

“The Truest Love Story of All”

I John 4:7-21

I John 4 -- We're going to be looking really at the whole chapter, but kind of focusing in on verses 7 through 21, actually verses 7 through the end of the chapter. But the whole chapter focuses on the love of God, which is no surprise for us because that's the echoing theme of this book in one sense. And you could say it's even a commentary of the Gospel of John. As we look at these words this morning, we ask for the Holy Spirit to speak to us, the words that we need to hear. And I would urge you to please pay careful attention because it is God's holy and inerrant word, beginning at verse seven.

Beloved, let us love one another for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God because God is love. In this, the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only son into the world so that we might live through him. And this is love, not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God. If we love one another, God abides in us, and his love is perfected in us.

Please be seated.

Well, everyone loves a love story. Brothers, I don't care how macho you think you are as a guy. That includes you as well as women. Even Die Hard is ultimately a love story. Though it is not a Christmas movie. You can see me later if you want to debate that. Love stories have always been at the center of human life. Our legends are lore, or books or songs or movies, and the tragic love of Romeo and Juliet is one of those examples. The kind of sappy love will find a way out of The Notebook. There, I got it out. Fantasy. Epic. The Lord of Rings is a love story. In fact, all of these are ultimately love stories. Even The Velveteen Rabbit is a love story. So you think about a stuffed animal so loved. It is worn slick with the love of a child. Now, these are ultimately love stories and are powerful to us because they both speak out of and to our deepest desires, those deepest desires to be loved and to love in return. And there's a simple reason for that. We're made in the image of God, and God is love, as verse eight says. But John's assertion here isn't a declaration about something God possesses. It's a declaration of his very essence. Love is not something that God expresses or possesses or merely shows. It is the very essence of who he is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable. Love. That means is that all that God does towards us, he does out of the reality that he is love.

Even his justice ultimately is done in love. Love for his own glory. Love for the vindication of those who have oppressed and persecuted his people. But it's love. The problem with love,

humanly speaking, is that it's easier said than done. So many of us, probably everyone here, has hurt someone or been hurt by someone because of failed promises of love.

It's really true. All you need is love. As long as you know what true love really is. And the Bible teaches that we are hardwired to be love. Because, as I said, we're made in the image of God. We are made to love him, to love one another, and to love all those around us. But our sinful hearts get a hold of love and scramble it.

Sin misplaces or as I like to say it misgrounds the love we were made for so that we not only make idols out of people, things, or even just ideas. We completely redefine what love really is, making it all about what we want. It's all about our desires and we become the focus. Let me kind of cover that a little bit by saying things like, well, love is everything, but it isn't.

God is everything and God is love. And so God's love is everything because God is everything. And that distinction is huge. That's why I sing the gospel, I think as a love story, the ultimate love story, that the truest love story of all is so crucial. It's a love story that defines what all true love is when we see it in the world.

And it's the reference point for all human expressions of love, whether it's romantic love, love for our family, love for our brothers and sisters in Christ, love for friends, love for humanity, even love for the good gifts that God gives us. You can love football to the glory of God. Just don't make it your idol. And believe me, it's very hot right now.

But soon the sun is going to sink lower in the horizon earlier in the afternoons. And football season will be upon us. Now that I'm not making it an idol, I'm loving the good gift of God. But that's important because God has made us to love even those good gifts he gives us. And that's why the gospel of Christ is more than just an announcement of salvation.

It's what defines and empowers the true love of God so that we're able to see and live in it appropriately. It's that reference point in the good news of Christ died for our sins and being raised from the dead. God's love is both objectively defined for us. That is what it looks like and supernaturally empowered in our hearts.

That is how it brings us life. And that's critical because in our sin, as I say, we scramble all the good things of God, and instead of God, our love being about God and giving God what he deserves and being satisfied in him, we turn it on its face to us. So John directs our our, our thoughts and our hearts as if he were taking our face and pointing it to the truth that God is love.

To understand the implications of that profound reality. Now, before we go any further, I want to make sure we address an issue that is often brought up and discussed when we talk about the

love of God. We hear also the love of Christ. So do we talk about the love of God or the love of Christ, or are they the same?

Or is there some distinction? Now, we've talked about this very recently. Even as Doctor Dorian, he preached in his final sermon here a couple of Sunday evenings ago, first Corinthians 13. He talks about Jesus being the embodiment of the love that's presented there in those verses, beautiful verses saying that Jesus is patient, Jesus is kind. All those things we can see are reflected literally in the embodiment of God's love in his incarnation.

But when Philip asked Jesus to show him and his fellow disciples the father, Jesus answers him in John 14 nine by saying, whoever sees me sees the father. When you look at me, you see the father. And so when we see Jesus in the gospels loving people, we see God loving people. Yes, Jesus is God, God the Son, but he is that in flesh and action, so that we may not have ever seen God in His essence.

We've seen his love because we see it in Jesus. I love what Paul says in Romans 838 and 39. He kind of summarizes the way we to understand the love of God and the love of Christ. He says in verse 38, I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The love of God is expressed in its fullness in Christ Jesus our Lord. When we speak of the love of God, we're speaking of the love of Christ. What we see him doing is he pursues sinners like us. Sacrifices himself for sinners like us and commits himself wholly and completely to the end and into eternity. When we see Jesus' love, we see God.

Now here in verse John, we have all of those components that I just mentioned, what I think true love really is. It's a simple presentation of the gospel and that's the simplicity of the Gospel of John. He just says things forthrightly, directly and without much fanfare. But they are so profound. The love of God is seen in pursuit, sacrifice, and commitment.

These are the actions that show us what it means to say that God is love. Not surprisingly, we as true believers, we express those same elements in our love towards God and to our fellow believers. We pursue God to know him and to grow in him, and to learn from him and to enjoy his presence. We sacrifice our time and energy, and even we give a sacrifice of praise, denying those things we are tempted to trust instead of him.

And we offer that praise for him, and we commit ourselves to him. Though in all of these things we fail miserably. And often God's love is expressed in that perfect pursuit and sacrifice and commitment. And that is what we see here. God's kind of love and its expression, even in those in whom his love is being perfected. Now notice that phrase, it is being perfected is not yet perfected, but one day it will be.

So in the gospel, God's love pursues us. He pursues sinners like us. Now, when I first laid eyes on Lisa on the campus of Covenant Seminary in the fall of 1990, I was smitten. But when I heard her engage in a theological debate with some of our fellow classmates, the pursuit was on, and I began to think of ways to find myself where Lisa was.

I began to pursue her. I ask questions about her. Who is she? Where it will, where is she from? What is she studying? I tried to find myself in those places where students gathered in the mailroom and Edwards Halls. Very small place. So you've barely turned around. And there. So it was a really good time to meet somebody on campus in different places.

I even pursued her by using one of my responsibilities. I had a job on campus taking care of a little magazine called The Intercessor, and what we did is we contacted alumni and students, and I would call them and get prayer requests, and we put it in the in that little flier that we would hand out. Nothing was digital in those days.

Well, I needed a prayer request, so who could I call? I'll call Lisa Duck. The pretense, of course, was it would be an opportunity for me to talk to her. I got a prayer request and I put it in there, so it was real. But we talked for an hour, and I began to pursue her. God's love pursues us.

It's different, of course. I was pursuing Lisa out of a desire for her. But God's love is different in some ways. So much deeper. He doesn't pursue us because of a desire for what he sees in us. He pursues us even prior to any desire we might have for him. Look at verse ten in this is love. Not that we have loved God, but he loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation of our sins.

Or as we also see later, that he loves. We love because he first loved us. But that point there is important. While we were still sinners in need of having God's wrath satisfied against us, God sent his son. He says it bluntly. Paul does. In Romans five, God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Or again in Ephesians two he says, God being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ. So God's love in pursuing us is different, in that we were incapable of even responding to his pursuit. And he pursued us. He opened our hearts and our minds so that we might receive his love.

It's a kind of love that so humanly inconceivable that God led the New Testament writers to, to create or use a totally different word for it agape. Here's what one commentator says. It is not a conditional love that depends on the attractiveness or worthiness of the object for it to be exercised. Divine love, agape is utterly different. It cannot be earned.

It cannot be deserved. God loves us because that is his nature. And so he pursues us because he is the one who loves, not because he sees something particularly lovable in us. And he removes

the obstacles to his love in the process of that pursuit. Now, from his perspective, he doesn't try to begin to convince us because, as we said earlier, we couldn't be convinced when we're dead in our sin.

But as he opens our hearts and we begin to hear, he tells us what he has done in removing the most significant obstacle to his love. And that, again, is in verse ten, and this is love. Not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. The greatest obstacle is his just wrath towards our sin.

Now we've examined this concept of propitiation several times recently. Doctor Dorian preached on it in Romans three, also Hebrews two. And speaking of the incarnation. Some translations use the phrase atoning sacrifice for that Greek word here, but I don't think that quite gets the fullness of the meaning that God's wrath is to be satisfied, and not just that our sin is covered, or we are covered in the righteousness of Christ, but God's just wrath is satisfied.

Now the assertion that God is wrath, Rafael has had its detractors from the very beginning. It's especially true to the modern mind, and all you have to do is search God's wrath on Google, and you'll see all kinds of horrible things said about people who believe in the doctrine of God's wrath. One of the things they'll say is that it's just it's the opposite of love.

But that's how the devil works. He takes God's truth and flips it on its head, because there is no greater expression of the love of God than that the judge who demands a price satisfies it himself. Even as we sang in the opening hymn, In Christ, we meet our judge and maker unafraid. Because his love has satisfied demands of his law.

He satisfied his wrath against our sins so that we might come before him with that confidence. He had no obligation to do it. We had no right to demand or to ask for it. We couldn't even possibly repay him. But because his love loves the unlovable and undeserving, he did it. That's love. But in the gospel, we also see that God pursues us by cleansing us from all unrighteousness.

Now, in this case, we might say it's more our perspective. It's true. Objectively, God's wrath must be satisfied. But as we come to God very often, one of the things that we're most mindful of is our sin or pass in our present sin. Our sense of un cleanness. Look at verse 17 by this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is, so also are we in this world.

There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear, for fear has to do with punishment. And whoever fears has not been perfected in love. Now the hinge of these verses, the truth in which John's point I think turns, is that statement. It's a remarkable statement, as he is so also we are in this world, the he is Jesus.

And the point here in John's discussion is God's love. And what he wants us to understand is that God's love is perfected or matured in us. I like to say it as it settles, settles in our hearts. As it settles our hearts, it settles in our hearts that we realize what he is saying here. Now what? How is Jesus before his father?

He is the beloved son in whom our father is well pleased. Twice, audibly, God said this at Jesus baptism and at the Mount of Transfiguration, so that it can be heard that Jesus, who would come and stand in our place, was coming to fulfill all righteousness. This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased. And of course, he remains that way, the beloved son.

So when John says, as he is, so we are. What he's saying is, remember, you are beloved. You've been cleansed from all righteousness. But the righteousness of Christ is what we confess in chapter one. First John verse nine. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. That's where the devil goes, reminding us of our past sins or our present failings and the fear of the future.

We might think well of the Day of Judgment have I fear it, but we shouldn't. He says we have confidence, even boldness. The word can be translated in the day of judgment, but we have also that confidence now, because God looks at us as his beloved and in us. If you dare to believe it, he is well pleased.

That gives us confidence to live without fear right now, here and now in our daily life. This is why we preach the gospel to ourselves. And when we say that phrase a lot. But what does it really mean? To preach the gospel or to ourselves is to remind us what God has said is true. I go back to pursuing Lisa.

One of the things that every husband should do, and I'm not saying I do this perfectly, but every husband should do this. And I'm sure all the men in here to do this is to continue to show that pursuit of love through gifts for no reason except other than you love them flowers, cards, not just on birthdays and Mother's Day and whatever hallmark days there are.

You are continuing to say, my heart pursues you. And when we preach the gospel, the news that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, we are proclaiming to ourselves again that God is still pursuing us to say, remember, I have forgiven your sin. Remember, you stand before me as my beloved son and daughter, in whom I am well pleased, and whose spirit I have put my self in you, so that you may love one another.

He pursues us by removing all the obstacles and cleansing us from our sin, so that we might then fully live without fear in this world, certainly without fear of the judgment. But even now, do you feel God's smile upon you for that reason? Don't let the devil convince you that the past is operative, but that your present faith and rest in Jesus Christ and what he has done to cleanse you.

That is how God sees you next and why, and something we might be tempted to skip over because it's so obvious in the gospel. God's love, sacrifices and as it is with all sacred truths, we have to be careful that we don't rush over it because it's obvious Jesus sacrificed himself. And that's the whole focus of the gospel, right?

But we can't move too fast. The fact is that the things we take most for granted are those things which are obvious, and they're really the most important things, the kind of things we say things like. Well, it goes without saying, I hate that phrase. If it goes without saying, then don't say it. But this goes with saying for saying this is the good news.

We must say it as the Psalm has said, let the redeemed of the Lord say so. We must say the sacrifice that God has given. It's everything, and it shows God's love in all of its depth. Perhaps it's better to say, not that it's obvious, but maybe that it's simple. Not simplistic, but it's simple. Namely that the magnitude of God's love is shown by the greatness of his sacrifice.

He gave what was most needed and he gave what was most valuable. Again, verses nine and ten. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God, but he loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Again, what was most needed from the divine perspective we've already looked at, and that he gave what was most needed his son, so that our sins could be forgiven. His wrath could be satisfied. But what is most needed from our human perspective is there in verse nine, life. God sent his only son into the world that we might live through him.

As the gospel proclaims to us, the love of God in Christ, what's most important for us to see is that God doesn't merely have eternity in view. What he has in view is the way that we are assured of God's love and presence now as we live life. It's not just eternal life. It's the life that we now live.

It's not just a get out of jail free card. It's the perspective. And again, the reference point that we understand all of life from that God is love and his love has come to us through the sacrifice of His son so that we might live. Jesus Himself said it. John ten verse ten. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

That's not just delayed to the end. It's now the richness and the assurance of the knowledge that our Lord is with us, has loved us and empowers us in his love. I love the way Paul says in Galatians 220, I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh.

I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. That same verse shows us what makes God's giving, what is most needed all the more profound when we see that his

love sacrifice by giving what is most valuable. There could be no greater, more valuable gift than the gift that God gave.

Verse nine again it says, God sent his one and only son. Now he's really rephrasing the most well-known verse, certainly in the New Testament, maybe even the whole Bible. And again, as I said earlier, there's a sense in which this letter may be seen as a commentary on the Gospel of John. And we hear echoes of John 3:16, because that's exactly what's being said here.

And everybody here probably has memorized that verse in one translation or another. It's beautiful to hear. So I'm going to ask all of you to recite the verse with me. However you learned it. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever.

All right. Well, that was the new American King James Standard international paraphrased Version, however you learned it. 😊 What an amazing truth that God gave. That Jesus gave his life so that we might have life, and that he gave his one and only son. And we've all heard what that really means. If you memorize it in King James, the word begotten might confuse us as we think of all the begets of the Old Testament.

So the idea here is not that God the Father fathered Jesus the Son, the word only begotten, or one and only as the ESV is a Greek word that means one of a kind, one only of a kind-- Monogenes. You can hear where we get our word Genesis or genus. It means of a kind or species.

We can easily see why it's translated the way is. God gave the one and only divine Son.

So we might live. That's the greatness of his sacrifice. Jesus, of course, submitted to it willingly. It was his love as well as he himself said, greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his brothers. I keep thinking, what? What kind of sacrifice is illustrated, humanly speaking, that is that is similar and there is nothing.

There are stories of parents sacrificing many things for the sake of their children, husbands and wives giving up great things and sacrificing. But none of them can compare to the value of what God gave and what Jesus gave up. Even laying aside the glory of heaven to take on a human body and to live in this world, to be humble and serve as a servant of the doctrine, is the humiliation of Christ.

And think of it that Jesus humbled himself. He gave up his seat as you, if you will, in heaven. Even though he didn't leave deity and he still had fellowship with his father. In the great mystery of the incarnation, he walked every day in a world that he saw, abusing his love steadfastly to the cross, where he would give his life no greater gift.

Finally, in the gospel, we see how God's love commits, and he does this by assuring us his love remains with us. Back in first John four verse 12. And then we're going to look at verse 16, no one has ever seen God. If we love one another, God abides in us. His love is perfect and his love is perfected in us.

Then verse 16, so we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in his love abides in God, and God abides in him. Now John uses this word abide four times in just these two verses, and a total of 24 times in the entire letter. So it's very important, the translation of this word could be also remain or stay or dwell.

So the idea is this the love of God that comes to us stays with us. It remains with us. It dwells with us. He uses the same idea in John 14 when he says, if anyone loves me, my father and I will come to him by the spirit, and we will dwell. We will abide. We will pitch our tent, and we're here to stay.

The love of God remains with us. It dwells with us. More correctly, we should say God dwells with us because God, God's love, can no more leave us than God Himself, who has pursued us and sacrificed himself for us, can leave us. And so he's committed over and over again. God assures his people in the Old Testament, in the New Testament, some variation of this I will never leave you or forsake you.

The Emmanuel Principle literally fleshes that out. As God came near in the temple and drew his people near him. And then God came in the flesh, and now by His Spirit he dwells among us. And one day we will be face to face. But through it all his love remains.

Look at verse 13 and see how he promises to do that in terms of the role of the Holy Spirit. By this we know that we abide in Him and he in us, because he has given us of His Spirit and we have seen and testify that the father has sent His Son to be the Savior of the world.

Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. Can almost get confusing as you hear him, because he's trying to make the point.

If there is any love in you that is reflective of that love of God, it came from God, and you know it because the Holy Spirit has brought it to you. He teaches us he is the one who opens our eyes, and he is the one who drives that truth into our hearts. As I said early earlier, settles it into our hearts so that we may live out of that.

To know that it's true. His love is committed and remains with us. But God's purpose in assuring us that his love remains or stays with us isn't only to provide that sense of security that it surely

gives us to know that God is with us and he will never leave us. God's love is ours now and forever, and God wants us to see that his love commits.

That is, it remains, and it stays by making us able to love one another like he loves us. God has come to dwell in us. Everyone who believes in him and individually and all of us together as a church, is the body of Christ, so that he might love us in our loving one another. Again. Verse 11.

Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God. If we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. Verse 19, we love because he first loved us. If anyone says, I love God and hates his brother, he's a liar. For he who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.

And this is the commandment we have from him. Whoever loves God must also love his brother. Now the logic of these verses is easy to follow, and it's inescapable. If God's love has come to us and is in us, then we must love our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, who each have God's love in them. But there's something stronger here than just obligation.

It isn't just that because God has loved us and our family in the church that we ought to love as well. Look at verse 12. No one has ever seen God. If we love one another, God's God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. Now you look at that sentence and at first it seems a bit random, even disconnected.

Like what is the first part of that have to do with the rest? It's almost like he said, Mars is a planet. If we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. Well, how are the two related? Well, in John one, the gospel of John, he says almost the same thing in verse 18.

No one has ever seen God. The only God who is at the father's side, he has made him known. That is Jesus. This point here is that no human being has ever seen God in his essence. Jesus, who has come to earth, is that embodiment of God, the investment of God. And when we see Jesus, we see God again.

John 14 and Jesus answer to Philip, when he says, show us the father. Jesus says, whoever sees me sees the father. So John is making the same connection here, the same application, only not in Jesus, but in us. He's saying, no one has ever seen God. But when we see believers truly love one another with God's love, we see God.

That's amazing and it's awfully convicting because we might look at ourselves and say, how has my love or does my love? This past week show God? Think of those just in this body? Brothers and sisters has my love for my family here. Is could someone look at it and say I see God? Or will they say I see Rob?

Here's what one commentator said. Christ's physical presence is no longer with us in this world. But if people want to see Jesus, they should be able to meet him in the churches. They should encounter his love and the love we Christians have for one another. And again, that means not just mystical visions or wonderful warming words, but practical, down to earth actions.

The modern equivalent of washing one another's feet. Only then does God's love take its fullest effect in our lives. That's why John can say, whoever loves has been born of God and knows God because they are embodying his pursuing, sacrificing, committing love. So much so that we can even say that we see God. It would not just in the preaching, not just in the worship, but our acts of love which show that God is real.

Francis Schaefer even said that this kind of love is the ultimate apologetic. As Jesus himself prayed in the High priestly prayer, that the world may know that he is a life because of our love, one for another. John's again just re-emphasizing Jesus own words that our love for him shows up in our lives as obedience to him.

It's easy to say I love God, but the proof of that pronouncement is manifest in obeying his command to love one another. Look how strongly John again puts it in verse 20. If anyone says, I love God and hates his brother, he's a liar. For he who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.

And this commandment we have from him, whoever loves God must also love his brother. What does that look like? It looks like Jesus preferring others, humbling himself. Or as Paul put it in Philippians two, as he was encouraging the church there in Philippi, which was going through many difficult things and even many personal struggles, he says in verse three, do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.

But each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves which is yours in Christ Jesus. It could actually be translated as Jesus. Think so? You thought you two think. Who thought he, though he was in the form of God, didn't count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

We love one another, but preferring each other over one another. And I can't tell you how many times I've seen that happen in the life of this church. Not waiting for someone to ask. Even people taking the initiative. God pursued taking the initiative. And that's how his love works. Even just phone calls and texts of encouragement that seem to come out of nowhere.

That's the pursuit of love. And then doing things, not waiting to be asked because you see that they need to be done. Taking someone to the doctor, showing up with a meal, cutting someone's grass, or just noticing there's a need, and instead of waiting for someone to say

instead of saying and waiting for someone to respond. If you need me, need anything, let me know.

Just doing it. We see God in that reality. Finally, I want to underline, at the risk of sounding redundant, that God's love commits by never failing. You might say, well, you just said that if it remains with us, it's forever, right? Well, a few weeks ago, when I determined this was what I was going to preach on, I was preparing a lesson for my Sunday school community growing together on this very passage of Scripture.

So again, I apologized to growing together for hearing it again. But that's okay because we can stand to hear it again. That's the whole point here. Then Doctor Dorian, he began to preach in first Corinthians 13, saying that Jesus is the embodiment of love. I'm like, oh boy. And then he reference first John four and made about three of my points.

And I was like, oh gosh. So the Monday he left, I called him in the hallway and I said, hey, I just want to tell you, I've determined I'm going to preach on. I was thinking I was going to preach on first John four. He went, really? I said, well, I don't know now. He said, well, don't worry about it.

Don't remember anything. I said. I said, well, I don't think that's true. He said, well, you could say Dorian. He made a good start and you finished it. So no, I don't think I'm going to say that either. We kind of looked at each other and he said, well, maybe God wants us to think a lot about God's love right now.

I said, I think so too, because we can never think about it too much. His love remains, and we need to know that it never fails. That word is used in First Corinthians 13. A different word is used in John 13. So if you want to turn there, look at John 13. This is the night of the last Passover.

Jesus would celebrate with his disciples. The night he would be betrayed, the night he would be arrested, the night that Peter would deny him. It was the night that all of his disciples would flee. They would run away in fear. And Jesus knew all of that was coming. And as they gathered in that room for that last Passover, in a setting where a servant would have washed their feet as they came in, and perhaps it belonged to one of them even to do it.

And it didn't happen. Verse one says, now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that this hour had come to depart out of this world to the father, having loved his own, who were in the world, he loved them to the end. That phrase, love them to the end doesn't mean that he loved them to the end of his life.

We might look at that and go, wow, that was Jesus showing love all the way up until he died. No, it means he loved them completely, fully, to the fullest, to the end. Means never failing. He was about to give his life. Verse three then shows what he did. That illustration that shows the

fullness of his love. Jesus, knowing that the father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, rose from supper.

He laid aside his outer garments, and, taking a towel, tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples feet, and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him. No one could have faulted Jesus if his thoughts had been consumed with the pain and abuse that was going to come to him over the next 24 hours.

Makes sense that it would be on him. And that's not even thinking about all that he would experience under the wrath of God on the cross, but instead he bows before those for whom he is going to die and washes their feet. That's the kind of love that loves to the end and beyond. That never fails, that serves selflessly and loves fully, even in the face of great distress.

Because it loves for the sake of loving the one who needs to be loved, not for anything in them, but because it is love. You know, from our end, when we think about love and sacrifice, one of the things that we most need to sacrifice is our pride and our ego. My sister had a poster in her room for many years.

Some of you may have had this poster. I don't know what was from the movie Love Story. Remember what that poster or the tag of the movie was? Love means never having to say you're sorry. That's demonic, because love among the brethren is all about saying I'm sorry, I've sinned. Will you forgive me? Even coming to God now? God's love is perfect.

He has nothing to apologize for, but in our relation to him we are coming in repentance saying, I am sorry, and were receiving his love and one another. As we look at one another, we sacrifice that pride and ego and say, I have sinned against you, brother. Will you forgive me? That's what the love of God looks like.

Or maybe it's even just overlooking a multitude of sins and saying, I really cannot ever bring that back up again, whatever it may be. We fail, and when we fail, let us return to the love that never fails. Remembering his perfect pursuit, his sacrifice, his commitment is never failing. Love.

Because it's here. And we see God at work right here as Doctor Redding. His family come. My prayer is that if he even stands in the pulpit and he looks out at his developed relationships with people and he's thinking about the things that he has seen and heard, he will be overwhelmed by thinking, I see God because God is love.

Because God is love. Brothers, let us love one another.

Let's pray. Lord God, thank you that you remind us again in the gospel over and over again, that you have pursued us with an everlasting love, sacrifice, and committed yourself to us, and that your face shines upon us with that perfect love. So may we then rest without fear of anything.

With confidence of your love dying more and more to self and growing more and more in Christ and loving one another as you have loved us. We pray in Jesus name. Amen.