

# Live Expressed

by Art Katz

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*The sermon explores the contrast between human sympathy and divine love, urging a ruthless love that confronts sin for true spiritual growth.*

**Duration:** 22:34

**Scripture:** 1 Samuel 15:3, Nehemiah 8:10, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 16:23, Romans 12:15

**Topics:** "Love Of God"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the importance of understanding and demonstrating true love, as exemplified by Jesus in his interaction with the rich young ruler in Mark chapter 10. The speaker emphasizes that personal sympathy and prejudice can hinder our relationship with God and others. Jesus' love for the young man is not heartless, but rather a love that requires tough confrontation for the young man's own benefit. The speaker warns against operating out of human sentiment rather than divine love, as it can lead to immaturity, hinder spiritual growth, and even breed resentment towards others.

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## Transcript

It's one thing to read 1 Corinthians 13, a statement about love. It's another thing to read how Jesus himself expresses it. If God is love, we ought to give a special attention to the conduct of the Lord and making that reality demonstrable.

So I'm into Mark chapter 10, a little episode of the rich young ruler who came to Jesus. It's not sympathy that confirms him in the condition that he's too long wallowed in, but a ruthless confrontation about that condition. This is what watchman Oswald Chambers is fingering, and that's what Jesus is exhibiting in his relationship with the rich young ruler.

The Lord is wanting to instruct us about what love really is. The greatest dissipator, he says, of our relationship to God is personal sympathy and personal prejudice or disposition with another. Identification is the key to intercession, and whenever we start being identified with God, it is by sympathy and not by sin.

Isn't that a remarkable statement? It's not sin that's the problem, it's sympathy that is the problem. But if you examine sympathy deep enough, in fact, I looked it up in the dictionary. Take words that you think you know and understand.

Who doesn't know what sympathy means? But it's remarkable when you look it up in the dictionary what new facet of understanding these definitions afford. Here's what the dictionary says that sympathy is. An affinity, association or relationship between things so that what affects the one affects the other.

Mutual or reciprocal susceptibility. Sympathy has not only the other person as the object of your interest, it has you also as the object of your interest. What you are actually performing or exhibiting in that sympathy is not a selfless love for that other person, but a love for yourself.

Maybe a wonderful biblical example would be Saul, given the requirement of God to slay and to kill Agag, and the best of the sheep and the oxen spares them. He spares Agag so that when Samuel sees that Saul the king has spurned the requirement of God, he hacks Agag to death himself. And from that point, Saul is in the place of being dispossessed of his kingship and of the kingdom.

He failed to heed God. He was ruled by his own sentimental identification with another king so as to spare him. Why? Because he himself wants to be spared.

What we exhibit in sympathy is really in its deepest expression, if we could but see it, a self-sparing thing for ourselves. And therefore, we cut ourselves off from God, who is much more ruthless than we, and do a disservice to the one with whom we purport to be concerned. We are not in a right identification.

We have broken the identification with God and have made our identification lateral, horizontal, with the person himself. That is what rules the world. That's what we read in romance books and magazines and movies, and the world calls that love.

It's petulant, it's self-pitying, it's self-justifying, it's romantic, it's full of feeling and full of emotion. It accomplishes nothing. It's death.

Jesus gives us an example of another kind. It says he looked upon this young man and he loved him. This is not a heartless attitude toward that young man that explains why Jesus is so cruel.

His love requires that cruelty, for that's the best thing for the young man. Not an identification with the young man that would spare him, but an identification with God that knows what is best. And he speaks it unsparingly, even to the point of allowing him to be shocked and grieved and turn away.

Let me just finish with Oswald Chambers here. So I repeat, identification is the key to intercession, not with the person being interceded for or the nation being interceded for, but with God and his view toward that person, toward that nation. Identification is the key to intercession, and whenever we stop being identified with God, it is by sympathy, not by sin.

We need to examine our sympathies and understand at the root of them, at the heart of them, more often than not is some self-serving purpose that benefits and pleases us and reinforces and keeps us in an attitude and condition that we want to maintain. Sympathy and sentiment are the last hiding places and refuge of self. That's why we have to be cruel in order to be kind.

And the greatest place perhaps where we need cruelty or ruthlessness is toward ourselves, and that's where we're least disposed to exercise it. It is not likely that sin will interfere with our relationship to God, but sympathy will. Sympathy with ourselves or with others, it's one and the same, which makes us say, I will not allow that thing to happen.

Remember when Peter said, Lord, let this be far from you? Why, that man deserved the B'nai B'rith award for the year. What a wonderful, commendable, humane statement. Lord, after Jesus said, I need to go to Jerusalem, I'm going to be apprehended, tried, I'm going to be cruelly crucified, Peter, speaking out of his human sentiment and identification with Jesus, which is really a self-serving thing with himself, because if the Lord has got to suffer and be crucified, what then would be the fate of those who are related with him? I'm not saying that Peter is conscious of that, but it's a factor of which we need to be conscious.

But what does the Lord say? Get thee behind me, Satan. Probably one of the cruelest retorts that Jesus expressed in his whole earthly tenure, identifying a prized disciple and one who is to be the leading apostle of the church with Satan himself. It took that kind of cruel statement to get at the root of this sentimental identification that would even have kept Jesus from the cross.

For had it succeeded, if Jesus could have been persuaded, and believe me, his humanity is being spoken to and addressed, hey, you don't have to suffer this, there must be another alternative. Had he acceded to that kind of appeal, none of us would be in this room today. There'd be no salvation for the world.

I will not allow that thing to happen. Instantly, we are out of vital connection with God. Well, I'm certainly stimulating the need for physical relief.

Intercession leaves you neither time nor inclination to pray for your own sad, sweet self. The thought of yourself is not kept out because it is not there to keep out. You are completely and entirely identified with God's interest in other lives.

Beware of imagining that intercession means bringing our personal sympathies into the presence of God and demanding that he does what we ask. It's based on sympathy, which is that in ourselves and in others that we don't think needs, I'm paraphrasing here, God's ruthlessness or direct attention. We do not identify ourselves with God's interest in others.

We get petulant with God. We are always quick with our own ideas. Here's a way to identify whether the love that you're expressing is divine or human.

If it's petulant, if it's... You know what that word means? Somebody give me a synonym. Petulant. Sulky.

Sulking. If you're sulking, if your lip is down and you feel you've been misunderstood then you're likely not on the right ground. This kind of intercession brings the glorification of our own natural sympathies.

We have to realize that the identification of Jesus with sin or self means the radical alteration of all our sympathies. Vicarious intercession means that we deliberately substitute God's interest in others for our natural sympathy with them. If you really see it, it's an ultimate kind of presumption to substitute your human sympathy with God's love.

It elevates you above God. It says that what you think is appropriate is more than what God thinks appropriate. It's really an impertinence.

So I wrote here Sympathy and affinity of this kind between individuals or toward a nation is self-love hiding or gasping in one's identification with another. It justifies, condones, and explains away what needs to be ruthlessly excised out. It pats where it ought to punish.

There are times when love requires that which appears to be cruel. And kindness as we know it, humanly and sympathetically, does not serve the best interest of that one to whom it's directed. We pat where we need to be punishing with a word that is ruthless.

And we condone or explain away what needs to be exposed or excised. This indulgent permissiveness is construed as a greater sensitivity. Here's the heck of it.

The one who operates in that realm of sympathy fancies that he is more sensitive than the one who is disposed to be ruthless. Because it has that appearance. And if you're looking from the earthly plane, that will be true.

But from the heavenly plane, from the definition of love as is divine, and as Jesus himself expresses it, it's altogether backward. So here's another way of estimating whether you're operating out of divine love or human. Not only will you be expressing sympathy of a kind that does not serve the best interest of that person and reinforces your own condition, which is much like unto that, but you will look upon those who are more stern as being less sensitive than yourself.

You will exalt yourself and think yourself more loving. The fact of the matter is, from the point of view of God, it's not more loving, it's less. So this indulgent permissiveness is construed as greater sensitivity, a deeper discernment, a more profound comprehension than is seen by others.

You justify and rationalize your sentimental identification because you think that you're seeing more deeply that this is a more profound apprehension of the need of the person than those who seem to be more direct or more hard. But all of these things are part of that configuration. You justify and rationalize your sentimental identification because you think that you're seeing more deeply that this is a more profound apprehension of the need of the person than those who seem to be more direct or more hard.

But all of these things are part of that configuration of things that take place when we operate out of human love rather than divine, which is what sentiment is. The result is to confirm the other in his immaturity while arresting one's own spiritual growth, cooling in relationship with others who don't share your softer view, and even regarding them with resentment. Well, maybe this doesn't fit anyone here this morning, but it's good to keep on file for the future.

If you have not had occasion up till now to discern the difference between a sentimental identification with a person or a divine identification with God, you'll know that these are the signs. Sullenness, petulance, a self-applauding view of your own greater sensitivity, a resentment toward those who don't share it, and a looking upon them as being unnecessarily hard. That's not to say that there are men who are not unnecessarily hard, and that this is not a blanket endorsement of all that hard men will say and do that might equally be as much out of God as sentimental.

But I'm saying that we need to discern and to recognize that hardness, like Jesus, that cruel word, like Jesus, that sends a man away shocked and grieving, as being the love of God. That's not always the case, but it's more often the case than we know. And I don't know that we'll be able to discern it if we are ruled by sentiment, which is a self-exalting, self-elevating kind of an attitude and a spirit, because we are in sympathy with that person, we are in identification with that person rather than with God, because it does something for us in a symbiotic way.

It exalts us, it justifies us in the same areas in which that person himself is languishing and needs more in love to be challenged. So we resent those that are hard, and in that resentment, far from blessing the person who is in need, we bring by that resentment a schism in the body. That's the kind of environment and atmosphere by which we begin to look critically at others who don't share our sensitivity and our understanding and are looked upon as somehow themselves being in need.

So this issue of sentiment is really corrosive and has all of the elements of those kinds of things that would work a leaven in the body that is not the leaven of the kingdom. So maybe the greatest place where we need to be cruel in order to be kind is with ourselves, to examine what our motivation is in our identification with others, and whether it's the Lord's or our own. What self-serving thing is being promoted in this condescension toward another person when what they need to hear is sell all that you have, strip yourself, give up that last thing.

One thing do you lack? And to identify that one thing and to require it. It may be from our own children. So blessed are those who mourn rather than commiserate.

To commiserate is to come into the atmosphere and to share the kind of self-pitying thing that people will languish in and in which we comfort them and console them and encourage them to continue. We need rather to mourn for that condition rather than to commiserate with it. Why mourn? Because that person is being robbed of fullness.

That person is being robbed from sonship. That person is being robbed from fruitfulness. That person is being reinforced and being allowed to languish in a condition that has gone on already far too long.

To commiserate is not what that person needs. What that person needs is the love of Jesus, which is perhaps ruthless in what needs to be identified and called for. Because no one has so expressed that love to that person, but what he or she has received over the years far too long is a commiseration, a sympathetic identification, which does nothing but to reinforce the condition rather than to change it.

The Lord is wanting to instruct us what love is. Hold it just a second. So blessed are those who mourn rather than commiserate.

Maudlin sympathy is the last refuge of self. It is Saul in sparing Agag is sparing himself, as over and against God's unsparing word. It lost him the kingdom and it will also do the same for us, at least our joy.

So another symptom that I sense is not only a sense of superiority, of thinking yourself of being more sensitive, of a resentment of those who don't share it, but an absence of joy. If you're identified with the Lord, you'll be in the joy of the Lord. Where your joy is lost, you need to check and see that you have substituted an identification with a person in sympathy rather than with God.

The joy of the Lord is a remarkable statement. And so, if you become joyless and sullen, critical, or resentful, sentimental, and so on, you're on the wrong road. And then let me conclude.

Jesus often seemed cruel, heartless, in dismissing the rich young ruler with words that shocked and sent him away grieving, while Jesus looked at him and loved him and said. What he said that sent him away shocked and grieving was when he looked upon him and loved him. We cannot think that because the word was hard or demanding or requiring and had this effect that it was not love.

That is inserted in the text to save us from thinking that. This is uttermost love if we could but see it. And it's this kind of uttermost love that would really benefit our brothers and our sisters, benefit the body, benefit the church, benefit Israel.

But we have been so seduced by a worldly counterfeit of sympathy and emotion and feeling that is the antithesis of this kind of divine love. For which reason, the Lord is, I believe, wanting to bring this to our attention. Jesus did not soften the requirement.

No man good, but rather how hard it is to enter the kingdom. He did not withhold fingering the matter. One thing you lack, he put his finger right on it.

Is that not uttermost love? And this same Jesus who was so unsparing to that man is the same Jesus that wept over Jerusalem. It's the same Jesus that wept at the tomb of Lazarus. It's not a man who's hard in his affections.

He is very loved. But his love will express what the moment requires for the good of the other and not be some kind of self-indulgent thing that gratifies his own soul. That is eros, not agape.

So let me just pray and then I'll let John have something to say and anyone. So Lord, again, we're walking on eggshells, on questionable ground. It sent us to the bathroom in a rush that I've never seen before and maybe stirring us up inwardly as well as physically and well it should.

And so I'm asking if this is only my word, my thought, because I'm a hard man, then let it just fall away. Let it dissipate with the air. But if it's your heart jealous over us and jealous for this body and jealous for those who are among us who are in need of agape love and are not getting it because sentiment ruled by self-interest in the subtlety of heart is keeping them from that very thing to identify the one thing that they lack.

My God, if that's your heart, that's your word, that's your thought, let it remain. Let it continue to have its effect. Give us a heart to hear it and to apply it to ourselves that the first ruthlessness of love will be taught ourselves and to identify where we're soft, condescending, accommodating, commiserating when we should be more ruthless and cool first with ourselves and then where it needs to be with others.

Lord, teach us what love is, true love, as you have not only understood it but you are it and as you have expressed it in your own earthly walk and given us that record three times in the Gospels of the rich young ruler that we should not miss the point. I receive it. I'm blessed by it.

Help me, Lord, because my tendency naturally is to be rather hard rather than sentimental but may we not be ruled by what is natural but by what is divine and be in the proper identification with you that when it's required we can weep and when it's required we can speak in firmness in hardness in seeming ruthlessness and say even to our mothers those kinds of things which makes them wail how but no more but that was exactly what she needed or she would have perished eternally in an adulterous situation with the man who was the murderer of her own husband then there would have been a shriek in the day of eternity that you would not want to hear the son loved her so much as not to spare her so my God more love we pray that is true love give us a heart both to speak it to do it to receive it we thank you and give you praise in Jesus name Amen

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