

Moore College Mission Brett Hall

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Date: 23 March 2013

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning. Let me pray. We thank you, Heavenly Father, for your word to us, that it is powerful, powerful to change lives. And so we ask that you would give us hearts to receive it, our ears to hear it, minds to comprehend it this morning.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. So I think this week for mission, I've probably spent more time on the North Shore than at any other time in the entirety of my life.

I, at the moment, live in Newtown, and to be frank, I've just never had any reason to really cross the ditch over to the picturesque, leafy North Shore. And so it's been great as part of this mission, coming to Chatswood and keeping my eyes open, keeping my eyes peeled to the things that make this part of the world what it is.

There's a few things that I was expecting to find here. One of the things we've been doing that I mentioned before is that we had a stall set up down in Chatswood, near the entrance to Lemon Grove and Westfield.

And there's no surprise that over the two days that we were there, manning the stall, that we met a lot of people from Chinese or Korean backgrounds. I was expecting that. Now, I've since been told as well that Chatswood is like the Bondi Junction of the North Shore.

[1 : 2 0] Or perhaps you'd rather, Bondi Junction is the Chatswood of the eastern suburbs. And so there's not just been Chinese folk that we've seen, or Anglos, but there's actually been a whole range of people that we've seen down in the shops in Chatswood who have come here because it's a commercial hub or a transport hub, so they're either here for work or shopping or just passing through.

Some of us were also introduced to a man named Charles Knox, who's a caseworker with Streetwork, Streetwork, so an organisation working with at-risk youth and young people, particularly in and around Chatswood.

Now, I never would have conceived before I came here that there could possibly be a need for such an organisation in Chatswood of all places. Having spent a week here, I feel like I'm starting to get a feel for the place, especially reflecting on the food that's available.

I've been forced to say a few times this week, why have I not spent more time in Chatswood before? I guess you could say the place is growing on me. But I wonder, if God were to turn and look upon Chatswood right now, what would he have to say about the place?

I actually think he would say that I love Chatswood. But why? God doesn't need to eat, so the restaurants are hardly likely to impress him. And if God glanced over at the Westfield, he'd probably be more disgusted than impressed by the way that people worshipped spending money like idols.

[3 : 0 3] And so, what is it that would ever give me this confidence to say that if God were to look at Chatsfield, he would actually say, this is a place, these are people that I love.

Rather than speculating further, or presuming to put words into God's mouth, let's turn to Scripture and see what God has already said. So if you could have that passage from 1 John chapter 4 open in front of you, that would be fantastic.

So we're looking at from verse 7. And verse 7 begins with a very ordinary encouragement, actually, but standing behind it is an extraordinary truth.

Come and read it with me. Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.

Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. The very ordinary encouragement that we read is this instruction to love one another.

[4 : 16] There's nothing particularly complicated or controversial about that. But the extraordinary truth that lay behind this command is that God is love.

This phrase, God is love, frequently is misunderstood. There's one mistake that I've heard where people think that words in Scripture can simply be interchangeable.

So you'll be familiar with another part of the Bible, perhaps, that reads this way. Love is patient, love is kind, it does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. And so I had a friend once, when I was working on the south coast with a church down there, who led a Bible study by taking us through that other passage and comparing it with this one and saying, if God is love and love is patient, God must be patient.

Yeah? Now that's actually true. God is patient. But this isn't actually a very good way to read the Bible. It's not how language works. It's not how words work.

I'll give you an example. I happen to think that clothes shopping is very boring. It's not something I like spending time on. Get me in there, get me out of there, I'll be happy.

[5 : 30] So clothes shopping is boring. Now I might also think that doing the dishes is boring. Now I don't. Invite me around to your house for dinner. I will do the dishes afterwards. I quite enjoy washing dishes.

This is a very strange thing. But just because clothes shopping might be boring and doing the dishes is boring doesn't mean that I'm doing the dishes when I'm buying you socks. You see, words don't work that way.

So we can't move from saying that God is love and love being patient to say that God is patient. Okay? That's one mistake that I've seen made.

Another common mistake is to think in the wrong direction. To think, what is loving? What do I think is loving? And then to apply that to God. And so I had a friend that I studied with at university.

His name was Scott. He went to church every week. He was part of the music team. But his personal opinion is that he didn't think it would be a loving thing for God to punish sin.

[6 : 31] So he took what he thought was loving, not punishing sin, and then applied that to God because this passage says God is love. But you see, what he's actually done there is he's not moved from God to see what love is.

He's conjured God up in his own image. He's made a God that suits his own tastes and desires. Rather, the right direction to think is actually found in verse 7.

Dear friends, let us love one another for love comes from God. And so it doesn't matter whether someone is a Christian or not, the very essence of love as we know it in this world comes from God.

And love isn't just something that God created. He made the heavens and he made the earth and he didn't kind of make love next because God actually existed before he spoke the universe into existence.

One God in three persons. And these three persons loved one another. So love is not something made. It actually exists as part of who God is.

[7 : 44] I want you to picture in your mind for me three of the young children that we had down here before for the kids talk out on the deck playing with a ball.

And they have absolutely no idea that there is anything else happening around them. They're just playing with one another in absolute delight and love and joy with one another.

Now it's not a perfect analogy by any means but I actually think this is a reflection of the kind of love that existed within God before he even made the heavens and the earth.

The Father loved the Son and the Spirit and the Son loved the Father and the Spirit and the Spirit loved the Father and the Son. And their concern was not so much for themselves but for one another.

This is the nature of love. This is what it means in this passage when it says God is love. He's the source and the origin of love.

[8 : 45] He's the very image of what true love and real love is. And because God is love he couldn't actually keep it to himself as if he could bundle it up and so we see that God has shown his love.

Come and have a look with me at the next two verses. Verses 9 and 10. This is how God showed his love among us. He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.

This is love. Not that we love God but that he sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. At the heart of God's magnificent demonstration of his love is what we talk about when Christians use the word gospel.

And in these verses like a multifaceted diamond there are several dimensions to the gospel to the way that God has shown his love. And so I want us to shine some light on this diamond from a couple of different angles so that we might see some of the breadth of what God has shown to us.

God has shown his love by sending his one and only Son Jesus into the world. And when verse 9 of our passage says one and only it's not just a number.

[10 : 07] The passage is not trying to give an account for how many sons God has so much. It's actually saying that Jesus is unique. He's special. He's the one that God delights in.

He's the one that God loves like no other. In Mark's gospel one of the biographies of Jesus' life there's a scene where Jesus is baptised and he goes down into the water and as he comes up from the water there's a voice that comes from the heavens and the voice says this you are my son in whom I take the utmost delight.

this is the son that God sent into the world. God has shown his love by sending his one and only Son Jesus that we might live through him.

What John is concerned about when he says that we might live through him is that we might live and not be conquered not be ruled over by death.

In June last year I received an email from one of my aunts suggesting that my uncle was quite sick he'd been diagnosed with cancer back in January and so the basic gist of this email is that things weren't looking good and then one night at college just after dinner had finished I got that text message that no one ever really wants to get saying that his condition was quite serious and so I jumped in the car and I drove down and I sat with him and my aunts because my aunt and uncle had never had any kids and I held his hand and I sat there and I watched the heart rate monitor for about three hours 50 49 48 49 47 and it kept dropping until there was no more life left in him and he passed away you see death is not a light thing frequently we spend our lives trying to set it to one side giving it little concern little thought we are we as a society are obsessed with youthfulness because it drives us in the opposite direction to aging and then dying and even just now as I describe the situation that my uncle was in did you notice that I use the phrase he passed away we even use our words to soften the impact of death because we don't really want to think about it he's passed away he's kicked the bucket he's given up the ghost but in that moment like a slamming door when something like this happens in your life you cannot escape death it punches through the facade and it robs you of loved ones it robs you of friends of family and eventually it will take your very own life and yet

[13 : 19] God has shown his love in this way that through his son we might live and not be conquered or ruled over by death God has shown his love by sending his son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins the reason that death has this kind of absolute power over our lives is because of sin I don't know what you think of when you hear the word sin but I want to tell you that sin simply is a way of describing a life lived without God and the Bible says that people with sin are like pigs in mud we can't resist living lives that leave God out we just kind of wallow around I remember some years ago seeing an experiment that was shown on YouTube the way that it worked was this there was a kind of within the camera frame there was a shot where you could just see the inside of a room the interior of a room and there was a door into the room and there was one of those kind of one way windows so that people could see in but you couldn't see out leave the biscuit

I'm going to go away for a little bit and if you haven't touched the biscuit when I come back not only will you get that biscuit but I'll give you another one how do you think that went now the scene played over and over and over again and so the first child comes in and picks up the biscuit and looks at it puts it down picks it up looks at it again no puts it down picks it up takes a little nibble but then tries to hide it now some of the other kids that came in one of them just as soon as the adults out of the room door closes bam it's gone and then some of the children who were more thoughtful about the future left the biscuit there and ended up getting the second one as well and my point is this though God has given us instructions directions a shape to how to live life and if we follow this kind of shape this direction that is given to us it will lead to good things in the future a second biscuit if you will we still insist on leaving him out of the picture and deciding for ourselves how we'll live sometimes we get a little bit creative in it we'll try and hide the things that we do that leave

God out but you see with God we're not talking about mere biscuits we're talking about the difference between life and death you see there's as much in verse 8 it says that God is love elsewhere in the Bible we find that God is light when I was little my family had a Subaru wagon with these massive driving lights on the front and they could just cut through the darkness for up to about a kilometre down the road where the light was darkness couldn't be and where sin is God sorry where God is sin cannot be God will not let us wallow around in our sin in the mud forever and this is where death comes in death is God's way of dealing with sin and so where people insist on living without God something someone has to die

God sent his one and only son his unique son that he loved like no other to die that death for us and the amazing part is that God has shown his love to those who didn't love him you might have missed it as we read over verse 10 it's easy to skate over come back there with me now this is love not that we love God I'm not sure if you've noticed this in situations around you but more often than not love comes to depend on something that the other person does for me we would never say this of course but you only have to pay attention when you speak with people have you ever heard the phrase I just don't love them anymore this is often not always but often code word for whatever that person used to do that made me happy they don't do anymore or it doesn't make me happy anymore you see their love for the other person depended on what that person could offer them as long as you're fun to be around then I'll still love you as long as you're beautiful then I'll still love you as long as you're in perfect health then I'll love you you understand what I mean now don't get me wrong it's okay to find something attractive or endearing about another person but mere attraction is not the essence of love you see because God loved us when we were strangers in fact worse than that when we were his enemies and so it means that when we're no fun to be around

God still loves us when we're unattractive or ugly you've put on a few kilos God will still love you when we're crippled and sickly God will still love us God's love means that even when we ignored or hated him he sent his one and only son that we might live through him and so we come full circle back around to verses 11 and 12 but it kind of comes back around to where we started dear friends since God so loved us we also also love one another no one has ever seen God but if we love one another God lives in us and his love is made complete in us in just three short verses we've been plunged into the depths of God's love for us in Jesus to emerge on the other side with the same instructions that he began with dear friends let us love one another this reminds me of words that Jesus himself spoke as I have loved you so you must love one another by this all men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another a great

[20 : 06] Christian author has put it this way no one who has been to the cross and seeing God's immeasurable and unmerited love displayed there can go back to a life of selfishness and so this is why churches all around Sydney are concerned with showing love and kindness to the communities around them God has shown his love to us he's actually shown in an indirect way how much he loves Chatswood and knowing that God loves Chatswood and the surrounding suburbs it would be no surprise to me if this church invests itself in the same way endeavouring to love your friends your neighbours your colleagues but I'm led to ask as we've handled this marvellous multifaceted diamond of God's love shown in the gospel as we've contemplated the mountain peaks of who God is his very character as we've been plunged into the depths of God's love for us in

Jesus are you convinced of God's immeasurable and unmerited love for you if God came to Chatswood he wouldn't just say I love Chatswood he'd actually also turn to you face to face and say I love you this is how I showed my love towards you I sent my one and only son into the world that you might live through him this is great news great news for every one of us here but there might be some here this morning for whom this is especially welcome news the idea that God loves you and you personally might be actually entirely new you might have heard about Jesus when you were younger at an earlier stage in your life but never really taken his claims seriously taken his death and resurrection seriously maybe you've been to church a while ago but this point that

God loves you has never really sunk in regardless God has shown his love for each one of us if you want to accept God's love for you shown in sending Jesus if you want to begin to live a life where God comes into the picture I'm going to pray a prayer now that you might want to pray along with me now I want to say that praying a prayer doesn't make you a Christian following Jesus understanding that he loves you that God has demonstrated his love in sending him as a sacrifice for your sins that is what makes you a Christian but praying a prayer can be a fantastic way to start so I'm going to pray now and then Chris is going to come up and give some further instructions about what you might want to do if this is something that's been particularly pertinent for you this morning will you pray with me heavenly father

I'm sorry that I've lived a life that has so often left you out of the picture I want to thank you that you have shown your love by sending your son that I might live I pray that you would help me to love you and to love others the way that you do in Jesus name amen friends if