grace, Empty Himself of all but love, and led for Adam's helpless race, Tis mercy, all immense and free, for all my God, it found out me.
- [1 : 55] Tis mercy, all immense and free, for all my God, it found out me.
Long my imprisoned spirit lay, as bound in sin and nature's night, My night diffused a quickening ray, I woke the dungeon flamed with light, My chains fell off, my heart was free, I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.
My chains fell off, my heart was free, I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.
No condemnation now I dread, Jesus, and all in Him is mine.
Alive in Him, my living hand, and followed in righteousness divine.
- [3 : 26] Bold I approach the throne of throne, and came a crown through Christ my own.
Bold I approach the throne, and came a crown through Christ my own.
Good job, good job. The Lord be with you. Amen. Take a moment, if you will, and greet your neighbor with the peace of the Spirit. Amen. I'd like to invite the children to come up with me.
Any kids want to come up and join me? Oh, is that what happened? Well, we didn't have last night, you know.
Any kids want to come join me? Come on up. Come on up. Good morning, girls. How are you this morning?
- [4 : 49] Good? And gentlemen? You guys know what this is? It's a candle, yeah. What color is it? That's a nice red, isn't it? You want to smell it?
Anybody else want to smell it? No? You don't want to? It smells good like Christmas. Yeah. So that's what a candle's about, right?
They look pretty and they smell. Is that the idea? No? What are candles supposed to do then? Help you see? Well, how's that going to happen?
Oh, you've got to light it. All right. So without a fire in it, it doesn't do what it's supposed to do, right? But if we put a fire in it, not only does it smell good and look good, it actually gives us light. It even gives us a little bit of heat.
And it looks even better. Same thing with us, you know. God wants us to have wonderful things on the outside that look good, even smell good. But he really wants us to have the fire, the power of God inside our heart.

[5 : 54] So we can have that if we just ask God to come in and join us in our heart, okay? You guys thankful for anything? If you want to share something, raise your hand. My parents. Anybody else?

No? There's one. My mother. Okay. Dear Lord, we thank you for our parents and the friends and the good things we have in our lives.

And we pray that you'll always hold us close to your life, to your heart, to your wonder. For it's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Okay, you guys go out to church school. All the kids are welcome to go out to church school now if they want to.

Good morning.

The psalmist in Psalm number 136 wrote, Give thanks to the Lord for he is good. His love endures forever. Give thanks to the God of gods. Give thanks to the Lord of lords.

[6 : 55] To him alone who does great works, his love endures forever. Have you experienced the love of God in your life? Have you experienced the love of God in your life?

Wonderful. Have you experienced the blessings of God pouring down into your life? Let's continue our worship as we return some of those gifts in our tithes and our offerings because God loves us so much.

We worship God by giving back to his work. There is coming a day when no heartache shall come.

No more clouds in the sky. No more tears to dim the eye. All is peace forevermore on that happy golden shore.

What a day. What a day. What a day. What a day. What a day. Glorious day. That will be. What a day.

[8 : 20] What a day. That will be. When my Jesus I shall see. And I look upon his face.

The one who saved me by his grace. And he takes me by the hand. And leads me through the promised land.

What a day. Glorious day. That will be. There will be.

Glorious day. Glorious day. Glorious day. That will be. What a day. What a day. That will be.

When my Jesus I shall see. When I look upon his face. The one who saved me by his grace.

[9 : 46] And he takes me by the hand. And leads me through the promised land. What a day.

Glorious day. That will be. What a day. Glorious day. What a day. What a day. That will be.

What a day. What a day. What a day. What a day. What a day. That will be.

When my Jesus I shall see. When I look upon his face. And he takes me by the hand. And leads me through the promised land.

What a day. Glorious day. That will be. What a day. What a day.

[10 : 41] Glorious day. Glorious day. That will be. What a day. I will not live full of destiny. What a day. What a day.

What a day. What a day. Praise God, from Him all blessings go.

Praise Him, all creatures here below. Praise Him above, ye heavenly host.

Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

Dear Heavenly Father, we do give you thanks and praise for this day and that we may come and worship you. Lord God, we ask that you would bless this offering. Give us wisdom to know how to best use it for the furtherance of your kingdom.

[11 : 58] And help us, Lord, to remember to lift up all of our gifts to you, all of those things that we do that bring you glory. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen. Amen. Please be seated. And we do have some concerns we want to lift up this morning.

Our youth and a whole bunch of adults, 41 people in all, I understand, are heading off to the Adirondacks in what we call in the United Methodist Church, the Mohawk District of our Upper New York Annual Conference.

They're going to be going off to do some work for some folks and to help them out and to share the love of God. So we want to pray for them. It's an awful lot of people to organize and an awful lot of people to support back and forth and just keep on track.

So we need to keep them in our prayers all week long in their comings and their goings. We also have some health concerns that we want to lift up. Ellie Drake had some good results from some tests she had.

[13 : 05] She's got a little bit more testing to go on, but we want to keep her in our prayers. Lori Gondek continues with health concerns. Tom Gertz has been experiencing some chest pains.

We want to lift him up and keep him in our prayers as well. Sarah Lewis is home from the hospital, but continue to keep her in your prayers as well. And Joe Ventura had surgery, and I understand that he is home as well.

Let's keep him in our prayers. With these concerns, those that are in your hearts, either at the rail, with me, or in your seats, let's turn together to the Lord in prayer. Lord, you know what is going to be before it even happens.

What an amazing thing that is. Lord, you know what's going to be going on with all of the people going on that mission trip.

What a blessing they're going to be. Be with them, Lord God. Touch them. Help them. Make them well able to do and accomplish everything that you have led them to do.

[14 : 32] Lead them each and every moment by your Spirit. Give them strength. Give them perseverance. Give them peace. Give them joy in their hearts. Cover them and protect them.

The whole way there, the whole way back, and everywhere in between. Prepare the hearts of the people they're going to be ministering to, Lord. The communities that they're going to be entering.

Let the love of Jesus shine from their faces, shine from their hearts, shine in their words. Let many people be brought to Jesus as their help.

Father, we pray for all of those people who are sick and infirm, who are in need of a healing touch from you. When you touch us with miraculous healing, Lord God, you are breaking into this realm.

Your kingdom is becoming manifested in this place, and we are so grateful when those things happen. We need you, Lord. We need you, Lord. Your people need a touch from you.

[15 : 43] We just ask that you would touch each one who is in need and make them whole, from the top of their heads to the soles of their feet, in their spirits, in their souls, and in their bodies, that they may be well and share your love.

Lord, we pray for those who are grieving losses of all kinds.

We ask that you would be with them as well. Comfort them. Bring them peace. Cover them round about. And let them feel your presence.

We pray, Lord, for those who do not know you. We pray that you prepare their hearts, that you continue by your grace to draw them to yourself, and that you give us, your church, wisdom to know how to speak to them, how to be there for them, how to bring your love into their lives.

Whether we are those who are planting seeds or watering seeds or fertilizing those little plants that are shoots of faith in you, help us to do our part in each one's life.

[17 : 08] Be with us in our worship this morning, Lord God. Help us to worship well. As we hear your word, as we sing songs of praise, wash over us by your spirit and transform us into your likeness.

Be with Pastor Thomas. He brings the message this morning. Let it be a blessing to him and a blessing to us. And make all of our worship to bless you, Lord. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen. Shall we hear from the word of the Lord? Amen. Shall we hear from the word of the Lord? Amen. Shall we hear from the word of the Lord? Amen.

Shall we hear from the word of the Lord? Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Good morning.

[18 : 18] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Today's scripture lesson comes from Romans chapter 3, verses 9 through 28. Amen. Amen.

What shall we conclude then? Do we have any advantage? Not at all. Not at all. For we have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin.

As it is written, there is no one righteous, not even one. There is no one who understands. There is no one who seeks God.

All have turned away. They have all together become worthless. There is no one who does good, not even one. Their throats are open graves.

Their tongues practice deceit. The poison of vipers is on their lips. Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood.

[19 : 20] Ruin and misery mark their ways. And the way of peace they do not know. There is no fear of God before their eyes. Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God.

Therefore, no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law. Rather, through the law, we become conscience of our sin.

But now, apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the law and the prophets testify. This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.

There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

Christ presented, God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement through the shedding of his blood to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance, he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished.

[20 : 42] He did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus. Where, then, is boasting?

It is excluded. Because of what law? The law that requires works? No, because of the law that requires faith. For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Thank you, Bill. I gave you a nice short one for today. This summer, we're talking about what makes Methodists different as a denominational family from other churches.

Many, many, many different kinds of Christian churches. Why are Methodists particularly different from other ones? This morning, we're going to talk about how we're justified, or how we're saved, or how we're made holy, or how we live in such a way that God makes us that one with him.

In verse 28, it ended by saying, We maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from what they do. Christians believe that it isn't what we do, it's what God does that makes the difference in our lives.

[22 : 12] It's what God does to make us perfect again. Now, that's not Methodist Christians. That's basically most all Christians. If you read the theology of most churches, they'll all agree with that statement, more or less, even though individual churches may or may not preach it.

So, how are Methodists different? And to talk about that, I want to point first to a very familiar passage in 1 Corinthians 13. In the last verse, it says, And now these three remain, faith, hope, and love.

But the greatest of these is love. And I would suggest to you that the difference with Methodists lies in that love.

Hope encourages us to face each day. It encourages us to face the future. It encourages us and gives us strength to be able to live for the next world. And faith sustains that hope and gives us the ability to live in that hope.

Without that hope, we would be discouraged and disappointed and defeated. But love, love sustains the faith.

[23 : 23] And that's the difference with Methodists. So, we're going to talk a little bit today about love. Now, the hard part is, is defining love. You know, the Greeks had such a hard time that when they wrote the book of the Bible, they actually used three different words and they had four words for love.

Not us. We have one word, love. And I'll give you those great theologians, the gumballs, to help us out with this. What happened? Unknown malfunction detected.

Attempting self-diagnosis. What's wrong with your system? A virus is parasiting my hard drive. File name, I love you, dot exe. Dude, it's not a virus.

You're in love. Processing information. Terminology unrecognized. Define love. Well, love is in the air. It's in your heart. In the eyes of others.

It's in the way people touch. The way people talk. And it's all over the universe. If I understand you correctly, you have narrowed the definition of love down to everything and everywhere.

[24 : 27] And everyone does not compute. Maybe a song would help you understand. Come on, man. Count us in. A one. A one zero. A one. One zero. One one.

One zero zero. Okay, you know what? Never mind. Love. What is love? Yes, that was my query. What is love? Does it fall from above?

Listen, bobber to the words we sing. We are love. And love is everything. Warning. Circular reference detected. I love my boyfriend. I love my toys.

I love my mother. And I love making noise. I love my television. Darling, I love you. Love is as old as time. And love is always new.

So you got it, right? Love is everything and everywhere and everyone and every possibility. That's what love is. I love chocolate. I love my dog. I love the trees. Love is in the air.

[25 : 25] Love is in the breeze. Sounds like a song, but it doesn't sound like it makes sense. So we're going to do a little quiz and get an idea from you. All right? So if you grabbed a piece of paper on the way in or if you want to just rip one off of your bulletin or you want to be technological, you can use the that thing there, pole thing.

So you got four choices. What is love? Is it A, a warm feeling like heartburn? Is it B, a supportive relationship where people look out for each other?

Is it C, when people do kind of nice things for you? Or is it D, an ice cream cone with the sprinkles? Which do you think is love? A, B, C, or D?

Don't think too long about it. Just put down your answer. As soon as you got your answer down, they're going to come around with a basket and collect those up. So we'll let them go ahead and do that. Here comes Adrian with his basket.

So you can just turn them into the middle. Maybe that will make it easier for Adrian. Either way, just to the aisle somewhere. Trying to make it easy for you, Adrian. Trying to work it out. What is love?

[26 : 32] And what does it have to do with faith? Last week, Pastor Lisa talked about John Wesley and his struggle with faith. She preached on something called provenient grace, which is the grace that goes beforehand.

Which what that means is before you even thought about God, before you even considered having God as part of your life, before you even made any decisions whatsoever, God was there and God was loving you.

It's the grace that goes before. But John Wesley struggled in the midst of that. He knew about God. He had even made a commitment to God. The man went to Oxford to learn about God.

He understood God. He became a priest in the Anglican church. He came over to Georgia to convert the Native Americans there.

But something was missing. Something wasn't quite right. John struggled to please God. But somehow he felt like a failure in the effort.

[27 : 36] I did my best. But I guess my best wasn't good enough. That song always haunts you, doesn't it? How many of you have tried to do your best and failed?

You know? Somehow, it just doesn't quite work out. And the key is that John loved God with all his soul. He loved God with all his mind.

And he loved God with all his strength. But there's one missing. John was missing something in his heart. Even when we do our best, sometimes we come up short.

This last week, while I was on vacation, my wife wanted me to clean out closets and attics and things like that. So I did, okay? You know? I had time, so I went ahead and did that. And I got to this one closet that's located between our master bath and our master bedroom.

That's supposed to be a walk-in closet, but I never got around to making it such. In fact, the plaster still needed to be sanded. So I cleared everything out like I was supposed to do.

[28 : 40] And I looked at it and I said, so what am I going to do? Leave an empty little room here? This doesn't make sense. So I went out and I got the stuff. And I went to work on the master closet. And in a period of about two or three days, I built the master closet, you know?

Got it all sanded, painted, put up the bars, put up the shelves, got the wood stained and polyed and all that kind of stuff. And when I was done, I looked at it. And I said, oh, shoot.

That's not right. Do you know what I'm talking about? I think it was Plato who said, you can design in your brain the perfect chair or perfect closet or perfect anything, but you can never really live it out.

Because what we create in our brain might be perfect, but what we create in reality is a little off. Especially when you're working with a place from the 1890s where all the walls and everything else is a little off, too.

So in that case, it actually fits in real well. It looks like they built it 100 years ago. But that wasn't what I was going for. It's hard to be good.

[29 : 52] Did you hear what that passage said to us? There is no one who's righteous. Not one. No one who understands. There's no one who seeks God. All have turned away.

They have altogether become worthless. There is no one who does good. Not even one. All have sinned. And have fallen short of the glory of God.

Don Wesley failed. You might not know that, but the person who started our Methodist church was an abject failure in Georgia. In fact, he was such a failure that he had to sneak out on a midnight boat before they hung him.

The guy was a real mess. I hope I never have to sneak out on a midnight train because you're ready to hang me. I think some of you might like the idea, but John was a failure.

He went back to England feeling completely dejected. Completely destroyed. Sometimes life can feel that way to us.

[31 : 00] Like everything we work for has come to nothing. I read an article in the Buffalo News the other day. And it was about this Methodist church in England.

And it was talking about how great it was because they were going to sell it to become somebody's private house. But some sheik in the Middle East gave them like \$70,000 or something so that they could keep this building open.

And I'm like, yeah, until I realized what they said is, not as a church, of course, just as a place for people to get together and have parties and social events. And you see the world's celebrating that and I'm feeling like something's broken.

I feel sometimes like something's broken in the church of Jesus Christ. Like things aren't quite right. They're not totally broken. And we're not totally broken.

But some things have to change because it's just not really working. It's failing little by little. John felt like a failure. And sometimes we feel like failures.

[32 : 10] Have you ever felt like a failure in life? Like you tried to do your best and it just didn't work? Well, join the club. Because ultimately we all fail.

And you know, just to make it even worse, this whole argument of Paul is the end of a couple chapters in the book of Romans. Where what he says is, it doesn't matter if you go to church, if you believe in God, if you do the things that Christians are supposed to be.

Really, ultimately you're in the same mess as everybody else. Well, thanks a lot. That's what I was looking for, right? So coming to church doesn't help us.

Well, that's not what he's trying to say. But as Billy Sunday once said, putting a person in church doesn't make them a Christian any more than putting your bicycle in your garage makes it an automobile.

There's something more needed. In Matthew chapter 7, Jesus said these words. They're troubling. Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven.

[33 : 17] But only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name? And in your name drive out demons. And in your name perform many miracles.

And then I will tell them plainly. I never knew you. I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers.

That's hard. Pastor Lisa last week talked about the Pharisees. We like to pick on the Pharisees in the Bible. As if somehow they're the evil characters in the Bible.

These are people trying their best to understand and follow God. We've got lots of Pharisees in the church. Struggling to be what they're supposed to be.

And somehow it isn't working. So John was kind of depressed, if you will. Disoriented. Didn't know what to do with himself. And he got invited to go to a Bible study on a street called Aldersgate in London.

[34 : 21] Some of you old Methodists might have heard the word Aldersgate and wondered what it is. Aldersgate, plain and simple, is a street in London. And it wasn't anything all that exciting.

Really. They were reading a commentary by Luther about Romans. The book we're looking at. They weren't even reading the book. They were reading a commentary by Luther about Romans.

And something changed. Something happened. And the way John Wesley himself describes it, he says, my heart was strangely warmed.

My heart was strangely warmed. And the beginning of these people we call Methodists started on Aldersgate.

In Romans chapter 10, you know this verse. If you declare with your mouth, Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised you from the dead, you'll be saved. For it's with your heart you believe.

[35 : 24] And are justified. And it's with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. How are we justified? How are we saved? By having a heart attack.

He felt the love of God. He felt love. And that love made all the difference. In 1 John chapter 4. You want to know what love is?

We know and rely on the love that God has for us. Because what's love? God is love. You want to define love? Figure out who God is. Because God is love.

Love is God. Whoever lives in love lives in God. And God. And God. And God lives in them.

And that's what happened. That day on Aldersgate Street. I was 14 years old and I went on a retreat with my youth group to some place called Cherry Creek.

[36 : 21] Some of you old Methodists might even remember Cherry Creek Camp. It was just a little camp. But we went there for a retreat. With my pastor. Who didn't say anything particularly new that I had never heard before.

But somehow something happened to me. Because up to that point I knew about God. My parents took me to Sunday school. My parents took me to church. I heard all kinds of sermons from my pastor.

But I never heard anything that changed my heart. And then all of a sudden God did something amazing. And from that moment forward my life was never going to be the same.

Before that I was winding off in the wrong direction. I'm not even allowed to tell the teenagers what I did as a teenager. Because I would have ended up in juvie.

You all know what that is? I was not a good person. I was angry. I was hurt. I was upset. I was frustrated. And my direction was in a whole different way than where God sent me.

[37 : 22] God turned my life around. I'm not saying I changed overnight because I didn't. But little by little I could feel the difference as this warming in my heart changed me.

As I experienced real love which is the love of God. Real love. I started to understand what love was. And I not only wanted more.

It changed who I was and everything I saw. So I went from religion to faith. I went from being a Pharisee to being a believer and follower of Christ.

Before that I knew about God. After that I knew God. And that's the difference. We're Methodists. We believe the same thing.

But we live it out entirely different. You see without love faith is hard. It's difficult. It leads often to a sense that we fail because we can't measure up.

[38 : 20] We're not good enough. It leads to despair. It causes us to lose hope. And because of it we fall into sin. Even though we're trying to follow God. We just simply can't do it.

Because we don't have that power in us. In verse 9 it says. Every one of us. Jews. Jews. Church people alike. They're all under the power of sin. We tend to think of sin as a little action. But that's sin with a small s. Sin is a force.

It's a power. It brought down an archangel named Lucifer. It brought down one third of the angels. It's brought down some of the greatest, smartest, wisest people in the history of the world.

It's a force that draws us in the wrong direction. Listen to these words. People live in sin. Their throats are open graves.

[39 : 17] Their tongues practice deceit. The poison of vipers is on their lips. Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood. Ruin and misery mark their ways.

And the way of peace they do not know. And there is no fear of God in their eyes. Wow, that's kind of crummy, isn't it? Deceit and cursing and bitterness and violence and ruin and competition.

And no one seeking righteousness. Sound familiar to you? It's bad for everyone. Because when we're separated from the love of God, we end up in failure and we end up in fear and we end up in anger with God, with ourselves, and with each other.

Have you ever noticed when somebody's angry at you, whatever you do doesn't make the anger go away? It doesn't matter what you try.

I've tried it. When I was young, I cleaned up my bedroom. My mother wasn't impressed. She was still angry. You know? Because when you're angry, the only way for the anger to go away has to do with the person themselves.

[40 : 35] John was trying to take away God's anger at his sin by doing it himself, but he wasn't good enough because no one's good enough. In verse 21, it says, we have nothing to boast about because it's all about God.

It's all about his grace. You know, some people wonder, why do Methodists have a rail? Why do we have kneeling in church? Because we need to remember. We need to always remember.

It's not what we do ourselves. It's what we do by submitting to God. That's what we kneel about. We kneel as a sign of respect, as a sign of saying, God is God, not us.

We can't do it. We need God. See, grace itself is love over sin. God does it.

He swallows up his own anger in his love. Some people say they don't like to hear that God's angry. Have you ever been betrayed by somebody?

[41 : 37] Have you ever been hurt by somebody? Have you ever had somebody, like, gossip about you, or say things about you or do things to you or sabotage your life? Has anybody ever had that happen?

Or am I the only one? Yeah, no, I think there's some hands that didn't go up. Because we've all had that feeling. And when we feel that feeling, what do we want to do?

We want to hurt somebody, don't we? That's where God is. He's given us everything. He's loved us and cared for us and nurtured us, and we literally spit in his face and turn our back on him.

And so the natural thing is that God would be angry. You know, it's interesting because it talks in here about redemption. Redemption. Jesus redeemed us.

Now how could he redeem us? Some people think he bought us from the devil. If God needs to pay a price to the devil, then the devil's God, right? No, he redeemed us from his own anger.

[42 : 42] He paid the price for our anger. That's what he did in the sacrifice. He paid the price to justify us.

To justify us. You know what justify is? Justify is a legal term, which means you're declared innocent. But think about those margins. Does anybody remember the old manual typewriters that you tried to make the margins straight?

Anybody remember that? Did anybody actually accomplish that with a manual typewriter? It's like there was no way you could, but now, bam, the computer is just, boom, like that. You push a button and the whole thing goes straight.

Completely, completely perfect. perfect. The best we can be is the manual typewriter, doing it ourselves. But with God, we're like the computer who makes it entirely different.

But you see, here's the problem. It's not just a legal thing. It's not just a mechanical thing. It's something that's completely and entirely based on the relationship. And that's why I say it's all about love.

[43 : 49] You know, when I built that closet, my wife came up and looked at it. And she said, it's wonderful. You built it just right.

What a beautiful job you did. Then she went and got her friends and brought them up and said, look at how great a job he did. And I'm like, no, not. Not. Don't you see? Right?

And I guarantee you, if I would have hired a professional, to do that closet, she would have found every flaw and mistake that that professional made. Am I right?

Every one of them. There's a drip of polyurethane over there in the far corner up behind the shelf. But with me, all she saw was, it's perfect.

You see how love makes the difference? Love makes the difference with God too. You see, the church is not a community of perfect people. The church is a community of forgiven people.

[44 : 48] Amen? The church is not a place where everybody gets it right. The church is the place where even though we try to do our best and we fail, God loves us anyways.

And God makes us perfect in that love. 1 John chapter 4. There is no fear in love. We don't have to be afraid of an angry God. Perfect love drives out fear because fear has to do with punishment and the one who fears is not made perfect.

Perfect what? In love. Not perfect because of what we do. Not perfect because we're able to do it. Perfect because of God's love with us.

So, grace requires a sacrifice. God wants to make us at one with Him. That's what atonement means. At one with God. God. But to do that, He had to give something up which was His perfection.

God had perfection. God did not have any sin, any brokenness, any pain, any of that stuff in His world. But what He said is, I love you so much that I will take you and let your sin come into my world.

[45 : 55] As it says in the Bible, the sins of the world were cast upon Him. God died to His righteousness. That's the sacrifice He made. God died to Him so that we could become at one with God.

So we're saved by that faith. But it's not faith. It's just an intellectual thing. It's not just a mind thing. It's not even a strength thing. It's not even our worshiping soul thing. It's a heart thing.

A heart attack. God loves us. And that faith gives us salvation and the love drives it and we can have hope forever. So let's see how you did on your quiz.

How do we make out? Two people thought it was a warm feeling like heartburn. 82 people thought it was a supportive relationship where people look out for each other. Nine said, when people do kind things for you, and one, it's the ice cream.

And then 12 kind of threw an olive above because they couldn't come up with an answer. And I would submit to you that love is the first one. That love is the first one.

[46 : 58] Love is a feeling. I can't explain it. It's a feeling that whenever I'm near my wife or people I love, my heart just sings. It's a feeling that changes how I act, how I feel, how I do what I am.

And yes, it leads to all those other things. Those are a demonstration of love. Love buys the sprinkles for the ice cream. But love is something that happens inside of us.

For John, it was a warm heart. What we describe it as, when God touches me, it's like an electricity goes through my system.

When God embraces me, it's like I feel more comfortable and warm and cool and all that stuff all at the same time. When God fills up my life, I feel like I have the confidence of the universe.

What is it when we come to the table? Why do we do this? Because every week we invite you to come. We invite you to come and share in the grace of God.

[48 : 01] Come and meet God. And we can't explain what happens in communion. We can't explain it at all. I had a grandmother once say to a three-year-old, Travis, you can't take that communion if you don't understand what it is.

He said, it's the body and blood of Jesus which was shed for me. Okay. That works. That works. That'll preach. I can't explain it but I can feel it.

And it changes me. The key to Methodist is the Holy Spirit power of God dwelling within us. It's the fire that sets our hearts aflame.

It's the blessed assurance of knowing that Jesus is ours. So Pastor Lisa showed a clip from a movie last week. I thought that was so cool. I was going to show a clip from the movie too, you know.

And she had this great clip about Provenient Grace but mine had John Wesley at Aldersgate Street and they're having this very staid and very formal little meeting and John Wesley says, excuse me, dear sirs, but I must interrupt your discourse because I have had a warm feeling in my heart.

[49 : 15] I thought, I don't think it happened that way. I don't think it happened that way at all. A man who set the world on fire for God didn't go, kind of warm, sort of a subtle feeling.

He said, dude, can you feel this? Holy cats, is everybody feeling what I'm feeling? My heart is on fire. Holy cats. We've got to go do something about this.

We've got to get everybody to feel this. This is amazing. This is amazing. God's grace. Change John's world and can change ours as well.

Without Aldersgate, John would have been an obscure priest in the Anglican church. With him, he's transformed the whole world. 1 Peter chapter 4 says, above all, love each other.

Love each other deeply because love covers over a multitude of sins. With a warm heart, we can change everything. How many of you think this world's going in the right direction?

[50 : 18] I'm not seeing a whole lot of hands going up. So you want to change the world? You realize John Wesley alone changed 100 million people's lives.

Imagine what we could do if we all changed 10 million people's lives. We can do that. People ask me, what am I about? Why are we making changes? Isn't the church good?

Isn't everything? No! It's fine for us, but it's not fine for the world. We need to mobilize. We need to get going. We need to get out there. We need to change people's hearts. Warm them up and light a fire in this place because we need that kind of love to change the world.

You know what? I do construction. Nobody ever taught me really that much about construction. I'm not really all that great at it, but I do it again and again and again.

Do you know why I do it? I do it because whenever I'm done, my wife looks at it and she says, it's wonderful. Not because it is, but because she loves me.

[51 : 21] And I do this for God. Not because somehow I'm great at it, but because whenever I talk about God, whenever I turn to God, He warms up my heart and I feel like I can do anything and the whole broken world won't stop me or you and certainly can't stop the church together.

The Bible says the gates of hell will not prevail against this church. So we need God. We need God. We need to reach out and say, God touched me. God touched me. God changed me. God filled me. God blessed me.

God, be my God and warm my heart. God half I am humbled by a heavy burden Neat the load of guilt and shame Then the hand of Jesus touched me And now I am no longer the same He touched me, oh, He touched me

And all the joy that lost my soul Something happened and now I know He touched me and made me whole Since I met this blessed Savior Since He cleansed and made me whole I will never cease to praise Him I'll shout and while He turned and He roamed He touched me, oh, He touched me And all the joy that lost my soul

Something happened and now I know He touched me and made me whole You know, God, God, the one who created the whole universe God, God who is above all things God who is perfect in every way God wants to love you and me Can you imagine such a thing?

[54 : 37] I know what's wrong with me And God loves me God shouldn't even pay any attention to me And He loves us He loves us more than anything He's reached down into our world No matter who we are To lift us up If we'll just lift up our hearts to God Who are I, that the Lord of all the earth Would care to know my name Would care to fill my love Who am I that the bright and morning star Would choose to light the way For my ever-wandering heart

Not because of who I am But because of what you've done Not because of what I've done But because of who you are I am a flower quickly fading There's a day and gone tomorrow The rain talks to me on the sky The paper in the wind kills you Feel me when I'm falling Lord, you catch me when I'm falling And you told me who I am I am yours I am yours Who am I that the eyes who see my sin

Would look on me with love And watch me rise again Who am I that the voice that comes to me Would go on to the lake And call the storm in me Not because of who I am But because of who you are Not because of what I've done Not because of who you are I am I am a flower quickly fading I am the day and the day I am the day and gone tomorrow The wind talks to me on the ocean No paper in the ocean No paper in the wind still heal Hear me when I'm calling

Lord, you catch me when I'm falling And you told me who I am I am yours I am yours I am yours Higher than the mountains that I face Stronger than the mountains that I face Stronger than the power of the brave Constant in the trial and the change One thing remains One thing remains

Your love never fails Your love never fails It never gives up It never runs out on me Your love God On and on and on and on it goes It overwhelms and satisfies my soul And I never ever have to be afraid One thing remains One thing remains Your love never fails It never gives up It never runs out on me

[59 : 50] Your love never fails It never gives up It never runs out on me Your love never fails It never gives up It never runs out on me Your love In death, in life, I'm confident I'm covered by the heart of your great love My death is safe There's nothing that can separate my heart From your great love Your love never fails and never gives up It never runs out on me Your love never fails and never gives up It never runs out on me Your love never fails and never gives up It never runs out on me Your love

Higher than the mountains that I face Stronger than the power of the grave Constant in the trial and the change One thing remains This one thing remains Amen. Please be seated.

Somebody asked me last night How do I get this How do I get this fire in my heart? How do I do that? We turn to God Because you don't do it God does it You don't do it God does it You get it?

That's the whole point Is to give it up to God That's the hardest part we've got in our lives We're so convinced We can do it all ourselves We can't Give it up to God Turn it over to God Your brokenness Your pain Your struggles Your defeat And everything And let God just fill your heart With his warm spirit Let's pray Dear God in heaven Forgive me Because I've sinned And I'm broken I can't seem to get it right Pour into my heart Your Holy Spirit Warm up my life Give me that blessed assurance Help me to know your mind Change my life So I can change this world For you God Forgive my sins Bless my soul In Jesus name

Amen God wanted to do this with you For your whole life He wanted to do this with you Before you were even born He decided to do this with you A thousand years ago The fire of Jesus Christ Is alive Let it burn in your heart Don't deny it Don't turn away from it Live it In the name of Jesus Christ Your sins are forgiven Glory to God Amen Jesus invites us to the table To come to meet with him To receive from him Everything That he has for us All of the blessings All of the anointing All of the power of God Can be received When we come Expecting that God Is going to pour it out

[63 : 44] So we come to the table Expecting to receive If you love God Repent of your sin And seek to live in peace As a disciple of Jesus Christ You are welcome At the table You are welcome To come and meet with God You don't have to be A member here If you want a touch from God If you want God To fill your heart And fill your soul And empower you For all God has called you to do You are welcome At this table This morning The Lord be with you Lift up your hearts Let us give thanks To the Lord our God 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 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 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 Hosanna in the highest Holy are you And blessed is your son Jesus Christ Your spirit anointed him To preach good news To the poor To proclaim release To the captives And recovering of sight To the blind To set at liberty Those who are oppressed And to announce That the time had come When you would save Your people He healed the sick Fed the hungry And ate with sinners By the baptism Of his suffering Death and resurrection You gave birth To your church Delivered us from slavery

To sin and death And made with us A new covenant By water and the spirit At his ascension You exalted him To sit and reign with you At your right hand On the night in which He gave himself up for us He took bread And he gave thanks to you He broke the bread And gave it to his disciples Saying take and eat This is my body Which is given for you Do this in remembrance of me And when the supper was over He took the cup Gave you thanks and praise And gave it to his disciples Saying drink from this All of you This is the cup of my blood The blood of the new covenant Poured out for you And for many For the forgiveness of sin Do this as often As you drink it In remembrance of me

And so in remembrance of these Your mighty acts In Jesus Christ We offer ourselves In praise and thanksgiving As a holy and living sacrifice In union With Christ's offering for us As we proclaim the mystery of faith Christ has died Christ is 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 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 With the Holy Spirit In your Holy Church All honor and glory Is yours Almighty Father Now and forever Amen Shall we pray together With the confidence Of children of God The prayer Jesus taught us 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 Will those who are serving Please come forward Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen

[68 : 49] 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 Jesus invites you to come and meet him.

Come and be touched by the power of God. You're welcome at the table at the rail for prayers for healing and anointing. To light a candle, come. Come and join us. Come and meet your Lord. Come and meet your Lord.

Come and meet your Lord.

Come and ■. Come and hang your Lord. Come and look our Lord. This is my Lord. This is my Lord. That's my Lord.

[71 : 43] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. If you're able, I'm going to invite you to stand as we're going to sing together Rock of Ages.

[74 : 00] Thank you.

It's probably not politically correct.

But anyways, it says that the Catholics have a cross on the top of their church to remind them of the Holy Trinity. And the Congregationalists have a weather vane because they decide what they believe by which way the wind is blowing.

And the Methodists have a lightning rod because they were struck by lightning once and they're afraid it might happen again. Well, not only are we taking the lightning rod down, let me tell you, the trustees just ordered a steeple, so we're going to make it easy for God to hit us.

I've got to tell you of a young woman in our church. I won't name her, but I'm so proud of her. I got a letter from a pastor in the church where she goes to college. And they said, this young woman has come into our church and transformed the spirit of the whole church.

[76 : 11] Can you imagine one young woman who is willing to go and be God's person in this world? May God set your hearts on fire that wherever you go, change might happen, blossom might occur, the power of God break out.

And this world can come to love and peace and joy and hope through the power of God in your heart. May God bless you.

May God set you on fire. Today and always, go in his peace.