

What's Love Got To Do With It?

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Date: 24 February 2013

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[0 : 00] Good morning. The bell wasn't working, so I just thought shouting might do it.

While Bill is helping us recover from the lack of equipment, I mean, Kurt did his best with the overhead, but it was...

It's not working. No, it's not working, so we're trying to do it another way, and fortunately Bill is helping with this. But in the meantime, I'll tell you what's going on here.

You know the subject is love. But this is also the first of what is going to emerge as, I hope, as an irregular series, meaning it won't be sequential, about scripture that has had a particular impact on people in this group, one at a time.

Wouldn't it be nice to learn these things about each other and to get introduced to a different side of the people that we have coffee with? So maybe you can be thinking about what has particularly moved you or resonated with you, and if it's something that you would be able to share with us, tell Lenore.

[1 : 15] Put your hand up, Lenore. Everybody knows Lenore, maybe. Okay. She's on the coordinating committee that does programming. So you may be penciled in for a future Sunday morning.

Are we ready to go, Bill? Oh, a happy face, the very thing. Thank you. Right. Well, my subject is love.

This being February, the month of St. Valentine's Day and all things Hallmark, we have had love songs, we've had call-ins on the radio about how I fell in love, how I met my heart's desire, heart-shaped chocolates and other candies, and bookstores touting every kind of printed message about love.

There was one in Carousdale that I looked at, and I thought I should write these down, but, I mean, it was like about 30 books. Let me count the ways. Love in a Cold Climate. How to Improve Your Love Quotient, whatever that is.

Love in a Time of Cholera. That's got to be difficult. What the French can teach us about love. And the list goes on, you know. Well, I intend to follow four different themes of four different types of love, all of which have Greek names.

[2 : 36] Lends a little cachet to the whole thing, doesn't it? The last one will give you more information about the verses that have special meaning for me. And thank you, Bill, for putting this list up.

And I'll refer to these as we go through this. But first, we will pray when you sit down, okay? Okay. Okay.

All right, let's pray. Father God, whose love for us we can never fully understand, help us to strive to come closer to being the loving people you would have us be, and in this, as in all things, to be guided by your loving Holy Spirit.

Amen. Well, I'm going to take a page out of Harvey's book by saying I've been at the Oxford English Dictionary to find out a meaning for love.

And it's defined in this way. Warm affection, attachment, liking or fondness, paternal benevolence, affectionate devotion.

[4 : 05] That's quite a range in a way. But these wonderful feelings, which I suppose all of us would have experienced, have a common thread in these descriptions.

They all refer to feelings, to emotional states. People who have never experienced love are likely to be damaged in some way in their psychological development.

It can be very difficult for them to understand the love of God if they have never experienced human love. Recently, the adult child of a multiple murderer was being interviewed on the CBC.

The interviewer asked him if his father had loved him. She seemed to be searching for some redeeming feature in the psychopath who was his father.

After a long pause, the man confessed that his father had never said that word to him. He had never hugged him, never played ball, never read a bedtime story, or watched a hockey game with him.

[5 : 10] But he thought again, and he said that going through some of his father's stuff, because his father had recently died, he found a birthday card, never sent, which was addressed to him and signed, Love Dad.

Now, you and I know that that is a formulaic ending for a lot of things that don't involve a heavy investment of emotion. But he looked at this, and his conclusion was, well, there it was.

There was the word. His father had written this word. And maybe, after all, maybe his father had loved him. What a tenuous thread on which to hang such a lot of hope, you know?

And he had no memory of any action attached to that word to sort of bring it into focus. Well, we have probably all been motivated by love, possibly even compelled to do certain things.

Good things, not so good things, benevolent things, crazy things, risky things. Love is a very powerful motivator. It is not, however, the most powerful motivator in our lives.

[6 : 24] A man called Dr. Abraham Maslow, a psychologist researching motivation and personality, produced a paper in the late 1940s, which subsequently was developed into a book called Motivation and Personality.

I haven't read it for 50 years, so I'm kind of cuddling my memory here. But it was a very important book at the time. World War II was over with.

They'd had, you may not have thought of this, but they had captive populations of people to test some of the psychology of people during the war, because they had all these people who had to take orders.

And so if somebody said, sit down and fill out this questionnaire or whatever, they could do that.

And there began to be a lot of improved research, let's put it that way, in the social sciences.

And psychology was one of those that benefited from that. Now, Dr. Maslow was working in the United States, and he was using a healthy 1% of the student population.

[7 : 47] He didn't want people with psychological problems or known emotional difficulties. He wanted to test people who were healthy, and he thought he could discover this.

But, I mean, that was a huge sample that he had to choose from. They were university students, so we were looking at people who had, you know, achieved the right grade point average and all the rest of it.

And he developed this pyramid. Somebody else actually diagrammed it this way. His book has words, not a picture. And it goes from bottom to top, and he was looking at what would free people from the external things that would motivate them.

What motivates behavior the most? At the bottom of this are physiological needs. And that would include things like thirst and food and breathing and sleeping and so on.

And when those needs are met to a certain level, it doesn't have to be totally. It ceases to be the major determiner of behavior, and then safety becomes more important.

[8 : 55] Think of somebody who is in a war-torn country in, let's say, Africa, Libya, or somewhere like that. The urgent need for food is going to be all-consuming.

What am I going to do to stop my baby from crying? What am I going to give my kids? Where will I get food? If they make it to a refugee camp, then they're worried about a roof over their heads, because even though it's not a balanced diet they're going to get in the refugee camp, even though it's not going to be interesting food, they know they aren't going to starve or die of thirst.

Then, securing that, safety needs come next. Am I going to have to stay where there are IUDs and people fighting back and forth over my patch?

Are there wild animals that might attack me? Can I find a cave where I could hibernate for a while?

And in modern society, even things like employment and health would come into this.

If you lose your job, you were made redundant. I guess that's an English expression, isn't it?

Downsized. Have you got enough money to last for six months without a job?

[10 : 07] Is your health in a precarious way? Is that something that you need help with? And I'm talking to a group who've all experienced some of this, right? So when that is met to a certain level, not necessarily totally, then love, then look at this, third from the bottom, then love, belongingness,

family, close friends, sexual intimacy would come into this level as a motivator of behavior.

Am I making sense here? Okay, good. After you feel reasonably secure about that, your family loves you, they think you're great and all the rest of it, but it's not quite enough, you would really like to know what others think of you.

And esteem needs really mean your peer group has honored you in some way, your boss has promoted you in your job. This is the level on which a lot of people work.

Scientists busy in the lab working 30-hour days, hoping that they will find something new that will appeal to Nobel Prize givers. The people that actually are in Olympic competition would be operating very largely at this level, and it isn't their peer group that interests them.

Their peer group are the competitors, you know, the ones that are also trying to win. So it would be judges. The judges, they want the good feeling and the support of those people.

[11:37] And somebody to say, to stamp it, yes, you're the greatest. Yes, you're the best. Yes, you're good at what you do. Now, this one is actually called self-actualization.

We did not have enough room on the page for that. Self-actualization, according to Maslow, is when all these external things cease to be the major motivator in your life, and the major motivator comes from within instead of from without.

It is the desire to be better than you are. It is the desire to be all the things you ever wanted to be. And so driven by that as a motivator, then you seek what he wanted to call a self-actualization.

Now, he would have included in that people like Einstein, Eleanor Roosevelt, as I recall, was another one.

Jane Adams, who was dead by the time he wrote this, the lady who started the Settlement House movement in, I think it was Chicago, he put her into that category.

[12:45] But the two that I remember, because they had all been long dead, were Julius Caesar and Abraham Lincoln. And I'm not quite sure how you make that judgment about people, you know, who both headed governments that were entirely different and were long dead, how you would make that judgment.

But he did say that he thought those people would have been operating at a level of self-actualization. Is there a question about this before we go on? I'm going to come back to part of this later.

Anybody? No? No? Okay. We will return to that chart later. But let's move on to the first Greek word for a type of love.

This is for you, Sam. Now, excuse me, I only know two words in Demotic Greek, and this isn't one of them.

So I'm going to pronounce it Storga. But if you know that that's wrong, please tell me now. What kind of Greek is it? Demotic? Demotic Greek? The speech of the people.

[13:49] Demotic? Demotic, like democracy. Like that. Okay. Demotic, you might want to pronounce it that way. Okay.

Storga. I borrowed it from C.S. Lewis as a starting point. Where is Sam? Thank you. Yeah. Listen closely, because I actually think that this is a dubious meaning.

I looked at it and thought, we don't need this. It's covered by other kinds of things. But, you know, anything that we disagree with in this group is food for discussion. If we all agreed, we wouldn't have a decent discussion.

So I have included it. Here's the definition. Storga is fondness through familiarity, like brotherly love. Well, there is another Greek word for brotherly love. Especially between family members or others who have found themselves together by chance, possibly even us. It is described as the most natural, emotive, and widely diffuse of loves.

[14:58] natural, in that it is present without coercion. Nobody forced you to do it. Emotive, because it is the result of fondness due to familiarity.

And most widely diffused, because it pays the least attention to those characteristics deemed valuable or worthy of love. It doesn't have to be earned. And as a result, is able to transcend most discriminating factors.

Now, my problem with this word is that we do not need another word for brotherly love. And that it seems to be based on the assumption that strangers are free from innate suspicion or animosity, which is not the finding of anthropology.

But anyway, I haven't seen the other side of it, which I hope you'll tell me about. But at this point, I want to move away from dictionary meanings for love and zero in on some biblical meanings and examples.

Excuse me. There are between 400 and 610 references to love in the Bible, depending on which translation you are using. They do not emphasize the warm, touchy-feely stuff an individual may have when he is with a familiar person.

[16:23] According to the Bible, love is caring in action. It isn't what we feel. It is what we do. So as we move through, philio, also from the Greeks, the word for brotherly love, eros, the word for erotic love, and agape, the word that we are most familiar with in the New Testament.

It appears very often in the New Testament and not so much in the Old. And St. Paul, it was one of his favorite words. We will look for behavioral indications of love.

Philio, the word that typifies a special friendship, is best illustrated in the Bible by David and Jonathan. There is probably not a better example even in the wider world of literature.

People who have never read the whole story know the names of these two friends. We can revisit these, and I'm not actually going to do all of this today, in references in 1 Samuel and the first chapter of 2 Samuel.

Their relationship, which spread over a number of years, is bookended by these two verses. The first one is when they meet. Now, just as a back story to this, David has been out fighting Goliath.

[17:46] And Saul gave him a suit of armor before he went onto the battlefield. and said, you know, you're going up against a giant, you're going to need this. And David, I can't remember whether he discarded it without trying it on, but he said, I'm not familiar with using this kind of equipment.

I need to go with a weapon that I know how to use. So he went off with his five smooth stones. And we know the result of that. Now, when he comes back, that is when he meets Jonathan.

Jonathan is the oldest of three sons of Saul. And by all accounts, a really interesting guy. And he is in the army. He's a military person fighting Saul's wars.

And this is the expression that is used when they meet for the first time. The soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David.

And David and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as his own soul.

[18:55] You know what he's describing here? He's describing love at first sight. Click. Pals. Brothers in arms and other things probably as well. There was immediately a connection made between these two men.

The implication of scripture is that Jonathan would have been older than David but we actually don't know that. They do become pals and they, as I say, they fought in Saul's armies together.

But David very quickly emerged as a leader of men and was leading Saul's armies and, you know, glorious victories coming back, crowds probably hurling flowers at them and everybody saying, you know, Saul had his thousands but David has his ten thousands.

Well, green-eyed monster sort of finding root in Saul who was very disturbed about this. He didn't want anybody to find a leader that was better than he was.

This quickly develops into a very strong paranoia, as you know. He started hurling spears at David. How you can do that in an enclosed space and miss is a mystery I will never understand.

[20:05] But he did miss. He missed not once but every time he did it. And, of course, Jonathan, close friend of David, goes to his defense and talks to his father and says, in effect, look, dad, it's not true.

He's not after your job. He's not after your life. You are God's anointed. David is going to honor that as everybody else is, too. But that really doesn't do very much to alleviate the problem.

It goes on. And to make a long story short, it doesn't stop with Saul trying to kill. He gives instructions to other people that David is to be killed.

And Jonathan actually engages in a treasonous act at this point. And that was not a popular thing to do, even in tribal societies like this one. He goes to David and says, look, he is going to kill you.

Nothing else will satisfy him. You've got to get out of here, and I will help you do it. Now, I think there's a very touching word in the verse where they say goodbye.

[21:13] And I looked at this and thought, Jonathan knew he was never going to see his pal again, you know. And I think that that might well have been true, and it was true that he didn't. So in the

next battle, Jonathan is killed.

His father, in disgrace and despair, kills himself. Saul took his own life, falling on his sword, I think they said, which is quite difficult to do. And also, you know, that would have been a dreadful thing for an Israelite to do, because God gave them life.

Life was a gift. And to lose it in battle was one thing. To take your own life was something really terrible. It was like thumbing your nose at the Creator. And the news is brought to David.

And David has a really beautiful eulogy, if you want to look it up. It's the first chapter of Samuel. He starts by addressing the crowd, and he starts by talking about Saul and Jonathan dying.

And then, at the end, he moves in a different direction. He says to the crowd, how the mighty are fallen in the midst of battle. Jonathan lies slain on your high places.

[22 : 25] And then, he addresses Jonathan. I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan. Very pleasant have you been to me. Your love to me was extraordinary, surpassing the love of women.

Wow, what a statement. Now, we don't know very much about David's experience with women at this point. He's had two wives, but there's no telling what that was all about.

Maybe it was a political union. But this is a very unusual way to describe their friendship. Now, there are several behavioral indicators in this passage.

One of the things that is not indicated that I would like to have known, I don't know who wrote 1 Samuel or 2 Samuel, but somebody saw something happen between these two men when they met, or he would never have used such florid language as souls being knit together.

What did he observe? He doesn't tell us, so we have to go on guessing about that, but there would have been a behavioral manifestation there somehow. There are several indicators in this passage.

[23 : 34] I've mentioned what the one-way expression from Jonathan on behalf of his friend is much clearer in the beginning, but here at the end we do find out exactly how important this friendship was to David.

Now, just as a sidebar, let me refer to this statement about the love surpassing the love of man and woman. I believe that the intent of this verse has been mangled and misunderstood by some members of the homosexual community.

I have a gay friend, well I have more than one, but this particular one was the first man I met when it came to St. John's, the first person I met, who's handing out the programs. He's still my friend, as his partner.

And he uses this verse, as do other gay Christians, to justify his relationship with his partner of almost 40 years.

As recently as last Christmas, a miniseries called World Without End was showing on television a dramatization of Ken Follett's sequel to Pillars of the Earth, which some of you may have read.

[24 : 50] And in it, it was directly quoted to explain and condone the behavior of two monks in the Kingsbridge Priory in that story. Now, I don't believe that this is what this verse means at all.

And I don't think that the Bible can be so clear about the behavior between homosexuals and then come up with this complete reversal.

That doesn't make a lot of sense to me. I believe that what it's intended to mean is that it is a signal that a true, uncluttered, sustainable, unambiguous friendship between a man and a woman is much harder to achieve for reasons that we will discuss now.

Enter eros, the symbol for erotic love. this is a word for love that you will not find in the New Testament. This is a word driven by human chemistry.

This is a type of love driven by human chemistry. it is fueled by our hormones intentionally and it results in behaviors that offer the wide gamut of everything from exciting to tender to frantic to experimental, urgent, athletic, playful, and did I say exciting?

[26 : 26] Oh, you were all listening. And erotic love is really a very special gift from God. No other kind of love allows us to participate in the act of creation.

That's got to be special. That's not its only purpose. Even the Anglican prayer book tells us that. But that the what? The Anglican prayer book.

Yes. If you look at the marriage services that are in there you'll see that there is another value to this kind of love. And unhappily it has to be said that no other type of love has been debased, debauched, trivialized, and degraded as erotic love has.

And you know this, you cannot turn on the television set without seeing those behaviors used totally out of context for which they were intended. And 24-7 this goes on, you know, I don't know what the

younger generation thinks about this.

There are daily references in addition in news dispatches about victims of sexual abuse and violence, about the victims who have experienced these behaviors in brutal contexts like marital rape, pedophilia, rape of a bigger population than a partner, pornography, and prostitution.

[28 : 01] Rape as a weapon of war is now being acknowledged as a statistic separate from collateral damage. actually, this past week, on the BBC, South Africa has released a statistic, now there is not a war going on in South Africa, the statistic that one out of three women in that country has been raped at some point in her life.

Over 30%. If you were a little girl, would you want to grow up in a country like that? If you were an old lady, would you want to stay? It's really, and we look at things that have happened in India lately, I mean, I'll say this to the men here, little girls do grow up knowing that the world is going to be a more dangerous place for them.

And it isn't just because of that, it's because they don't have testosterone, and they don't have the physical strength that men have. So, we do know that, but we certainly have not ever been led to expect that it would be as dangerous as it seems to be getting.

Well, back to my talk here. The lady who gave me the title for this talk was a victim of this kind of marital abuse. After her third trip to the ER, her husband, who was a prize fighter, was jailed for three years because of the damage he had done to her.

And Tina Turner, that's her name, returned to the concert circuit with a new song in which she howled into the microphone her anger, her hurt, her betrayal, and finally her cynicism, singing, what's love got to do with it?

[29 : 53] What's love? It's a second-hand emotion. That was her experience based on the behavior of the man who said he would love her. love her.

Well, this is a long way from what God intended for erotic love. He wanted it to be used in a loving and committed relationship. He expected us to guard its special nature and not fling it about willy-nilly.

How do we know this? Well, the Bible, of course, does tell us this, but I'm going to quote Dr. Maslow again. physiological needs, the most basic ones.

Breathing, sleeping, eating, drinking, eliminating body wastes, regulating body temperature, and sex. There they are.

Sex is different from all those other physiological needs in that you can be deprived of it, sometimes for long periods, and not die.

[31 : 00] Could there be a clearer message? Could there be a clearer message? The last type of love, well, God did expect us to treat erotic love with respect and reserve, and that, unhappily, is not happening.

so we're on to agape.

Some people pronounce that agape, but I told you how much Greek I know. I learned this word along with the Greek alphabet when I joined a sorority as an undergrad, so I'm just going to go on calling it agape.

It has been used to describe God's love for us and also to describe ideally the love that exists among members of the Christian community. we used to sing a song in the 60s, a chorus, and 70s, I guess, called They Will Know We Are Christians By Our Love.

Does anybody remember that song? Yes, we are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord, and they'll know we are Christians by our love.

[32 : 15] Well, the lesson of history is that people have many associations with Christians that are not loving. Ideally, because God's love has been poured out to us, love will work through our faith to bless others.

I worked in a Catholic hospital, I've told you this before, for quite a long time, and I worked with nuns, bless their hearts, who did not believe that they would know whether or not they were saved until Judgment Day, and they were, like most Catholics, working their way towards salvation. The kind of love that God expects us to express to others comes on the other side of being saved. It isn't working for credit that way.

It is that we are inspired and helped by the love of God and his grace. He said, the whole of the law is summed up in loving God and loving our neighbors, and if we are faithful to the law, to that law, we will demonstrate this love in our treatment of others.

And we can expect that God's Spirit will help us with this, since all things are possible through him. This can be very hard to achieve, kind of an ongoing battle in a way.

[33 : 34] St. Paul, the man who told us to strive for perfection, has many beautiful descriptions of the characteristics of love. You know, unselfish, unconditional.

I mean, the list, if you Google this, you will get like about 65 words that he has maybe used in his writings. And I'm not going to refer to these.

Instead, I want to look at what Jesus said about love. Jesus did expect a behavioral expression of this. You notice when he comes back after the resurrection, and he asks Paul, do you love me? And Paul says, you know, Lord, that I love you. And he doesn't say, that's great, Pete, come and give me a hug. He says, feed my sheep. Do something.

Don't just tell me that you love me. I want to see you demonstrate that love. The first of the references is about the law.

[34 : 33] I've written down some things here. I've got Matthew 5, but this is where the Sermon on the Mount kind of starts. The Sermon on the Mount is full of various illustrations that Jesus gives us about how to love our neighbors and how to love God.

And he says, a new commandment I give to you. Now, a commandment is an order. You know, it's not a suggestion. It's an imperative.

You must do it. Those who heard him say those words wanted some wiggle room. You remember how this encounter goes, challenging Jesus to describe just who is my neighbor. If we can pin him down on this, perhaps we can limit the requirements in some way.

No, Jesus was having none of that. In the Good Samaritan story and also others, Jesus doesn't fall for this. The hero of the Good Samaritan tale is a despised stranger. Two strikes against him. He's a stranger, but not just any old stranger. He comes from a despised group. This story was bound to have a profound impact.

[35 : 41] Now, you know, often in Christian communities, including this one, we are very good at ministering to our own folk, discovering and addressing needs.

What is it that our teenagers need and want? How can we spread that net further and get them to bring their pals from school? We are equally good at responding, no, are we equally good at responding to the marginalized or despised or unloving strangers in our midst?

I have just spent 18 years in the West End before my recent move where beggars and the despised and the lonely and the homeless were on the streets.

Some of you were in my condo. You know that there is a portico at the front of that building and people would come with their push cart full of everything they owned in life and sleep in that place and there was a similar place at the back but you couldn't take a cart there because there were steps down from the level of the lane wanting to get out of our inclement weather.

The last one that I spoke to there was a Cambodian Buddhist, a proud man. He had a Labrador dog with him that he had to feed as well as himself.

[37 : 04] He had a big cart that was full of stuff and he would not accept the help that some of us in the building wanted to give because he couldn't give anything in return.

One day he saw me limping along the pavement with my cane and I looked at him and I said can I get something for you to eat or drink and he wouldn't let me do that but he wanted to give me advice about how to take care of my sore foot.

This was what he had to give. I didn't have a sore foot but I wasn't going into explanations about that but he wanted to give something back, still be a contributor. We are so insulated here where our church is.

You will not see a beggar on our doorstep when you leave the church and neither will any of the other people in this block. A beggar has to have \$2.50 for the bus to get here to ask for help.

We are insulated. It's as if we're protected from the harsh reality of some of these needs in our community. Downtown churches have more experience with this kind of thing.

[38 : 21] Is that our Bible down there? Or theirs? No, I forgot to bring one from the church. I need a new is this the ES?

This is NK. Yes, that might be better. I don't want the old-fashioned language. Much and all is I love it. Thank you. Thanks. I forgot to bring one from the sanctuary.

I was going to. I also think that we need to be constantly challenged about the people that Jesus had in mind. Because it is harder for us to find them.

Now, I do know that there are people in this congregation that have found their niche in terms of a mission to others and are doing it beautifully and are doing it well. And this is not intended to be a criticism. None of us can take on all of the world's problems. But we can all do some of that.

[39 : 28] Now, I'm getting, finally, finally, you thought I'd never get there, to the verses that have had an impact on me personally and professionally. I'm going to read this whole passage because the end of it, the punch line, is often left out.

where am I? A reference to the final judgment. When the Son of Man comes in his glory and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne.

Before him will be gathered all the nations and he will separate people, one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on his left.

Then the king will say to those on his right, Come, you who are blessed by my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

For I was hungry, and you gave me food. I was thirsty, and you gave me drink. I was a stranger, and you welcomed me. I was naked, and you clothed me.

[40 : 39] I was sick, and you visited me. I was in prison, and you came to me. Then the righteous will answer him, saying, Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink?

And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and visit you? And the king will answer them, truly I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.

Then he will say to the people on his left, depart from me, you cursed. into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

For I was hungry, and you gave me no food. I was thirsty, and you gave me no drink. I was a stranger, and you did not welcome me. Naked, and you did not clothe me.

Sick, and in prison, and you did not visit me. Then they also will answer, saying, Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and not minister to you?

[41 : 42] Then he will answer them, saying, Truly I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me. And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.

This is chilling stuff. This, Matthew 25, 31, etc. There are consequences to not fulfilling this part of the law.

And so often we do quote the first part of that, and we don't read the part that says you're going to be judged. And it won't do any good to say, well, really, Lord, I love those people. He's going to want to know, what did you do?

What did you do to demonstrate the love that I have poured out for you, that you need to pour out for others? We are intended to be a blessing to this world.

We have picked up the covenant of Israel, right? We are the new Israel, some people say it that way. And those people that were in the original covenant were intended to receive a blessing that would help them be a benefit and a blessing to others.

[42 : 54] Well, it isn't different with us. I want to finish with a word about the love of God. I hope I can get through this. Most of the sources I looked at indicated that agape is used to describe God's love for us.

I don't think we know of a word that adequately describes God's love for us. Look at all the lexicons you want. There is not a vocabulary that really can deal with that adequately.

I am not sure we can ever truly comprehend love of that magnitude. It's not human. It's not human. It is beyond anything that our vocabularies can encompass.

Some years ago, I was the mother of a lovely blonde, brown-eyed little boy in his first year of school, six years old, when I went to a twilight retreat with some other health professionals from my workplace.

Now, a twilight retreat, I had never heard this, but I told you I worked in a Catholic hospital, and so I got to hear about ways that other people practice their Christian belief, and retreats are a popular thing for nuns to do, and others.

[44 : 11] And we went off to, as it turned out, Trinity Baptist Church, because they had a lot of little individual rooms. Twilight meant five o'clock to eleven at night.

So we started with a meal, and we went on into spiritual exercises from there. We spent the evening hours engaging in a meditation experience guided by a Jesuit from Portland.

We were separated in little rooms. That's one reason we had gone to that church, apparently, the little Sunday school rooms, with an exercise that involved meditating on the cross.

Men were to do this from the point of view of John, the disciple that Jesus loved, who was a witness to the crucifixion. and women from the position of Mary, the mother of Jesus, also a witness to the crucifixion.

As I tried to understand what the mother of Jesus would have been experiencing, I was thinking, okay, we know about his birth.

[45 : 24] So, feeding him, nursing him through the chicken pox, helping him recover with little drops of ginger ale when he had gastroenteritis, helping him deal with tense tummy on the first day of synagogue school, and I went through the things I had done with my son and tried to imagine Mary doing this kind of thing.

Well, suddenly, I moved from the safe position of the objective observer to a more subjective one, imagining that that was my son on the cross.

And I almost threw up. Really, I did. It was a very visceral reaction. I had spent six years trying to keep my son safe from every evil, and there I was confronted by my own helplessness to do just that for all his life, and that was more than I could manage, and I rather imagine it was more than Mary could manage too.

But to her credit, she saw it to the end. I don't know how she did that. Excuse me, this is why I don't talk about these things very often.

In my nausea and confusion, I asked God, how could you do that? How could you do that to your son? And the answer I got, you do get answers when you do meditation stuff, was God saying to me, I have loved you, I have called you by name, you are precious in my sight, and I want you back.

[47 : 11] The God who made us for fellowship with himself wants his people back, and this was his way of making us worthy to be back with him.

we know this, not because he said, I love you, but because he gave his son. Let's not pretend that we understand that kind of love.

Let us just acknowledge that love so amazing, so divine, demands our souls, our lives, our all. Amen.

God who maneuvers■■ it and to finally re let's hear mine it will