

The Degree of Love

by Edgar Reich

The sermon explores the depth of love as commanded by God, urging the congregation to love Him and their neighbors authentically and selflessly.

Duration: 40:49

Scripture: Leviticus 24:20, Matthew 5:21-22, Matthew 5:28, Matthew 5:44, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 22:37-39, John 14:15

Topics: "Love"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a powerful story of a rescue team during the 2008 earthquake in China. They come across a woman's body buried under rubble, and despite knowing she is dead, the leader of the team is moved to go back and investigate why she was kneeling. This leads him to reflect on his own life and question his commitment to God's commandments and his love for others. The speaker then explores the concept of love, referencing 1 Corinthians 13, and challenges the congregation to examine their own love for others, particularly those who are marginalized or in need of help.

Transcript

Edgar's mother, his mother, think about the song now, as long as I got King Jesus, his mother managed to escape the Nazi German death camps with he and his sister as little children, or he would have been history. He made it through because God wanted him to be with us. Back in 2005 when Katrina hit, and we opened our doors for what was supposed to have been a long weekend.

What it was, they were coming up on Friday, Saturday, Sunday, we thought they'd be going back on Monday, Tuesday, and that's what we planned, a weekend, nice weekend for everybody from South Louisiana to come stay at the church, picnic out, camp out, storms over, pray, go back home. It turned out that we closed the shelter on the 11th of November. Now I'm saying this to set us up, Ellis said this morning, he and Neph used to watch Will Green, the way Will carried himself when they were in high school.

Listen, they watched the way Will dressed in his mannerism in high school, and they wanted to be like Will. Will met Edgar in Hackensack when Edgar got word that his mother would not live through the weekend. Riding around, he ended up at Mount Zion.

They brought him in for prayer. That's where he met Jesus, at Mount Zion in Hackensack, New Jersey, where Will brought Edgar to meet Jesus. When Scott Criddle was told he wouldn't make it in COVID, and

the plane had an emergency landing in Hackensack, New Jersey, it was Mount Oliver, Pastor Curry, membership, who showed up with Marshall at the intensive care unit because Will Green had called.

Who on earth would have expected a little fellow who got saved when he was about five years old hanging around us to touch people from different areas, and then we all converge in this room. Nobody but Jesus, and so thank God for Will, and so two of his disciples is with us today. Don't take it like when you touch somebody's child or somebody's child is watching you.

You'll never know. You'll never know what God's purpose is in that child, and I just thank God that there is a place called St. Matthew where his purpose can be accomplished, and Nap went to Texas and sang and invited Ellis to come check him out, and because he did God's will, and most of you went to school in Alexandria now. Lord Third, his father was principal now, and spent the day with us during the inauguration and helped us.

This is an unusual place, so now we're going to enjoy this song, and right after you sing, preach the hell out. I know the Lord will make a way. Yes, he will.

Aren't you glad about it? Oh, I know the Lord will make a way. Yes, he will, and oh, he'll make a way. He'll make a way for you, and I know the Lord, he will see you safely through.

I know the Lord will make a way. Oh, yes, he will. Oh, I got a savior.

I can tell all of my troubles too. Aren't you glad about it? Oh, oh, when I'm down in burden, and I just don't, I just don't, I just don't know what to do. Thank you, Jesus.

I go to him. Oh, in secret prayer. Oh, and I leave, oh, I leave all my burdens there.

Yeah, I know the Lord will make a way. Yes, yes, he will. Oh, y'all can help me just say, yes, he will.

Yes, he will. Yes, he will. Yeah, when you're down in burden, just say, yes, he will.

Yes, he will. Yes, he will. Oh, I know the Lord will make a way.

Yes, he will. Yeah, when I was down, oh, down to my last dime, oh, that's when the Lord, he stepped in, he stepped in on time. Yeah, I know the Lord, yeah, yeah, he'll make a way.

Yeah, he'll make a way. Yeah, when you got financial trouble, he'll make a way. He'll make a way somehow.

Thank you, Jesus. Thank you, Jesus. I love you.

Let the church say, amen. I greet you in that name that is above every name. I greet you in the name of Jesus Christ, who is my Lord and Savior.

And he's going to send you a text message. I'm so glad to see all of you young people here today. What a wonderful sight that is.

And he's got a text message for you at the end of the service. And that text message is, you must remember, I love you. And that's from Jesus.

You must remember, I love you, a text message. We'll get to that at the end of the sermon. Now, I want to give honor to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

I'd like to honor Reverend Dr. Green and all of the pastors in the house and all of the preachers. I believe you have 14 preachers, and black preachers are better than white preachers. So I don't know why you're having me, Pastor, but the Lord will have to do it.

The Spirit knows no difference in color, okay? He knows no difference. Praise God. Praise God.

Giving honor to the first lady of the house, the mother of the church, all of the deacons, the deaconesses, my dear sisters and brothers, I give you honor, too, because God has given you at least one gift that's better than any of my gifts. So praise God. I can look up to you and esteem you better.

And then I'd like to mention deacon and deaconess Will Green. I thank you for your hospitality and for your kindness. He's my brother in Christ.

And not only are we spiritual brothers, but his mom, Sister Robison, we fell in love four years ago, and I came over for that greens, ochre, and all the other good stuff. And she said to me, why don't you be my white son? And I said to her, why don't you be my mama? And she said, I want to. And so we hugged each other and we cried a little.

So it's a wonderful, wonderful thing to greet you in that name that is above every name. Now let us open up in a word of prayer. Heavenly Father, we glorify your holy name.

We glorify Jesus. We glorify the Holy Spirit. We thank you for the bread of life.

Lord, as it is about to be broken by you, multiply it for your glory that we might understand and become more like you. In Jesus' name, amen. And I'd like you to open up in your Bibles, Matthew 22, 37 to 39.

Matthew chapter 22, verses 37 through 39. If you've forgotten your Bible, I know you've memorized the Bible. Next time, next time, bring the Word of God because it really helps you, okay? And you got to check up on the preachers to see that the preachers tell you the truth.

All right? Now, I'm not talking about any members present in this church. I'm sorry, Pastor. But do you check up on the Word because the Word is truth.

God is truth. Matthew chapter 22, verses 37 to 39. Jesus said to him, you shall love the Lord your God with, what? All your heart.

With, what? All your soul. And with, what? All your mind. This is the first and great commandment.

And the second is like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. Now, I see so many wonderful people here.

I know you all agree already. You say, yes, I love God. And yes, I love my neighbor.

So I have no problems. But I'd like to check a little bit on your degree of your love for the Lord. Would that be all right, Pastor? Thank you.

I want to tell you a little story about Mother Teresa from Calcutta in India. She gave her life for the poor and a little poem was written about her. Love has a hem to her garment that reaches the very dust.

It sweeps the streets and lanes. And because it can, it must. Loving the unlovely.

When visitors came to Calcutta, they noticed the deformed feet of Mother Teresa. They asked what happened to her feet. Her helpers explained, once a year we get a shipment of shoes for all the helpers and nurses here.

Mother Teresa always waits until everyone has found the right shoes for their feet. She will take the last pair left over. Since she cannot find shoes that fit her, her feet have deformed over the years.

How did she do that? What kind of love has she got? What kind of love do I have? What is love? Let us take a look in 1 Corinthians chapter 13 and we'll read four verses from 1 Corinthians chapter 13. Four verses to see what love is. And by the way, in Greek there are many different words for love and you know some of those.

For example, agape is the sacrificial love, philos is the brotherly love, or eros is sexual love. What is the difference between love and lust? What is the difference between love and lust? If you forget the whole sermon, I want you to remember this, okay? Love gives and lust takes. Lust takes what isn't his or hers, all right? Love gives and lust takes.

Now as Scripture explains the sacrificial love in 1 Corinthians 13, 1 to 4. Are you all there? Say amen. If you're not there, say wait a minute. All right, I think we're all right.

1 Corinthians 13 verses 1 through to 4. And it reads here, 1 Corinthians 13, 1 through to 4. Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels but have not love, I have become as a sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. So even if you have a sweet tongue but no love and only lust, it's an empty noise. It says, I love you baby, I want to marry you, but your intentions aren't honorable.

And that is not love. That is an empty noise. That is empty talk with action of lust in behind.

And verse 2, and though I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith so much that I could remove mountains but have not love, what am I? That's the word. I'm nothing. I'm nothing if I don't have love.

I thought it's that mushy feeling for man. No, no, no, no. Love is a tangible action.

And then in verse 3, we learn, and though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, in other words, you give all of your money to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, you become a martyr, but have not love, it profits me nothing. So what this says is that if our intentions are incorrect, then it profits me nothing. Our intentions could go with actions, but if those actions are pride to be seen, to be all-powerful, to be recognized, that is the wrong motive.

And so therefore it profits nothing. And then in verse 14, in verse 4, it now tells us what real love is like. Love suffers long and is kind.

Love does not envy. Love does not parade itself, is not puffed up or proud. It's not proud.

It's not proud. I once met Pastor Wurrenbrandt. He was a Romanian pastor.

He was tortured for Christ. He had seven pieces of flesh cut out of him. He came into the church, and as he walked in, he walked in on socks.

He was not able to walk properly because his feet had been broken with torture. As the church looked at him, they saw his feet, and as he walked up to the front, they quickly drew up a chair for him to sit down because he could not stand with those broken feet. And he sat down, and he said, I love you, sisters and brothers.

I love you. I was tortured, and people always ask me to say bad things about my torturers. They always ask me, thank you, pastor.

Thank you. They always ask me, say something about the communists. Say something bad.

Say something that really tells what you feel like. And he said, you know what I feel? I feel love. I cannot hate those torturers.

You know, he said, if I really look at it, it was my fault. And people said, what do you mean it was your fault? And he said, I just didn't love enough. My Lord, I didn't love enough.

Now, God wants you to love him with all, with everything. Your mind, spirit, body, your soul, everything, every fiber of your body, he wants you to love him with. And young people, for you, this is a wonderful, wonderful goal, a goal in life, to love that incredible God because he first loved you.

And you know, I used to be in money, and I used to run a very large corporation and be made money, and I did it for many years. But it was empty. It was void.

There was no future, no hope for my spirit. There was no future and hope for my spirit, pastor. It was only money and power now, selfishness, pride.

That's all it was. But Satan deceives us. Satan shows us on television, the castles and the mansions.

So that's what we got to have. He deceives us young people, don't go for that. Go for Christ Jesus, because he's going to leave a text message for you.

You must remember, I love you. You must remember, I love you. And so, with this love, I have a little test.

Now, I'm going to take the test, and you can follow me. You can give your answers in your own mind. So these questions are for me.

Don't be offended for you, okay? Let them be for me, and let them answer me for myself. Have you ever accepted the Son of God into your life to give you eternal life? If you have not, there are two homes waiting, Sister Robison. She's telling me there are two homes, one above and one below.

And the one below has no parties. That's a lie from Satan. There's only hellfire and eternal pain.

There's solitude. You're alone. You're not with anyone else forever.

And so, I want you to consider to accept that Son of God into your life. Now, then, Jesus said, if you love him, keep my commandments. So Christ commands me to follow his commandments, which, by the way, exceed the commandments of the Old Testament.

All right? So if I follow his commandments, then I have a higher target to reach. And it says here, have you looked at someone with lust? That goes for both men and women, by the way. And Jesus says in Matthew 5, 28, you have committed adultery.

So, Edgar Wright, don't look with lust at anyone because he don't belong to you. Lust takes. Love gives.

Love gives. Now, Jesus said in Matthew 5, 28, have you been angry with someone without cause? Uh-uh. Now, he compares that to something really awful.

Now, I thought getting angry at someone isn't all that bad. You know, I can fly off my handle once in a while. That should be all right.

But he says, if you're angry with someone without cause, Jesus compares that to murder in Matthew 5, 21 and 22. Then he's got another new commandment. And he said, in the Old Testament, it was an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

So you could hit back. You could kill. You could defend yourself.

But he said in Matthew 5, 44, love your enemies. Wow. Wow.

And then he gave us three things to do. We can pray for them. We can do good for them.

All right. So, don't do the other thing. All right.

Now, I have a question for myself. Do I live common law? If I do, I'm in violation of Jesus' commandments. Do I live with more than one woman? Okay.

I'm in violation of God's commandments. When is the last time you wept for your sins, Edgar Wrike? When is the last time you wept for the sins of the country? Is my life about what God can do for me? When is the last time I have kept the Son Neholy? Isn't it his day? Should I catch up on all of the junk and all of the work I have to do? Do I witness and share the Lord? Who or what is my first love? There are 24 hours in the day, let us say. You use eight hours to sleep and get ready.

You work for eight hours. That leaves eight hours and Saturdays and Sunday. The average TV time per man per day is four hours and 35 minutes.

The average TV time for women per day is five hours and 17 minutes. Now, I know that doesn't apply to anyone here, Pastor. I got to make an exception.

And I don't want you to feel bad, but I used to be hooked on TV. I couldn't let it go. And even now, it's a great, great temptation for me.

But then if I use up my time on TV, I don't have time for something that the Lord says that shows my love to him. I have time for prayer. I have time for the Word.

I have time to make some phone calls to people that hurt. I have time to visit. I have time for my family.

Does God really think that I love him if he looks at my actions? You ask yourself, and if any of this touches your heart, then I would ask you to repent. I would ask you to confess your sins before God, and he will cleanse you from all unrighteousness. Now, the second part of Matthew 22, 37 to 39 is you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

When we think of Louisiana, who are our neighbors? Neighbors include our wife, our children, our next of kin, church members, neighbors in the next house, and people at work. Our neighbors are people of all color and different races in the state of Louisiana and in the USA. It includes white people.

It includes African-American people. It includes Indians, Chinese, Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists. So, Lord, who is my closest neighbor? Who needs help? And, you know, as I was thinking and praying about that, I couldn't get the answer, and I couldn't get the answer, and I couldn't get the answer.

Who is the closest neighbor for you? Who's the closest neighbor for you? And then the Lord gave me the answer, and I said, no, no, Lord. No, Lord. I cannot tell them this.

I have no right to. I'm white. I cannot do this.

I'm part of the problem. And then the Holy Spirit reminded me and said, wasn't your father shot? Yes, my father was shot. Didn't you grow up as an orphan? Yes, I did.

Weren't you poor? Yes, I was. I had to find food in the woods as a refugee. White worms were in my experiments.

My mother misused me sexually. Okay, were you misused? I was discriminated against as a refugee and hunted as a child. I had to watch out.

I had to watch my back all the time. I died nearly six times. I was addicted.

I had no future and no hope. So, the Spirit says, you go ahead and you tell them. You tell them who that neighbor is that is close to them and that's missing in this church this morning.

Now, there are many, many young people here, and I'm so glad to see you. You're all excluded from what I'm going to say next, but there are some young black men out there who have decided a different way of life. They're going in the wrong direction.

They need your help. They need your love. Are you loving them as your neighbor or are you judging them because their pants are on the ground? It is your own young men that are killing themselves.

This is also true of a generation of white young people. By the way, it isn't just black young people, but they don't have a future and a hope. What are the reasons? Why is that? Madeline Murrah O'Hare was an atheist.

In 1963, she had the Bible, prayer, and commandments taken out of school. Judges 2.10 says we are raising a godless generation because many of you have two or three jobs. You can't teach those kids at home, and they don't get it at school, so what do they get? What do they get? They need your love.

Bishop Wellington Boone from Atlanta wrote a booklet called The Death Style of Black American Men. Black men are killing themselves, and he related that to his own life. He was growing up without knowing his father until about age 35.

He was left with his mom, and he said black men remain as children longer because they're fatherless. In 2006, 65 percent of all black children were raised by single moms. Moms, I'm not saying anything bad about you.

I know you're trying your best. You're turning your heart inside out to bring up those children, but you know God made a family unit, and there is that dad that's missing. Seven out of ten children are born to single mothers.

Children so raised often have issues with God because mothers and grandparents do their best, but they cannot replace good fathers. Now my own father was shot. My nephew's father left him at birth.

He says, and he thinks, my own father didn't love me. How can God love me? I don't want God because my own father doesn't love me. What are some of the solutions? And the first solution, of course, is you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Let that young man that is going the wrong way be your neighbor. Reach out and love to him. Then the second point is many young children, many young people are leaving the church.

Why is that? Why is that? Because they see our hypocritical living. We must walk worthy and holy before them. We can't be a hypocrite.

We can't have a forked tongue speaking out of one side of our mouth on Sundays and then come Monday. We're hellhounds. We cannot be this way because they need us.

Those young people are looking for something. They're looking for a future and a hope. They're already rejected out in the world.

They have to fight discrimination. They have to fight jobs. They have to fight lower pay.

They say, why is this life worth living for me? It is not. I'm going to finish it. Oh no.

Brothers and sisters, the next point is start praying with weeping, a prayer of travail. It's weeping. We need to stop Satan and generational curses because what some of those boys learned is from their, from their dads.

Their dads did it, now they do it. They don't know any better. So let us turn to God.

We need Christian schools. We need godly men, mentors. I don't know how many godly men are in this place, but there's so many of you.

You look so beautiful. You look like beautiful Christians. Would you take it in your heart to, to agree with your family to give one hour, two hours of your weekly time to talk with a kid that has no future and a hope? Would you do that? Would you do that? Would you love your neighbor as yourself? You do that for your own kids, wouldn't you? And then we need godly women mentors for fatherless girls not to become pregnant out of wedlock and to find godly young men who will marry.

Because scripture tells us that you women have that responsibility. And if they're girls that, that have grown up without a father, it's more easy for them to go towards men. And if they end up with the wrong man, what happens? The Lord help us.

Now will you love your closest neighbor as yourself? Are you willing to be part of the solution or are you part of the problem? Will you remain part of the problem or will you become part of the solution? And God says I want all of you. I want all of you. And now perhaps there are those here that say, yes you tell us to love.

You tell us to love God. You tell us to love fellow men. But I haven't experienced any love.

Let me tell you there's a great, great heavenly father who loves you. And he has proven his love. And that's my final story for today.

It comes from a great earthquake in China in May 2008. Thousands, hundreds of thousands were killed. Rescue workers worked tirelessly to try and save those buried.

The rescue team reached a completely destroyed house. Amidst the rubble, the leader of the team noticed a small opening. He saw the body of a person in a somewhat kneeling awkward position below that rubble.

It looked like a woman. He managed to force his hand into the opening to touch the woman. She was cold.

Her body was stiff. They knew she was dead. The team started to go to the next house.

But then the leader went back. Why was she kneeling? He forced his hands one more time, this time underneath her body and felt something warm. And he cried out and he said there's someone alive here.

Come, come. And everyone rushed back. And the whole team rushed back.

And they removed the fallen beams and the boards carefully. The woman's head was crushed. Her back was broken.

She was in a kneeling position forming a protective bridge over a child. A doctor came running and examined the child. The child was well and sleeping peacefully.

Inside the blanket was a cell phone with a text message. If you survive, you must remember I love you. If you survive, you must remember I love you.

And you know that is what the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has done for us. He made the ultimate sacrifice. He gave his broken body to shield us from the consequences of sin.

For the wages of sin is death. But the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Jesus proved the power of love in his sacrifice.

And the Lord gives us eternal life if we accept him as our Savior and our Lord. He sends you and me a text message today. You must remember I love you.

Thank you. Thank you. Keep in mind I love you.

If you survive, if you survive, please remember that I love you. Jesus loved me as I know. For the Bible tells me so.

Oh, little to one, to him belong. They are weak, but he is strong. Yes, Jesus loved me.

Yes, Jesus loved me. The invitation is given. If you really believe Jesus loves you and ready to meet you where you are, come join Jesus.

The Bible tells me so.

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