

Love Never Fails

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Preacher: Peter Montague

[0:00] . We still have 25 seconds left.

We can talk a little bit longer. .

. . Welcome to Union Baptist Church in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

We welcome all those who are watching from the live stream, if the live stream's on. And we also welcome, especially welcome, any new people visiting for the first time today.

We want you to know that you are very welcome here. We're continuing today with the second part of our sermon series on 1 Corinthians 13, which is entitled, Love is a Person.

[1:24] Last week, we explored the fact that without love, we are nothing. Or in other words, without Jesus, even with the greatest spiritual gifts, we are nothing.

Today, we're going to focus on what Christ's love looks like and how we reflect that love. So together, let's come to the foot of the cross in reverence and in awe of our loving God.

And let's encourage each other to worship our Lord, our Creator, our gracious God, by saying this call to worship together. Let's say this together, and also to each other, as an encouragement to worship God.

Come, let us bow down in worship. Let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker.

So that's it. We're going to say it one more time so it sinks in. Come, let us bow down in worship.

[2:31] Let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker. Let's pray. Father God, we bow down before you today, thankful that we love because you first loved us.

Thank you for showing your love among us by sending your one and only Son into the world as an atoning sacrifice for our sins, that we might live through him.

We praise you for your amazing love. Lord, fill us with your Spirit as we worship you now. Take us outside of ourselves and fill us with your love for our brothers and sisters as we worship you together as your church.

Bring us into unity of the Spirit by your love, and may our worship bring glory to you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen. Theolo■■■ We offer you for thy Elohim.

Amen. Do you know that we are little more than a child, Peter? Amen. Amen. Thank you for the Lord, our Father. Amen. And may our Lord be sure to visit us, there are always more than a child.

[3:52] Amen. Amen. our Savior. I believe in God our Father.

I believe in Christ the Son. I believe in the Holy Spirit. Our God is three in one. I believe in the resurrection.

That is, we will rise again. For I believe in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Our judge and our defender suffered and crucified. Forgiveness is in you.

Descended into darkness, you rose in glorious light. Forever seated I.

[5:05] I believe in God our Father. I believe in Christ the Son. I believe in the Holy Spirit. Our God is three in one.

I believe in the resurrection. Then we will rise again. For I believe in the name of Jesus.

I believe in you. I believe in you. I believe in you.

I believe in you. I believe that Jesus Christ is Lord. I believe in you.

I believe you, Rosalia. I believe that Jesus Christ is Lord.

[6:14] I believe in God our Father. I believe in Christ the Son. I believe in the Holy Spirit. Our God is three in one.

I believe in the resurrection. That we will rise again. For I believe in the name of Jesus.

I believe in life eternal. I believe in the virgin blood. I believe in the saints communion. And in your holy church.

I believe in the resurrection. When Jesus comes again. For I believe in the name of Jesus.

For I believe in the name of Jesus. For I believe in the Holy Spirit. Let's pray.

[7:13] Please remain standing. Eternal God. In whom we gain strength and hope. We thank You for Your incredible love. The height, depth, and width of your love cannot be measured or comprehended.

Yet by trusting in the life, death, and resurrection of your Son, Jesus Christ, we may experience it. Praise be to your name. Now we confess to you the many times we choose to neither live in your love nor to express your love through our words and actions.

We love ourselves instead of loving our neighbors and loving you with all we have. And all we are. We focus on our needs and wants, our worries and cares, and our goals and purposes, rather than on your redeeming and sustaining love.

Forgive us, gracious Lord. Take us outside of ourselves. Free us from our self-centeredness, so we may love you and love others and thus bring honor to your name.

We pray through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. In Psalm 103, God assures us of this. The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.

[8:34] He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever. He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities.

For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

Praise God. Amen. Let's remain standing as we continue our worship. What gift of grace is Jesus my redeemer?

There is no more for heaven now to give. He is my joy, my righteousness and freedom.

My steadfast love, my deep and boundless peace. To this I hold, my hope is only Jesus.

[9:56] For my life is holy bound to his. Oh, how strange and divine.

I can sing all is mine. Yet not I, but through Christ in me. The night is dark, but I am not forsaken.

For by my side the Savior he will stay. I labor on in weakness and rejoicing.

For in my need his power is displayed. To this I hold, my shepherd will defend me.

Through the deepest valley he will lead. Oh, the night has been won. And I shall overcome.

[11:06] Yet not I, but through Christ in me. No fate I dread.

I know I am forgiven. The future should, the price it has been made. For Jesus, I am forgiven.

For Jesus fled and suffered for my pardon. And he was raised to overthrow the grave. To this I hold, my sin has been debated.

Jesus now and ever is my King. Oh, the chains are released. I can sing. I am free.

Yet not I, but through Christ in me. With every breath I long to follow Jesus.

[12:18] For he has said that he will bring me home. And day by day I know he will renew me.

Until I stand, will drive it through the throne. To this I hold, my hope is only Jesus.

Oh, the glory evermore to him. When the race is complete, still my life shall repeat.

Yet not I, but through Christ in me. Yet not I, but through Christ in me.

So for the next song, it's an action song. If anyone would like to come and help me with the actions, that would be great.

[13:31] But if not, that's fine too. If any young volunteers know the actions and want to come and help out. No, well, do come in during the song if you have any confidence to. Or grown-ups. Or grown-ups too. Oh, great.

Now I can do good hard work this girl. Yeah. God's love is people and people's attention.

God's love is higher than the void is in. God's love is higher than the highest mountain deep. God's love is higher than the deepest ocean.

God's grace is higher than the deepest ocean. God's grace is higher than the highest mountain deep. A wider, higher is God's grace to me.

God's love is higher than the deepest ocean. God's love is higher than the highest mountain deep.

[14:56] God's love is higher than the highest mountain deep. God's grace is deeper than the deepest ocean. God's grace is higher than the highest mountain deep.

God's grace is higher than the highest mountain deep. A wider, higher is God's grace to me. Deep, wider, higher, deeper, wider, higher, deeper, wider, higher, it's gone to me.

Thank you, musicians. You can sit down now. I'm going to invite Sheena and Joanne up for this time tomorrow.

Well, good morning, everybody.

I'm Sheena and I'm the community deacon. And it's great to see you all. And in our current sermon series at the moment, we are looking, as Cathy's been saying, at love in Corinthians 13, with love needing to be at the heart of all that we do.

[16:07] Now, we spend most of our lives outside of church. And that's where God has placed us. And that's where he wants to work his purposes out for us in the world. And that's where we can show God's love to others.

It's really encouraging each time we have one of these series to see people and hear about God at work in their lives and to hear him active in their lives. And today, we want to be able to support Joanna at her front line and to pray for her as well.

So today, I'm going to be asking Joanne, what will you be doing? Come over here. This time tomorrow, Joanne. Well, I will be busy at work because plants have got their stride at this time of year.

Help them what you are. What to do. And yeah, we don't wait for anybody and they certainly take bank holidays. So yes, I am a self-employed gardener and I'm privileged to have access to many private gardens across Buckinghamshire and Berkshire.

And so yes, I will be in somebody's garden this time tomorrow. So, what will you be doing there? I have a kind of a specific list of things that I look for when I go to everybody's garden.

[17:26] Seasonal pruning. This time of year, it's things that have flowered already. I'll be deadheading. And like I said, the weeds have taken off. And also, there's climbers to tie in.

Other gardens I go to, people have a list on the back of an envelope for me that they've written, that little projects they want me to get started on. It might be something in the greenhouse, planting, potting on, that sort of thing.

Yeah. And Joanne's been really kind. She came and gave us a planting plan for our garden. We've asked her to do that for us. It's been really exciting to be planting our plant, our garden up according to her plan. Because while I love gardening, I find it really difficult to know which plant goes where. And Joanne is brilliant at that. So anybody who's like, oh, I watched that. Sorry. So who are you going to meet there? A few of my clients are busy professionals.

And so if I see them, it's for the briefest chat. Most people are retired and are generally home when I visit. And some of those people like to come out and garden with me.

[18:32] And so over the years, I've got to know them quite well about what they used to do and their families and things. And then I also help look after the church garden.

You might not have noticed as you walked up this morning. But yeah, and that's a real lottery. It's been, it's quite surprising actually what a busy walkway this is when you're here during the weekdays. And yeah, I've had some interesting conversations with people.

Somebody who wanted to know all about how to look after his palms, you know, as indoor pot plants. And then there was a conversation through sort of broken English and gestures about what in the garden was edible.

The chap wanted to know what he could have with his pasta. And I was convinced that asters looked like a rosemary, I think. So yeah. So what are some of the joys and challenges?

I've always been somebody who's needed to be really active. So the physical aspect of the job is a joy. Being outside in the fresh air and particularly in the pandemic, that was a real blessing.

[19:44] Yeah, I enjoy helping people maintain their gardens. Particularly people that have, you know, been great gardeners over the years and just don't have the same energy for it anymore.

Yeah, just being a plants person. There's not enough room in my garden for all the plants. I've learnt that you can't squash them all in and hope any of them to thrive.

So yeah, just being actually able to see the huge variety of plants in different people's gardens and marvel at God's glory. And this time of year I've often followed round by a robin or a blackbird.

And yeah, that's quite a joy. It's feeding them. Yeah. Challenges? Challenges? Yeah, the weather. Not just actually whether I should, you know, go out to work or not. But just with the huge change in the climate as to what do you recommend to people to put in their gardens.

[20:45] That's actually going to either survive a freezing cold winter or a scorching summer. Yeah, I mean, while I love the physical aspect of the work, during the summertime it gets exhausting and it's taking this toll on the body slowly.

And yeah, being a real task-oriented person, yeah, I just, finding the right balance of hanging around and chatting and getting on with the job is a bit of a challenge, yeah. Okay, so where have you seen God at work?

Right from the beginning when I was considering leaving teaching, I've known God's leading and guiding. And I've been praying just in the timely training opportunities that have come along. And particularly when I was considering taking it up full time, I'd been praying and the same morning that I've sort of been reading the verse in Isaiah 43, 18 about, you know, forget the old things and former things.

And I'll lead you, provide streams through the wilderness. I can't remember the verse exactly. But that same Sunday, Marian came to me and had coffee and talked to me about a neighbour who she'd never talked to me about, who was a landscape gardener, who was wanting to give up gardening and wanting to pass her clients on to someone.

[22:08] And yeah, that just all happened to fall into place at the same time as the garden firm that I'd been working with in Oxford closing. And so, yes, God's, yes, you know, even now doing it full time, yeah, I just know God's provision through, you know, work coming on at the end of the year when things might be winding up with lawn mowing and things.

And there are other projects that God's provided. And also just in conversations that I've had with people and in timely visits to people that I've been able to help them with, perhaps other things like a couple recently I went to had no heating and I was able to put them onto a, yeah, a plumber that I know and he fixed their boiler for them and things.

But yeah, so, yeah, it's just an opportunity to help people. Yeah. How can we pray for you? Yeah, just, I guess, for physical strength and good health, safety as I travel, that I will continue to be an encouragement and blessing to people that they'll see the light of God showing through me and that, yeah, the fruits of his Holy Spirit.

And as I help to make beautiful gardens that they will marvel at God's creation and consider afresh their relationship with him. Let me pray for you, Joanne.

Father God, we just thank you for Joanne for the way that she does light up a room when she comes in. We thank you for her smile. We thank you for her passion for flowers. We thank you for her knowledge and that she can pass on to others.

[23:43] That people can see your creation through the fruit of her work. Lord, we pray for her for physical health, for continued enjoyment and motivation. We thank you for, we pray for her to continue to provide opportunities for her to reach out to others and to share her knowledge and her skills.

Lord, we just pray that you're bringing your blessing upon her today and give her your encouragement and your peace. In Jesus' name. Amen. Thank you, Joanne. That's right. It must be about my garden handbag.

Yeah. You never did it, you. Thank you so much, Joanne, for this testimony of God's provision and love and the way that he's pouring out his love through you.

It's amazing. So we're going to continue our worship with two more songs. And during the first song, the children and young people will be going to their groups. But first, let's just pray for them.

Father, we pray for the children and young people as they leave for their groups. Lord, bless each one of them. May they understand more about how much you love them. And let each of them grow into men and women after your own heart.

[24:56] Father, bless the leaders of these groups. Fill them with your spirit as they teach these precious ones. And shine your light and your love through them.

Amen. I invite you to stand. Here is love, Paul.

We've done that one.

in the next ■■■stasy. He will never be forgotten throughout His eternal days.

Grace takes my sin, holds me bread, pays my debt completely.

[26:35] Love rescued me, seated me with my King forevermore.

On the Mount of Crucifixion, fountains open deep and wide.

Through the floodgates of God's mercy, flowed a frost and glorious tide.

Grace and love like mighty rivers, poured in selsen from above.

Heaven's peace and perfect justice, kissed a guilty world in love.

[27:45] Grace takes my sin, calls me bread, pays my debt completely.

Love rescued me, seated me with my King forevermore.

Let me all your love accepted, love you ever all my days.

Let me seek your kingdom only, and my life be to your praise.

You alone shall be my glory, nothing in the world I see.

[28:49] You have cleansed and sanctified me. God Himself has set me free.

Grace takes my sin, calls me bread, pays my debt completely. God Himself has set me free.

God Himself is my King forevermore. God Himself is my King forevermore. God Himself is my King forevermore.

My Jesus, my Savior, Lord, there is none like you. All of my days I want to praise the wonders of your mighty love.

God Himself, my God. My comfort, my shelter, tower of refuge and strength. God Himself, my Lord, there is none like you.

[30:46] God, I want to praise the Lord. God, I want to praise the Lord.

God, I want to praise the Lord. God, I want to praise the Lord. God, I

want to praise the Lord. God, I want to praise the Lord. God, I want to

praise the Lord. Shout to the Lord on the earth, let us sing Power and

majesty, praise to the King Mountains go down and the seas go roar At the

sound of your name Bless you, adore you, and the work of your hands

Forever I'll love you, forever I'll stand Nothing compares to the promise

I have in you My Jesus, my Saviour, Lord there is none like you

All of my days, I want to praise the wonders of your mighty love My Father, my shelter, tower of refuge and strength Let every breath, all that I am, never cease to worship you Shout to the Lord on the earth, let us sing Power and majesty, praise to the King Mountains go down and the seas go roar At the sound of your name I sing the joy and the work of your hands Forever I'll love you, forever I'll stand

Nothing compares to the promise I have in you Let us pray Lord, we thank you for your amazing, unfathomable love for us We thank you for the perfect example of a life of love In your precious son, Jesus We are grateful that you love us still Even when our own love for each other And the world you gave us is often lacking We pray for a renewal of your spirit today A softened heart and the ability to see the world around us As you see it Help us to love, to encourage and to lift up those we meet in the week ahead

We are grateful for the way in which we can serve the churches around us We especially lift up George and Aubrey today As they preach at Croxley Green and Wickham Marsh churches May your spirit guide them as they share your gospel And may your word ignite in the hearts of those congregations We thank you for Pete and lift him up to you today We thank you for the time he has spent with you preparing for his sermon May his words come from you And may your spirit within us help us to hear and to respond We ask for your comfort and your intercession with those in our church Or connected to our church family who are going through illness and sickness at this time We ask for your spirit of love to be with Elizabeth and those close to her As they process some recent difficult news We pray that they will know your peace and your strength at this time Father we long for the day when sickness and pain are no more But until then we ask for your strength to bear it

And that the church would show both spiritual and practical love To those suffering in our community We thank you for our new children's and family worker Jackie We thank you that you have called her to this role And we rejoice in the plans that you have for her Starting a new role can often be daunting So we pray for Jackie at this time Fill her with your spirit and equip her We pray that we as a church would care for her Encouraging and supporting as we can We thank you for all the leaders for children and young people in our church We thank you for the love that they show and the care that they give And we pray that you would continue to raise new leaders to this ministry Father we pray for those who feel they have had to withhold labour In order to be heard by our government We lift up our teachers and NHS workers Who are struggling to cope with increasing pressures Staff shortages and insufficient wages We ask for improved negotiations between unions and the government

[35:53] And we ask for accurate media coverage And for a positive outcome These frontline workers regularly go above and beyond In their care and service for others We thank you for them And we ask that your spirit would be with them In these difficult times With exam season soon upon us Lord We pray for all year 11s and year 13s As they approach their study leave in May We pray that they would utilise their time wisely To revise but also to rest Lord We pray for parents, guardians and siblings Of those preparing for exams Fill them with patience and love And help them to be gracious to those young people Who are likely to be stressed and anxious We pray that all those taking exams Would know that you hold their future in your hands And they can be assured in the knowledge That you have good plans for them Heavenly Father as we look ahead To the new king's coronation We pray for Charles and the royal family We ask that you grant them your peace and joy at this time

Help familial rifts to heal And we pray for protection from the media And others who would wish to usurp this occasion For their own benefit As King Charles commits himself to your service Give him the strength and perseverance To serve us well as our earthly king May he know you walking beside him day by day And your spirit guiding him throughout his reign We ask that you would hold him accountable To the promises and vows that he makes And may he follow the example of Jesus The ultimate king of kings We ask that you bless our king Lord And we ask all this in your name Amen I'd like to invite Elizabeth up For a reading Good morning

Good morning It's my delight and pleasure To read this wonderful chapter 13th of Corinthians Sorry 1 Corinthians Chapter 13 And we're going to read the whole chapter And it's found on page 1154 In the Pew Bibles Love is indispensable Says This is Paul writing to the church at Corinth And yet I will show you The most excellent way If I speak in the tongues of men Or of angels But do not have love I am only a resounding gong Or a clanging cymbal If I have the gift of prophecy And can fathom all mysteries And all knowledge And if I have a faith That can move mountains But do not have love I am nothing If I give all I possess

To the poor And give over my body To hardship That I may boast But do not have love I gain nothing Love is patient Love is kind It does not envy It does not boast It is not proud It does not dishonor others It is not self-seeking It is not easily angered It keeps no record of wrongs Love does not delight in evil But rejoices with truth It always protects Always trusts Always hopes Always perseveres Love never fails But where there are prophecies

They will cease Where there are tongues They will be stilled Where there is knowledge It will pass away For we know in part And we prophesy in part But when completeness comes What is in part Disappears When I was a child I talked like a child I thought like a child I reasoned like a child When I became a man I put away I put the ways of childhood behind me For now We see only a reflection As in a mirror Then we shall see Face to face Now I know in part Then I shall know fully Even as I am fully known

[41:05] And now these three remain Faith, hope and love But the greatest of these Is love Amen Beautiful words Just read so beautifully And powerfully to us Thank you Elizabeth Thank you Elizabeth You've blessed us this morning And may the Lord give you His love Today Father we thank you For these words of scripture They are so powerful And so incredibly challenging

Lord by your spirit Lord by your spirit this morning Speak deep into our hearts And enable us to become People of love In the name of Jesus We ask this Amen The young bride The young bride was Extremely nervous Before her wedding Convinced that she would make Some terrible mistake During the ceremony She asked her mother For advice Quite simple She told her Just remember that you Walk down the aisle You stand at the altar And then we sing a hymn Reassured by this The bride arrived at the church On the morning of her wedding Repeating her mother's words Over and over To herself As she made her way down the aisle The guests could hear her Saying to herself What sounded suspiciously like I'll alter him I'll alter him Perhaps not the greatest start To a marriage And the sentiments The bride expressed Are in direct contrast To those described In the words of scripture We are looking at today These verses from Corinthians Are often read at weddings As a wonderful poetic description of love They are a call to live love out And it is important However That this incredibly moving And challenging appeal Is looked at In the context Of the surrounding chapters In his letter To the church at Corinth Paul is writing In response to divisions Appearing in the fellowship He writes as a pastor To an immature church Seeking to see it restored

In areas of weakness These include such matters As favouritism of leaders Sexual immorality And now conduct In public worship And this discourse on love Comes between chapters 12 and 14 As a response to the misuse Of spiritual gifts within worship An attitude which was proving To be destructive Within this fellowship As members were seeking To use their gifts For selfish advantage Rather than building Each other up In the first three verses Of this chapter Paul states Without love The use of these gifts Is empty And meaningless He then goes on To describe In the verses We are looking at today What true love looks like And how it should be expressed In their lives together And next time In the remainder of the chapter The words will explain

How love lasts Into the next world And therefore Is far more important Than most of the things That this church Was bothered about The verses before us This morning Are more than a Hollywood Account of love Which are full of Wonderful romanticism But can also be self-serving But the movies Are good fun to watch Aren't they For an example An unromantic response Was made by Harrison Ford Playing Han Solo In The Empire Strikes Back Who when Carrie Fisher's Princess Lear Declared I love you He replied with I know The words in 1 Corinthians 13 Are a cry To sacrificially Put the needs Of others first In a non-judgmental Grudging manner With patience And with kindness

[46:10] This is hard I have found preparation For today Hugely challenging Because I know There are situations In my life Where I am not always Patient and kind Where I don't keep No record of wrongs Where I do not Always persevere I know this admission Will come as a huge shock To my wife And my family But it's true And in our own Human strength It would be impossible To live like this But these verses Are not written To condemn And weigh us down With guilt But to spur us on And ask us to progress To a better way of life As believers We are not infallible But in Christ Jesus We have been forgiven We have been made whole And we have a new Perfect life of righteousness

Filled with the Holy Spirit And through these words God is gently encouraging us To love others As we have been loved By him These words Define love Popular music Often speaks about The experiences And heartaches Of love in songs That many relate to Foreigner famously sang In their number one hit I want to know What love is You too sang I still haven't found What I'm looking for For Amy Winehouse Declared Love is a losing game And Adele Has sung on numerous albums About the difficulties Of love People are searching For love And the verses Before us this morning Define What love is A very brief Language lesson The Greek language Has a number of words For love Three are commonly used

The first eros Is defined as Sexual or romantic love Then we have Philia Which describes Brotherly love Or the love In a friendship And then agape Describes Unconditional love A love that is Freely given For the benefit Of the other person A love that comes From God himself As described In the passage Before us today In Paul's letter To the church At Galatians Love is described As the first fruit Of the Holy Spirit Fruit Is a sign Of a healthy Growing plant I enjoy gardening I'm not very good At it And I certainly Wouldn't be able To make a career Of it But I muddle Through A few weeks ago In our small garden In a corner I put some new Topsoil down And scattered And raked in Some

wildflower seeds

That hopefully Will display Some lovely colours In the summer Every day Since I planted them I've been going And checking For signs of life In the soil And this week Small green shoots And leaves Have begun Appearing From the seeds The work Is beginning To bear fruit And hopefully They will continue To grow Into healthy Plants And for us As believers The fruit of love Is evidence That Jesus Is at work In our lives And we Are growing In him So let's Look at these Words In the chapter Before us This morning Love is patient Love is kind It does not envy It does not boast It is not proud There was a man Who told his wife That a husband Is like a fine wine

He gets better With age So the next day She locked him In the cellar Not much patience And kindness Being shown By either party Patience is the opposite Of being short tempered It reacts with goodness Towards those Who will treat it It gives kindness As others Are served It is not envious Or therefore jealous It is not displeased With the success Of others It does not brag And it does not And it is not Puffed up With its own Achievements It does not It does not Dishonour others It is not Self-seeking It is not Easily angered It keeps no record Of wrongs It is not rude Bringing disgrace And indecency Into the conversation Or indeed For the Corinthians Bringing unruly conduct Into worship It is not Self-centred Insisting on its own way Consequently It will listen [51:13] To others Putting their needs First It is not angered There is a place For righteous Opposition To evil But in this context It is talking about A selfish concern For one's own rights When we are provoked If we respond With love We will see The strengths And potential Of others Rather than Their quirks And attitude I have been reading The autobiography Of Baroness Fluella Benjamins Terrific read Amongst many things She has been an author TV presenter Actor And campaigner For children's rights And those of us Of a certain generation Will remember her As a presenter Of play school For many years She arrived in London As part of The Windrush generation And in her life Has faced many Difficult situations Of hardship And abuse But her way Of dealing with it Has been to smile

And live with joy And positivity She has said All you do When people don't Show you love Is show love Yourself You have to smile And feel worthy Any wickedness That people give to me I just smile And it's mother Teresa Who has said Love begins With a smile The word used For keeping No record of wrongs Is connected To the keeping Of accounts In other words Noting something down And reckoning it To someone I know I've done it In my life I forgive I forget But then somehow I'm able to Accurately record At every opportunity What someone did And said As a means of Showing a sense Of injustice We need to be aware Of a lack of forgiveness That then becomes A barrier to us

Receiving from God Love does not Delight in evil But rejoices With the truth So easy Isn't it When we feel We have been slighted To dislight In the misfortune Of those who speak Ill of us As a means Of feeling vindicated Ah they had it Coming to them Love should do The opposite And delight In truth We have Jesus' words I am the way The truth And the life May the truth Of his love Invade Our lives It always protects Always trusts Always hopes Always perseveres Love protects It means To cover One of our Favourite walks Is along the Thames From Hurley It's enjoyable At any time Of year Particularly in the Spring And into the Summer And along the Path Just after Hurley Towards Hamilton There's often A gaggle of geese Some of you Will have seen Them And when they Hatch They're goslings You get too Close to them At your peril I think last year When we walked Past them We counted 20 or so Baby geese Being supervised By their parents If you got too Close You were warned They were doing Their job Of protecting Them Another time We saw a Swan Gliding along And then it Moved its wings To reveal A little Signet Resting under Them Being protected Just like the one In this picture Psalm 91 Declares Whoever dwells In the shelter Of the most high Will rest In the shadow Of the almighty He will cover You with his Feathers And under His wings You will find Refuge His faithfulness Will be your Shield and rampart God's love Protects us God is watching Over each of us This morning Each of us Here Watching online Is covered By the grace And the love Of God Through Jesus Christ Our Lord Always trusts It allows for Circumstances And wants to see The best in others Doesn't mean It's gullible There are times When we must be Guarded and aware Particularly for Our own safety It is therefore Not deceived But is ready To give the benefit Of the doubt Always hopes It looks forward And not back To the

past Love is a glass Half full It is refusal To take failure As final Always perseveres Love keeps going And going We've all seen The advert For Duracell batteries Number of drumming Toy bunnies And the ones With Duracell batteries Keep going And going After ordinary Batteries fail [56:17] Love always perseveres It just keeps going It's like Duracell Plus plus To infinity Batteries It never ever Gives up See love Never fails It cannot be quenched Because love Is a person And we can love This way When we are In relationship With Jesus Because to love Like this Comes from him What does this look like In practice for us A few simple pointers Listen more Speak less Giving time to someone Is an act Of love Valuing them For who they are Often problems Articulated Produce healing And direction Be slow To come To judgmental Conclusions And if a name Is given to you As you pray Call them up See how they are Keep short accounts Maybe something

Was said in haste A few years ago And that needs To be put right In a relationship Keep persevering In prayer For a situation It's hard But don't give up Allow the Holy Spirit To enter Your prayers Tom Wright In his commentary On these verses Gives some helpful tips For prayerfully Allowing the words To sink Into our souls He suggests Taking them A verse At a time And reflecting On three things Firstly Ways in which You see these Qualities In Jesus Himself Secondly Ways in which We see or don't See them In ourselves And thirdly Ways in which We were like that If we were like that It would work out In practice Ask for grace To envisage Situations Where we could Behave differently And imagine What it would Feel like We are called To love As we have Received loved How have we Received love

Going to do What Malcolm Did last week Jesus is love And let's see What these words Look like Substituting the name Of Jesus For love Jesus is patient Jesus is kind He does not envy He does not boast He is not proud He does not Dishonour others He is not Self-seeking He is not Easily angered He keeps no Record of wrongs Jesus does not Delight in evil But rejoices With the truth He always protects Always trusts Always hopes Always perseveres Jesus Never fails Once we were Enemies of God Separated by our sin But God was kind God was patient And carried on Loving us Even with our Backs turned to him He loved us So much He sent his son To die on a cross For us Taking upon himself

The punishment For our sin Our selfish desires In Jesus Our record Of wrongs Has been deleted In his love For us God has held Nothing back And his love Has never failed Because he had No sin Jesus rose Gloriously To new life Defeating The powers Of darkness And if we Trust in Jesus Giving him The authority In our lives We are set Free From sin And our Old way of life We are clothed In his righteousness Making our life And our love Acceptable To God In Jesus We have a new life And a new hope Therefore There is now No condemnation For those Who are in Christ Jesus Because through Christ Jesus The law of the Spirit who gives

Life Has set you free From the law Of sin And death Knowing all These things We are more Than conquerors Through him Who loved us For I am convinced That neither death Nor life Neither angels Nor demons Neither the present Or the future Nor any powers Neither height Nor depth Nor anything Else in all Of creation Will be able To separate us From the love Of God That is in Christ Jesus Our Lord And don't let Anyone tell you That you cannot Receive or experience A love like this Jesus gave his life For you He has not Given up on you That is how much You are loved With a love That always trusts Always hopes And always Perseveres Our relationships May not always Be what they could And should be But through Jesus

[61:21] We can experience The perfect love Of God Day by day And as you Trust him You can never Be separated From this love And he will Give you the strength To live it out Even though Humanly speaking It is very difficult Whatever you are Facing in your life At this moment In Christ Jesus You are not Separated from His love There are times When life is Desperate When life does Not go as we Desire or plan When it is Very painful When we make Mistakes When we fail To love with Patience and Kindness As we have Been loved When wrong Decisions Lead to difficult Circumstances That weigh us Down But as we Seek Jesus And look To him We receive Amazing grace Incredible grace

Forgiveness And restoration And through The Holy Spirit's Indwelling power And presence We are given Strength To love As we Have been Loved It will Spill over From the Love that We receive Day by Day From the Presence of God In our Lives Can I Encourage you To trust In Jesus Today These verses Define love Show us How to Live love Out And reveal The incredible Love we Have been Shown by God Through Jesus Love Never Fails Because God's Love for Us In Jesus Never Fails Let's Pray Lord Your love Flows like

A stream Into the Ocean Of your Grace Your love Encircles This world Displays Your Faithfulness Your love Is patient And kind Brings Wholeness And true Peace Your love Is all We desire To heal Our Brokenness As all Things pass And fade Away Love Remains Eternally Creator Of all Sustainer Of all Saviour Of all Your glory And majesty Are beyond Our understanding Your power Too awesome To behold And yet Your love Enfolds Us As a Gentle Breeze Saviour Of all Sustainer Of all Creator Of all We bless Your holy Name In Jesus Name We pray Amen Thank you Pete We're going To take a Couple of Minutes To silently Reflect On what God's Been Saying To us Mik To be bee Way By By God's Bye Bye By Bye Bye Bye Hi Peace Tonight Peace Bye Bye Bye Bye Bye Bye Bye We wit Thank you.

Thank you.

[66:04] Thank you.

Let your words sink deeply into our hearts and minds and help us by your spirit to apply what you've said to us today, over the coming week and beyond. Amen.

So we're going to finish with the same hymn that we sang last week. It's a bit of a theme song for the sermon series. It speaks of this divine love which exceeds all other loves.

This love that can only be found in our Lord Jesus Christ. Let's sing love divine, all loves excelling. Love divine, all loves excelling.

Joy of heaven to earth come down. Fixed in us thy humble dwelling.

[67:53] All thy faithful mercies cry. Jesus, thou art all compassion.

God unbounded, love the world. Use it us with thy salvation.

Enter every trembling heart. Bring, O breath, thy loving spirit.

Into every troubled press. Let us all in thee inherit.

Let us find thy promise. Let us find thy promise. Take away the love of sinning.

[69:09] All for our glory of sinning. All for our glory of me. Land of faith was its beginning.

Set us at liberty. Come, almighty, to deliver.

Let us all thy grace receive. Suddenly return. Suddenly return. And death are never more.

Thy temples leave. Lord, dear. Know, dear. O Lord, dear. We would be always blessing.

Serve thee as thy hosts above. Prayer and praise thee without ceasing.

[70:25] Glory in thy perfect love. Finish then thy new creation.

Pure and spotless let us be. Let us see thy great salvation.

Magnetically restored in thee. Change from glory into glory.

Till in heaven we turn our peace. Fill in us the crowns before thee.

Lost in wonder, love and praise. Please receive the blessing.

[71:43] Blessing. This is from the Apostle Paul in Ephesians. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power together with all the Lord's holy people to grasp how wide and how long and high and deep is the love of Christ.

And to know this love that surpasses knowledge that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen. Amen. Please be seated. So a couple of notices.

Next Sunday is an all-age parade service. And this is actually for all ages. And you are very welcome to invite your friends, family, neighbors to the service.

And it's in honor of the coronation. And May 21st after the service, Chris Magnetly will be speaking about his planned trip to Tanzania over lunch.

[72:57] And if you would like to come, we would ask you, it doesn't cost anything this lunch, but we would ask you to sign up on the church website. Or you can go to this week's sheet and there's a link to the

sign up page.

And finally, we invite everyone to stay for coffee. It's where it usually is, upstairs. And if you don't know where it is, please follow people going up there. So God bless you.

When I say I will pray for coffee. I wonder how he can love me, a sinner I will pray for coffee. How marvelous, how wonderful, and my soul shall ever be.

How marvelous, how wonderful is my Saviour's love for me.

For me, in the garden, he prayed not my will but mine.

[74:28] He had no tears for his own grief, but strength of the blood for mine.

How marvelous, how wonderful is my Saviour's love for me.