

# Love Unfailing and Unshakable

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Preacher: Rev. Andrew Ong

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Please consider donating to this work in the San Francisco Bay Area online at [Christchurcheastbay.org](http://Christchurcheastbay.org). Good morning.

My name is Denise Yan. I'm part of the San Francisco Community Group and Women Reading Women. Today's scripture reading is from the book of Isaiah, chapter 54, verses 1-10, as printed in your liturgy.

Sing, barren women, you who never bore a child. Burst into song, shout for joy, you who were never in labor, because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband, says the Lord.

Enlarge the place of your tent. Stretch your tent curtains wide. Do not hold back. Lengthen your cords. Strengthen your stakes. For you will spread out to the right and to the left.

[ 1 : 12 ] Your descendants will dispossess nations and settle in their desolate cities. Do not be afraid. You will not be put to shame. Do not fear disgrace.

You will not be humiliated. You will forget the shame of your youth and remember no more the reproach of your widowhood. For your maker is your husband.

The Lord Almighty is his name. The Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer. He is called the God of all the earth. The Lord will call you back as if you were a wife deserted and distressed in spirit.

A wife who married young, only to be rejected, says your God. For a brief moment I abandon you, but with deep compassion I will bring you back. In a surge of anger I hid my face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness I will have compassion on you, says the Lord, your Redeemer.

To me, this is like the days of Noah, when I swore that the waters of Noah would never again cover the earth. So now I have sworn not to be angry with you, never to rebuke you again.

[ 2 : 19 ] Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken, nor my covenant of peace be removed, says the Lord, who has compassion on you.

The grass withers and the flowers fade, but the word of our God stands forever. Thank you, Denise. Good morning. It's the fourth Sunday of Advent, our last Sunday that we're going to be in the prophet Isaiah, so I'm looking forward to opening up God's word with you.

Let's go to him in prayer. Speak, Lord, in ways that inspire us, in ways that convict us of sin, and most importantly in ways that lift our eyes up to your Son, Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, who came and who's coming again.

Set our hearts on him. Let us behold him as the love of God given to us at Christmas. In his name we pray, amen.

So just this past week, my two daughters got these like holiday goodie bags, and in the goodie bags were these cute little like maybe like toenail-sized polar bears, little figurines.

[ 3 : 37 ] And each of them got two, so we had four in total. And my younger daughter, Leah, as soon as she saw these little polar bears, she decided that these would be like the perfect Christmas gift for her kindergarten buddies.

And we were so proud of her for thinking of others, being willing to part with these polar bears for the sake of her friends. But there was one small problem. Leah has three besties, but she only had two polar bears.

So we all turned to Cammie, our first grader, you know, hoping she'd be mature, hoping she'd do the math, be loving, be willing to give up just one of her polar bears so that Leah could give three away.

And so we asked Cammie, hey, JJ, that means big sister in Chinese, can Leah have one of yours so she can give gifts to all three of her friends? And man, this could have been such a beautiful Christ-like moment, right?

Both of our girls sacrificing for the sake of others, giving three polar bears away and sharing that one in our peaceful household, loving each other as sisters and good little pastor's kids.

[ 4 : 48 ] But of course, that's not what happened. Cammie was like, no, I want it. And listen, this is not a story about which daughter I love more or about how frustratingly selfish a pastor's kid can be.

No, this is the story of a pastor and a parent in process. Me thinking through, okay, how am I going to play this? Because the pastor in me, the biblical counselor in me was like, man, I'm so sad about this selfishness I see in my daughter.

I'm so disappointed. And I kind of want to call her out on this right now because she needs to know that selfishness is like everything that's wrong with the world. And I don't want to guilt or shame her into giving and loving others, but I do want her to have an aversion to the selfishness in her heart. I want her to hate selfishness and to practice putting it to death in her life. It's not the way of Jesus. It's not the way of the Holy Spirit. It's not something that honors God, and it's definitely not God's best for her.

And then on top of those thoughts, you know, as a millennial parent, I put on my Dr. Becky hat, and I thought to myself, okay, how can I help Cammie in this moment get in touch with her good inside, right?

[ 6 : 01 ] How can I compassionately, calmly help Cammie think rationally about this? It's like maybe, hey, I know you love these polar bears, and they are super cute, but you'll still have one.

Do you really need two? And wouldn't you want someone else to share with you? Think of how it will make Leah feel. Think of how it will make her friends feel. Don't you want to spread some kindness and generosity into the world?

What an opportunity to be a big girl. So me and Chels, we just like looked at each other like, hmm, how are we going to play this? And we did our best. I tried to reason with her and psychologize her into giving just like Dr. Becky would, but it didn't work.

Then I also talked to her about selfishness, and I played the Jesus card, right, about how unselfish he was. But no, she wouldn't budge. And you know, ultimately, we weren't going to force her to give up the polar bear.

It really was hers. It was her choice to make, right? You can't force generosity. You can't force someone to be loving and sacrificial, right? So that night, as I tucked her in, kissed her on the forehead, I left my girl's room thinking about this as a parent and as a pastor.

[ 7 : 13 ] How is it that people like my daughter, people like all of us, this congregation, how is it that people are shaped into people of love? How can we help people to a point where their desire to give outweighs the fear of loss?

Today's the fourth Sunday of Advent, and when we lit that fourth candle this morning, we were lighting what's called the love candle. We've been moving through Advent from hope to peace to joy, and now we come to love.

Because that's what hope, peace, and joy inspire in God's people, love. And not like love as mere holiday sentiment, like fleeting feelings. Not love as obligation, like, you know, buying that Christmas present for certain people, you know, that certain person that you just kind of, you buy it for them because it'd feel awkward not to.

No. We're talking about real love. God's love as the deepest and most anchoring reality in which God wants to form His people. Now, the passage today, Isaiah chapter 54 that we're looking at, what this is, is it's a prophetic call, it's a prophetic vision, it's a prophetic invitation and voice. It's Isaiah's voice speaking on behalf of God to God's people, calling them, inviting them, imploring them, really, to respond to the greatest thing that God has ever done, the greatest image and display of God's love in all of history.

[ 8 : 32 ] And we see that actually in the chapter right before, in Isaiah chapter 53, the famous prophetic image of the suffering servant who had come to save God's people, even after God's people had rebelled and chosen infidelity again and again and again.

Even after they failed to be the servants of God that they were meant to be, Isaiah 53 is about how God was still resolved to love them and to send forth another servant to bear their pain and suffering, to take upon Himself their punishments, their afflictions, to be pierced for their transgressions, crushed for their sins, to bear their sins, the sins of the lost sheep of Israel, and to be crushed as a substitute lamb, to be wounded in their place that they might be healed. And yet somehow, at the end of Isaiah 53, you have this suffering, murdered servant of God. In the last two verses, though, of Isaiah 53, it says that after he suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied.

He will justify many. Therefore, I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils because he poured out his life unto death. And this is where our text picks up.

Isaiah 54, in response to this incredible act of God where he saves his people, not by simply conquering their enemies, but by sending a servant to suffer in their place for all the ways that they'd become their own worst enemies and even enemies of God.

[9:53] Isaiah 54 is a prophetic invitation to God's people to behold and respond to this servant who was slain for their sins and yet somehow raised to greatness as a blessing for many, countless multitudes of undeserving beneficiaries.

Isaiah 54 calls God's people to respond to this incredible act of sacrificial love and bounty. It gives us a picture, a vision of what it looks like to be astounded by the love of God in such a way that, like, transforms us and transforms our lives to live radical lives of love as well.

So let's turn our attention to this poetic image from Isaiah 54 here starting in verse 1. Now, I want you to notice in verse 1 that the very first thing that the prophetic voice basically calls out and commands the people to, in response to the love of God, it isn't try harder or like, oh man, you really owe God, you guys, so you better go do something hard, do something costly for him.

No, it's just sing. Verse 1, sing. See, God's love doesn't just call for like cognitive understanding and agreement from our heads or even active busyness and productivity from our hands.

No, most importantly, it calls for a full and overflowing heart. It calls for a singing soul, a response so deep that it's just reflexive and uncontainable. Singing is what happens when God's love is not just understood or agreed upon but felt.

[11:27] And this is why Christians sing. This is why we sing every single Sunday. It's so integral to our worship. It's an incredibly important spiritual discipline for God's people as we are being formed as people of love.

It's not that, you know, thing that we do here to stall so you can make it to church in time to at least hear the sermon, all right? Singing isn't that expendable portion of Christian worship.

No, it's essential to our formation, not just as Christians but as human beings. And maybe this sounds weird for some of us because our, you know, contemporary Western culture, in this culture, you know, adults rarely sing, right?

Especially not together, singings largely shifted from being a communal, heartfelt, cultural expression of the things that most move us to just something performed by entertainment professionals for the rest of us to consume.

Think of that scene from Elf, my all-time favorite movie, all right? Will Ferrell's The Man. Not thus saith the Lord, but I do like him a lot. Think of that scene, though, where Buddy first shows up to his dad's office in the Empire State Building, right?

[12:33] Remember, he shows up for the first time and his dad's just, like, expecting a performance from him. Like, maybe throw his name into Jingle Bells or something like that. And Buddy is put on the spot and so he sings, like, the most awkward and cringy song of the whole movie.

It's like, I'm here with my dad and we've never met and he wants me to sing him a song, right? I love it. I love it.

See, for Buddy, though, Buddy has lived his whole life. In his whole life, he's been singing communally with the full-throated Christmas spirit along with Santa and all the elves in the North Pole.

But now in this New York office, with Christmas cheer at an all-time low, Buddy's dad, who actually used to love making music back in the days when he was young and in love, now Buddy's dad only sees music as a trivial commodity.

Even after his change of heart toward Buddy, and even after he becomes a believer in Santa, we see that he's still too embarrassed to sing in public with his fellow New Yorkers.

[ 13 : 40 ] And his refusal to sing actually threatens to ruin Christmas for the entire world. But then, eventually what happens? It's when he finally raises his voice with all of New York City, that's when Christmas is saved.

And that's the moment when we're finally convinced that he's been saved, that his heart's been transformed by like a newfound love. When he finally bursts into song, that's when we know. That's when he comes alive and becomes the best, most human, most natural and endearing version of himself, with the movie ending with him like leisurely, beautifully, and soulfully making music with his family by the Christmas tree, right?

And this is what Isaiah is getting at. This is what he has in mind for the love-soaked, love-transformed people of God when he implores them to sing in response to what God has so lovingly done for them.

Singing is what God's people do. It's the natural expression of those who've been astounded by the love of God. But what's also intriguing about this passage is not just that it starts with a command to sing, but also who it tells to sing.

[ 14 : 46 ] Sing, barren woman, you who never bore a child. Burst in a song, shout for joy, you who were never in labor. Here God's people are being personified by a barren woman.

And not just a barren woman who never gave birth, but also a desolate woman. You could translate that as an appalling, deserted, desolate woman. And remember, being barren, unwanted, and deserted in this culture would have been like the greatest possible disappointment and shame in this society.

To not be wanted, to not have a family and bear offspring in that day, to be seen as undesirable and unproductive. No woman would ever write that story for herself. And this is what happened.

This is what had happened to Israel. Israel found herself diminished and undone, exiled, and tossed to and fro by the powers that be far from the flourishing vineyard that God meant for her to be.

And yet, because of the great love with which God loved her, this barren and deserted woman is invited here to sing, burst into song, shout for joy. Not because God was going to finally make her fertile all of a sudden.

[ 15 : 52 ] Look, it says, shout for joy, you who were never in labor. So somehow, just as the suffering servant somehow ended up seeing the light of life, God was going to make this woman, He was going to make this barren woman fruitful without making her fertile.

Shout for joy, you who were never in labor, because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband. Somehow, this barren, desolate woman is going to have more children than the ancient trad wife.

All right? And in light of this, this barren woman is being called by God not only to sing with joy about what He's going to do, but to live and to make plans in light of all the children, all the descendants shall eventually have in the future.

Verse 2, enlarge the place of your tent, stretch out your tent curtains wide, do not hold back, lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes. Basically, build a bigger house. Do the work of planning for God's abundance.

Start now. Make room for all that God wants to do in your life, all that God wants to give you beyond what you could ever imagine. Verse 3, for you will spread out to the right and to the left.

[ 17 : 00 ] Your descendants will even dispossess nations and settle in their desolate cities. He's saying, you are going to have a victorious, sprawling offspring across the whole earth. What Isaiah 54 is saying to God's people is that no matter how barren we may feel, no matter how desolate, appalling, deserted, no matter how much scarcity and limitation we face, God's always got a better plan and future for us because of His suffering and risen servant.

And not only are we encouraged to sing of that great comfort and hope, but even today, even before we see the fulfillment of the promise, we are called to enlarge our tents, to live into God's future now as though it's already arrived.

We're called to make room, make space now for God's abundance in our lives. And listen, I'm not preaching the prosperity gospel here. Actually, that God is saying these things to the barren and desolate woman, that somehow she'll have more children than the woman with the husband, even though never going into labor, that's actually proof that God's not promising the barren woman here the storyline she would have chosen or written for herself.

No, He's promising her a fruitfulness she never could have conceived or engineered, a better story than the one she'd ever have written for herself. When God says, enlarge your tent, make room for my abundance in your life, He's not saying, all right, start maxing out those credit cards, set yourself up for that dream life.

No, He's saying, prepare yourself for my perfect and better future for you, my better plan for you. We talked about this on the first Sunday Advent, that this God, He's a God of hope, right, which means that He is a God of surprises, the ultimate author of our lives who orchestrates fruitfulness out of our perceived barrenness in ways that, like, defy our limited imaginations.

[ 18 : 49 ] So the application question is, are we willing to accept this? God's better plans to make us fruitful His way, even without making us fertile in the way maybe we initially hoped.

You know, all the way back in 1916, there were these two African-American girls. They were 15 years old, and they had been going through a Bible study with this young German-American woman named Lillian Crager, and eventually they became Christians.

They converted to Christianity. Now, Lillian belonged to a church in Midtown Manhattan. And so the two girls, they were willing to commute from Harlem down to Midtown Manhattan.

They just wanted to be part of the church that Lillian belonged to, so they sought membership there. But because of the color of their skin, these two girls were denied membership. So what these girls did was they asked Lillian, well, would you be willing to come up to Harlem to continue leading us in Bible study so we could learn more, so we could reach more of our friends here in Harlem?

And that's what Lillian did. She went up to Harlem every week, and she led a Bible study for them. She commuted uptown to Harlem, away from her family, right? But the thing was, Lillian's family was very displeased with this.

[ 20 : 05 ] They ostracized her and how she was mixing with colored people, and not just her, like, immediate household, but she was actually also engaged. So her fiancé, he threatened to call off the wedding if she continued her ministry in Harlem.

So as you could imagine, Lillian agonized over this, the sense of calling to these girls in Harlem, and yet also her good, her good natural desire to be married, to become a mom, to start a family. But as the story goes in Lillian Crager's inner conflict, God spoke a clear word to her, and she came upon this very text that we're looking at this morning, Isaiah 54, more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband.

And that was it for her. She chose the 15-year-old converts from Harlem over her family, over her fiancé, over the future she thought she was about to have. And it cost her dearly.

But within a year, there was a group of 12 Christians now in Harlem gathered as a result of her Bible studies. They launched a church called Bethel Gospel Assembly. And in this church, Bethel Gospel Assembly, Lillian Crager soon became known as Mother Crager.

[ 21 : 24 ] And this church eventually blew up to 1,200 members. See, Lillian Crager could have settled down with a nice home, a nice nuclear family in midtown Manhattan, but instead she chose to enlarge her tent.

She chose to live into the future more than into the present. Instead of living into the German-American dream of 1916 with maybe like five kids in a four-bedroom apartment, she chose to live into the new creation future.

As a citizen of the kingdom of heaven where her family consisted of people from every nation, tribe, and tongue, of every skin color and culture. That's what people do when they are secure in the love of God.

They love without abandon, even at great cost, because they are no longer afraid of what they might lose. And that brings us to verse four where the prophet has more to say about how to respond to the sacrificial love of God.

He says, sing, barren woman, enlarge your tent. And then here in verse four, he says, do not be afraid. You will not be put to shame. Do not fear disgrace. You will not be humiliated.

[ 22 : 31 ] You will forget the shame of your youth and remember no more the reproach of your widowhood. See, barrenness isn't our only problem. For many of us, we don't just feel barren and empty and infertile, but also, and maybe worse, we feel ashamed, disgraced, disqualified, and fearful of God's wrath.

Because we know we've fallen short. There's no mistake about it. Israel had fallen far, far short of God's standards. We know all the ways that we've screwed up and failed to live up to even just our

own standards, let alone God's standards.

And so it makes sense to us that God would be angry, that we've forfeited a peaceful and loving relationship with our Creator because of all the pollution that we've introduced into His creation. All the words we've spoken that we wish we could unsay.

All the relationships we've damaged, left unrepaired, and have to kind of anxiously navigate, especially during the holiday season. All the patterns we promised ourselves and we promised God that we would give up, that we were done with, but that actually linger in our lives.

This is what the Bible calls sin, unrighteousness, unfaithfulness. And we all have a ton of it on our records, just as the people of Israel, who God did angrily abandon and hide His face from.

[ 23 : 48 ] As it says here in verse 7, God admits, I did abandon you, I did hide my face from you because sin is real, and God is right and righteous to be angry with sin and to forsake the unfaithful. So this record of sin, it actually makes us all wonder, right?

Not just whether God can bring a brighter future out of our barren circumstances, but also whether our past has put us beyond the reach of God's love for us. And it's to this sensible feeling of shame, disgrace, and fear that God speaks to us through the prophet.

Not with denial, not with the minimization of our flaws, but with the promise. Do not be afraid. You will not be put to shame. How? Why not? Verse 5, for your maker is your husband.

This isn't don't be afraid because what you did isn't that bad. You'll do better next time. No, this is do not be afraid because of who I am to you and for you. I'm your maker.

The one who knit you in your mother's womb, brought you into existence. The one who knows you inside and out, up and down. And the one who didn't just have the power to create you, but the one who also still has the power to recreate you.

[ 24 : 58 ] And I've chosen to be more than a maker to you. I've chosen to bind myself to you in love. As a husband, to a wife, the Lord Almighty, literally the Lord of hosts. All the hosts of heaven are at my disposal.

I'm more powerful than you could ever imagine. And I choose you. I'm committed to you always and forever. And not only is your maker your husband, but the holy one, it says.

The one of a kind. Holy, holy, holy. Standard of purity himself. The holy one is also your redeemer. The one who claims you as his own.

Takes responsibility for you. Purchases you at a cost and publicly declares your worth. The God of all the earth, it says here. The one to whom all creation belongs.

He says, I am still willing to pay for you in addition to all that I already have. Your maker is your husband. And the holy one is your redeemer. This isn't just abstract, like theological God language.

[ 25 : 56 ] This is personal. This is I am yours and you are mine forever. Forever. This is God saying, I will have you. I will cover you. I will bind my future to yours. This is what God says to his people.

You are worth redeeming to me. You are worth loving to me. And I wonder if that's the word you need to hear this morning. Maybe something you've heard before, but something you need to hear fresh.

That God loves you. God loves you. You, the holy one, the maker. He's willing to pay the price, bear the cost for you, to redeem you.

You, us, poor, wretched, barren, and bumbling, sinful, rebellious, unfaithful, ungrateful, us. This is the gospel.

This is the good news of Christianity. That God loves you. This is the news that inspires our songs and our courage to live in love no matter the cost.

[ 27 : 00 ] The news that casts out all fear, erases all shame. This is the God of the Bible. A God who does not wait for you to find your way home, but calls, pursues, initiates. Can you hear his voice to you this morning?

God loves you. Even if you feel far from him. You haven't been in his presence in quite a while. Verse 6 says, That's what he's focused on.

That's what he wants, to show you that he loves you. He will ever and always be calling back to himself the ones that he loves at great cost, at cost of energy and patience, at great emotional cost. But he's your redeemer. He's willing to spend it on you. Even after you've gone after other lovers, even in your barrenness and undesirability, he runs toward the rejected.

He's a God whose compassion runs deeper than his dismay. Verse 7, For a brief moment, I did abandon you, he says, but with deep compassion, I will bring you back.

[ 28 : 29 ] Likewise, verse 8, In a surge, in a quick outburst of anger or wrath, I did hide my face from you briefly. For a moment, he says, But with everlasting kindness, I will have compassion on you, says the Lord, your Redeemer.

Do you see the contrast here in verses 7 and 8? Do you see the asymmetry between his real anger, absence, and judgment, and his massively outsized love? Abandonment for a brief moment, but deep, deeper compassion that brings you back.

A surge of wrath, a moment of hiding his face, but everlasting kindness and love. The glory of the gospel is that God's wrath is real, but it's not ultimate.

His compassion is greater, his love lasts longer, and his commitment runs deeper. And I wonder, do you know that kind of love? This love unflinching and unshakable that can survive our barrenness, at last our rebellion, overwhelm our shame.

If we want to be who God made us to be, if we want to be people of love, if we want this kind of radical, self-giving, sacrificial love to flow from us, if that is how we want to show up in this broken world, where selfishness far outweighs our selflessness, we have to be captured, we have to be captivated by this amazing love of God, the absolutely unique love of God that was lavished upon us when Jesus Christ, the suffering servant, bore our sins, took on himself the punishment our sins deserved, and brought us healing by his wounds.

[ 30 : 00 ] This is the only way we will ever be formed into people of love. You know, recently I sat down with a pastor that we just wanted to get to know each other, and this pastor, he basically lived like my worst nightmare.

And honestly, in more ways than one, but one of the ways was that his wife had an affair. She cheated on him. And from what I could tell, man, this pastor did everything right.

He loved his wife. They actually had a great relationship. It wasn't like he fell into any of the normal traps that you hear all these other pastors falling into. No, this was a man who kept God first. He devoted himself to prayer and fasting.

He was loved by his people. In fact, his people still miss him as their pastor. This church that he planted, right, 15 years ago, he invested 15 years of his life in this church. But ultimately, long story short, this pastor's wife's infidelity cost him his job.

It nearly broke his family. It buried him in questions of shame, like, was I not enough for her? And what does this say about me as a pastor? He had all the potential to break him, all the potential to silence his singing, push him into self-protection mode, and let him waste away in shame.

[ 31 : 09 ] But the pastor I met was not a man wallowing in self-pity or victimhood. Yes, he's got scars, but he held his head high, and he's forgiven his wife, and they're still together three years later.

He speaks no ill of her. In fact, he remains her greatest defender and supporter. He's still able to celebrate who she is, who she's becoming. In fact, he told me that their marriage today, three years after the incident, after the affair, is better than it's ever been.

And I was just blown away to hear this. And then you know what he said to me? He said to me, there is absolutely no way I could have survived any of this.

No way I could have forgiven her. No way my family could have weathered this. Apart from the gospel. Apart from the cross. Apart from knowing, trusting, and wanting to live out what Jesus has done for me.

Can you imagine if the world was filled with this kind of love? These kinds of loving people. So secure in the love of Christ that we could love anyone in any circumstance because of Christ's steadfast love for us.

[ 32 : 20 ] See, this kind of love, it doesn't come from personality or willpower or wishful optimism. It doesn't make sense. It doesn't make sense unless, unless the love of Christ is real and true and at work in us.

It doesn't make sense unless we are sure that justice has been paid and every repentant sin covered and atoned for by the blood of Jesus Christ. Yet this is exactly the kind of love that the world needs.

This is what each of us desperately needs. The security of the love of God so secure we can sing in any circumstance, so secure we can even enlarge our tense in anticipation of God's promises, so

secure that our shame and disgrace, are overshadowed by His compassionate pursuit of us. It's not a love that overlooks our sin, but a love that overcomes our sin by the sacrificial work of Christ. Look at verse nine. God says here, yeah, your sins are bad. So bad I could and should have blot you out for them.

To me, this is just like the days of Noah. Your sins are that bad. They demand a cosmic flood. But again, the beauty of the gospel is that God is more committed to saving than slaughtering.

[ 33 : 27 ] And He is far better at saving than even we are at sinning. So just like He swore in mercy that the waters of Noah would never again cover the earth, He says here, so now I have sworn not to be angry.

You can translate, not to be wrathful with you, never to rebuke you again. And this is just incredible. Basically, God is comparing His love for you to one of the most solemn and solid oaths He has ever made in human history.

And then He says something even stronger in verse 10. Though the immovable mountains be shaken and the steadfast hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken, nor my covenant of peace be removed.

Can you think of a greater oath, a more trustworthy promise, a firmer foundation? God doesn't swear by something greater than Himself because there is nothing greater.

He is the Lord. He is Yahweh the I Am. And I love how it's put in Hebrews, in the Hebrew here in verse 10 where He says, again, though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken, nor my covenant of peace be removed, says, and literally in the Hebrew, says, the compassion toward you, Lord.

[ 34 : 45 ] That's how it reads here, literally in the Hebrew. Not just says the Lord, says the compassion toward you, Lord. Like all He ever had to be was the Lord, Yahweh, but out of love, out of sacrificial, unfailing, and unshakable love.

He has committed Himself to not just being the Lord, but the compassion toward you, Lord. By entering into this oath and covenant, He has literally taken on an identity that has you, that includes you in who He is.

And He hasn't just sworn a covenant of love and peace with us, but He's proven it in Christ. His love is sworn, and His Son's been slain.

So how could we not live in the unfailing, unshakable love of God, singing even in our barrenness, enlarging our tents according to God's future perfect promises, being honest about our sin, and yet without descending into fear or shame, but rather pouring ourselves out in love because God's love for us has been sworn, proven, and can never be taken from us.

See, this, this is what happens when people are shaped and transformed into people of love. God's love frees us to give our polar bears away.

[ 36 : 02 ] It's a love unfailing and unshakable. So this Advent, this Christmas, let's spend ourselves freely because this love we did not earn is also love we cannot lose.

Let's pray. Let's pray. Oh Lord, we love the gospel. It is good news that you've loved us not because of anything in us, but as you said to your people of old, you just loved us because you loved us because you loved us.

It's all about who you are and not who we are. But in that, Lord, you've given us worth. You've given us an identity. And just as we did not earn it, oh Lord, we celebrate that we cannot lose it, your love toward us.

So let us live out of it, Lord, as sacrificial people, as the body of Christ, as those who see and believe that what he's done is the most beautiful thing in all of history, as those who want to share his good news and shine his light and bring his hope, bring his hope to the world, God.

Would you do that in us by your spirit, by your word, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.