

Love Story

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[0:00] Glory. What a blessing. This morning, let me share with you the greatest story ever told.! Now there's a film called that, isn't there? about the Bible, the greatest story ever told. Really, it's the greatest love story. Love. Love. This is love by God's definition.

Love that goes the distance. What does it say? God is love. 1 John 4. See the verses here. 1 John 4, 7-8.

John writes, Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God. And everyone that loveth is born of God and knoweth God.

He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love. That's a definition there, isn't it? Three words. God is love. That defines love.

[0:57] It underlines love. What is love? God is love. And the gospel is the ultimate love story, isn't it? Of the ultimate love. And we see in 1 Corinthians 13, which we'll go to, Paul shows us what love looks like.

Just going to step through 1 Corinthians chapter 13. It's a chapter that's often read at weddings. It's a poem, a summary of what love is.

God's kind of love. Agape love. The ultimate God kind of love. And we see that Paul calls this love the more excellent way. 1 Corinthians 13.

Our relationships need to be marked by love. God's kind of love. And what is that love? It's not some cheap, selfish, Hollywood style of love.

This is God's kind of love. This is the ultimate. This is the absolute. And he calls this the more excellent way. God's kind of love. It's unconditional. Paul's talking about love as being the first and greatest quality of life.

[2:07] And he's saying here in these verses, he's saying that love goes above and beyond. It goes above and beyond spiritual gifts and all kinds of knowledge that we can have and all kinds of understanding.

Greater even than the greatest faith and sacrifice that we could render to him. That without love it's all worthless and it's empty in God's eyes.

It kind of puts it all in that perspective. That love is the ultimate to aim for. And Paul writes to this church in Corinth, this place called Corinth, and he says that they've got a love problem.

Now what a shame it would be to have a church with a love problem. A church that is loveless. This church at Corinth, they were boasting and selfish. They were prideful.

They were arrogant. And they had all kinds of goings on, spiritual things. But they lacked the substance of love. And that was the point Paul was making here.

[3:05] Corinth was like this church going through the motions. It was lacking in love. And God help us to not be such a church. Amen. There will be a church that is a loving, God kind of love church.

And so we see this, we read through these verses. We see 1 Corinthians 13. Just going to step through this chapter. It's been called really the chapter of love, the love chapter of the Bible, 1 Corinthians 13.

And Paul says this, he says, Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not charity, I am become as a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.

Like this, just this noise, this jarring noise, this gonging, this clashing, this noise. A church can have a lot of noise, lack love.

And that's a vital ingredient indeed, isn't it? Some people are like that. All talk, no action. They sound spiritual and have a lot to say.

[4:11] They make a lot of noise and hoo-ha. Mouthing off, weasel words, lots to say. But the love is missing. And even what seems miraculous is

meaningless without love, isn't it?

Just a lot of clashing, clanging. Paul's really not saying so much about how to speak in tongues here. He's telling people that love is more important than trying to speak in tongues.

It's not the object of this passage. Paul's saying love is the must-have. Love is what we must aspire to, what we must pursue.

And we can have a whole lot of spiritual talk, but it's pointless if we lack love. He's saying this is what matters, love. Love, God's kind of love. This is what is the most important.

Nothing compares with this love. And as we talk, it's not Hollywood, emotional, kind of physical love per se. This is the love that is of the God quality.

[5:13] It's the gold standard, the God quality standard of love.

Self-blessed love. It's sacrificial love. Really, it's Calvary love.

Calvary.

Calvary, the place where the cross was stationed. Calvary, the place where our Lord was crucified. That's the kind of love that we're talking about here. The kind of love that God demonstrated 2,000 years ago.

Where it says, But God commendeth his love towards us. In that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Wow.

While we were his enemies, he gave such love. Such love that we couldn't deserve, we couldn't earn, we couldn't. We've got no call for it, really.

We're undeserving of that love. But he commends that love. He demonstrates that love. He gives that kind of love. As someone has said, it wasn't the nails that held him to the cross.

[6:15] It was his love. Love held him there. You and me. In the Bible, it says he could have called legions of angels to come and to scatter his enemies.

But no, he chose the cross for you. It was his love that he demonstrated towards us. And Paul writes on in 1 Corinthians 13 about this kind of love.

He says, verse 2, Though I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, these are good things. Though I should, faith such that I could remove mountains and have not charity, have not love.

I am nothing. You know, we can have a load of knowledge and without having the heart right, it's a problem, isn't it? We can have a load of understanding and ability and power, spiritual power.

But love is the vital factor that we must aspire to. We must have faith without works. We have all kinds of talk and spiritual ability, but it must be in love.

[7:26] It must be given and done in love. Our faith should translate into loving action. Let God's love flow through you, through your day by day.

It's not just a Sunday Christianity.

It's a 24 by 7. It would be a channel of God's love. That we are that channel. Wherever we go, through school, through work, through life, to live out our faith, motivated by love.

Verse 3, Paul says, Though I bestow my goods, all my goods, to feed the poor. Give everything.

Though I give my body to be burnt. And have not charity, profiteth me nothing.

Nothing. People can be generous. They can give to worthy causes. They can give their all. And yet, without love, it's missing that vital ingredient.

Even our good works can be superficial, if not done with love, as the object, as the aim. You could say that works without love is there. Is love our motivator?

[8:30] That we love God such that we love without caring for praise, for recognition. Is love the driver about what we do, about who we are? Do we love like Jesus?

He loved without expecting anything. And I reckon, look, I was thinking about what is the biggest word in the Bible, and I found it.

I should put this out there as the greatest discovery. The greatest discovery is the biggest word in the Bible, and it's two letters long.

Two. The biggest word in the Bible is just two letters long, and I'll show you where it is. It's found in this verse here. It is two letters long.

So, for God so loved the world that he gave his own thoughts. Whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

[9:33] Our Lord calls us so to love as he loves. How much did he love? So loved. That he laid his hands on that beam of word, that he laid his hands to be pierced, to bear our sin.

So loved. Arms wide open that he's so loved. And he so loves. And he says, love one another as I have loved you. Wow, that's a big call, isn't it?

We should love. So love. So love. God's love can flow through you today, here and now, where we live, in our lives, in our homes.

Do we love as God loves? Loving so. So loving that we won't expect anything back. Paul tells us further how of the attitudes and actions of the Corinthians, that they were selfish.

They were jealous. Trying to keep up with the Joneses and feeling this jealousy, this arrogance, this crudeness, this unbecoming behavior, this rudeness.

[10:44] Seeking their own rights, being easily provoked to anger, holding grudges, being unforgiving. You know, that's in me. That's me.

That's the old me. That's easy to be, isn't it? The ego. What does it say? Ego's not a dirty word. I think it is.

Ego is a dirty word. Ego, the self. Self. Selfish interest. Self-importance. Selfish passions. Pleasing self.

Self-centeredness. Self-contentment. Is that what drives us such selfish passions and desires? Or is it God's spirit? God's spirit can so infill us that he comes out.

We'll ooze Jesus, as it were. That would be good, wouldn't it? That's where we get a holy virus this morning. That you'd all get contaminated with the holy virus, as it were.

[11:46] The Jesus virus. That he would so fill you and flood you and overflow you that it comes out of the very pores of your skin. People can see Jesus oozing out of you.

Wouldn't that be good? God's so loved and he wants us so to love. One day there was a cobbler, this shoe repairer, had a dream that Jesus would come and visit him.

And it seemed so real, this dream that he had, that he got up early the next morning thinking that today's the day. Jesus is coming to my shop. And he decorated his business and he waited all morning for Jesus to come.

But to his disappointment, the shop was quite quiet. And he said, just some old man came in and limped up to the door and asked him for a few minutes of warmth on this cold day.

And as the man was resting, the shoe repairer noticed the old man's shoes were worn through. And he was touched. And he reached out and took a new pair of shoes from his shelf and gave it to the stranger.

[12:45] And saw that the stranger was wearing them as he went on his way. Then through the afternoon, the cobbler waited and another visitor came, an elderly woman. And she was struggling under this heavy load of firewood.

And he invited her too to his shop to come and eat. And he saw that she had a nourishing meal before she went on her way. Then as night fell, the cobbler heard a child crying outside the door.

And the child was lost and afraid. And he went out and soothed the youngster's tears. With his hand, he took the little child home to safety. When he returned, the cobbler was sad.

He was convinced that he had been away and he might have missed the Lord coming. Maybe he had missed the visit of the Lord. And he said, Why is it, Lord, that your feet delay? Have you forgotten that this was the day?

Then in soft silence, he heard a voice cry, Lift up your heart, for I have kept my word. Three times I came to your friendly door. Three times my shadow was on your floor.

[13:45] Well, I was the man with the bruised feet. I was the woman you go through to. I was the child on the street. Now the Bible says in that you've done it to the least of these you've done it unto me.

You know, think about how can we look like Jesus, look on people like Jesus would look, and to know that Jesus sends people across our path for us to bless, to reach.

To see others as souls that Lord Jesus loves. 1 Corinthians 13, verse 4. We see the Corinthians love, the 1 Corinthians 13 love is fully demonstrated by the Lord Jesus.

Really, it's Jesus here in this chapter, in the love chapter, isn't it? He is love. Love personified. Love incarnate. Love in the flesh. Love made man, God made man, and dwelling amongst us.

Verse 4, we see charity suffereth long. Long suffering. Charity is kind. Charity envieth not. Charity vaunteth not itself. It's not puffed up.

[14:49] What is it saying here? It's saying that love is generous. Love is kind. Love is gentle. It's sensitive to the needs of others. Love is patient. Think of the long suffering of God.

Think of how long God has suffered to woo me, to reach me, to draw me, that I could receive his gift. And God is very patient, isn't he?

He's patient with me still. Amen. With you. Praise God for that. Love is patient. And he bears with us. He waits for us simply to trust him, simply to come to him.

And he's long suffering, isn't he? He suffers long. He's kind. Love is God's nature. He's kind to us. Love is Jesus, isn't it?

See how Jesus was kind, our Lord, our precious Saviour. Love is kind. He touched people. How he reached people. How he saw their need and he met their needs.

[15:51] Love, it says, it envieth not. It's not jealous. It's not daunting itself like some peacock. Love is not greedy, grasping, envying others.

It's got a peace and contentment deep down. We don't have to be greedy and grasping and envying and kind of chase the almighty dollar as the world would.

It's not envying others. It's not being content. It's not being content. Knowing that peace, that rest, that soul, that contentment. Love doesn't act like a show-off.

Love has humility. Think of our Lord. What did he do? As he came, he quietly serves. Doesn't he? As he came to the disciples, he was as a servant. Now, love makes no fanfare.

It blows no trumpet. The hypocrites in the Bible days, they would blow the trumpets to say, hey, somebody special's coming. Look at the rabbis or whatever. And they would wear and make a big showy entrance and show off as they would blow the trumpets, literally, to announce their importance.

[17:00] But no, Christ came humbly as a servant. Will we be a church like that? God helping us.

People of God like that? I've told this story before. There was a church in Chicago where there was a young little boy and his parents moved to another part of the town for some distance from the Sunday school, the church program.

And it would mean for him a long, tiresome walk each day. And a friend noticed that he was continuing to come, even though there was churches much nearer to his home.

And he said that they may be as good for others, but not for me. He was asked, why not? He says, because they love a fellow over here. Love people here in the church.

That's what made the difference for this man. He was willing to travel to the church where the love was. And that's what we want to be, isn't it? A loving church. A caring church.

[18:10] A loving church just like that. And a loving people just like Jesus. A loving servant. The one who took upon him the form of a servant.

It says that he washed the disciples' feet. Can you imagine a more menial task than that? You know, if we were in a nation, as some nations have servants, that would be the lowest of the low. That's just a, that's a, you know, the lowest lowly kind of job and service you can render, wash someone's feet. But the Lord Jesus did that.

Wow. He would be, as it were, of such a humility to do that. He's not puffed up.

Jesus is not up here somewhere, high and mighty, looking down. He is amongst us, with us, reaching out, embracing us, holding us, calling us.

[19:12] It's like the man in the story of the prodigal son, where the prodigal son, he wastes his substance and blows everything that the father has given him.

And he's living it up in this faraway land. And he realizes, I've got to go back to my father. Of course, a picture of a sinner coming to God. And as soon as he heads towards the father, the father's already looking, waiting.

And the father runs, grabs his garment and faces towards the son. And then he says he embraces him and he kisses him. And that's the kind of love that God shows.

Even the man, as he was in this picture, of a man who lived in the pig pen. He smelled like a pig. God loves.

So. Goes on, verse 5. It tells how, Love does not be self unseemly. Seeketh not her own.

[20:15] Is not easily provoked. Thinketh no evil. We're talking here about God's kind of love. Not a self-focused love, but God's love. And selfishness is a big problem, isn't it?

You know, in this selfie world where everyone's all self-obsessed, all selfish and self-centered.

You've just got to get the latest photo of yourself, to project yourself, to brag about yourself, to show what yourself is doing.

This selfie kind of world. The opposite of God's love, isn't it? It's ego. We're not here for an ego trip. We're here to know him, to trust him.

And sometimes self is at the very heart of our problem. But the Bible actually says to crucify self in the sense of we don't put self on the pedestal. We put Christ.

We exalt him. And we think of others. This world we live is not focused on others. It's often focused on yourself. I know I've read this little poem before.

[21:16] But it's something that I find this quite a moving poem. And something it bears repeating. Lord, let me live from day to day in such a self-forgetful way that even when I kneel to pray my prayer shall be for others.

Help me in all the work I do ever to be sincere and true and know that all I do for thee must needs be done for others. Let self be crucified and slain and buried deep or rise again.

And may all the efforts be in vain unless they be for others. And when my work on earth is done and my new work in heaven begun, may I forget the crown I've won while thinking still of others.

Yes, others, Lord. Yes, others. Let this, my motto, be help me live for others that I may live for thee. The sense where we should think of others.

Not of ourself. Not of seeking our own. Seeking what we want. But have a heart for others. To think of others. Others need our touch.

[22:21] Be thoughtful of others. The Lord came because he cared about others. And he gave the very greatest gift he could give. He gave himself. And he took the bruising.

He took the wounding. He took the piercing. He took the beating. For you. For me. As he took it. He took it for you. And this love, it says, verse 5, in effect it's saying that love doesn't think it are evil.

It doesn't put it. It doesn't keep track of the wrongs done by others. Now some people like to keep a little black book of all the things. So and so wronged me.

So and so said something about me that was negative. Somebody hurt me. Somebody slighted me. Somebody was rude to me. Whatever it be. And they keep these grudges.

They keep these chips on their shoulder that weigh them down. I was just let go of your grudges.

Forget. God's love will keep loving. You know, I had occasion of someone who we had a bit of a falling out.

[23:26] And it could have been partly my fault. I knew there was a difference between me and this other man. And I knew that I had to get it right. I didn't leave it unsettled.

You know, I've got friends dying of cancer. You know, it's life short. You know, I think, well, how long have I got? How long have they got? I wanted to leave it unsaid, undone.

I went and made it right with him. I visited his home. It wasn't home. But I wrote him a long letter, a note. I apologised for how my actions might have been perceived.

Even though in some ways I felt that I was the one wronged. But nevertheless, I knew that the problem between us, I could do something to sort it out.

That's what we need to be like, don't we? And maybe you might feel you're the innocent party. But if there's something between you and someone else, get it sorted. Get it right. Life's too short, isn't it?

[24:21] I mean, think if you knew you only had a day to live, how many phone calls you might make, to write things, to share your love, to say, I love you, while you can. To have a heart like that.

To let go of grudges. To begin. That's God's kind of love. God's love will keep on loving. God's love is perfect. Now, there's people I love who have acted harshly, hatefully towards me.

It is something we should have. In fact, I find one of the cruelest things people can do to me as a pastor, one of the cruelest things people can do to me and the church, they stop contacting us. Stop contacting me. Because my inclination is to keep on showing God's love to them. And to keep on extending grace towards them. And then they stop me doing that.

It's kind of hard. I don't like to be cut off from anyone. But even when there's some ill will from them, that we would not want to be cut off from people.

[25:20] Because we want to reach out. We care for others. And God's given us the spirit of power and of love and of a sound mind. Hasn't he? The spirit of love. Wow. Don't you want that spirit?

The spirit of love. Holy Spirit. Verse 6 we read on. It says that love, charity, rejoiceth not in iniquity, in sin, but he rejoices in the truth.

Think about what does the world rejoice in? What is the top of the pops? What is the movies that are on the highest watched level? It's the movies and the entertainment that's filled with crudeness and filthiness and fleshliness and violence.

Dirty jokes. Our world rejoices in iniquity, doesn't it? Our world rejoices to hear some gossip, some smutty facts or figures.

It feeds on it. It feeds on it. And it laughs and enjoys that kind of thing. God's kind of love doesn't rejoice in that.

[26:22] We don't rejoice in sin. It's not something we want to feed our minds with, to entertain ourselves with. The world can't get enough of it, but we don't want a bar of it. Rather, we rejoice in the truth.

We rejoice in what is good and godly and righteous and uplifting and gracious and helpful. What is right and what is true. We want to make much of that. We rejoice in the truth.

Because God cares about the truth. So should we. Care about the truth so much we must impart it. Not as a holier than thou that I know better than you.

You know, when we're on the doorsteps talking to people about Christ, we're on a par with them. I was talking to my brother yesterday when we were out witnessing. When they say, you know, you knock on the door and they say, I'm an atheist.

Well, we could say, well, I used to be one of those too. I used to be like that. I used to think, you know, that you can identify, oh, I'm not interested. Oh, I used to think that I wasn't interested too.

[27:23] You know, there's a sense where we're on a par, we're on a level. I was there once. I was there once. But for the grace of God, I'd still be there. Amen. It's like we're talking with someone. I know it was at the prayer meeting.

A sister said, we are just like them, as in those who don't know Christ. The only difference is Jesus. The only difference. He's the only one who makes a difference.

We'd be just as lost and hell bound as the next man. But Christ makes the difference. Jesus saves. God cares about the truth. That's why we care about the truth. Enough to tell people.

Some people don't want to know. Don't tell me. Blah, blah, blah. Shut up. Go away. But there's a need to tell people the truth because it matters. The truth matters. There's a need for tough love too, such that we'll care enough that we'll tell people even when they hate us for it.

Care enough to speak the truth. And we'll speak the truth in love. As I say, not as some might try to teach or deliver truth as if we're better than other people.

[28:28] Not at all. Just the same. It's Jesus who makes the truth. And what love cares, love cares about the truth. Love cares about being honest and having integrity.

What is it that we get all excited about? Is it iniquity? Oh, what's the latest? What's the latest? It shows our values, doesn't it? What we tune into.

What wavelength we want to tune into. Let's rather rejoice in the truth. Let's rejoice in what's good for our soul. The Bible tells us we have to speak the truth in love.

Even when people don't want to hear it. And we want to do that lovingly, gently, graciously. And some might say, oh, that's unloving to say something is sinful or wrong.

The most unloving thing we can do is not to tell them. The most unloving thing we can do is to neglect to urge people to Christ. To fail to tell them is unloving.

[29:29] Some people get all excited about trivial things and they can't stop talking about it. You know, they know all the facts and figures about their sport team or whatever it is.

But they know scarcely anything of the truth. It's about a mind shift, isn't it? What matters? Nothing compares to this message or our soul.

May it be on our hearts and on our lips, we must tell. It's great gospel good news. We must impart it with that burning love that constrains us, that leaves us to do it.

To have a heart like Jesus. And as we share the good news, as we share our faith, our faith gets stronger. You might say, well, preacher, I've got a little bit of faith, but I'm still, I feel like I don't know enough to say much.

Well, say something. Do something. There's a story about a hiker in some terrible snowstorm. I can't really think about that this kind of time of year here.

[30:32] But you imagine if it was a terrible snowstorm and he was getting weaker and weaker and he stumbled and fell. And he said, this is the end. I just want to give up. No one's ever going to find me.

And he was getting so weak that he just thought, look, I'm just going to go to sleep and let the cold creep through my body and pass away. And then as he fell to the ground, he noticed there was another body there.

There was another man there. It was unconscious. And as he fell to his knees and was about to just kind of give over to death, he saw this man here and he thought, I've got to help this man.

And he began to rub the hands of the man and rub his face until the man's eyes opened. And he kept the other man warm. And in saving the other man's life, he saved himself.

And it's the same with us, isn't it, as Christians. Sometimes we can get weak and weary and lose the passion. We can think about others. We think, how can I reach others?

[31:29] And it gives you a passion. It gives you renewed vigor and strength. And God will help you. One of the greatest ways to stir and build your own faith is to share it.

Share your faith. Let's go to 7 again. 1 Corinthians 13, verse 7. It says of love, of charity, it beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

Love will keep on, keeping on. God's kind of love. It's not love that kind of a, you know, like a firework that some people, as they would call love, it's just some firework that goes off and they get all this emotion and then just fizzles out.

This kind of love, God's kind of love keeps on keeping on. This kind of love, it loves unconditionally. And this love covers everything. It says that it goes on and on and on.

It looks about a hoping. It's an enduring hope. In a world filled with hopelessness, we need this hope, don't we? The Bible talks about a living hope, a lively hope. It says we've got a sure hope for the future.

[32:37] We have a hope that is beyond what the news is saying. It's got a hope in a world that's often filled with despair. We've got a hope on the inside of us. The Bible says we've got a hope as an anchor of the soul.

And this love that we have, this love of God, we know that we have a hope that is ever living. It's everlasting. It will endure and go beyond and keep on loving.

And it's going to put up with all things. It's going to bear all things. It's going to go the hard yards. It's going to go the distance. It's going to believe. It's going to have faith. It's going to press on. It's going to have that sure hope.

It's going to have that endurance that keeps on going. It's going to have that strength going. And that's the kind of love that God shows us, isn't it? And he loves us so. The Bible says the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts.

How can I show the love of God? How can I share the love of God? How can the love of God be shed abroad in our hearts? How can that love that is in me go out of me? And there was a man who was praying and figured that he shouldn't pray, Lord, make me to love this person, but Lord, love this person through me.

[33:51] You can be the one who reaches those who might be unlovely, unlovable maybe. God will help you to love those who are hard to love.

God will help you to love you.

God says, try a little harder. What about when he's unkind and unreasonable and he loses his temper and acts angrily to you? What will you do then? Try a little harder.

Suppose he should strike you as he's done before. What could you do but leave him again? Love him a little harder. There's a sense where love will endure. Of course, we know the situations where you're not tolerating violence to women.

A woman has to put up with getting a hit. But there is a perseverance that can go the extra mile.

[35:14] That effort to reach. In this case, this woman reached her father. Redeemed. Gave up his drink. Saved.

Love endures. It goes the extra. And nowadays, the world would call love some passing lust. Some mere attraction. And maybe that goes just for a day, a night, a season, and then it just evaporates. There's nothing to show for it. Then they just go on to the next partner, seeking another love. That's not God's kind of love. God's kind of love is enduring.

It's committed. It goes the second mile. It's lasting love. And friends, we see verse 8. It says, charity never fails. It says this love will never fail.

Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail. Whether there be tongues, they shall cease. Whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. Love never fails. God's kind of love, it never fails.

[36:16] Jesus never fails. Amen. It says nothing should separate us from the love of Christ. It says that his love does with an everlasting love.

Nothing better, bigger, wider than that. And his love is forever. I urge you this morning, do you know his love? Do you know his love? His love that will not let you go.

And that love can dwell within the very person of Jesus within you. And you can love people as a Christian. God can help you as a Christian to love people, people that are hard to love.

And you can reach and touch people. It goes on. Paul writes, we know in part, we prophesy in part, but then that which is in part will be done away.

Look, we're just in a time where there's much unknown. But one day everything was going to be done away. It says for now, as a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, thought as a child.

[37:24] But when I became a man, I put away childish things. There's a sense where you put away some things in life. Put some things away. That immaturity of self.

That childishness. It could be childlike in the sense of a receptivity. Put away that childishness, the bratty childishness.

God doesn't want us to be that way. It says for the meantime, we see through a glass like a mirror that's dark, that's darkened. But then we're going to see face to face.

Now I know in part, but then I shall know even as also I am known. And he says this telling truth here, he says, Now abide a faith, hope, charity.

These three. And the greatest of these is charity. Love is forever. We'll have his love in heaven. But what about now? Do you have his love now?

[38:21] Do you know that you're loved by God? So loved. So loved.

Calvary's love. That this love, it transcends any other kind of love.

It's not temporary passing love.

This is forever love. It's going to endure forever. It's going to abide. It's going to last forever. It's going to persevere. This is the greatest love. What is it? Greater love hath no man. Yes, that he has to lay down life for his friends.

The Lord Jesus laid down his life. That's the kind of love we're talking about. It's love that is to that extremity. To that extreme. And this love is our identity.

He says, the Lord Jesus says, By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, that you have love, one for another. Or pray for the Philippians, that your love may abound more and more.

This love grows. It increases. Of course, we know how the, as our Lord met a scribe of the day and questioned about what is the law?

[39:26] What does it all sum up to? As in the whole Old Testament leading up, the Old Covenant. And Jesus answered him and said, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord.

The Lord our God is one Lord. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind and with all thy strength. This is the first commandment. And the second is like, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater.

It sums up in love, isn't it? Love captures it. Love is that which we should aspire to. They're called to walk in love. Put love into action.

In 1 John 3.18 it says, Our little children, let us not love in with it, rather in but in deed and in truth. That we don't just talk about love.

[40:35] Just blah, blah, blah. I love you. With your words. But you put it into action. In deed and in truth. You live it out. And Paul says, Let all your things be done with charity.

In other words, this is not a love we switch on and off when we feel like it. It's all encompassing. That your whole life is filled with love. That's a big call, isn't it?

I don't know. Is that possible? God says, Let it happen. Let all your things be done with charity. To pursue this love. To follow after or pursue it.

And this was manifested, the love of God towards us, in that God sent his only begotten son into the world. We might live through him.

Herein is love. Not that we love God, but that he loved us. Initiation for our sins, which means the sacrifice on our part.

[41:36] Punishment. Here's the one who took our sin punishment. And beloved, if God so loved us, also to love one another.

I urge you this morning to think about this greatest story ever told. The greatest love story. It's in your Bibles. Here it is. This is the greatest love story ever told.

The gospel. God so loved the world. The law that leads to the gospel, even that, is love the Lord your God.

Love him. Love him. And love one another. It's captured here. And 1 Corinthians 13, it's just a beautiful summary of love, isn't it?

And yet, let it not just be words on a page. Let it not just be as we could see there, that it's just in word, as it were. But it's in deed and in truth.

[42:35] We put it into action. We put it into our shoe leather. Walk it out. We live it in our deeds, in our actions. It's true. That we're truly living.

Pretense. Not some pretend kind of love. It talks about fervent love. It talks about love that's real, not love that's put on, or pretend that our love is real.

And I urge you this morning that the greatest love that we can ever know is Jesus and his love for us, that Jesus died for our sins. Let's pray.

Lord, we thank you that your love is the greatest love and it's beyond our reckoning, Lord, what that love can mean, that a soul can be saved, that a heart can be changed, that you so loved the world. Lord, and you still do. Lord, help us to know that love, each one, and by faith to know you and your saving, Lord, our loving Lord.

[43:45] We thank you. You came in the form of a servant. You were made in the likeness of human flesh, in that body of man, yet without sin.

And you took there, that body to the cross, and were nailed, that we can know your forgiveness and your sacrifice for us, our saving. Lord, we thank you that you so loved the world, that we can be a people likewise that will so love, that we'll have a selfless love, an unconditional love.

Help us to love, Lord, others, as you would have us do, and to love them enough to share that greatest love story ever told, of your great love with which you have loved us.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.