

Showing the Light of God's Love

by Carter Conlon

Carter Conlon's sermon emphasizes the transformative power of God's love and the church's role in sharing that love with the world.

Duration: 47:29

Scripture: Psalm 37:4, Matthew 6:33, Luke 15:7-8, John 3:16, Acts 2:42, Revelation 1:20

Topics: "God's Love"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of being a light in the world and living a life that reflects God's love. He references the passage in Revelation where John sees seven golden candlesticks, symbolizing the presence of Christ. The speaker suggests that when someone repents and turns to God, there is joy in heaven. He also uses the story of the Prodigal Son to illustrate the consequences of living a self-centered life without the light of God's love. The sermon emphasizes the need for genuine passion and love for others, rather than just knowledge or theory.

Transcript

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This recording cannot be posted on any website. However, written permission to link to the Times Square Church homepage may be requested by emailing info@timesquarechurch.org. Other recordings are available by calling 1-800-488-0854 or by writing to Times Square Church Tape Ministry, 1657 Broadway, New York, New York, 10019. I'm going to speak to you this morning about showing the light of God's love.

John chapter 3. If you'll turn there with me and let's pray together. Now, Lord, I thank you with all my heart. Jesus, you have been so merciful to me.

You are so incredibly kind. I thank you for the kindness that you would even choose to walk with me. I give you the praise and the glory for it.

God, I ask you today one more time that you quicken this meager meal that I bring and cause it to be multiplied so that it would speak clearly to every heart. You know where everybody's living. You know what they think.

You know where our needs are. And I'm asking you to divide the bread today and speak to us. Draw us as a church, Lord.

We do want to be a church who lives in truth. We want to be a church who is honest. Lord, we don't want to play religious games, but our hearts are so prone to these things.

It's only you who can come and stand in the candlesticks. And just by your manifested glory, you begin to tell us and show us what needs to change. God, you've been speaking to my heart.

I've been deeply convicted through the simple testimony and love of so many in this church who gave their all for the poorest of the poor. Jesus, I'm challenged. And I ask you, Lord, to come today and enable me.

And, Lord, I give you the honor and all the glory, for I know what I am without you. And I thank you for your kindness. In Jesus' mighty name.

John chapter 3, showing the light of God's love, beginning at verse 16. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.

He that believeth on him is not condemned. But he that believeth not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

For everyone that does evil hates the light, neither comes to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that does truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought, or that their origin is of God. That they are wrought in God, as the King James says.

John 3.16 is obviously one of the favorite verses of every Christian, I have no doubt. I think it's the first verse in the Bible that I've ever memorized. God so loved the world.

What an incredible concept, when it first dawned on my heart, that God wasn't angry with the world, that the cross was not just some judicial thing, that God had to do through his Son to make up for his own fallen creation, that everything that God did and does is because his is a love, that you and I can only hope to understand. We can experience it from time to time, and by God's grace that love can begin to radiate through the life of every Christian. But it has to be a supernatural work of God.

We can't muster it up, it's not within us. I'm talking about within us apart from Christ. It's impossible to love the way that God loves, unless we yield to him and he begins to love others through us.

And the word in the Greek New Testament is agapeo, and it means something that God so cherished that he focused his will in reclaiming it and finds his complete joy in its recovery. He created the world and man we know fell and sinned against God, and because of that sin was unable to come back, not just for time, but for eternity. His own creation, created in his likeness and image, you and me, were alienated from God forever.

You would think with all of the creation that God has, there are other galaxies. There are, we know from scripture, created heavenly beings that worship him. There are angels, there are seraphim, there are cherubs, there are all types of angelic beings all around, probably in the thousands or millions, all around

about the throne of God, and who knows beyond this.

We sang today in my father's house, there are many mansions. We're just beginning to get a glimpse into space through our little pencil that we see through as human beings, and we're beginning to understand how vast this creation of God really is. When Jesus said there are many mansions, he really meant there are many mansions.

It would be easy for you and I to take this fallen creation and just flick it into space. Most of us, if we had been God, that's probably what we would have done. Take the whole ball of failure and just flick it into eternity.

And God can just speak another world into existence. He could have just created other people. He could have done it all over again.

But there's something in the heart of God that he could not allow you and I to be born and cast us away, because he so loved us. His will was so focused in having us as his friends, and even beyond that as a bride for his son for all of eternity, that he began to find his chief joy in our recovery and getting us back to himself again. And of course, we realized there were no limits to what God would do.

We understand from the gospel that he became a man, that he walked among us in a human body. His name was Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, for 33 years. And then he went to a cross and suffered a vicious, horrible death.

But even beyond the physical pain, he suffered something he had never known for all of eternity, this momentary separation from his father. Now, you and I could never understand the cost of that. There's a cost far beyond what our natural minds can comprehend.

But God did this because he loved you. He did it because he loved me for no other reason. He would be absolutely justified as God to have written all of us off and send us into eternity without him.

But he so loved us that he gave his only begotten son, that whoever believes in him should not die, but have everlasting life. In Luke chapter 15, if you'll go back there in your Bibles, please. Luke chapter 15 shows this passion of God in greater detail.

And it shows us how he intended to get back that which he had lost. In Luke chapter 15 and verse 4, he says, What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he lose not one of them, does not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness and go after that which is lost until he finds it? Now, I want you to think about this in the context of the hundred sheep, not just being Christians who are sort of... We look at this all the time, Christians who are kind of living for God, and out of that congregation strays one person. And this is quite often the way we view this.

But I want you to think for a moment, outside of this, and think about the created beings that are in heaven. Think about all of God's creation that adores him. Think about the seraphim, who just simply bow in unison, moving with the will of God, that when Isaiah stood there and repented for his uncleanness, there's this immediate moving to the altar to pick up a coal.

There's a creation, as it is, that's in entire unison with God. Think of Gabriel appearing because of the will of God, knowing his mind, knowing his words, speaking his life into those that are without life. Think of all this, the ninety and nine as it is, that he has all around him.

And we only have a glimpse. We're looking through a window that's frosted over, and all we can see is just a little bit into what really is going on in heaven this day. And this speaks to me in some measure of the vastness of that which God has created.

And the angelic beings, and such like in heaven, who really don't need to repent. They've not sinned against God. But in God's creation, Adam and his descendants sinned against him.

And this speaks to me about the heart of God. He has a hundred sheep. He has created much.

And he could be undeniably adored for all of eternity by heavenly created beings that he has made with his own hand. But he lost one. And the one that he lost was Adam and Eve.

He lost first Eve, and of course, secondarily Adam, as they sinned together against the knowledge of God. And subsequently, all of their descendants, including you and I here today. He left in 99, and he went after that which was lost, he said, until he finds it.

He came to this world because you and I were lost. He had the right to be worshipped. He had the right to turn his face away.

But something in God's heart, so loves, that he could not be content just to be worshipped by angelic beings, and such like. He lost one. And I hope you are thankful today about that part of the heart of God.

Because if that wasn't there, you and I would be gathering here today, but there'd be no hope. It would be so dry. We would have theories, perhaps, about a God that existed somewhere, but seemingly turned his face against us.

But because of his love, our hearts are warmed, our minds are opened. We have been changed, as the song was sung this morning, and we have new hope and new life in Christ. Not just for time, but for all eternity.

We are going to rule and reign with Christ, whatever that represents. We're going to walk on streets of gold, as the Scripture says, although personally I couldn't care less if it was dust. It's heaven.

What difference does it make? And then he says, he goes out and seeks after that which is lost until he finds it. You thought you found him. I thought I found him, only to realize that he had been pursuing me for years.

These faint whispers, when I was living in sin, when I'd be cursing his name, these pangs of conscience that would come seemingly out of nowhere. Is the Holy Spirit pursuing me? Pursuing you? When you did your worst, he was still there. He followed you.

He pursued you. You didn't find him. He revealed himself to you.

And when he had found it, it says in verse 5, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. This is an incredible thing when we see the picture of this. In Luke 22, verse 17, it says about Jesus, at the Last Supper, he took the cup and gave thanks, and said, take this and divide it among yourselves.

He took the cup of suffering. He took the cup of his father's wrath. He took the cup of separation from the father that he had known from before the beginning of time and throughout all eternity.

And he took the cup of that separation, and he took the cup of that justice that had to be paid, and took the cup of his father's wrath, and said, in effect, I'm taking your sin upon me. And I'm going to pay the price that you owe. Take this and divide it among yourselves.

There's a glorious freedom from sin coming. And it's going to be open to all. Take it now.

Take what I'm about to do and divide this cup among yourselves. Hebrews chapter 12 and verse 2 says, for the joy that was set before him endured the cross. What do you think the joy was? The joy was you.

The joy was me. It was the thought in God's heart of having you back again. Not just for time, but for all eternity.

Do you know that? Who for the joy that was set before him thought it worthwhile to shed his heavenly robes and take on a human body, be misunderstood and rejected and despised and crucified? Who for the joy that was set before him? In 2 Corinthians chapter 5 verse 19, Paul says, God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. He said when he finds that lost sheep, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. Not just redeeming us, but carrying us.

That's what the cross is all about. Yes, it's redemption. Thank God, but it doesn't end there.

Not only does he save us, but he picks us up and in the power of his promises and strength, carries us through this life and gives us the strength that we need to live a life that brings honor and glory to God. He takes us out of captivity, brings us out of poverty, takes us away from all that would swallow his own testimony within us. Puts us on his shoulders.

I hope you realize this morning that you're not walking this Christian walk in your own strength. You are on the shoulders of Jesus Christ. What a picture when you realize that Jesus carried the top beam of his cross.

Now, quite often in theater, you see the cross as almost like a symbol. This is kind of a cross like symbol. But technically speaking, what he did carry was a beam across his shoulders to the place of crucifixion.

And I think about how he says he goes to find the one and then he lays it upon his shoulders, rejoicing. God so loved you. God so loved you that he was willing to lay the scorn of his own fallen creation upon his shoulders and suffer the wrath of his father.

The wrath of God. And then not only to redeem you, but to carry you. You know, we get real proud of our religion sometime.

That's only, I think, when we finally stand before him that we'll see ourselves in the purity of his light and begin to realize grace. Grace. I think if we're going to shout anything when we get there, it's just going to be grace.

Oh, my God. Grace. Grace.

I don't deserve to be here. Like Isaiah, I'm unclean. I'm full of unclean lips.

I dwell in the midst of an unclean people. Oh, God. Grace.

Grace. Rewrote my life and mercy carried me all of my days. Then it says in verse six.

And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, rejoice with me. For I've found my sheep, which was lost. Keep in the thought of where I began in this.

Keep in the thought of he is home and his friends and neighbors. Take them as to be at this moment, at least for the sake of what I'm speaking. Take them to be angels and seraphim and cherubim and all these created heavenly beings.

And when he rose from the dead and went and sat at the right hand of God and called together his friends and says, rejoice with me. I found my sheep, which was lost. And, you know, ironically, I was asking Pastor Neal.

Am I right in this this morning? But as far as I see it, the first conversion in the New Testament was a thief on a cross. And Jesus being raised from the dead sits at the right hand, calls together heaven as it is and says, rejoice with me. Yes, one day he's going to call us all together.

One day we're all going to be there. And one day there's going to be a rejoicing in heaven that you and I will be part of. But I want to suggest to you this rejoicing has already begun.

There is a joy going on around the throne of God this very day. I want to suggest to you that God struck up the band and the heavenly choir began to sing. The moment you bent your knee to God and confessed with your mouth that Jesus Christ is Lord, there was a celebration at the throne of God because of you.

I say to you, verse 7, that likewise in Luke 15, 7, joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repents, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance. Incredible when you really begin to see this. In chapter 15, verse 8, he goes on to say, now keep in mind, he's revealing his heart.

We're speaking in the context of John 3, 16, of God so loving the world. He says, either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, does not light a candle and sweep the house and seek diligently till she finds it? When she has found it, she calls her friends and her neighbors together saying, Rejoice with me, for I've found the piece which I had lost. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents.

He's speaking now in the context of God's heart. He says, what woman has ten pieces of silver and she loses one and lights a candle and sweeps the house? Well, folks, I want to tell you that's exactly what God did. He has this incredible treasure of the universe.

He's got other created beings, but he lost humankind and he lit a candle. The candle is the church. Didn't he say, you are the light of the world.

A city that's set on a hill cannot be hidden. He lit a candle in this world and he said, and he's sweeping the world to find every last soul that he has lost that are precious in the sight of God. That is why we're here.

We are the candle of God. We are the bride of Christ, the body of Christ, where he has put his Holy Spirit. He's planted his passion in his mind within us.

He set us upon a hill not to be hidden, not to be self-consumed, but to find that which is precious to the heart of God. Every man, woman and child ever created in the image of God. This is the work of God.

In Revelation, let me just read it to you for time's sake. In chapter 1, John in the Isle of Patmos, he says, I turned to see the voice that spoke with me, and being turned I saw seven golden candlesticks. And in the

midst of the seven candlesticks was one like the Son of Man, clothed with the garment to the foot and girded about the paps with a golden girdle.

He's speaking clearly about Jesus Christ. I saw seven candlesticks, and in the midst of the candlesticks I saw Christ. This is what John is saying.

And in the same chapter, verse 20, he says, The mystery, Jesus is now speaking to him and says, The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in my right hand and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels or the pastors of the seven churches, and the seven candlesticks which you saw are the seven churches. This is the candle that God lit in the world.

He lit the candle of his church. He put the fire of his own passion within a people, and he called this people his church. Now this church, if we are walking close to God, we have to find our delight in that which delights the heart of God.

Our will should be intertwined with the will of God. He so loved the world that his will moved to fall in humanity, and his joy is complete every time a sinner comes back to him. This is the will of God.

This is the work of God. This is and should be the passion of the true church of the living God. Now Christ comes in this early church in the book of Revelation, and this is a young church, but already the seeds of the lamp as it is going out were in it.

And the only way we can know if the light of God is truly burning in us, we have to let the presence of Christ begin to examine us. There has to be an inner cry, Jesus, come, walk in the midst of the testimony that you've given me. And anything that offends you, you have to take it out of my life.

And folks, this is not always easy, because we get very proud of our religion. We can get very comfortable in what we're doing. We can die, actually, in religious service.

You'll see it in the book of Revelation. And it speaks in a sense of a person trimming a wick, a candle. Now, these were candles that were supplied by oil, but there is a wick in a candle.

And I don't know if any of you have ever done this, but you'll have a candle that burns too brightly, for example, because the wick is too long and it will smoke and stink up your room when it's supposed to be just giving light. You have another one where the wick is too short and it won't give any light. And Jesus comes in a sense as a wick trimmer to his own church, and he speaks to the church in Revelation of that which is crept into his house.

And that which is crept in is marring the testimony of his love. It's obscuring the way home to those who are lost in darkness. And it's robbing God of those who are the desire and affection of his heart.

Now, folks, we think that as long as we are tithing, we're not robbing God. And many people, that's how you've heard. All you've ever heard your whole life is, well, if you're not tithing, you're robbing God.

But I want to tell you there's a much greater robbery taking place when all around us people are perishing because my life and yours are becoming unclear, a hidden or a shadowy testimony of Jesus Christ. A much greater robbery is taking place. Men and women are being captivated by a roaring lion who seeks to devour them.

The only way out of the darkness is the light that Christ has planted within his church. And when our testimony is unclear, hidden or shadowy, there's a robbery going on all around us. And quite often we can think we're doing quite well because we tithe.

Now, Luke chapter 11, if you'll just go back a couple of pages with me. Verse 33, Jesus said, No man, when he has lighted a candle, puts it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, one of the other gospels says, or under a bed, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light. Now, you see, this candle is you, it's me.

When the Holy Spirit, after we received Christ as our Savior, when the Holy Spirit came within us, we became this candle of God's testimony of his love. And Jesus himself doesn't light us with his presence that we might be hidden in a secret place, or stuck under some kind of a vessel. But he says, he puts it on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light.

Now, verse 34, he says, The light of the body is the eye, therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But when thine eye is evil, thy body is full of darkness. And the singleness of the eye speaks clearly to me about the focus of Christ.

You see, Christ came with the focus of doing the will of his Father. In John 17, verse 4, he says, I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. Mark chapter 10, verse 45, he says, Even the Son of Man came not to be ministered to, but to minister and give his life a ransom for many.

Doesn't the writer of Romans tell us that it's a reasonable thing to give our lives as a living sacrifice for the purposes of God? The lamp, the life of Christ burning in us is completely dependent on where we're looking. What are we looking to? What is our focus? Why do we want Jesus Christ in the midst of our lives? And there's so much of a focus today that is misguided. The work of God is the saving of the lost, beloved.

That is the work of God. Everything else is gravy. Thank God he prospers.

Thank God he heals. Thank God he will lift us out of the mire, but sometimes we'll be sent to prison. Some people lose their heads.

Others know incredible hardship, but they are filled with the light of God because their eye is single. Their focus is God's focus. It's not just about a bigger slice of the economic and social pie.

It's about winning men and women and children to Christ. That's the focus. That's why we're Christians.

That's why God leaves us on the earth. I'm convinced of it. I know it.

Scripture bears witness to it. God so loves you. God so loves me that the moment we receive Christ, he would.

I believe he would just take us. We bow our heads. We pray and we would leave this physical body and be home with God.

There can only be one purpose. We're left on the earth. That he lights the candle of his passion within us and he sends us into our environments, our families, our homes, our neighborhoods, our workplaces, that our lives for the rest of what remains of them might be a testimony of the reality of God's love to fallen

humanity.

Before a man can become a light, he must first come to the light, the true light. And in this light, John says, after John 3, 16, he will be proven whether or not what motivates him comes from the heart of God. I believe this morning with everything in me that you are standing in the light right now.

And the very motives of why you are here are being tested. And I am here of where we're going, what we're doing, what is it all about? Why are we Christians? Why is the Holy Spirit within us? Why do we have this Bible? It's interesting. I thought as I was preparing this, that wickedness begins with a wick and we must have the wickedness trimmed from our hearts in the presence of God that we may burn correctly.

If we're burning too brightly, it could be a sign of unrighteous zeal, pride or unsanctified ambition. Remember Revelation 3, 1, the church of Sardis, he said, you have a name that you live, but you're dead. You are cut off as it is from the enlivening influence of the Holy Spirit.

If we're burning too dimly, it speaks of captivity, fear, spiritual sloth, a wrong focus or secret and unvictorious shame. Now, in chapter 15 of Luke, he concludes, Jesus concludes the thought, which began in verse 4. Now, you have to understand, he's speaking one thought all the way through this chapter. He's telling one story.

He's just hitting it from every possible angle. And here's a story in chapter 15 of the prodigal son. But it's a story of a young man who's losing the testimony of being his father's son because he's spending his inheritance in the wrong place.

Bottom line, you and I were given an inheritance. The inheritance was one for us on the cross. The inheritance is not only salvation.

It is the very life of God in the power of the Holy Ghost. The question is, where are you spending it? To what purpose is the Holy Spirit within you and me? Where are we going with this? The story of this prodigal son tells us that he could speak about his father, but his candle was out. I see him going into these places that he's not supposed to be.

And in the King James, it says he spent his inheritance on riotous living. And in the original text, it means selfishness. He consumed this inheritance on himself.

His whole focus was me, myself and I. And it led him into a place that was very far from his father's heart. His father watched him go, knowing that only mercy would bring him home. I can see this boy boasting about his father in these places where he was living.

My church is like this. My God is like this. My home is like this.

But he's got no candle. And everybody looking at him is quite aware that there's nothing burning within him. It's theory.

It's knowledge. But it's not producing any change. There's no passion.

There's no genuine love for a soul. You can stick scriptures on a person, but it won't necessarily lead them to Christ. But when they look at you and they see the passion of God for you.

I had a man come into my office one time, and he opened a book. He was a very intelligent man. And he opened a book before me, and he had theological questions.

There were, I don't know, six or seven. I don't remember how many of them there were. And they were the chicken and egg theology questions.

And there's no, you can go around in circles with these forever. And I looked at them, and he said, if you can answer these, I'll give my life to Christ. I looked at his questions, and I thought I'd be here forever, even attempting to.

Not that I even knew the answer. I closed his book. I said, I don't know the answer to your questions, but I know this one thing.

I feel the love of God for your soul right now. And Jesus wants you for his own. He closed his book and said, I'm ready now.

Give my life to Christ. All the questions are answered when the candle is burning, folks. When the passion of God is flowing through your life, all the questions are answered.

You see, because there's something much greater than the questions. It's having the evidence or seeing the evidence that God truly loves you. He may have been speaking about his father, but his father considered him dead.

In Luke 15, 24, he said, rejoice with me, my son was dead, but now he's alive again. And the word dead, it means having your soul separated from the quickening influence of the divine light and spirit, of course, which is the Holy Spirit. He's out there, and he still has the testimony that he's his father's son, but he has no life in him.

Because his whole focus of his inheritance is wrong. He's moving in the wrong direction. He's consuming this life on himself.

His candle is hidden under a bushel of selfishness. It's obscured from the light under a bed of spiritual laziness. And this is exactly what happened to this young boy.

His life became a spiritual non-issue. And people discounted him. They said that they sent him in a field to feed swine.

They discounted him as a non-issue. And his whole life and testimony, no matter what he said, was cast under the feet of men. And that's exactly what Jesus said will happen to a church age and a church people who lose the passion for what the work of God and the kingdom of God is all about.

The whole testimony will be discounted. It will be a spiritual non-issue. We're living in a generation where people go into the house of God.

They have contact with Christians. And it's not completely the case. But largely, I think in our time, I'm sure many here have to agree with me.

It seems like the church and the voice of God is a non-issue in the direction of our nation and many other nations throughout the world. And this young man, because his focus was wrong, he was discounted, as Jesus said will happen, and cast out under the feet of men. Not a confrontation with his burning passion

and love of God.

But just theories about his father that have no reality. There's no expression of God's love in it. And subsequently, he's just relegated.

Here, go feed the self-consumed. And that's where he ends up. But he came back to himself.

And he came back to his father. And when he came back to his father, Jesus said in John 3 that whoever does truth... This is the condemnation, that light came into the world, but men loved darkness because their deeds were evil. For everyone that does evil hates the light and won't come to the light unless his deeds be exposed for really what they are.

But finally, this boy was just fed up. He got tired of this. And I know I'm speaking to somebody here this morning.

He said, Pastor, you've been in my prayer closet. You've been reading my mail. You've been sitting at the desk next to me in my workplace.

You've been holding the broom next to me where I clean. Because I'm tired. I'm tired of this place.

I'm tired of where I'm living. I'm tired of my life being discounted as a spiritual non-issue in my neighborhood, my family, my generation. I'm tired of people not being confronted, not just with theology, but with the love of God to me.

That's really what makes the difference. I'm tired of seeing men as trees walking. Things to be harvested.

Taken to a sawmill and something to be where a notch can be put in them every time I win a soul to Christ. I'm tired of this. I want this love of God that he promises me.

It's the midnight hour and I don't have what I need to set before this generation. And this young man realized his condition and got up and said, I don't care if I'm a slave. I'm going back to my father because there's bread there.

There's life there. Everybody is looked after there. And where I've been living and what I've been doing seems to be fruitless.

All it does is make me hungrier. The more I go, the more I brag about my inheritance, the hungrier I'm becoming. And I'm tired of this place.

And I'm just going back to my father. I don't care what he does. I don't I don't care what place he puts me in his house.

I'm just going back because it's better there than it is here. And I know I'm speaking to many hearts this morning. There are many who gathered here and say, Pastor, I'm not happy here.

I seem to be in a passionless place. I have within me the life of Christ, but I have so little influence on those around me. And I'm tired of this place.

This young man got tired and he got up and just started heading back to his father. And when he headed back to his father, he found what we began with in John 3, 16. God so loved.

He expected to be berated. He expected to have his nose pushed in his sin and failure and the shame that he brought on the father's name. Instead, he got out of his seat and headed towards his father, only to find his father coming running down the road to him.

God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son. He didn't give his son so he could go back on a throne and nitpick his church to death. He loves his people.

He found unconditional forgiveness. As a matter of fact, it seems like the father had not even imputed his sin to him. He found unconditional cleansing, an unconditional restoration of authority.

He found shoes for his feet. The father says, No, you're not a slave, you're a son. You're a daughter.

You're the bride of my son. You're not a slave in my house. And you don't find my life through works.

You're a son, you're a daughter in my house. I will cleanse you, I will empower you. I will put shoes on your feet.

And because you will understand the love of my heart, you will now be an ambassador of me throughout all the kingdom. You'll be an ambassador of my love because you have experienced it yourself. See, beloved, we can't be an ambassador of what we know nothing about.

Can't talk about a kingdom we've never been to. Can't talk about God's love when we've never experienced it. And let me tell you, you experience God's love in the deepest measure in your failure.

When you failed him and you know you failed him and you come back and there's seemingly not a word. All he does is cover, cleanse, empower. Says, Come, we've got a lot of work to do.

There are many out here who don't know my love. They don't understand I've come running to fall in humanity. And you, because you've experienced my mercy, are now ready.

You're ready now to be my son. He found an entrance into that which was at the center of God's joy. And he found that the center of God's joy is not found in works.

It's not found in service. It's not found in doing anything. The center of God's joy was him.

Amazing. When you find this and begin to realize that you are the center of God's joy. It's not what you do.

It's you. That's why he said to the church of Ephesus, you're working, working, working, working, working. Get back to your first love or you're going to lose your candlestick.

It's not about what you do for me. It's about you. I love you.

With an impassioned and an everlasting love, I engraved you on the palms of my hands. He was the source of his father's joy. He was restored.

He was revived. He was recommissioned. And Father brought him into the house and said, strike up the band.

Let's have a taste of heaven right now. Hallelujah. I don't mean to be light.

But I feel that heaven's band has just stood to their feet now. And they're tuning their instruments and just getting ready. Because somebody is coming home.

Somebody. Somebody. Somebody here is willing to say this morning, I've had enough of sin.

I've had enough of living in sin. I have a savior. I've had enough of wondering where I'm going in eternity.

I can know today that I'm going to heaven. I've had enough of the uncertainty. I need a savior.

There's others here today who are saying, I've had enough of living under a bushel and under a bed. And in an obscure place. I have the Holy Spirit within me.

God, bring me to the light. Prove my deeds. I want this generation to see your love.

And experience through me your passion for their souls. If this is the cry of your heart. As we stand, would you make your way to this altar in the annex? Would you step between the screens? And we're just going to pray together and believe God as always for a miracle.

Would you stand in the balcony? You can go to either exit. The main sanctuary slip out of where you are. Make your way, please, here.

And we're going to pray together. You're here today. And you know that you need a savior.

And you believe at this moment that you're lost in your sin. But understand that God loved you. And he died for you.

Because he wants you home. Not just for time, but for eternity. And in your heart, you're willing to walk with him.

And turn from the things that you know that are wrong. He says, not only will I cleanse you, but I will empower you to live a different life. If that's in your heart today, you may not be at this altar.

But I'm going to ask you just to raise your hand, unashamedly now, all over the sanctuary. Downstairs, upstairs, just raise your hand nice and high. I'll pray a prayer with you.

We're going to believe God. Thank God. We're going to believe God that your sin will be forgiven.

I see every hand. And the ones I don't see, God sees. All over the sanctuary, education, annex.

You raised your hand not to a pastor. You raised your hand to God. He sees your hand.

He sees your heart. And if you can see it, he's running to you right now. He's running to embrace you, to cleanse you, and to change you.

And to set your life as a testimony of his goodness in our generation. Let's pray together for those that are coming into God's kingdom. Lord Jesus.

I have sinned against you. And the knowledge of your truth. And I am sorry for my sin.

I realize today that my sin put you on a cross. And you suffered a horrible death to pay the price for the wrong things that I have done. Thank you for loving me.

Thank you for giving your life for me. Thank you for your promise. That if I would believe in what you have done for me, I will not perish, but I will have everlasting life.

Jesus, I believe that you are the son of God. I believe that you died for my sin. I believe that on the third day, you were raised from the dead by the power of God as living proof to me that my trust in you today is not in vain.

You have forgiven me, and you will raise me from the power of death and free me from the power of sin. I believe that at this very moment, I am saved. Thank you, Jesus.

Now let me pray for the rest of you right now. Father, I pray for those that have heard this word today. God, I have heard it.

Lord, forgive us for all the religiousness. Forgive us for all of the scripture we quote, yet our hearts are so cold. But we come back into the light of who you are.

And Jesus, we welcome the trimming away of that which keeps the light of your love from being shed abroad through our lives. Lord, give us the power to love. Give us the power to reach out with the passion that you have in your heart for every person that's been created in your image.

You've chosen us to sweep the house until you've found every lost coin. God, what a privilege. We accept it and ask you for the grace that we require every day to live it.

This is all about you and us. We can't muster up this love. It has to come from you.

But it will be your delight to reveal your heart through your people. I thank you for it. In Jesus' mighty name.

Now let's rejoice together. This is the conclusion of the message.

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