

Imitating God and walking in love

Ephesians 5:1-2

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TRANSCRIPT:

Well, thank you for having me here this morning, and greetings from Smithfield Baptist Church as well. We've been praying for you for a year, and particularly every time we pray for Drummoyne, we prayed for you, and we'll be looking forward to praying for you in your own right very soon. Why don't I read from the Bible first, and then I'll pray, and then I'll try and explain just a couple of verses from what we have read. So if you turn in Ephesians chapter 4, and verse 30, actually verse 31 of chapter 4, we'll just go back a little bit. Our focus this morning is Ephesians 5:1-2, but we're going to read from chapter 4, verse 30, to just give us a little bit of context from chapter 4.

So starting from verse 30: "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you. Therefore, be imitators of God as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness nor foolish talking nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore, do not be partakers with them; for you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. Therefore He says: 'Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light.' See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the

days are evil."

Well, let me pray, and then we'll come and look at these few verses this morning. Heavenly Father, we have read Your Word. You actually do speak to us through the Bible, and though my job is to explain it now, Lord, we pray that all I will be doing is just repeating and explaining the truth of the Bible. Our job is to listen, and we pray that we will listen well. My job, Lord, even as I'll be preaching this again, really is to listen as well, and Lord, I pray that I would not take it for granted. Lord, we pray, help us to hear Your voice this morning, in Jesus' name, Amen.

So, we're doing a series in Ephesians in our church, and I'm picking one of the older sermons that we covered. We're looking at verses 1 and 2 of Ephesians 5, to remind you. Let me just quickly read them again: "Therefore, be imitators of God as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma." We're in the practical section of Ephesians. Paul has already explained the plan of God. He's already explained how a person individually becomes a Christian. He's also explained how, when a Christian is made a Christian, they're brought into the church. Now he's looking at how you live as a Christian. He started that in chapter 4, actually, and when we get to chapter 5, we sort of think, oh, there's a chapter break, so this is a brand new section. It's actually contested by the commentators. Some of them say this is really just a summary of chapter 4. So if you really want to know what chapter 4 is in a few short lines, read these two verses. But then others say, no, no, it's actually a starting point to give you, if you like, some sort of momentum, some sort of motivation to read on chapter 5, the bits that we read, and so if you really want to know what does it mean to imitate God, well, read on in chapter 5, as we did, and you'll get a feeling for what it means to imitate God. You want to know how to walk in love with Jesus, well, read on the rest of chapter 5, and you'll find out how it works out.

This morning, though, I'm going to sit on the fence, which is very rare for me, but I'm going to say that on the one hand, I think it is a summary statement of chapter 4, but it's also a link or a pivotal couple of verses that lead us into chapter 5, and so they're so critical to just think of on their own, and that's what we're going to do. And let's think about it in the first place under one heading, which is: Our love for one another should imitate God's love for us. Ephesians chapter 5 starts off with the scariest words I think you'll ever find in the Bible. Very simply, it says, "Therefore, be imitators of God as dear children." Now, if you and I were told to imitate another Christian, we'd sort of think to ourselves, we've got a bit of a chance. If the Thessalonians, for instance, were told to copy the churches, we find that Paul writes to the Thessalonian churches and says, basically,

you did a pretty good job. He says in 1 Thessalonians 2, "For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea." They did a good job copying the Jewish Christians. If Paul commands us, for instance, to copy him, and he does so four times in the New Testament, we probably think it's pretty hard, but deep down inside of us, we'd probably think, well, maybe I've got a shot at this as well. 1 Corinthians 11, for instance, Paul says this: "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ." And perhaps we think this is something we could do. But when we find words like "be imitators of God," surely this must instantly tell you this is impossible. I can tell you it's impossible for you, and you could come to me after and say it's impossible for me. So really, we should give a bit of thought to this, shouldn't we? We should think about why would the Apostle Paul tell us to do something that's impossible? Well, he cannot mean we have to copy God's self-existence. God did not need to be created. Theologians say God self-originated. In other words, He's totally independent. He doesn't depend on anything. He doesn't depend on anyone. He doesn't need anybody. He existed in and of Himself, and quite frankly, it's He that gives everything life, if they have life, and everything existence. And so, in fact, we are the dependent ones. We depend on Him. We are the created ones. We cannot copy God's self-existence. We cannot copy His infinity. He has no limitations. He's eternal. We are not. Time limits us. Time does not limit God. He's immense. Space cannot limit Him. God can be everywhere at the same time. We cannot. And so, we cannot really copy His infiniteness. And then, God never changes. His moral values don't change. His plans never change. His being does not grow or decay. We decay. Botox is a help, but it really doesn't change the story, does it? Theologians call these attributes of God the incommunicable attributes of God. What do they mean? Well, they're saying God does not share these things with us. God really is God because He has these attributes. However, there are some attributes that God does share with us, and they call them the communicable attributes of God. Most of them are moral in nature. For example, the goodness of God. A human being can be good. The justice of God. Each one of us can watch a footy match and instantly cry "unfair" when the ref gets it wrong. We've got this sense, haven't we, of what is good. We've got this sense of what is fair. We're not perfect. We're not perfectly just. We're not perfectly good like God, but we've got some sense of it. You see, it's because God created us in His image, and that's the reason why we actually have something about God in us. He's, in great grace, shared something of His nature in us. Now, these characteristics, things like goodness or justice, you can't really work them out if you don't have some sense of God. If you don't read the Bible, if you don't understand it, your sense of goodness is going to be something wishy-washy and wrong. Your sense of justice is going to be really something quite polluted if you don't understand the justice of God, and our society is sort of showing us that almost every day, isn't it?

But since we have been created in the image of God, even though we're not perfect, we have to look to these communicable attributes of God to see which one of them, or does He want us to copy all of them, when He says, "Be imitators of God"? Well, I believe, I think Paul is saying that He wants us to copy the love of God. It's just one attribute He wants you to focus on this morning, the love of God. We know this because He says the word "therefore." Did you see that in verse 1? "Therefore," and "therefore" instantly connects us to the verses before, and the verses before say, "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you." And God wants you to mimic or copy His kindness, His compassion, His tenderheartedness, and His willingness to forgive sinners, people who sin against us. You see, this is once again a message to the church, people who already are in the plan of God, people who are already converted, and He's saying to Christians, to you as a Christian, He's saying, "You must be an imitator of God." You as a Christian, you have remaining sin, and so your love is always going to be imperfect, but as you exist in a community, you have to expect that you are going to hurt someone in this church, and someone in this church is going to hurt you. And when they sin against you, or if you sin against them, well, quite frankly, you have to be tenderhearted, you have to be kind, and you have to forgive them, just as Christ has forgiven you. And so, you're a serial offender yourself against God. You have constantly disobeyed Him and constantly opposed Him, and so you know for a fact, from Ephesians 4:32, that God has treated you this way. He has treated you with kindness and tenderheartedness and forgiveness. And so, in the negative, even if you go back into chapter 4, you see what you're not to do. Verse 31, for instance, He says, "Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you." So that's not how you respond to someone who's hurt you. That is not how you respond in the life of a church when one person hurts another. Bitterness should not creep in. Evil speaking about each other should not creep in.

Now, if we were just to study chapter 4, those verses 31 and 32, I would hope that would scare us. I hope that would frighten us because the normal response when someone hurts me is to think about how I'm gonna hurt them. The normal response when someone does something wrong to me is, even at the least, is to either give them the icy cold shoulder or to maybe speak about them to someone who always listens to the rubbish I keep talking to them. Here, Paul is saying, no, he's saying, "I want you to be an imitator of God." And if you didn't pick that up from chapter 4, verses 31 and 32, if you didn't see how scary this responsibility is to your neighbor or to your fellow Christian in the church, well, in chapter 5, he's repeating it again. He's saying, "Therefore, be imitators of God, dear children."

Now, in essence, imitating God's love in any measure is impossible, isn't it? And the only thing that gives us a little bit of hope in that verse is when

he says the words "as dear children." You see, he's just given us, in three words, a simple description of a Christian. A Christian is a child of God. As children, we receive the likeness of our father from birth. I look at the mirror, and it irritates me to see myself in the mirror too often because I see flaws, and I wish something was different, and something else was different. And in the same way, when I look at my kids, if I see them sin, it's really quite irritating because many of their sins are actually the sins I commit. Our children receive our likeness, possibly through our genes, but then when they live with us, they start to copy our ways as well. I copied many of my dad's ways, and I look at them these days, and I think they're so foolish, and I couldn't believe he thought like that and he did that. But as I hit 63, I find myself doing exactly the same dumb things, and I wish they were the only things I was copying, quite frankly. But you see, children of God should look like God. Children of God should treat sinners like God treats sinners. And when we ask ourselves again, how does God treat sinners, we need to understand what is kindness, for instance.

You see, kindness is doing something freely for someone. Kindness is not doing something for someone because they deserve it, or because they earn it, or because you think highly of them. God actually chose His people before they were even in existence, before they could do anything for Him. He was kind to them. Tenderheartedness, or compassion, it's not just doing something good to someone freely. You can do something good to someone freely and keep them at a distance. So, for instance, I can send a card to someone and wish them a happy birthday and just be thankful they don't live in my suburb. We feel like that with a lot of family, don't we? But tenderheartedness is bringing someone close. It's the idea of not just choosing them but then choosing them and adopting them to be in your family. And that's exactly what God does. He not only predestined His people to be His people, but then He adopts them to be sons, totally freely. And sinners who are far from God are now brought to sit on His lap like kids and have access to Him all the time.

And then, God forgives sinners by Christ Jesus. He does not forgive us because we turn the corner so well. He doesn't forgive us because we hated ourselves so well when we sinned. We're told in Ephesians 1:7, "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." It's all in God, isn't it? And so, He forgives us really for that, because of the blood of Jesus, not because of anything in us.

And the first point we should pick up from this passage is our love for one another should imitate the love of God. The second thing we pick up from the passages, our walk should be flavored, if you like, with the love of Jesus Christ. And the next verse, verse 2, tells us that, doesn't it? "And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us." That

word "walk," it's repeated over and over again in chapter 4, in chapter 5. The whole section is about walking. I've tried taking up walking in 2023. 10,000 steps a day was the plan. I found that impossible. I couldn't keep it up. And 2024, I've decided it's going to be better this year because I'm only going to do 5,000 steps, and I suspect if you invite me back at this time, I'll say it's pretty tough. I didn't do it. But have a look at how difficult it is walking with Paul. Look at Ephesians 4:1, he tells us to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called. And then he goes off to say this means that you should be united to one another. Look at verse 17 then of the same chapter, "Walk not as the rest of the Gentiles walk." Look at Ephesians 5:8, "Walk as children of light." Look at Ephesians 5:15, "See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise." And then our verse, which clearly says, "And walk in love." The Bible's using imagery, isn't it? Often you see the Bible using the imagery of an athlete who's in the Olympics, who's really smashing themselves to win a prize, and it's the picture of a sprinter, isn't it, who's really ripping into it and trying to get the gold medal. Well, the bottom line is, the sprinting is more starting and stopping, going hard, and then eventually conking out. Walking is quite different, isn't it? Walking is just constant. It's steady. It's not flashy. There's no prizes at the end of a walk, really. You're just constantly one step after the other. Most people in Paul's day did a lot of walking. They didn't own horses, for the bulk of them. They did not have carts, and progress wasn't dramatic. It wasn't flashy. It was just one step at a time, and that was deliberate, and they just kept on taking one step after the other. And the idea is, Paul is saying, steadily and deliberately and regularly grow in the love of Jesus. Grow in a life that's soaked in the love of Jesus. Grow in loving your fellow Christian with the love of Jesus.

And the word "love" is that word "agape," and for us, we've heard this over and over again in our churches, probably, but it was not a word that was common in Paul's day. In fact, the Greeks had many words for love, and not many people knew this word "agape." They knew the Greek word for instance, which meant general friendship between one another. They knew the Greek word which spoke of sexual passion between a husband and a wife. They knew the Greek word which spoke of family affection within a family unit. But "agape"? Well, no one had much of an idea until Jesus came, and until He came and died for sinners. You see, this is radical stuff in the Roman Empire. It was honorable to die for your friends. It was considered very honorable if you died for your country. But if you died for your enemies, well, that was on the dumb side. That didn't make a lot of sense. It was revolutionary. But "agape"? Well, it soon becomes a brand new word, and it becomes this revolutionary word, well, it comes so after the death and the resurrection of Jesus. And you see, with this in mind, Paul says, "And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma." The

love that is "agape" love is a love that gives, isn't it? It's not a love that receives. It's not a love that's reciprocal. It's nice to receive. We've just come off Christmas, and we loved receiving our gifts, I'm sure. But this love is seeking something higher. It's seeking to give. There's no payback. There's no obligation. There's no expectation. It's totally free.

Imitating Jesus's love is really no different to imitating God's kindness or tenderheartedness. You know, one day you'll get asked, "Why did Jesus come?" Or you might be asking yourself this morning, "Why did Jesus even come?" And if you're a Christian and you've been a Christian for a long time, you'll be thinking about the Orthodox answers, and you'll be saying something like, "Well, He came to honor His Father. He came to do His Father's will." Or you'll say, "He came to save sinners. He came to save me." Or you might say, "He came to defeat death," or something like that. But I don't think anyone here would be brave enough to say that Jesus came to be an example to Christians on how a Christian should love another Christian. You think that's almost like a social Christianity, wouldn't you? Yet, look at our verse and see what our verse says: "Walk in love, as Christ also has loved us." Paul is saying, "God treated you in one way, and so treat others in the same way. Jesus gave Himself to forgive you, and so you've got to learn to forgive those who sin against you in your church."

And think this through. You've got to think this through because it's just words if you don't think it through and see how am I going to put it into practice. You see, if you're truly going to imitate Jesus's love, well then, one day, you're going to suffer the sins of someone else. If you are going to be expressing Jesus's love, then one day, someone in this church is going to sin against you, and you're decidedly going to make the decision to suffer and not retaliate. You see, this verse is saying, bear the pain of having someone who sins against you rather than showing the offender how you can get them back. Send them a birthday card. Just send them a card saying, "I thank you that you are a Christian and that you're in our church." You might have to do that for your husband or your wife this morning. You see, he's saying, "Use the love of Jesus to motivate you to love one another." He's saying, "Portray Jesus Christ in your church by forgiving one another and bearing pain inflicted by others on you because when the world looks at it, they're going to say, 'This is weird. This is crazy. I can't believe it.' Now I understand 'agape' love because I saw it at Camden Valley Baptist Church."

You see, the problem is, it's because we have a small view of the love of the Father, we have little appreciation of the love of Jesus, is why we don't show this love to one another. And you're wondering, you know, how do I actually know the love of God and know the love of the Father? It's not by talking about it. It's actually experientially expressing it. You see, we all can have that orthodox knowledge that says, "Jesus loves me," but they're

just words rattling around in our theological games. In reality, what we're like is like that worker, you know, the worker who took a loan from his boss. It was a big loan, and there's no chance he could have ever paid it back, and he decided to just go to his boss and said, "Please forgive my debt." And the boss goes, and great surprise, "Your debt's forgiven. You don't have to pay it back. It's free." He goes back to the workplace, high-fiving everyone, except one bloke who owes him just a small debt, a pittance. And rather than high-fiving the guy and saying, "I've been forgiven," he says, "I can't forgive you." And if you're new or you're a visitor, go to Matthew 18, and you'll find Jesus tell that story.

You see, when we are actually copying the love of Jesus, we're more like that woman in Luke 7, aren't we? She washed Jesus's feet with her hair. Simon the Pharisee was Orthodox. He had the head knowledge. He knew God loves him, but he could not get his head around how Jesus and that woman interacted with each other. Jesus had to stop and spell it out for him. He said, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house, and you gave me no water for my feet, but she has washed my feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. You gave me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss my feet since the time I came in. You did not anoint my head with oil, but this woman has anointed my feet with fragrant oil." You see, you can tell someone who appreciates the love of God. You can tell someone who understands the love of Christ. You see it in their actions. You see it in how they not only love the Lord but how they will love their fellow Christians.

And the second point: Our walk should be flavored by the love of Jesus. And the third point, and I'll wrap up with this one: Understanding of the cross will fuel our walk in love. And the \$64 question is, how can I have this kind of love for my fellow Christian? Isn't it? Should I come to church more often? I don't think that'll work because you'll see them more often, and it's gonna be harder to love them. Should I pray before I go to sleep? I don't think that might work because you'll probably fall asleep before you pray. And what about reading my Bible? Well, you know, in sincerity, all of these things are helpful, don't you? But gaining an appreciation of Jesus's love is a supernatural work. It's a work of the Holy Spirit. You see, being kind is foreign to us. Being compassionate, bringing a person who's an enemy close to me, being compassionate, well, that's just awkward. Forgiving someone who has hurt me, well, no one taught me that habit from the day I was born. And then, being humble and self-sacrificing, well, that just doesn't work in Australia. We have our rights, and we must demand our rights. And we have our dignity, and we're not going to lose our dignity, are we? But shockingly, this is exactly what the Holy Spirit does in a person when He brings him to God, when He makes a dead sinner alive. This is exactly what happens. The person who's born again doesn't just put their

trust in Jesus for salvation. No, the Spirit makes them a brand new creation. And this new creation is not only adopted into the family of God, but they're born again to supernaturally now be a child of God and start on taking the likeness of God.

And so, interestingly now, the Spirit is working in them kindness towards their fellow believers. The Spirit starts to work in them tenderheartedness and allows them to bring sinners who sinned against them close. And the Spirit even allows them to forgive someone who has hurt them. And perhaps you're sitting there this morning, and you're thinking, "Well, I get the message. Now, if I can just love like God and really concentrate and love hard, and if I really concentrate on my walk, I'll become a Christian." That is not what is being said here. That is definitely not what is being said here. I can tell you now, if you don't love someone in this church, if you are not tenderhearted to someone who's hurt you, if you cannot forgive someone, whether it be in this church or Christians from outside this church, well, you probably do not have the Holy Spirit, and you need to ask and cry out for mercy that the Spirit might do a supernatural work in you.

Because when He does, you will notice this new attitude start to grow. And if you're a Christian and you're finding any bitterness rooting up inside you, well, cry out to mercy, cry out to God for forgiveness, and ask Him for mercy that He would do a work. We all accept Christians are not perfect. We all even accept we have remaining sin. We have studied our theology; we've got that right. But you've been adopted into God's family. You've been made a new creation. And you've become a child of God quite supernaturally and organically. And Paul is saying, because this has happened to you, now you behave accordingly. He's saying to Christians, "The Spirit has started off a change in you at regeneration. He's made you alive, and those changes that have resulted in you being alive now give you energy and power to actually do something." And so in verse 1, he can say, "Be imitators of God." He's commanding you as a Christian. You do it. "Walk in love, as Christ also loved us." You get on and walk in this way with your fellow Christians. You're not to blame remaining sin. You're not to make excuses. You will only really know the love of the Father inside you when you have been kind and forgiving to someone. You will always know it in head knowledge, but if you want to know it experientially, if you want to know it in your experience, if you want to make it yours, if you want to have the love of Christ as yours, well then, you learn to sacrifice yourself. You learn to die to your desire for revenge. You'll learn to turn off the icy cold shoulder, and there'll be no shortcuts. You will actually have to feel the pain of letting love cover a multitude of sins. And if you don't, if you think it's just head knowledge that is going to carry you through, well, you're going to be banished to a kind of Christianity that is just orthodoxy and cold.

But let me close off with one more encouragement that Paul gives us as Christians. You see, Paul actually tells us what's going to fuel and what's going to produce this love that we can walk in. You see, it comes from the cross. And quite frankly, if you're looking for this perfect answer, imagine you're in the street, and someone says to you, "Tell me, why did Jesus come, and what did He do?" I'd be going to verse two. Listen to these words: "Christ also loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma." In the first place, He says Jesus gave Himself, loved us, and given Himself for us. Normally, you find in the Bible it says God sent His Son, God gave Jesus, but here it's Jesus gives Himself. You see what Paul wants you to think about is that Jesus is a high priest. He wants you to understand that He is actually come in offering Himself. Hebrews goes to town on this. If you ever read the book of Hebrews, you'll find the Hebrew writer saying it over and over again, and I'll just give you one example from Hebrews 7:26-27, "For such a high priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself." You see, that's his point. Jesus gave Himself as a high priest. He came up as a high priest to give Himself as an offering.

The second thing he says, He gave Himself for us. You see, his point is He stood in our place, isn't it? "He who knew no sin became sin for us," or as Peter puts it in 1 Peter 3:18, "Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." You see, He didn't just come as a high priest. He came as a high priest and offered Himself as this sacrifice that's a substitute for our sins. A pure act of kindness, isn't it? In great compassion, in incredible tenderness, Jesus does a work to bring us near, to bring us to God.

And then lastly, we're told, "Christ gave Himself up as an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma." And some commentators make these words a full message. They tell you, "Here are all the different offerings in the Old Testament. Here are all the different sacrifices, and I'll show you how Jesus fits into each one." I haven't got the time, and quite frankly, I don't even have the ability to do that for you this morning. But I want you to pick up just two little things from that little phrase. The first thing is this: Once and for all, the sacrifice of Jesus was good enough for God. The Father accepted His Son's sacrifice. He considered it adequate for the sins of His people. On the cross, the Father turned His face away from Jesus in judgment. He pronounced or sent His wrath upon His own Son. But once the price was paid, notice what we're told: a sweet-smelling aroma. It rose up right into the nostrils of God because God accepted the sacrifice.

The second thing we pick up is that God has a serious problem with sin. He's got a serious problem with sinners. Some in history would tell you that when Adam sinned, Satan came and took over the world, and he took ownership of every human being, and the only way a human being could be released from Satan's hold is if Jesus came and died and paid Satan a price to release those sinners. Folks, this is error. There's nothing like this in the Bible. You see, what the verse is telling us is that God was angry when people sin, and God is obligated by His own justice to punish every sinner for every single sin. And hell is all that awaits someone if they are a sinner, and every one of us are. And the only way to escape the fiery judgment of hell is if you can find someone whom God will accept to die in your place. And not just anyone. It must be someone whom God will accept. And we're told in this verse that Jesus is the only one. And if we will not accept Him, we're doomed. You see, Jesus did not save us from the grip of Satan only. No, what He did was really, He saved us from the wrath of God. He saved us from the anger of God. Such is the love of the Father that He sent His Son to spare sinners like you and I. Such is the love of the Son that He was willing to take the wrath of the Father for you and I, that we might become dear children of God.

Now, with so much love extended to you in Jesus Christ, and I'm speaking to Christians here, with so much love extended to you in Jesus Christ, can you not love Jesus's brothers and sisters in your church? You've been called out as a special possession. You're a kingdom of priests. You're a holy nation. How do you think you should behave? But well, surely you should walk in love. And the cross will be the very thing that fuels that love.

Now, if you're a non-Christian this morning, I just want to repeat one last time: Making this concerted effort to love is not going to save you. You'll never be able to do it. It needs a work of God, and you need to call after God for mercy in Jesus Christ.

Well, let me pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you again for the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank you for Your love as the Father to send Him to die, that You might be able to forgive our sins, that You might be able to bring us close to You. We thank You for Him who gave Himself up as a sweet sacrifice, as one that is a sweet-smelling aroma to God. And we pray that You would help us to look to Him this morning, and we pray in His name. Amen.