

What is Love

by Gayle Erwin

This sermon emphasizes the simplicity of loving God and loving others, highlighting the profound impact of showing love through acts of service and kindness. It explores the power of childlike faith and the joy that comes from selflessly blessing others. The message underscores the fulfillment of the law through love and the transformative nature of being other-centered, ultimately leading to a life free from sin and full of joy.

Scripture: Romans 13:8, John 13:34, Matthew 22:37, Exodus 34:6, Mark 9:35

Topics: "Love", "Acts of Service"

Description

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Transcript

Well, I wish you'd gone on with that introduction. That was doing pretty good. What a delight to be back with you again.

You know, this isn't the only church that burned down after I preached. But that's another story. What an honor that you give me to ask me to come and share with you.

And let me start with a story. A few years ago, a friend of mine who had, you know, his work had tired him out, decided to take a week and spend it in Hawaii cruising around the islands, and he decided he would use that as a time to study his Bible and also to reread the Jesus style. Well, on the first day, he was seated in one of the lounge areas and had his Bible open in the Jesus style there face up beside him, when an 85-year-old man walked up and pointed at the Jesus style and said, what's that? He said, well, it's a book about Jesus.

Oh, I don't believe in that blankety-blank stuff. He said, well, you must not know Jesus. Take the book and read it and see what it's about.

No, I'm too old to read a book. I don't want to read any books. He said, doctors have told me I only have a few days to live, so I've spent all my money to get my family on this ship so I could say goodbye to them,

and I plan to get so drunk I won't even know I'm on this ship.

My friend very wisely said, you know, that's right, I can't expect you to read this book, but I'll tell you what, let's have some fun. How? Let me read it to you. Okay, and he sat down, and my friend began to read the Jesus style to him, and by the third day, that man had given his heart to the Lord.

But that was just the beginning. On the way home, they lived on the East Coast, one of his sons sat next to him in the plane, and the son said, Dad, what's up? What are you talking about? What's going on? What do you mean? He said, Dad, you're not drunk. Oh, he said, and he reached into the pocket of the back seat and handed his son the book and said, read it for yourself.

Well by the time they reached home, his son had given his heart to the Lord. Now the last count I heard, 45 members of that family had come to know the Lord off of the reading of that one copy of the Jesus style. Now they had the name and address of the original guy that had it, and they sent them back to him as a family and said, would you please give this back to the author with our gratitude and tell him we all have our own copies now.

And so I have a pretty precious thing here. It's kind of falling apart, you know, but I look at it and I think, 45. Now does this sound like a sales job? Well, I tell you what, I have good news for you.

All of those books back there on that table are absolutely free, nothing will you have to pay for tonight, okay? I think, are they gone? No, I say, okay, they should be before it's over. I have more, don't worry. One of the things that God finally gets through to me, you know, I'm a guy that I believe the Bible, I can't remember not believing the Bible.

I grew up in a Christian, well I never grew up, but I've been in a Christian home, you know, and my dad was a preacher, and I just accepted and believed the Bible and Christian things and activities and came to love the fellowship, you know. And as a reader of the Bible, and I'm not going to claim that I'm a scholar, but there's a tendency for us to get complex, you know, there's sort of a certain pride in being able to say, well, in the Greek, you know. And immediately your congregation knows, oh, he's smart, and I'm dumb.

And God delivered me from doing that, but I didn't know any Greek anyway, except I can't order food off of a Greek menu, but same way with Spanish, I'm good with taco, burrito, you know. But sometimes the Lord gets through to me about certain verses, you read them over and over, and you want to explain them away, and at one point when the apostles were doing a good apostolic job of rebuking the mothers for bringing children to, I mean, they were being good employees, protecting the boss. And Jesus said, no, you let the children come to me, because that's what the kingdom is made of.

In fact, unless you, uh-oh, now this is where I want to explain everything away. Unless you become as a child, you'll not enter the kingdom. Oh, boy.

Well, some things after a while you just can't ignore. And I began to realize this thing has to be simple enough for a child to understand, or I have violated it. And my studies, whatever they be and how deep they become, must only be so as to teach me how to be simple, so that not one person could leave without understanding.

When I really came to know that, I had to relook at certain Scripture. So I'm going to take you right off the bat tonight to Matthew chapter 22, and I'm going to begin reading with verse 34. Now, you folks will have to forgive me, but then I'm going to be dropping the bomb and getting out of the fallout area tonight.

So I'm going to read this first verse with modern understanding, then I'll go back and read it right. But when the Republicans heard that he had silenced the Democrats, go study it for yourself. But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together.

Then one of them, a lawyer, boy, they've been around a long time, haven't they, asked him a question, testing him. They haven't changed either, have they? Saying, Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law? Now, this was an unintelligent question, because every practicing Jewish home would begin the day quoting this verse. It was a creed to them, the great Shema.

And so everybody knew this, and what a strange question to be asking Jesus and testing him. Well, Jesus didn't call it a stupid question. He just went ahead and said to him, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.

In other words, love God with everything you got. This is the first and great commandment. Now, do you ever wish he'd have stopped there? I know, yeah.

And the second is like it. He elevates this next one to the same level. It also is part of the law, by the way.

And that one is, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. Oh, boy. He doesn't know my neighbors.

Well, we do have two problems here. One is loving God. You know, how do you love God when you can't even see him? You're not sure when you're feeling him.

When something happens, you wonder, Did you do that, God? And especially if it's bad, you blame it on him. Any of you who buy insurance are familiar with acts of God. They're all bad.

And so there is the problem of, Man, how can you love a God that you can't see? You don't know, really? When he's around you, you're not sure that he caused or did this or whatever. Well, my wife is here. She's the cute chick back there with the white hair.

And we've been married for over 60 years now. But when I first met her, when I first met her, I wanted her to tell me everything about herself. I wanted to know everything.

Now, I haven't heard all yet because she's still telling me stuff. That's the first time I heard that. And she still won't tell me how many guys proposed to her, but I know they were legion.

At any rate, the same is true of God. If you really want to love him, you've got to know him. And if you know him, he's got to tell you about himself.

There is a place in Scripture that is so this. It just gives me goose bumps. And I've read great books about, you know, the nature of God and so forth.

And when they come to this passage, they'll give it one paragraph. But I'll just tell you this. You don't have to turn to it yet, but mark it.

Be ready later. In Exodus chapter 33, Moses had actually won an argument with God. He argued a lot, but he always lost.

But he figured God out. This was really sneaky. He was great, you know.

And he figured God out and won an argument. And God said, okay. And I'm paraphrasing it.

I'll do what you ask. Now, how would you like to hear God say that? What do you want? I'll do it. Because I like you.

Now, how would you like to hear God say that? I like you. Look, if you haven't heard it, please hear it tonight. He really does like you.

He doesn't put up with you. You know, it's not like, aye, aye, aye, you again. No, no, no, no.

He's crazy about you. And you know what? Even if you don't believe in him, he's still crazy about you. Now, how can you beat that? And then his third thing he said to Moses, he said, I know your name.

Now, I chuckled at that, and I think, here's God going, hey, wait, wait a minute. Don't tell me. Don't tell me.

Oh, yeah, Moses. No, no, no, no. Back then, names had meaning.

If you knew a person's name and the meaning of the name, you knew the person. And so for him to say, I know your name, is saying that Moses had revealed everything that he was to God, and God knew him. He knew the meaning of his name, and he says, I know your name.

Well, now the ball's in Moses' court. And Moses knows I've got God. I've got him here.

So he says, I want to see you. Show me your glory. Oh, well, I'll tell you what, Moses.

I'll have all my goodness best in front of you, and I will, I'll preach my name. That's what I'll do. I'll reveal my name.

I will tell you the meaning of my name. I will define it for you. So he knew Moses' name, and now Moses was going to get to really know God's name.

So in Exodus 34, God hides Moses in this cave. You know the story. And covers him with his hand.

And as he passes by, God speaks and says, the Lord, the Lord. Now, just a quick thought here. That word's not there.

That word Lord, you know what's underneath there? Yahweh, Y-H-W-H. You know why they put Lord there? Because Orthodox Jews won't pronounce that name, and so we compromised with them and translated it as the Lord. But in your mind, I want you to remember.

Every time you see the word Lord in the Old Testament, and it's capitalized like that all the way through, although modern printings have big first caps and small father caps. You peel it up and say, I know what's under here, Yahweh. But he said, the Lord, the Lord.

And then he defines his name, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in mercy and faithfulness, mercy to thousands, forgiving wickedness, forgiving rebellion, forgiving sin. You like that? That's too good, isn't it? I mean, if you were putting God together for yourself, you couldn't do better than that. Now, this is so important.

I want you to hear it from your mouth, so I'm going to repeat it again, and I want you to repeat it to me, and don't whisper, okay? Okay. Oh, thank you. Compassionate.

Compassionate. Gracious. Gracious.

Slow to anger. Slow to anger. Abounding in mercy and faithfulness.

Abounding in mercy and faithfulness. Mercy to thousands. Mercy to thousands.

Forgiving wickedness. Forgiving wickedness. Forgiving rebellion.

Forgiving rebellion. Forgiving sin. Forgiving sin.

Folks, that's your God. How could you not love Him? Man, it just doesn't get any better than this. Your spouse can't do this.

A lot of times we mistreat our spouse because we expect them to be this way, but they just not wound up that way. Oh, I know there's one more. Yet not letting the guilty go unpunished, visiting the sins of the fathers on the children of the third and fourth generation.

And for most people, that ruins it all right there. But I have good news for you. In Exodus chapter 20 and in Deuteronomy chapter 5 and 9, God fine tunes this and says this is only for those who hate Him.

No, I doubt very seriously that there's a single one of you here tonight who said, I hate God so much I think I'll go to church. So you see, you're safe. That doesn't apply to you.

Plus, when you become a follower of Jesus, no curses exist on you anymore. I mean, they are absolutely all gone. So only this that we've shouted out applies to you.

Isn't that great? That's enough to make you love God with all you got. Okay, we solved that. Now we got another problem.

Love your neighbor as yourself. I've had people say to me, well, how can I love my neighbor when I don't love myself? And I smoke them out real fast. I say, oh, but you know, you are so lovable.

They say, really? You think so? Listen, folks, if you're here, you love yourself. That's a given. I mean, we're playing games if we say, I don't love myself.

Because if you really don't love yourself, you have already killed yourself by now. But if you bothered to eat and comb your hair, if you have any, thank you that you're here, brother. Then you love yourself.

If you bothered to eat, you love yourself. It's just a given, folks. Love your neighbor as yourself.

Years ago, back when I was in college, 1890-something. A guy in Atlanta, Georgia wrote a book called Situation Ethics. And it was a popular book and a powerful one.

And what he did was he took each of the Ten Commandments and showed a situation in which he felt it would be wrong to obey that commandment. Now, I could argue with him on that a bit, but still, it was a pretty powerful statement. And so he said, then don't give me rules because they can always be misapplied or don't work.

Let me look at the situation, decide what the loving thing to do is, and do it, and it'll always be right. Boy, that little book troubled me. I'm thinking, oh boy, yeah, do the loving thing.

That's right. But I knew there was a flaw here somewhere. And I found it.

It had a name. Gale Irwin. You can't just turn me loose and say, Gale, do the loving thing, because there's just enough larceny left in my soul.

That somewhere in here I'm going to ask, hey, what's in this for me? So I realized I don't know how to love. Well, where do you find out? How? In 2015, the leading question asked on Google was, what is love? Can you believe that? Billions of times. What is love? And we struggle with that, you know, when you're young and you're wondering what love is.

Am I in love? I'm sick to my stomach. I must be in love. No, you're sick to your stomach.

So is there anyone who can define, actually give me a dedicated definition of what love is? Well, I'm going to turn to his son, okay? Well, now look, I'm giving the message, all right? Okay, now, before I have you turn to John chapter 13, messing with my mind here, I have one more verse to read to you because this is often not noticed. But it's an incredible statement of simplicity. Very important.

He says, love God with everything you got. Love your neighbor as yourself. And then listen to what he says in verse 40.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. Now, you're aware, I assume, that the word Bible never appears in this book. The word Bible means library.

We call it a holy library to differentiate it from other ones. But back then, they didn't call it the Bible either. Their word for this book was the law and the prophets.

And he says, on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. In other words, you get these two right, you got the Bible. That's simple, isn't it? But now we need to turn to John chapter 13 and take a look at what love is.

That's a famous chapter because in this chapter, Jesus institutes what we call the last supper or communion. It was the last supper only because it was the last supper before his crucifixion. But some important things happened there that reveal something to us.

Now, you need to know, and this is important, actually. Forgive me for a moment. But they didn't sit at tables like we do and sit on chairs.

These were low tables and they reclined on their left side and their feet stuck out like the spokes of a wheel and they would eat with their right hand. And any time you're in a society that eats with their hands, please pay attention. They eat with their right hand.

If you touch something with your left hand, they'll usually remove it. Just a thought. And I won't explain that.

Just a thought. So, one thing you need to know about this table is that they would recline. It was shaped like a squared off horseshoe, open.

They would recline at this table according to rank. Now, what do you think is going to go on if you're reclining according to rank? It's known as fight. Did you know the most common apostolic activity recorded in the Gospels is fighting over who was the greatest? They are.

Every time they reclined to eat, there was the argument, who sits where? Now, we can put four people at the table. We can put the one that was in rank number one because he told us. He did it in a rather interesting way.

He said he was the disciple whom Jesus loved. Who leaned against his breast. Now, at first you think, what kind of guys were they? But he's just telling you where he reclined.

So, on their left side. And Jesus was the next one as the host. They would always be number two.

To speak to Jesus, he had to lean back against his chest. It's like saying, I get straight A's. Look, see.

And we know Jesus was number two. We know who the third person was because one of the customs is you would have a guest of honor and the host would open the meal or the banquet by taking a piece of bread. They didn't have sliced bread.

He had to rip it off and dip it in the sop. Now, that's not very appetizing. But then hot dog is not appetizing to them either.

But he would dip it in the sop and place it in the mouth of the guest of honor and compliment him in some way. Who got the first bite? Judas. What? Jesus made him guest of honor? Yeah.

But here's another part about it. They believed back then and Paul continues this. I'll quote it to you.

But they believed back then that when you ate with someone you literally became part of them. And the host and the guest of honor would eat from the same bowl. Now, I'll just tell you now.

Paul continues this thought because he says we are members one of another because we are all partakers of the same loaf. That makes communion extremely important thing. You're saying I'm part of you.

I'm part of you and I'm part of you. Well, we can also tell who was in the last place. Because at one point when Jesus was teaching and he said now one of you will betray me.

He said I, I, I. And this guy signaled across the table to John and said ask him who it is. Peter. What's he doing there? He's wondering himself.

But it makes sense, you know. In terms of the argument Peter probably said well now who had the great revelation from the Father that he was the Messiah? Yeah, and to whom did he say get behind me Satan right after that? Well, who walked on water? Yeah, and who sank? So, I think he finally realized hey wait a minute, Jesus said and Jesus taught that again at that table. Remember, whoever is greatest let him be least, let him be last.

Oh, yeah. I'll sit over here. We all know why, don't we? So, here he is.

Now, that was just for the fun of it. But now, I need to tell you something else about that table that becomes very, very important. Here in the United States if I were to visit you what is your name? Linton.

Okay, if I were to visit your house today, Linton and knock on your door I would hope you would say Gail, shake my hand maybe hug my neck, say come in have a seat, let me take your coat let me get you a cup of coffee or some other godly drink. And those are the simplest things to do. Let's say this is 2,000 years

ago and I knock on your door.

Gail, good to see you. You would kiss me on both cheeks which they still do in some places. You would seat me and if I were especially welcome you would anoint me with oil.

Now, we do that sometimes when we're praying for the sick. James told us to. But we have a little bottle of olive oil.

That's okay. But they didn't do that back then. They'd take a bottle of olive oil and pour it on your head and slick it down.

But there's an advantage to that. If I were to leave your house today especially welcome, who would know? But back then, man, somebody loves that dude look at the greasy head. But there was one other thing that was part of their common greeting ritual.

It was as common as a handshake for us. The roads were but dust it didn't take long to be uncomfortable. And hospitality is the art of making people comfortable.

You'd wash my feet. That is unless you had servants and then it would be the lowest ranked servant who would wash feet. If you didn't have any servants you would wash my feet but it would be a public admission of your low estate.

Now, why would that be so? Well, because back then and even today among Muslims and Arabs they believe that the bottom of the foot is the dirtiest part of the body. We don't believe that but they do, they did and they still do. So if you're going to wash feet man, we've got to get somebody to wash the dirty feet.

So you get your lowest slave or if you have to do it yourself it's a public admission of your lowest state. Now we rejoin the table. Nobody's feet have been washed.

Why? Could it be because they all knew that if I wash feet I'll lose the argument over who's greatest? So you know what happens, don't you? The king of kings, the lord of lords, the creator of the universe, the son of God, the savior of our souls gets up from that table and does the lowest job. He washed their feet. It was pretty quiet around that table except for an outburst from Peter.

You might know he was still trying to prove that he didn't belong in that low seat. Jesus finishes washing their feet. It was quiet after Peter.

Nobody said anything. And Jesus says, Now you call me lord and master and I am and I have washed your feet. Then he says, You ought also to wash one another's feet.

Now this has been a troublesome problem especially since they invented shoes because we have cleaner feet. With some notable exceptions maybe. But we don't have reason to wash feet now.

But there are some times there are churches that want to have a foot washing service because Jesus said that you ought also to wash one another's feet. I think he was speaking in terms of something that I'll explain in a moment. Usually you either don't dare announce it or nobody shows up.

But if you do announce it there may be four or five people show up with the cleanest feet they've had in centuries. New socks powdered. There are a lot of ways we can make people feel cleaner.

Whenever you do you're washing their feet. Sometimes just a smile at someone will make them feel like they'll go away feeling cleaner. It's an amazing thing.

It's a true welcomer. My wife and I and she's especially good at this just watches at churches where we go and we go to a lot of them to see how they treat people in the foyer. Do they really welcome them? Do they answer their questions or what have you? And we can tell the health of the church by how the greeting things go on.

And people that aren't necessarily assigned to do it they just want to greet people. They just want people to feel welcome here. And I certainly felt welcome and they were too nice to me.

One of you even decided to pray for me. What was your name again? Rob. Thank you.

So there are a thousand ways we can make people feel cleaner. Complimenting them, you know welcoming them in some way making them feel comfortable and not threatened. Because sometimes people who are outsiders who come to church they're nervous.

They don't know what's going to happen to you. But you can give them a way and give them comfort by how you treat them. So he says a new commandment I give you.

Oh boy. We've got over 600 of them things now. We need a new one? Man, this is like like the tax laws or the traffic laws.

You know, I believe in speed limits. I just don't remember them. I once said at a men's retreat that I just I consider the speed limits kind of recommendations.

I didn't know there were five policemen at that retreat. All five of them wanted to have their picture taken with me. I figure it goes with them everywhere they are.

Is that him? There he is. But this, and hear me because I've got to prove this. When Jesus says a new commandment I give you he was really saying this is the new commandment that fulfills and in essence replaces all other commandments.

Oh man, Irwin, you better prove that. But here's what his new commandment was. That you love one another as I have loved you.

Now I see no record in the scripture where Jesus lined them up and said I love you Peter, I love you James, I love you John, Judas, I love you Andrew. But there was something about the way he treated them and he identifies it on this day. I want you to love one another as I have literally just loved you and that love now is defined as an act of servanthood toward another person that makes their life better or more comfortable.

Now isn't that simple? So simple. He even goes on to say this is the way they'll know you belong to me. Now wait a minute, let me show them my card.

Okay, no, cards aren't proof. But when you begin to become what I call, because I think Jesus was the one truly others centered person. He said I didn't come to be served but to serve and to give my life a ransom for many.

And with that he's defining love, see. And they knew that he loved them by the way he treated them. His servanthood for them was love.

Now, you know we confuse love we think of it as this, you know, warm, schmurmy feeling. You know, I just love you and I love ice cream about the same. And the thing about the way we treat love is it's an emotion and emotions are so fickle.

Now they're not bad, they can be but they're not just bad because they're emotions, they're just unstable. It's not something you can follow. That's one reason that I don't have a gun at my house because I'm not always a nice guy.

And if I did have a gun at my house my wife would not know where it is because emotions are fickle. But I've had people ask me, well can you love someone and not like them? Life comes and goes but love, that servanthood, that decision to be other-centered, to care for others, stays the same. Often they're warm together but sometimes it kind of cross-purposes.

And some people get a little discouraged loving people by serving because other people don't appreciate it quite as much as they should but that's beside the point. Your love may help them learn to appreciate. See, there are all kinds of things that happen when you really love someone.

It's very simple. It's a servant act toward other people. Is this simple yet? So Jesus said, love God with all your heart, love your neighbor as yourself.

By the way, the problem, I tell people that when our children are born we just try to teach them to say mama or daddy first but those are our words. Their first word is mine. We are by nature self-centered.

Now I have some bumper stickers back there, some that say others. That's the only one I've ever put on my car. And boy does it get to questions.

What does that mean, you know? I say, well, Jesus, you know, was the one truly other-centered person. And usually you can cut the tension with a knife. And I release it real quickly by saying, and I'm the poster boy for the opposite.

I think about myself most of the time. And then they say, yeah, me too. Then we have a good conversation, see.

And I can tell them about what God has done for me because he was other-centered. But we are by nature self-centered. The problem with self-centeredness is your self is never satisfied.

You ever notice that? Nobody ever treats me as good as I deserve to be treated. They may try, but they don't quite get there. It's just true.

It's just true. I've done a lot of marriage counseling. I hate it, really.

I don't do it anymore unless there's a Mercedes involved. But sometimes, sometimes pastors give up on somebody and they ask me, please, they just beg me, will you, okay, okay, okay. But I have some methods I don't recommend to you.

I get sick and tired of them sitting there and, well, he didn't, he promised, he just said, well, she said, but she didn't, for me, for me, for me, for me, for me. I want to barf right there. No one ever says, oh, I love him

so much, but he won't let me serve him.

You never hear that. But I can promise you, the more you think about yourself, the more miserable you're going to be. It's the nature of it because yourself is never satisfied, ever.

But the strangest thing happens when you begin to become other-centered. And as you ask the Lord to help you and turn your heart toward others, and Paul was very strong about that. He said to think of others better than yourself.

And when you start to do that, something incredible happens. Now, for one thing, Jesus said, this is the way the world will know you belong to me, see, because you are blessing other people. But then in John 15, he reiterates this commandment, and he says, now, I tell you this so your joy may be full.

Oh, you may not be. I have a friend whom I hope to get to see on this trip who is a retired professor from a famous university and a man of means. And back in 1985, Chuck Smith and I came out for a conference in Nashville.

He was at it. I didn't realize that. He wrote me about 15 years later and told me he had been there all his life when he heard about the nature of Jesus because he was a follower of Ayn Rand.

A-Y-N Rand. If you don't know that name, I recommend that you look it up and find out. Just don't study her.

It ain't worth it. But she believed that selfishness was the core thing of humanity and was to be protected and work toward selfishness. And she believed, she was an atheist, but she believed that the poor should be left alone to die.

She didn't believe in charity in any form. She did believe in abortion, but she believed, let the strong be free with no regulations to do whatever they want to do. We have politicians who follow her.

And he was a follower of hers until he heard me teach on the nature of Jesus, the other-centered one, the servant-hearted one. He said it turned his life around. He now dedicates his life to helping those others who won't help.

It's fascinating. One particular person I know of, I met her, and a book was written about this whole thing. At age six, the state discovered she was half-starved and she had no language.

The state didn't know what to do with her. It wasn't this state. But if it were a state, you wouldn't know what to do with her.

They don't have any system for her. He was there. And he has provided a life for that girl, a teacher, a caregiver full-time, and a skilled teacher just with one student to make life better for her and restore her body to health.

There's another that he's stepped into, but this is an older woman. I think she was around 20-something when he discovered her. She was cerebral palsied and had no family, nobody to take care of her.

The state didn't have them to take care of her. And he steps in, and she's an intelligent person that the state wouldn't, and he's provided full-time care for her, a house, and all the health care she needs, and a teacher. After helping her one day and headed home, when he stopped, I guess, somewhere, a hotel or

something, he sent me an email and told me what he had just done.

And here's how he commented. He said, I feel like a million dollars. I wrote him back and said, you're on to something.

Now, Jesus said that your joy may be full. Well, before it gets too late, but then that has never stopped me before. I want to take you, because I need to prove this, to the 13th chapter of Romans.

What a book that Paul wrote. When I get to heaven, though, I'm going to talk to Paul, and I'm going to tell him, you know, you were a brilliant man. Why couldn't you write a sentence that's only two lines long? Why did you have to write sentences that were a page and a half long? Anyway, I have other things to talk to him about.

And so, Paul says, in Romans 13, verse 8, beginning there, owe no one anything except to love one another. See, that's a constant obligation. I hear that often.

For he who loves another has fulfilled the law. Did you hear that? And he gets specific for the commandments. You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not murder. I'm getting a drink of water. That's why I lost my place.

You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness. You shall not covet.

And if there is any other commandment, or all, how many? Summed up in this saying, namely, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law, the commandments. So simple.

That's so simple. Love God with everything you've got and your neighbor, you've got to faith. A child can learn that.

Child, it's very easy for them to love God. It really is. We tend to put all other kinds of stuff on.

And then he says in verse 10, love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law. So you want to be happy? Bless your neighbor.

Do something good for him. You want to stay happy? Bless more people. Do more blessing.

I mean, it's not like there's a downer to this. Now, the only downer I can think of is we get out of place if people don't appreciate some things that we do for, you know. They didn't even say thank you.

That doesn't matter. See, we got to understand, that doesn't matter. I did the right thing.

I blessed them. That's the simplicity that I think God is finally calling me to in my old age. And saying, Gail, you've complicated it too long.

I want you to make it simple. Because it's got to be for children. And I have to be as a child to make it in the kingdom.

Don't raise your hands, but do any of you struggle with sin? Did you know how simple it is to live a sin-free life? When you're blessing people, you're not sinning. Amen. It's so simple.

Well, I want to close the parenthesis on this message by singing to you. Brace yourselves. Nobody ever invites me to come sing.

I just have to do it. That's all. I was born in Oklahoma on a farm.

Church with Sunday school was about 15 miles away on dirt roads. Often the bridge would be washed out and we couldn't make it. But I had a Sunday school teacher in my early years.

I only know her by Sister Craig. I didn't know adults' first names. If I knew them, I didn't dare use them.

I'd get a whipping. It was an act of respect not to use their first name as a child. So I only knew her as Sister Craig.

But every Sunday morning, every single Sunday morning in that class, she would pull out a ukulele. Now, I'd never seen one of those before. I thought she picked it before it was ripe.

And she would play that and sing a song. Now, I'm going to sing that song to you and some others, not the whole song. But I've changed two words in this song.

And if you wonder why, ask me afterward and I'll be glad to tell you. But I think you'll understand. When I sang it to a Mexican congregation in Southern California, they wept because they said at last we're included.

You know? But it goes this way. Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world. Brown and amber, black and white, they are precious in his sight.

Jesus loves the little children of the world. Let me tell you, when you sing that every Sunday morning, you begin to think, God loves me. I'm a little child.

Now, the thing is when that kind of love really grabs hold of you, you hear other songs that as an adult maybe you think, that's my song. Man, I love this. And you know this one.

Oh, love of God, how rich and pure, how measureless and strong. It shall forever more endure the saints and angels' song. Could we with ink the ocean fill and were the skies of parchment made, were every stone on earth a quill and every man a scribe by trade.

To write the love of God above would drain the ocean dry. Nor could the scroll contain the whole though stretched from sky to sky. I sang that at a gathering of Presbyterian men in California and the leader just got beside himself.

He said, my grandfather wrote that song. I said, your grandfather blessed me. But now another children's song and there's a story that goes with this but I will sing it first.

Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so. Little ones to him belong. They are weak but he is strong.

Yes, Jesus loves me. Yes, Jesus loves me. Yes, Jesus loves me.

The Bible tells me so. Now we have ten great, I mean really great grandchildren and when one of them a little fellow named Jack his mother would bring him out to us when he was just a babe and I would carry him in my arms and walk around our house letting him feel of things and explaining to him not knowing

whether he would understand it or not why it felt like that and so forth and giving things names but I would sing that song over and over to him and he would in his inadequate voice attempt to go with me singing Jesus loves me this I know now he had a brother three years younger than him named Daniel now don't make me explain Jack Daniel I don't we did not have the same relationship with Daniel I mean life had made it more difficult for them to come out as often and so I didn't have that opportunity to sing that song to Daniel but one time when they were out at our house and Daniel was still quite small we liked it they were getting ready to leave we liked to give them gifts and we had one for Jack but we couldn't think of one for Daniel and my wife bless her heart in a brilliant moment remembered that in one of our closets we had a stuffed lamb that when you squeezed it it sang very clearly Jesus loves me this I know the whole song you know and we gave it to him and he squeezed it and he squeezed it and he squeezed it he forgot he was at our house he just sat there and squeezed it and let it sing to him his mother said all the way home it was a two hour drive he squeezed that song and squeezed it you know and I'm thinking yes he gets home and he sits there and he squeezes it and squeezes it and squeezes it and I know you see Jack I'm so impressed with him he is one of the most other centered and careful and loving kids you will ever want to meet in your life I marvel I watch what he does and I marvel at the kid and now Daniel has this song in his heart but now there's another brother Wyatt Wyatt's still quite young he's still mostly in arms but when we were at a little family gathering of that wing of the family I sat down next to Wyatt and I began to sing that song to him and his mother leaned over and says Daniel sings that song to him all the time way to go Lord you might be in a bad seat you'll catch me no I was worried about this oh I thought you were worried about me think of old me and I'm thinking I've already found out that the power of this is great when a child knows this and hears it and Jesus is telling us something about how we're all be but there's one more song and you may or may not know this one but if perchance you're here well of course you're here but if perchance you're not really acquainted with God maybe you you're not against him you like what you've heard but you have not yet made your own personal choice to follow him and let him be Messiah and the Son of God who died and rose for you and if so make this your song make this your song there's no no reason I've ever discovered you know I I have a scientific degree I have a undergraduate degree in chemistry I was gonna be a brain surgeon be thankful but the simplicity of the gospel and life for Jesus it isn't complicated love God and love your neighbor so simple but here's that song and make it yours if you will into my heart into my heart come into my heart Lord Jesus come in today come in today come into my heart Lord Jesus good prayer and usually you say let us pray at the end maybe you don't I'm strange I just often say that's it and I walk off and churches that are big enough you know to have a worship team who after they finish they go off somewhere in a room that has a TV so they can watch to see when they need to come back out there you know and when I say okay that's it and I walk away and they don't know what to do they're Pavlovian they have to hear the words let us pray and I you know I don't often end that way you're probably wishing I would hurry anyway but then one finally they get there they come straggling out you know trying to figure out and I say ha ha gotcha they weren't paying attention to you but thank you for sharing this evening with me I've had fun I appreciate it

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