

A Heart energised by love for Jesus

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[0:00] We continue having a think about some of the characteristics that we need to display and have and own as followers of Jesus. If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person?

Dear children, let us not love with words or speech, but with actions and in truth. This is how we know we belong to the truth and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence.

If our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts and he knows everything.

Dear friends of our hearts, do not condemn us.

We have confidence before God and receive from him anything we ask. Because we keep his commands and do what pleases him. And this is his command.

To believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. The one who keeps God's commands lives in him and he in them.

[1:44] And this is how we know he lives in us. We know it by the Spirit he gave us. What a wonderful passage that is.

As we read it, God will bless it to us. And as we read it, he will give us a new understanding of who he is. Next slide, please. When I've been preparing for this morning and thinking about this, I came to a place where I thought the most important thing here is to understand what we're talking about when we talk about heavenly love.

What is heavenly love? So I want to go into that for a little while before we go into some of the other parts of the passage. Agape love.

The love selfless and intentional around wanting the best for other people. It's a selfless love that gives because it wants to see the best for other people.

And of course we see that in Jesus. Of course we see that in Jesus. But we also see it in others.

[3:11] We see it in others as they give of their resources, of their energy, of their time, of their emotion.

But none of that can happen without us first looking to Jesus and receiving that agape love.

One of the best known verses from Scripture. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

It's well known. But it's also deeply profound. And sometimes I find myself being a bit glib about verses like that.

I know them so well. And sitting in my chair in my office where, as I've said before, sometimes I sit and have groans that words do not express.

[4:15] Other people call it snoring. But I was sitting in my chair just yesterday thinking, goodness me, how profound that is.

God loves us. You as an individual. Wherever you are in your life journey. Wherever you are in your journey with Jesus Christ.

God loves you so much. He allowed his Son to be killed for you. And to rise from the dead for you. Because he wants you to have eternal life. Life beyond the grave. Life beyond anything we imagine. That wonderful eternity in heaven. With almighty God. We're loved by God.

[5:17] Not because of what we do. But because of who we are. We are his children. I've missed a knot out in that slide.

I do apologise. Oh, we're not loved by God. I haven't. I just can't read. It's a good start.

We're not loved by God because of what we do. But because of who we are. His children. Now, I've brought my phone up today. I don't normally bring my phone into the... I try and leave it somewhere. Because then it doesn't ring.

Or irritate me. I wanted to use this as an illustration. This is my telephone. My mobile phone. All right. You've seen one before. Have you? Yeah? Yeah. Some of you will have them.

Some of you will have them. My phone is terrifically clever. It's far too clever for its own good. It knows lots about me. And I get all sorts of messages about what I ought to be thinking about.

[6:15] We literally got home from our holiday. And we were being bombarded by messages saying, Do you want to go on holiday? I just got back. I'd love to. But, you know, give me a break.

Can we unpack first? I unlock my phone with my thumbprint or my fingerprint. I have set it up so I can use both hands.

Because that's how technologically clever I am. But I normally use my right hand. My thumb or my forefinger. On holiday, I burnt my thumb and my forefinger.

Yeah. Thanks for your... Yeah. Oh, that's right.

Yeah. By gum. Tough gig today. I've burnt my... Because I've picked up a skewer that had been in flames for ten minutes.

[7:16] All right? I saw the skewer being in flame for ten minutes. I'm pretty good at knowing that flames are hot.

And yet I picked up this piece of metal with my thumb and my forefinger. And it hurt. And then I spent the rest of the meal in a restaurant in Madeira with my thumb and forefinger in a bowl of ice. I pretended it was a custom, a sort of local... I was just getting... And anyway, it burnt and it blistered a little bit, but with the ice, it didn't blister too much and it got better.

And now it's much better. You can't see the burn. But my phone doesn't recognise my thumb and my forefinger because it's damaged my fingerprint still. So my phone might think it's ever so clever, but it ain't.

Because it doesn't know who I am. If I do that, it doesn't... It just says, fingerprint not recognised. God will never do that with you.

[8:27] You can burn your finger, you can burn your forefinger, you can do goofy things, you can make poor decisions, you can walk away from him and he still recognises you.

You can try your very best to hide from God, but he recognises you. He will never, ever say to you, fingerprint not recognised.

We might think we're really smarty pants if we've got a clever phone or a clever computer or a clever car or a clever whatever it is and we're not. We're not loved by God because of what we do, but because of who we are.

We're loved by God because each of you here are his children. That's I can pay love.

That's selfless love. And we're called in turn to demonstrate that love through acts of kindness, forgiveness and care for others.

[9:41] And I'll come back to that in a moment. Next slide, please.

Heavenly love is inclusive and compassionate. Jesus showed his love to all people from all walks of life, including those who are marginalised, outcast, or considered sinners by society.

There's no one that Jesus wouldn't talk to. He saved his anger for hypocritical leaders and senior people in society.

But he made his business to spend time with those who others simply wouldn't because their behaviour or their reputation or their countenance was not attractive.

His compassion extended to the poor, the sick and the downtrodden. It's really important as we think about what heavenly love is and how our heart can be energised by that love.

My favourite character in the whole of Scripture, Zacchaeus. It's a funny one to have as a favourite, but he is. He was a right goof, was Zacchaeus. He wasn't a very pleasant man.

[11:03] Little man, stole money, tax collector, senior tax collector. And he wasn't a popular man. But Jesus was walking past and he suddenly felt, I need to see this Jesus.

I need to know about this Jesus. And I climbed up a tree. How demeaning was that? The only way I can get to see Jesus is climb a tree. But he did.

And Jesus, you know the story, Jesus went for tea with him. And he talked to him and Zacchaeus came to round to Jesus' way of thinking and committed himself to change.

And Jesus said, the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which is lost. It doesn't say to seek and to save that which is lost as long as they're nice.

or as long as they've got money or as long as they dress well. To seek and to save that which is lost. Heavenly love is inclusive and compassionate.

[12:14] Next slide, please. And heavenly love is sacrificial. Of course it is. Jesus is our example in all things and he showed his love by laying down his life.

Jesus went through agony in the Garden of Gethsemane the night before he died.

Praying to his father that he would take it away, this need to go through the cross to be taken away from him. But it wasn't.

Jesus wasn't being disobedient to his father. He was just saying this is going to be really hard.

This is going to hurt me because I've, because I, it's going to hurt. I'm going to have nails put through my hands and my feet. And yet he did it.

[13:18] He did it because he knew he had to. He did it because the sacrifice and the willingness to be sacrificial was, is part of the character of Jesus.

And I want to say that this is a real challenge for each of us. I think one of the big challenges of the Christian lifestyle is sacrificial living.

It's not the only challenge by any means. But it's a big challenge. How do we live a lifestyle of sacrifice? Because I'm built to be selfish.

If you want to put it in a slightly more generous way, I'm built for self-preservation. I'm built to make sure that I'm okay. And then I'm built to make sure that those that I love are okay.

And Jesus calls us to make sure that all of that's true and then to make sure as well that those that we don't know but need our love, need our compassion are also okay.

[14:40] 1 John 4 This is love. Not that we love God but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

Let me just pause there. It's not surprising that we love God because God's God. Why wouldn't you love God?

Well, we can ask that to lots of people. I can get my head around the fact that I love God. Have we all got our head around the fact that God loves you?

Allow that to ponder. I will come back in a moment. But just that am I sure that am I sure that I really believe that? That God loves you.

That God loves you. Dear friends, since God so loved us we also ought to love one another.

[15:50] No one has ever seen God but if we love one another God lives in us and His love is made complete in us. Isn't that extraordinary?

If we love God and God loves me and I love you God's love is made complete in that equation.

God's love is made complete because God loves me I love God I therefore love you because that's what I'm commanded to do and there is a completeness there's a wholeness in that love there's something there which is quite extraordinary and in the literal sense of the word miraculous.

The Holy Spirit changes our relationships. Now for those of you like me who have a sort of sociological psychological frame of mind there's all sorts of rabbit holes you can go down on that and by all means go there.

By all means have a think about it. But we are loved you are loved and as we love others God's love is made complete whole all of it is there heavenly love is sacrificial move on now there's a complicated couple of verses in the middle of this passage which I had to do some work on because it talks about if you if you don't feel if you feel condemned in your heart God knows better and if you don't feel condemned in your heart it's alright because you haven't been condemned alright God's assurance our assurance sorry God's assurance is in God's presence even if our hearts condemn us God is greater than our hearts and knows everything to start with do our hearts condemn us yeah yeah we feel bad about things we might feel guilty about things we might feel shamed about things

[18:15] I do and some of that's real this isn't saying that you're wrong to feel like that because that's where repentance and forgiveness comes that's where we can come to a place of repentance before almighty God but what this talks about here is are we condemning ourselves not are we

feeling guilty and do we need to go to God and repent have we done something wrong and we need to say sorry yes we do but God is not in the business of condemnation that is the work of the evil one we don't condemn ourselves we shouldn't condemn ourselves because God doesn't God doesn't and he will cleanse our hearts he will cleanse our bodies he will cleanse our words our thoughts our behaviours through the blood of

Jesus that's love that's love but for those of you who are sitting here this morning who are feeling that they are condemning themselves and you're in a bit of a pickle because you just are cross or upset about what you've done or what you've said or what you've thought and I know what that feels like most of us here all of us here know what that feels like God does not peddle condemnation God peddles freedom and so I would ask you and urge you and encourage you receive from God the cleansing and the forgiveness because God is greater even than our hearts and he knows everything if you're feeling like that please this morning if you are able to speak quietly to

God yourself or come and have a chat with somebody after the service and receive the freedom of the forgiveness of almighty God God offers us completeness and forgiveness in him and when we live according to his commands we have confidence before God okay so if we're doing what we're being asked to do well done great and God will allow you to know a sort of yeah it's good isn't it it's good being a child of almighty God a forgiven whole child of almighty God not good what a great thing for us to have and to feel and to be so as we consider allowing our love of Jesus to engulf us and energize us we need to first embrace the fullness of the love of God in our own hearts and I want to get to the place where we are feeling where I'm feeling where you're feeling this morning and as we go out on this week the love of

Jesus engulfing our hearts and energizing us for works of service but first we need to recognize the massiveness the enormity the big eology of the love of God next slide please so first of all we need to love God and it's not necessarily a massively theologically deep thought but there's my thoughts on it love God then love each other if we love one another God lives in us and his love is made complete in us and then we're told we need to show that same love by laying down our lives for each other in the context this is written of course of Jesus having laid down his life for us what does that mean it might and some of our brothers and sisters in other countries overseas it does literally mean laying down our lives it does mean saying kill me or finding yourself in a place where somebody is going to kill you because of your love for Jesus that's not the case in this country at the moment might well be but it isn't at the moment so what does this mean when we're being told to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters others don't be indifferent to the needs of others that's love indifference isn't actively

I'm not going to do it I see something there's a need there and I'm not going to do it it's a sort of a walking past it doesn't touch my heart and we need to be different from that we need to be different not indifferent it's good that wasn't it no I thought it was good when we see a need what do we do with that need now let me be really clear there's no way you as an individual I as an individual can meet everybody's needs we'll just burn ourselves out and exhaust ourselves and get into a right mess but fortunately if you look around just for a moment there's more than one person here there's lots of us and one of the wonderful things about there being more than one of us is that

[25:11] God creates community community community is God's idea it is not good for man to be alone said God and so he created woman do not give up meeting together as some have got into the habit of doing why because God wants us to be in community and we 90 90 100 people however many are here this morning have a responsibility to each other if you're visiting us you have a responsibility back where you worship or even here if you're quick enough but we can't be indifferent we can't just shrug our shoulders we have to make sure that we choose what we're going to address and what we're not going to address we have to be wise but you individual whoever you are is the answer to someone's needs this morning this week this month at home within the concept of the fellowship at work with your neighbours with the person who is serving you in

Aldi a smile a good morning a how's it going a welcome a would you like a cup of coffee a you look sad can I pray for you not talking about massive great projects smile at people it terrifies them it's

great fun morning give them a gift don't withhold your compassion from others that's an alternative translation of some of the words I've read earlier don't withhold your compassion from others if you talk to charities and people who raise money particularly they talk about compassion fatigue people are just a bit fed up with being told that things are hard and they want money and I get that how do I pray that God protects me from compassion fatigue not from appeals for money but from having God's heart of compassion I don't want that part of who I am to become fatigued oh I'm just bored with another person who has this issue God sent us to each other to love each other have our lives engulfed and overwhelmed with love because first it's engulfed and overwhelmed with love of Jesus and then be generous in practical actions as well as with words words are all very well what about some actions as Paul very similar from to the book of James if you see someone who's poor and say God bless you go on your way you haven't been much help be generous kind considerate next slide please we need help with this

I can't do it through my own gritted teeth and my own strength we need the Holy Spirit to come and dwell within each of us and help us with it we know that God lives in us by his Holy Spirit the Spirit guides us to love serve and act with genuine compassion as we embrace God's love in our lives in my life the Spirit will show us ways of loving others he will prompt you he will nudge you you're suddenly pottering around doing the washing up and suddenly someone's name comes into your head or a situation comes to mind you're sitting having a cup of tea and minding your own business and suddenly you get a sense that you really ought to ring somebody or message them or go and see them that's the

Holy Spirit prompting you to acts of kindness and compassion prompted by the love that comes from heaven when that happens do your very best not to ignore it but to send a message to give somebody a call does anybody ring anybody up ever these days whatever to go and see them when you're prompted act the Holy Spirit is nudging you and by the way some people say well how do I know that it's the Holy Spirit prompting me my answer to that is if you're feeling prompted to be kind and it's not the Holy Spirit don't really matter do it anyway it's kind but it will be it will be the Holy Spirit because that's what he does when you're prompted act on it be the person that God wants you to be

[31:08] John said earlier I've forgotten who said it Max Lucado I think it was the more we're immersed in grace the more we'll be able to give grace we need to be immersed in grace and so we've got some things that we need to do and there's an order to them first of all we need to understand and accept God's love for us and relax into that love I put relax in there quite intentionally this isn't a gritted teeth moment this is a surrender moment this is allowing yourself to know that God loves you and you can't do out about it he loves you whether you like it or not so relax into it embrace it allow it to overwhelm you and when you do that sometimes it may bring you to tears and that's absolutely fine but when you do it as well it will give you that sense of it's alright

God's got it God's got me so relax into it don't work hard at it just say to God help me understand that you love me once you've done that ask the Holy Spirit to quicken your hearts to acts of kindness and love for others again I use the word quicken quite deliberately there to just to allow him to give you ideas and thoughts as your heart is softened to who he is and then do it just do it and then your heart will be energized by your love for Jesus and his love for you Amen God