

My Hope When Love Has Gone Dry

by Carter Conlon

The sermon explores the necessity of love in the Christian life, particularly during times of spiritual dryness and relational challenges.

Duration: 47:22

Scripture: Job 14:7-9, Psalm 3:7-8, Matthew 22:35-40, Luke 10:30-37, John 13:34-35

Topics: "Hope"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of unity and love within the church community. He quotes Ecclesiastes 4:12, which states that two people standing together are stronger than one, and a three-fold cord is not easily broken. The preacher emphasizes that the strength we need to face the challenges ahead comes from being united as a church family. He urges believers to love and support one another, even if they have different interpretations or beliefs on non-essential matters. The sermon concludes with a call to pray together for the love of God to be perfected in their hearts and to be a people of love in these last days.

Transcript

Good morning, Times Square Church. If you could turn in your Bibles, please, to the book of Job, chapter 14. That's right before the book of Psalms in the Old Testament.

And Matthew, chapter 22 as well. I'd like to speak to you this morning, a message entitled, My Hope When Love Has Gone Dry. My Hope When Love Has Gone Dry.

Father, I thank you, Lord Jesus Christ, that you are leading us into truth that will preserve us, that will give us strength, that will allow you to be God in us. Lord, although we are incomplete in these things that we're going to speak of this morning, yet you don't despise our weakness. You're willing to give us strength.

You're willing, Lord God, to bring life where there is none and to change us where we need to be changed and strengthen us where only you can give strength. Lord Jesus Christ, I'm asking you for an anointing to speak this. We can't do this apart from you.

Lord, I thank you, God, that you will help me to speak it simply to every heart, including my own. Help us, Lord God, to hear this. And I ask it in Jesus' name.

Job, chapter 14. My Hope When Love Has Gone Dry, beginning at verse 7. For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease, though the root thereof wax old in the earth and the stalk thereof die in the ground. Yet through the scent of water it will bud and bring forth boughs like a plant.

In other words, God's saying through Job that even if something looks dead, even if it's been in a certain way and condition for so long, where it once had life or perhaps once was able to produce something and it's lost the ability, yet through the scent of water, the ability to discern where life is, that's what it's talking about, it will draw again from that water and bring forth boughs like a plant. In other words, it will produce like it once did. Now, in Matthew chapter 22, scripture tells us in verse 36, verse 35, that there was a lawyer who came to Jesus with a question tempting him or testing him.

And the question was, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? In other words, this lawyer was saying, in the context of all the laws of God, which one stands out above all the others? If there were a statement, a summation, a conclusion that one could point to and say this is the central truth that God is trying to get us to understand, what would it be? Now, the fact that he was already a teacher in a sense, a lawyer, would tell us that he already felt that he knew the answer and he came to Christ testing him as an academic would test a student. Feeling that he knew the answer, wondering if this new teacher that had come on the scene would be as knowledgeable or intelligent as he was. To test him, in other words.

Without hesitation, Jesus said to him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

On these two commandments hang all the law and all the prophets. And a phenomenal statement. When you and I stopped to consider it, Jesus was saying everything that is contained in the text of Scripture as they had it to that time.

All the law teachers, all the prophets have spoken, have led to these two things. And so essentially speaking, if people have not been led to those two things, that they've not fully understood, they've studied but they've not learned. They've accumulated knowledge but it has not brought them to truth.

Remember Paul said in the last days there'd be a people always learning but never coming to the knowledge of the truth. Learning new things about God, and I'm sure this lawyer would go into his studies and he would be constantly learning, constantly interpreting, reinterpreting, examining, re-examining, studying history and present religious trends and such like. But if it didn't bring him to these two truths, it was in a sense he failed at the grade.

He missed the mark. His studying had brought him to a place other than where it was supposed to lead him. I believe he was looking for an answer that would validate his own conclusions.

I firmly expected he thought that Jesus would say all the law and all the prophets should lead us to holiness and separation from sin and all sinners. Or all the law and all the prophets should lead us to a place of worship. A sound that comes from us that cannot be heard anywhere else but in the context of truth as God has revealed it.

Now these things are true in themselves, but they are short of where the lesson leads. They're included, but they're not the be-all. They're not the end.

They're not the great commandment. And this would explain why in another account, in Luke chapter 10, Jesus told the story in a similar situation with a similar question about how both the priest and the Levite could pass by someone in need as they traveled to worship and study in the house of God. It would explain it.

See, folks, when we come to the wrong conclusion, we can easily pass by human need. We can easily walk away from... We can claim to love God, but the manifestation of that love has fallen short. Remember, the work of God in Christ was the redemption of fallen humanity.

That's the whole gospel. That's the reason Jesus came to the earth. That's why he went to a cross.

It was to... You and I and everyone else who can still hear might come home and not have to spend an eternity separated from God. But religion can draw wrong conclusions from right study. And you and I need to be careful.

You see, the person who drew the conclusion that holiness and separation was paramount in the Christian life easily could walk by somebody that he felt might taint, somebody beaten and left for dead on the side of the road that might taint his religiousness, that might taint his separation from the things of this world. It's very easy for the conscience to become dulled under religious study. Or the man who's headed off to worship and sees somebody bleeding on the side of the road says, well, I would consider helping, but it would hinder my worship, would occupy my thoughts, it would take me away from what is of paramount importance in the Christian life is that I'm a worshiper of God.

And this would hinder my worship. So I'm just gonna pass by on the other side. Now, in Luke 10, the person asking the question when the answer was given, actually he gave his own answer.

And the scripture says, willing to justify himself, he asked the question, who is my neighbor? And now Jesus identified my neighbor as someone who's had something stolen from him. A person who's lost their covering. Someone who's been wounded.

Somebody who's been left in a place where without help, recovery looks unlikely. Now, I don't know about you today, but like I can say honestly that I love God, but loving people has not always been the easy part of this thing. Can you agree with me on that, at least this morning? I mean, it's easy to come to church.

It's easy to raise my hands. And I love to do it, but if all of that, if in all of that I can't look you in the eye and say I love you, then I've not come to the knowledge of the truth. And neither have you.

You see, this is what he was trying to get through. This is the sum total of our learning. That we love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

And love our neighbor. The second is as important as the first. That we love our neighbor as ourselves.

Our neighbor can be a person who's fallen short of what we expected them to be. A neighbor can be somebody who might have refused to listen to us. And so the inner thought comes, why should I help them now that they've gotten themselves into a mess? I warned them.

Isn't that sufficient? And I stood in the pulpit and I said, thus and thus shall you not do. They did it, now they're in a mess. So why should I help? A neighbor can be somebody that caused us pain.

And we'd rather focus on God than think about them. Or think about how perhaps they've gotten into the just reward of their actions. Suddenly the scriptures, you know when you have a bitter heart, you can go into the scriptures and pull anything out to justify it.

Oh Lord, break the teeth of the ungodly. Scatter them. Dash their families against the stones.

And we can read that with such satisfaction and say, God, my heart is in line with David this morning. I must be on good ground. In John 13, let me just read it to you.

Jesus said to his disciples, A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another as I have loved you. Now that's an ongoing tense. It's not just in the past tense because there's going to be a future revelation.

I'll explain this in a minute. That you also love one another. Verse 35, he says, By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, that you have loved one to another.

This is the sign. This is an evidence to all men that you belong to me, that you have a loved one for another as I have loved you. Now verse 36, Simon Peter said to him, Lord, where are you going? And Jesus said, where I'm going, you can't follow me now, but you'll follow me afterwards.

And Peter said to him, Lord, why cannot I follow you now? I'll lay down my life for your sake. And Jesus answered him, Will you lay down your life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto you, the cock shall not crow till you have denied me thrice or three times. He said, I want you to love each other as I have loved you.

Now these words must have come back to Peter with such power and force because he was going to grossly fail. He did love God. He did love truth in the measure that he had.

He did love walking with Christ. He did love the thought at least of being given for Christ and the purposes of Christ in the earth, but he was going to fail. His strength was going to be taken.

His confidence was going to be gone. He would be grievously wounded by his failure and he would be in danger of not recovering if somebody didn't help him. After he had renounced Jesus by cursing with an oath that he'd never known the man, the scripture says Christ turned and looked at him and just in the shame of that moment, he went away and wept bitterly.

And no doubt he would be in a moment where if you and I were there, could we not rightly say, I suppose, how could you do this thing? How could you, after all he did for you, how could you deny him? How could you flee him in his moment of need? How could you do something bad enough that you became a coward when you were needed, but to curse with an oath that you never knew him and to try to disguise your speech? Can you imagine some of the other disciples if his recovery was left up to them at that moment? And so how do I respond in such a time? What's my response to be when somebody speaking now just in the context, we can't even talk about loving the people of the world until the love of God is manifested in the church. Pointless. If we don't fulfill this in the house of God, forget it.

We're never gonna fulfill it out there. We're not gonna be out there where we're not in here, folks. It's just that simple.

What is a common thing? What's something I can do? I can't love like Christ and neither can you. It's pointless to try in my own strength. I've tried it.

Folks, that's somebody that really did something bad to me one time. And somebody, I went for advice and they said, pray that God bless him. It says, pray for those who despitefully use you.

So I went to the prayer clause and I said, Lord, bless this person. And God blessed that person. And I was mad when he got blessed.

I went back in the prayer clause and said, God, how could you bless that person? You know, it was just a religious thing. It had no real root in truth. It was a human effort, but human effort always falls short of what we're to be in Christ.

And so even to preach this this morning, I've spent considerable time talking with the Lord about this. And how, what do I do then? Because I can't do it. How do you expect the people to do it? I can't do it.

I know there's some naturally loving people here. I'm sure of that. Would you please lay hands on me after this service today and pray for me? But here's some practical things that we can do.

Proverbs 17, nine says that he that covers a transgression seeks love. He that covers a transgression. I want to show you, if you go to Genesis chapter nine, please.

First book of the Old Testament. I want to show you why this is so important. He that covers a transgression.

In other words, does not run around rehearsing it with other people. Genesis chapter nine, verse 20. Now Noah is a righteous man.

We know that the scripture declares him to be such and he built an ark, he endured persecution. He preached righteousness according to the apostle Peter. His family were saved and through his life, humankind as it is continued to inhabit the earth.

After the ark landed, the scripture says that Noah began to be a husbandman. Genesis nine, 20. And he planted a vineyard and he drank the wine and he was drunk.

He got drunk and he was uncovered within his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father and told his two brethren without. And Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it upon both their shoulders and went backwards and covered the nakedness of their father.

And their faces were backward and they saw not their father's nakedness. And Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his younger son had done unto him. And he said, cursed be Canaan, a servant of servants, shall he be unto his brethren.

Now, Ham's descendants, in other words, would be oppressed and under the control of other nations for this. They would not be victorious. They would not lead.

They would be always followers. They would always be underneath something. Instead of being in the dominant position as it is, that the testimony of God's people were supposed to be in the earth, this particular line of the family of God, we're going to be under the dominion of heathen nations.

That's the bottom line. Under the control of other nations, most commentators would agree on that. I want to ask you a question.

Could this be in great measure the root of the wickedness, the weakness rather of much of our Christian witness today? Is it possible in our generation that the testimony of Christ is not alive as it should be in the church and in the earth because we are so preoccupied with exposing one another's frailties? Is it, is it possible? Why would God pronounce this on somebody, but yet somehow we feel that we're absolved from this and we can, we can transgress this and not pay a price for it. So quick, all the denominations in our present generation, so many are so quick to criticize others in the body of Christ. So quick, even to run into pulpits and God forgive me for ever having done this, but to, to build what we do on the criticism of others, those who build what they do on the criticism of others generally don't have anything themselves to say this, this running, running with stories and their true stories of, of what somebody did, of what somebody said of how somebody did wrong.

Jesus could have done that. He could have, he could have entered any of the rooms he did after he was raised from the dead and said, did any of you hear what Peter did? And I know none of you were there, almost unimaginable what Peter did and would all be true. But Proverbs says he, that covers the transgression is somebody who's seeking the love of God as it is, or seeking to manifest that love, the covering of wrong, the backing in as it is and saying, yes, you made a mistake, but you are of the family of God.

Yes. Your present behavior has fallen short of the standard of Christ, but you are of the family of God and far be it from me to walk in and see some shortcoming in your life and then run out and start broadcasting it to everybody who will listen. If the fear of the Lord, the scripture says is the beginning of wisdom to understand that it's, it's not my prerogative and it's not your prerogative to chastise and admonish the whole body of Jesus Christ and to run out of your secret place and broadcast everyone else's failures.

God help us. That's the one thing that you and I can do is if there's nothing good to say, don't say anything. I read the story one time of a man who had a reputation of not ever speaking evil of anybody.

And some ministers decided they would test him out and see if they could trap him. There was a particular Christian man who was very obnoxious, almost impossible to love. And so they approached this minister and they said, what is your opinion of brother? So-and-so this, and the story says he drew back for a few moments, thought about it and he said, I hear he has a very lovely wife.

It's not like Christ to ridicule or to expose or magnify the faults of those that he calls his family. It is unlike Christ. Can you imagine today if we came into this house and instead of words on the screen was a list of your sins this week.

Could he not do that? And would he not be just in doing that for he is God, but he will seeks love. The scripture says covers the transgression. That's why we can have a really bad week, but we can come in here and we can start singing the songs of Zion.

We can talk about the blood of the lamb. We can speak of the lamb's book of life. We can talk about eternity in heaven.

We can open our mouths with praise because blessed to see whose iniquity is forgiven. His transgression is covered. Christ has covered us.

And if Christ has covered us, God help us to be kind enough to extend that kindness to other people around us. I believe if we choose this path, then we'll begin to find the strength of his love flowing through us. The strength of Christ's love.

That's we take the first step in covering a transgression and then his love comes because folks, as I said earlier, you can't do it and neither can I do it. It's not possible. Proverbs 17, 17 tells us a friend loves at all times.

And a brother is born for adversity. A brother. Did you know that you were born into the kingdom of God to uphold each other in the bond of Christ's love? You, you, you and I are not here to walk this walk alone.

You're not, we're in danger. The Lord's been so speaking to my heart. You know, Jesus said, he talked to a parable of a shepherd that left the 99 and went after the one.

And when I read in the old Testament where the Lord spoke to those who really weren't true shepherds, and he said, you've not gone after that, which was lost. You've not bound up that which was wounded. You've not brought home that which had strayed.

You've not delivered that which was captive. And folks, it's so easy in a church this size with 10,000 or so people. I don't know the exact number, but it's probably around that.

It's so easy in a church this size to suddenly somebody's missing that we've seen here for a long time and say, oh, well, there's 9,999 more. But how unlike Christ that is, or somebody brings a report and says, well, did you hear that brother was, was found in a bar last Friday night and he's, he's too ashamed to come to the church and say, oh, that's just after all that teaching and all that theology and all that knowledge, why would he do such a foolish thing? But I think the mirror needs to be turned around. And God looks at me and said, pastor, after all that I've taught you at all, the knowledge and all the theology, why would you do such a foolish thing and not reach out to that man? Brother is born for adversity.

When seasons of difficulty threatened to overwhelm the faith of some, Jesus said, Simon, Satan desired to have you that he may shift his wheat. But I have prayed for you that your faith does not fail. When confusion tries to take away confidence in people in difficult times, the scripture says in John 20, they were assembled in an upper room for fear of the Jews, a whole room full of failures, a whole room full of people who had abandoned Christ in this hour of need.

They couldn't even stay awake as he was heading to the cross. And then he walks into that room and the first thing out of his mouth is peace, peace. Thomas later on is in the same vicinity and Thomas is, is filled with unbelief.

He says, I don't care if you say he appeared here, I'm not going to believe it unless I can, unless I can touch his side, unless I can put my finger in the nail holes of his hands, I'm not going to believe it. Jesus again reappears in the room and says, peace, don't let your heart be troubled. Then he says, Thomas, come here, take your finger.

He says, put it in my hands and thrust it into my side, covering his transgression, covering his unbelief, covering his momentary doubt and his momentary failure. He could have justly come into the room and says, after all I've taught you, after all you've known, after all you've learned, even with witnesses saying, I've been raised from the dead. Here you are trying to fill everyone's heart in the room with unbelief and doubt.

But yet in the tenderness of Christ coming in, a brother is born for adversity. If I'm born again into the kingdom of God, I am born into this kingdom to hold your hand, no matter what you have to go through. I am born into the kingdom to encourage you when all hell is coming against you.

I'm born in the kingdom to stand with you when you've fallen, you've failed, you're struggling, you're in difficulty. I'm born in the kingdom to stand with you. When this world is bitterly dividing, Matthew chapter 24 tells us, and now we're living at that time.

I am absolutely convinced of it now. There's a spirit been unleashed now throughout the world. And the world is dividing now along ideologies and ethnicities and religions and newly and oldly invented lines.

But at the time when the world is dividing, hear me on this, Christ church has to come together. We have to come together one more time for one last and powerful sign to this world that there exists only one truth that has the power to save. Only one truth.

When everything else is falling apart, when nation is turning against nation, when civility is going out of the window, when people feel free now to curse everything that they want to curse out of their mouths. I see a church finally coming together one more time, one more time for the glory of God. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, that you have love.

Jesus said one for another. Darkness is amassing for one final onslaught against the testimony of the church of Jesus Christ in this world. And if you don't believe me, you will very shortly.

Darkness is amassing. There is an incredible battle just ahead of us. You and I no longer have the luxury of division if we're going to make it through these days.

Just as Paul said in Acts chapter 17 and verse 30, the times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commands all men everywhere to repent. All believers in Christ, all denominations. Now I'm not talking about ecumenism, that is a unity that despises truth in a sense.

No, I'm talking about bloodline fellowship now. Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterian, Pentecostal, Charismatic Lutheran, Salvation Army, Messianic Jewish, you just start to name the congregations. There are all other types of names and associations.

We don't have the luxury of division if we're going to make it through these days any longer. I know I'm speaking prophetically. I know it in my heart.

When the children of Israel went into the promised land, they went in as one family. Yet God made the choice to divide where the tribes would dwell and where their boundaries would be. They could have had just one big boundary and called it Israel.

And they did. They have an exterior boundary called the nation of Israel, but they had interior boundaries for each of the 12 tribes. And each of the 12 tribes had different distinctives.

In other words, they're distinctions. One was a seafaring tribe and the other was a military tribe. And another one were given to worship and another one were given to commerce.

Yet they were all one family. Can you imagine if they had spent their whole time in the promised land throwing stones over the borders at each other because there were distinctions and there were differences. Folks, we don't have that luxury.

I'm using that word not in a positive sense. It's in a negative sense. But we had the luxury of division when we weren't persecuted as a people.

But we don't have it anymore. We've got to get together. We are one family.

Ecclesiastes 4.12 says, If one prevails against him, two shall withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken. The strength that you and I need to get through these days ahead of us starts right here.

Right here. Right in this church. With every person that's here today, this morning, and will be here throughout this afternoon.

Everyone who's watching online. Everyone who's part of this congregation. And people who are believers in Christ outside of this congregation.

The strength that you and I need starts with the realization that I cannot, I must not finish this race without you. I don't care who you are. If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, I need you and you need me.

That's just the way it is and nothing can change that. If you don't believe certain things that I do, distinctives. I'm talking about things that are not essential to salvation.

If you've chosen a different interpretation, you're entitled to that. But I'm not entitled to ridicule you. I'm not entitled to build what I do on the criticism of what I feel you don't.

Because not any one of us here, not any preacher in this world or any denomination has the absolute corner on the truth of God. We're all learners on this journey together. And the sooner we realize it and humble ourselves before a holy God, the better off we're going to be.

By God's grace. By God's grace alone, folks, because I can't do this. And you can't do this.

But with Christ in us, I believe as the scripture says, with God, all things are possible. And so I qualify this by saying, by God's grace, if you need me, I'll be here. By God's grace, if you falter, I'll cover you.

By God's grace, let's pick each other up and finish the race together. By God's grace, folks, and by his grace alone. Praise be to God.

This is why I started with this scripture from Job, if you're wondering how it makes any sense. For Job says, There's hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease, though the root thereof waxes old in the earth, and the stalk thereof die in the ground. Yet through the scent of water it will bud and bring forth boughs like a plant.

It doesn't matter how dead you and I may be to some of these truths, but if we can smell the water of God's word, if we still have a hunger and a thirst, Jesus promises to bring us back to life again. In this area of love, this area of the manifestation of God's love, this area of fulfilling these two great commandments that sum up all that we learn in the word of God, that I love God with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength, and my neighbor is myself. Now, that's hard to do.

And I'm on this journey. I'm not preaching to you as somebody who's arrived today. I'm on the same journey you're on.

I struggle with the same things that you struggle with. But I'm not gonna let the struggles hold me back from the truth that's in the scriptures. I'm not gonna let my own difficulties stop me from becoming what I feel God is calling me to be, a representative of Christ in the earth, to wholeheartedly know and love and embrace the people of God of every denomination, of every persuasion, those that are strong and those that are weak.

To be able to recognize a child of God and to have that love of Christ in my heart and let it be manifested the way his love has been manifested towards us, and towards me in particular. We started a pastor's fellowship in this church about three or four years ago, I guess it is, to try to bring the pastors of the Tri-State area together to pray. And I remember those first few meetings.

It was, oh my goodness, how are we gonna get through this? The differences. We're all believers in Christ, but the difference, it's so easy to magnify the differences and so hard to unite at the cross. That seems to be the struggle we all have.

I remember the very first few meetings, there was a man in the front row, a pastor, pastored in the inner city. I asked him to pray one time. The poor man, he prayed like he was having an asthma attack.

I don't know if you ever heard anybody pray like that. I had only heard it once before, and it was just so odd to me. It was like he couldn't breathe, but that's the way he learned to pray.

And I remember just thinking, how are we gonna get through this? And all the different mannerisms and the people there that wanna prophesy and others that wanna weave and do their thing. And it was just so difficult, but we pressed through. And now there is a love there.

Now there's a bond of unity. Now there's... And that brother that prayed in a way that I didn't fully understand invited me to speak at his church. And I went there, and it was in a neighborhood where the taxi driver was so scared to drop me off there.

He says, I'll be here to get you when you're done. He says, or you're never gonna get out of here if I don't come and get you. Thank God for good taxi drivers in New York City.

I had no idea where I was, or where I was going. I went into this man's church, and I was pastoring in the midst of an extremely difficult situation. Had an opportunity to speak there on a Wednesday night meeting for him.

And a fondness came into my heart for this man. And I began to look forward to him coming to the pastor's prayer meetings. He was killed about two years ago in a car accident.

And to this day, I look at the seat where he used to sit, and I miss him. Now only God can do that. Only God can bring us somebody who's completely different than we are, where we look at where they are, or used to be, and say, I've missed you.

I wish you were still here. I wish I could just hug you the way I should have when you were here. I wish we could go for lunch together a little more often.

I wish I could have gotten to know you a little bit better than I did. And it's not too late, ever, if we're willing to let the truth of God begin to touch our hearts. And begin to draw us.

And I know there's some here that would say, Pastor, this is so dead in me what you're talking about. I tried this, but it didn't work. And there's certain types of people I just can't stand, whether or not they're in or out of the body of Christ.

And I just don't know how to go there. But I'm telling you, if you can smell the water, that's what the scripture says, the scent of water, if you can agree that this is living water, that this is something of God, and just get up and move to it. And just say, Lord, I'm not willing to study and not love.

I'm not willing to study, and all it turns me into is a critic of the Christian church. I'm not willing, Lord, to have all this knowledge and to sit into the gospel and to come into the house and worship and end up looking other than Christ. I'm simply not willing.

And so, Lord, I'm asking you to take me on this journey. I'm asking you, God, to put the roots of this dead tree down deep and cause me to draw life where only you can give it. And even if my heart is dead, Lord, you said in your word that I will bring forth boughs like a plant, as if I'm brand new.

There will be fruit. There will be life begin to be born into me if I will be willing to hear this and if I'll be willing to draw down and draw from you the resources that I need. This is my hope when love has gone dry.

I could have avoided this message. I could have avoided preaching and I could just turn and do something else. But I'll tell you one thing.

When I started out in this journey, I said to my wife, Teresa, if this is God, I want the whole thing or nothing. And I still feel that way today. If this is God, I want the whole thing.

I want everything he has for me. I don't really care what anybody thinks about it. I want to die a man of love.

I want to die reaching out. I want to die covering. I want to die speaking words of encouragement to other people.

I don't want to die a critic of the body of Jesus Christ. I want to die covering, transgression, bringing people together. I want to die bringing together I want to die a uniter and not a divider.

I don't want to use the knowledge of the scripture to tear apart the body of Jesus Christ. I want to live to see the body of Christ come together for one last glorious testimony of the love of God in the earth. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples.

Not by your doctrine, not by your ability to tear apart the false, but by your ability to love with the love of God inside of you. God has given us a momentous opportunity in this church with over 100 nations represented here to be a testimony in the earth of what only Christ can do. But it has to be real.

It can't be just a Sunday morning toleration of one another. It has to be real. There has to be a genuine love and compassion in our hearts one for another.

And it starts by looking to the left and looking to the right and saying if you need me, I'm here for you. If you falter, I'll cover you. I'm not willing to finish this race without you.

And that was the touch of God that came on Jacob's life. Jacob wanted the blessing, but he wanted it without where the blessing takes you. And when the blessing of God came unto Jacob's life, he was no longer willing to outrun the weak.

He was no longer willing to travel faster than the weakest among them could travel. That, my friend, is the mark of Christ. That's the mark of God.

That's where theology will bring us to. That's what we become if Christ is in us. Living ambassadors of the one who covers us every day doesn't rebuke us publicly when we fail, does not run around heaven telling our secrets, thank God.

Backs in every day and covers us every day and asks us now to do the same for one another. I don't know the full manifestation of where that's going to take, but I do know that that's where I want to go. You and I have to be able to love the person on our left and on our right.

We have to. And we have to be able to look these people in the eye and say, I'm simply not willing to finish the race without you. We have to ask Christ for a heart that if somebody's not here that you've seen for a long time that you simply, if you can't find them, at least pray for them.

We have to have the courage to speak kind words to one another. Everybody knows what they shouldn't be doing. We have to have the courage to speak words that will cause them to do what they should be.

This is my hope when love has gone dry. Father, I thank you, Lord, for speaking this to my heart first and taking me through this valley. I don't fully understand it, but I want it with all my heart.

I thank you for the purging, the pruning, the cutting off of the rough corners and creating things in my heart that have never been there. I thank you for the, Lord, the tears. I thank you, God, for the compassion.

I ask you, Lord Jesus Christ, that in this church it could be said that we loved you when we stand before your throne one day, that it could be said we loved you with all our heart, soul, and our mind and our strength and we loved our neighbors, ourselves, that all our study brought us to truth. Help it to begin in the house of God, Father, and I pray, Lord, after that, and you teach us to be kind to the stranger. Father, we thank you for this in Jesus' mighty name.

You know, we sang a little earlier songs that were along these lines. One of them was draw me nearer to the cross, to where I can, as you were, be given for the failings of others, that I can make a difference in somebody's life, that I would be less of a judge and more of a representative of the Savior. That can be in your own home.

I don't know your situation. That can be reaching out to somebody that fell short of your expectations of what their life should be. I don't know where it starts, but I do know that it ends in victory.

If you and I can hear this, and for anybody today that feels this message is directed to you and there's an area in your heart where you think the love of God needs to be perfected, I'm going to ask you to join me at this altar today and in the annex stand between the screens and in Roxbury and Summit as well. For those listening at home, you can just go to your knees right in your living room. And let's pray together.

Let's pray that we be a people of love in this last moment of time. Let's stand together, please. And if this is for you today, please just join me here.

I can tell from that singing right now that you are a people who can smell water. Living water. Out of his inward parts will flow rivers of living water, Jesus said.

And no matter how dry we might be in this area of our lives, I smell water. I don't know about you. the Lord says I'll call you I'll cause your roots to go down and you'll draw from that water.

And even if love has died, it will come back to life again. That we will be real and true representatives of Christ. Father, I thank you, Lord.

God almighty that Lord, you're going to have a testimony in this city in this last hour that we're living in when all of the world seems to be going into upheaval. You'll have a testimony here. Jesus, we just ask you to give us your heart for all people.

Your heart, Lord, not ours, yours. Not our life, yours. Not our love, yours.

We just simply reach out and ask you to give us the water that we need, Lord. So that we may live and blossom in this area. And Father, I thank you for this with all my heart.

God almighty, do a miracle here today. Open every prison door. Lord, break down the boundaries.

There's so many boundaries around us. Break them down and let us reach out joyfully, kindly, Father, to one another. And Lord, I thank you for it with all my heart in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Yeah, I suppose it's at a time like this we should all be singing kumbaya and joining hands.

I'd rather just do it. I'd rather just be there and care and just do what Christ says. So, would you turn and make friends with somebody? Would you do that now? Just take some time to fellowship.

We'll see you this afternoon. God bless you.

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