

The Love of God - Friday evening communion service

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Preacher: Rev Douglas Mackeddie

- [0 : 00] I would like us this evening to turn to words that we read in the book of Deuteronomy and chapter 26.
- Deuteronomy and chapter 26. And reading again at verse 4.
- And the priest shall take the basket out of thine hand and set it down before the altar of the Lord thy God. And thou shalt speak and say before the Lord thy God.
- A Syrian ready to perish was my father. And he went down into Egypt and sojourned there with a few. And became there a nation great, mighty and populous.
- And the Egyptians evil entreated us and afflicted us and laid upon us hard bondage. And when we cried unto the Lord God of our fathers, the Lord heard our voice and looked on our affliction and our labour and our oppression.
- [1 : 36] And the Lord brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm. And with great terribleness and with signs and with wonders.
- And so on. We looked for a little time last evening about those men who were assigned to take Jesus back to the Pharisees.
- For them to be questioned in greater depth. To find out what Jesus was all about. And we know that the Pharisees had a mind to destroy the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- But also in the providence of God. These men, how many there were, we're not sure. But these men anyway reported back and they said.
- Because of everything that they'd heard of Jesus. They said, no one ever spoke like this man. Now as I said last evening.
- [2 : 48] They were not necessarily followers of the Lord Jesus. But we know that he came under, they came under great influence of his ministry. The reason, that was the reason why they responded in the way that they did to the Pharisees.
- But what I want us to look at this evening. Is not the response of those outside of the kingdom of Christ. I want us to ask ourselves.
- How do we respond to everything that Christ has shown to us and demonstrated to us? As believers in him. And this passage might be a kind of a strange word.
- A strange passage to turn to. For the purpose for which I'm choosing it this evening. Because I do believe. That what this passage is teaching us is something of sublimity.
- Regarding the love of God. Now whatever these soldiers knew of Jesus and his love. We don't know.
- [4 : 02] But one thing we do know as believers in Christ this evening. If we are in that position this evening. We know something of the love of Christ.
- And we know it because of what he has done. In and for us. He has set us free and he has liberated us. And the language that is used here in the Old Testament.

In the book of Deuteronomy. Is a language that I think speaks very clearly. Of God's love. Even though the word love is not even mentioned. But what it is saying.

It is showing to us. The characteristics. Of the God. Who loves us. And the God who sent his son.

Into this world. To redeem us. When you think of Israel. And the state she was in. The necessity that there was.

[5 : 02] For them to become aware. Not just of physical blessings. Of course this passage is about the response of that. With regards to the bringing in of the first fruits of the harvest.

I'm not going down that route as such. But what I'm interested in. More than anything else. Is what is spoken of here. Of the characteristics of God's love.

And as I said. They are sublime. When you think about it. And when you read the narrative. Of this historical event. Because. What we're told here is.

That we have a God. Who is constantly giving. That's the one thing. I think that we do. Experience in our lives.

As individuals. That this God. Is a God who gives. And he gives so freely. Is it not the case? As he says here.

[6 : 00] The land that I give you. This land. This land. This land. That the Lord thy God giveth. Verses 1 and 2. And the thing is. When you and I think about God.

As someone who gives. And when we think of it. Spiritually speaking. What he's done for you. And for me. We surely would have to say this.

That what God has given to Israel. In a very similar way. He has given it even more particularly. To you and I. As believers in Christ.

Because like Israel. You and I. Were not deserving of anything. Not a thing. Israel didn't receive from God.

The benefits and the privileges. That came upon them. The land flowing with milk and honey. They didn't receive these things. On account of any suggestion.

[7 : 01] That they were deserving. Of anything. Far from it. The same holds true. For you and for me. We didn't receive.

What we have received. Because of anything. That we have done. I want to take you. Just for a moment or two. To Romans chapter 5. And I want to read there.

A section of Romans chapter 5. Because it draws our attention. To the very nature. And the characteristic of God. Upon each and every one of us. In Romans chapter 5.

Let me read of verse 8. But God. We are told to there. Commendeth his love toward us. In that while we were yet sinners. Christ died for us.

Much more than being now justified. By his blood. We shall be saved from wrath. Through him. Our every believer. Every single believer.

[7 : 58] Knows that. We were undeserving. Of the least of God's mercies. And we know that. For God. In his witness. And his testimony to Israel. Showed to Israel.

Through the very action. Of his chosen them. Love them. As a people. And he showed that. By giving to them.

And they were responding. By giving to him. The first fruits. Of their harvest. Now of course. It is anticipated.

By God. For every single one of us. That we give. In return. What do we give? Well. It is not so much.

First fruits. Of a physical harvest. But certainly. What it is. If you have experienced. That God has given to you. Something. That you know.

[8 : 52] That you were undeserving of. That he has given it to you. Not because. He says. So. Any goodness in you. Israel. Then surely. The response. For each and every one of us.

Is. To live. In obedience. This is what God. Wanted of Israel. Now we know. That she fell short of it. On numerous occasions.

And to such an extent. That she ended up. Very much. Out of favour. With God. God knew the heart of Israel. As it went on. And the result was.

That she ended up. In captivity. Because she allowed herself. To become embroiled. In the things. Of this world. And the idolatry. Of this world.

What they had actually forgotten. Was how God. Had provided for them. In giving to them. As he says. Here. And the Lord.

[9 : 51] Thy God. Brought thee forth. Out of Egypt. With a mighty hand. And with an outstretched arm. And with great terribleness. And with signs. And with wonders. What was happening here.

Well this was a very special people. And I want you to contemplate that one. For a moment or two. You are. Individually.

A very special person. God has looked upon you. With favour. And again. Not because we know.

Or suggest. That we have done something. That was admirable. Desiring that God. Would show affection. To us. In fact. We would. As one would say.

We were full of wounds. And putrefying sores. No soundness within us. Our whole deportment. As individuals. Was ugly in the extreme.

[10 : 50] All our righteousnesses. Were as filthy rags. But what is beautiful about God. In the characteristic of his love.

Toward his people. Israel. Is not only just. That he was a God. Who was willing to give. So freely. And so deliberately. But also.

That God. Looked. Upon them. In that merciful. And gracious way. Listen to what we were told. In verse 7. When we cried.

Unto the Lord. This is Israel. In desperation. Having thought. About how. The condition. That they were. To be found. In Egypt. When we cried.

Unto the Lord. God of our fathers. The Lord. Heard our voice. And looked. On our affliction. Everything. That is detailed. There. With regard. To the children.

[11 : 46] Of Israel. Being in the land. Of bondage. Is really true. Of you and I. Spiritually speaking. Because was it not the case.

Could we not all agree. And believe. That what God was doing. He was looking upon. The affliction. Of the people. As a consequence. Of sin.

That was epidemic. Within their lives. The children of Israel. Said. He looked. God looked. And he saw.

A affliction. Much more. Surely. When you and I. Realize. That this God. Of grace. And of mercy. Has looked upon us. As poor. Wretched sinners. That we can see.

God. At least. At least. To some degree. Looking upon us. Even when. As Paul says. In Romans chapter 5. When we were still.

[12 : 47] Yet. In our sin. God. Demonstrated. His love. Toward us. God. Seized the oppression. Christ.

Saw the oppression. Christ. Saw. What sin. Had done. To the people. And that's why. Christ. Had compassion. Upon them. You may think.

As you journey. In your life. If tonight. You are outside. Of Christ. You may think. Differently. You may think. Maybe. Does Christ.

Really think. Of me. In that way. Well. There is no doubt. He sees you. As a poor. Wretched sinner. And he sees you. Without hope. And all that he.

Wants you to do. Is to respond. To what he is. Offering to you. No one. Will ever. Offer you. What Christ. Has offered to you.

[13 : 44] The Lord. Looked. On our affliction. And our oppression. And our labor. Whatever. We were aiming. For in this life. It is certainly.

True. That Christ knows. That we are chasing. After rainbows. There is nothing. In this world. That will ever satisfy. The soul.

That is longing. Nothing. Whatsoever. And if you are. A longing soul. This evening. And you have not. Committed your life. To Christ. Then I say. To you. Don't leave it.

Christ looks. Upon you. He sees. Your state. He knows. Your condition. If God. In you. Every single thing.

About Israel. And every individual. Within Israel. Does he not know. Also. About you. And me. Is Christ. Not aware.

[14 : 41] Of the. State. And the status. That we find. Ourselves in. Strangers. To God. And to grace. Is. And all.

That the word. Of God. Is saying. To you. And to me. Is. He is not. Willing. That any. Should perish. But that all. Should come. To a knowledge. Of the truth. What are we.

Laboring for. In this world. What benefit. Is it doing. To us. I'm sure. We see. Many people. And they are.

Troubled. On every side. Whatever they might have. Of this world's goods. Is not promoting them. One whit. To give to them. Within their own hearts.

And souls. A degree of peace. And tranquility. It will only come. When we recognize. That Christ.

[15 : 37] Is looking upon us. Lovingly. And desires. That each and every one of us. Would lay hold upon him. But let me come back.

To those of us. Who. Yes. We know something. Of the love of Christ. But in what way. Do we know. The love of Christ. Well. I'm not speaking.

To the unconverted. At this point. You know. What I'm talking about. When I say. That what you have. Is deliverance. The state.

That you were in. As an unbeliever. You know. Fine. Even now. As you reflect. And you look back. Upon it. All. You can truly say.

Hitherto. The Lord. Has helped me. He helped us. To understand. That there is a way. Out of the predicament. Of an unbelieving heart.

[16 : 34] And what does he do. Well. He has looked upon us. And of course. We know. That from all eternity. He is chosen. But to bring us. Out of darkness.

Into his marvelous light. Whatever it was. In the experience. Of the children of Israel. Physically. And spiritually. To be found. Taken out of Egypt.

Brought into a pleasant land. Given everything. It's even much more so. In the experience. Of an individual. Who has been set free.

When the bondage. Of our spiritual Egypt. Had encroached upon us. So far. That. There was no desire. For anything. Spiritual.

We know. That it was difficult. For the children of Israel. For some of them anyway. The word of God. Was being presented. To them. In the great deliverance. That God had shown.

[17 : 33] To them. Taking them out. Of Egypt. But many had moaned. And groaned. And complained about it. Very easy to complain. About God. And the way that he deals.

With men and women. But when we take it. Right down to its. Nth degree. There is one thing. That is sure. God has provided.

Deliverance for us. In a way that Israel. Had never experienced. And as we look. Into the Lord. Jesus Christ. Christ. And we see him.

As our only surety. For time. And for eternity. When we embrace. What he has said. Before us. What does it do.

To your soul. And my soul. For the children. Of Israel. The Lord. As they say. Brought us. Out of Egypt.

[18 : 28] Do you ever reflect. Upon that. On the day. That you. Came out. Of that. That spiritual Egypt. The day. That you were. Set free.

And liberated. From sin's. Captivity. And sin's. Bondage. Do you ever reflect. Upon it. We should do. The children.

Of Israel. Here are. Reflecting. Upon it. And responding. In such a way. That they are. Giving. Of the first fruits. Of us. But what does God. Want of you.

And of me. Well it's not. Our first fruits. He wants. At least not. In that physical sense. But what he does want. What he does decide. Of us. Is obedience.

And what is the obedience. That God. Demands of us. Surely. It is this. That we would truly say. Without him.

[19 : 24] I have nothing. We do not set. Our affections. Upon things. In things below. We set our affection. On things above.

And we find. That God. Has set us. And delivered us. He has protected us. And he has kept us. All these years. As followers. Of the Lord. Jesus Christ.

Yes. The very power. Of Christ. You read. This passage. Again. Along with. First Peter. Chapter 2. And you see. The similarities.

There. That come up. Very strongly. In the mind. Of Peter. He's got that sort of. Old Testament symbolism. He'd been brought up. And he brought forth. In his message.

And he is telling us. Is he not. That we are a special people. Not special. Because we are better. Israel knew that. And they were told that. Many times. A time.

[20 : 22] What they had gained. Was not because. They were any better. Than anybody else. And you and I. Have gained. Not because. We are better. Than anybody else. But because.

He loved us. He chose us. From the. Before the foundation. Of the world. And what God. Has shown to us. And demonstrated. To us. Surely is this.

That he has loved us. In such a way. That he gives. To each. And to every one of us. That assurance. That he puts us. Where.

We are spiritually. Benefited. Is that not. What we find here. In this very chapter. Listen to what is read. Is said in verse 9. And he has brought us.

Into this place. And hath given us. This land. Even a land. That floweth. With milk and honey. Now. Said. To use the expression. The. Supremeness.

[21 : 20] Of God's love. And the character. Of God's love. To a people. Like Israel. But the. Sublimity. Of it all. Is found too.

When you and I. Can appreciate. More and more. That we are in a place. A far better place. Or we are not. Where we want to be. Exactly.

In this sense. To be free. From this world. And from. All its troubles. And all its trials. But we have been set free. From the condemnation.

And the execution. Of sin's reward. What is it for men and women. In our own day and generation.

That they cannot see. That this God of grace. And of mercy. Has shown to us. An abundant hope. That's what Peter says.

[22 : 17] He says. It's an abundant hope. He speaks of God's people. As yes. A holy nation. A peculiar people. He tells us.

That in Christ Jesus. We are. Very. Very special. And that although. We are in time. This side of eternity. Yet.

We are in that position. Of being in the kingdom of Christ. And no greater kingdom. Can there be. For any one of us. Than the kingdom of Christ. Because we have.

A great king. We have a priest. We have a prophet. We have one who. Displays to each and every one of us. That assurance.

That if we wait upon the Lord. He shall renew our strength. We shall mount up with wings as eagles. We shall run and not be weary.

[23 : 12] We shall not walk. And not be faint. Is that what I perceive. Of the love of God in Christ Jesus. Whatever it was.

That those men. Who were going to take Jesus captive. Understood about. The words of Jesus. As have been of some. Significance and authority.

Much more you and I. And if we approach a communion season. Embracing fully. What Jesus has done. On our behalf.

Listen to the words of the psalmist. That we sang there a few moments ago. In Psalm 66. All that fear God. He says. Come here. I'll tell. What he did for my soul.

That's something. That we don't do. Fellowship is a great thing. And I must say. That I've enjoyed very much.

[24 : 13] The fellowship in the manse. And the conversations. And the discussions. And the sharing in those things. But what has brought that about. It is surely the unity.

Of the bond. Of the body of Christ. Sharing together. In these things. Let me go to first Peter again. For a moment or two. And. A chapter.

A two. Because it really embraces everything. A for us. As we share in these things. And this is what Peter says.

In chapter two. He says. Unto you therefore which we believe. He is precious. But unto them which be disobedient. The stone which a builder's disallowed.

The same is made the head of the corner. And a stone a stumbling. And a rock of offense. Even to them which stumble at the word. Being disobedient. Whereunto also they were appointed.

[25 : 10] But he said. You are a chosen generation. A royal priesthood. A holy nation. A peculiar people.

That you should show forth the praises of him. Who hath called you out of darkness. Into his marvelous light. Whatever Israel understood of God's deliverance.

And certainly it was miraculous. Is it not the case. That your deliverance and mine. In our perception. Is even much more miraculous indeed.

Surely it is. You know very often we think that. You know. People get converted. But maybe they don't think and realize.

That this is a great miracle. Conversion is not just something. That just happens. And that's it. Of course it happens. But it's a miracle. Indeed.

[26 : 13] The Lord brought us out of Egypt. With a mighty hand. And with an outstretched arm. With great terribleness. And with signs. And with wonders. If the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt.

With all these signs and wonders. Every single believer. Who comes to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Should never ever forget. The greatness.

The greatness. Of redeeming love. God. And with a God. Who is rich in mercy. For Israel. They appreciate it.

But how much more should we. Appreciate. What God has done us. He brought us into this place. It wasn't of our own doing. And all that we should be able to do.

Is say. Lord. I believe. But help thou my unbelief. I know. And Paul would say it. I know I'm not what I should be.

[27 : 13] I know that I'm not what I could be. But by the grace of God. I am what I am. And what is that grace of God. As perceived by the believer. In the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is that the windows of heaven have opened. And God has poured out his blessing. Not just on a company of people. But even on you and I as individuals.

You have received the abundance of grace. And mercy and favour. And each day surely. As you are awakened in the morning. You reflect and you say.

Surely. Hitherto. The Lord has helped us. He has blessed us. And he will continue to bless us. Will he not?

When the psalmist. And I know you sang the psalm this morning. When the psalmist in Psalm 86. Called upon God. He said. Bow down thine ear. And hear me. For I am poor and needy.

[28 : 14] But also he said. I am holy. Imagine it. Someone who was a hell deserving sinner.

Has been classified. As holy. Not because of. Any doing of us. But because of the grace of God.

Bestowed upon us. When you read a passage like this. In Deuteronomy. And you see the actions of God. Towards a people. Who are not as obedient as they should be.

But no different to you and I. Because we know we are not as obedient as we should be. But by the same token. The hand of God reaches out toward us.

And he pours upon us blessings. That are not. There is not room enough. To receive them. What does God say? Well he has put us in this place.

[29 : 15] That is. In the kingdom of Christ. And it is a very special kingdom. Because it is a protected kingdom. It is a kingdom. That no one shall be able to.

Do anything. To disturb. In this sense. To take us out of it. Because we are held in the hand. And in the hollow of God's hand. And what the Lord is saying here.

Thou shalt rejoice. In every good thing. Which the Lord thy God hath given unto thee. And unto thine house. Thou and the Levite. And the stranger that is among you.

What is God saying to you? Rejoice. And again I say rejoice. Why? Because he has begun a good work in you. That he will perform.

Even to the very end. You remember. God has called upon us. To serve him. To be faithful to him.

[30 : 14] In verse 17. Thou hast vouched the Lord this day. To be thy God. And to walk in his ways. And to keep his statutes. And his commandments. And his judgments.

And to hearken unto his voice. There it is. Isn't it? Whatever the soldier thought. Of the voice of Jesus.

The believer's response. To the voice of Jesus. Surely is this. That our God. Our saviour. Our saviour.

The Lord Jesus Christ. Speaks to us. And assures us. Out of his word. And in response. We listen to him. And the Lord. Hath avouched thee.

This day. To be as peculiar people. As he hath promised. And that thou shouldest keep. All his commandments. God has made a promise.

[31 : 11] There was no promise. Given to these. Soldiers. Unless. Of course. They would repent. You and I. As we. Away to communion.

Sabbath morning. We have been given a promise. Have we not? We entertain that promise. To the glory of God. By being obedient.

If Christ has given us an invitation. To receive those blessings. Of which the communion itself speaks. Receiving the bread and wine. And the symbols.

Of Christ's broken body. And shed blood. A reminder to us. For all that he has done for us. No one.

Has spoken to you. And to me. Like Christ did. And we can say that. With all assurance. Surely. Because in his speaking.

[32 : 09] He has delivered us. He has set us free. He has placed us. In his kingdom. And we are. His holy.

Peculiar people. In order. That we should. Praise. And honor his name. Shall we pray.