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Luke

Chapter 13 - An Unpredictable End

No Room for God's Love (vs. 31-35)

Luke 13:31-35: Just at that time some Pharisees approached, saying to Him, “Go away, leave here, for Herod wants to kill You.” And He said to them, “Go and tell that fox, ‘Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I reach My goal.’ Nevertheless I must journey on today and tomorrow and the next day; for it cannot be that a prophet would perish outside of Jerusalem. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not have it! Behold, your house is left to you desolate; and I say to you, you will not see Me until the time comes when you say, ‘BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!’”

I want to thank all of you for your cards and your words of comfort, your prayers, and probably most of all, your hugs... I like those... with my mother's passing. She was suffering quite extensively towards the end, and I think the Lord sometimes does that so that we kind of are grateful that they're in a place where they're not suffering. So, thank you so much for those thoughtful things.

We come to a passage that reminds us of God's love for us. God's the loving One. John says in 1 John, God is love. We're the ones that aren't. And we live in a hostile world that is not only hostile, but as Paul will put it in Titus 3, "hateful, hating one another." That's the world that we live in. Unfortunately, it is even more hateful when individuals perceive themselves as "good people," and they're condescending and critical about everybody else. And so, they begin to be oppressive and hateful in the things that they say and critical about everything that somebody else does, and it just creates a horrible place to live. The world was such a place during the time of Jesus

being on the earth, things haven't changed. And worst of all, Israel, and specifically Jerusalem, was of the worst. There was a lot of hatred and there was a lot of hostility. And if you were to tell the “righteous people,” or the ones that perceive themselves as righteous, that they were wrong and they were sinners, then they would just hate you more.

At the beginning of the Book of Luke, we have Jesus going into a familiar synagogue. He's in His own hometown in Nazareth. If you look with me in Luke 4, we'll be reminded of this as He begins His ministry in a hostile and hateful world.

It is interesting that Luke wants to record in Luke 2 that all of the world was going to be taxed by Caesar Augustus. He was doing that in an effort to control the people. What we read about and know in the Book of Acts as well as in historical books was that there was an individual by the name of Judas of Galilee and he was going to rebel against the taxes. The way that he did it was he got a large group of sympathizers with him, and they ultimately ended up calling themselves “zealots”; they would kill

anybody that would not agree with them. And so, it was a time of great rebelling and great hostility. The government was hostile towards the citizens. The citizens were hostile towards the government. And yet, you have in the middle of this a young couple that just go pay their taxes. And by so doing, God takes care of them. You realize as interwoven in this wonderful Gospel of Luke, you see the love of God being displayed. God is love, and we have this Jesus that comes on the scene who is God in the flesh. Scripture says, “Emmanuel, God with us.” And so, He begins to walk, and for the first time we actually see what love looks like.

Scripture tells us in John 1:18, that no man has seen God at any time. But the only begotten from the bosom of the Father, He has completely explained Him. And so, we begin to realize the love of God.

The way Hebrews puts it in Hebrews 1:3, that Jesus was being made in the exact representation of God's nature.

And when I read in the Book of Isaiah and I see the longing of God, in particular Isaiah 30:18, it says that God longs to be gracious to us. I mean, you literally see that

with Jesus. You see Grace walking around, “full of grace and truth,” as Scripture goes on to say.

Isaiah 65 gives us a picture of God in the Old Testament in verses 1 and 2, and it reads this way,

(Isaiah 65:1) “... I said, ‘Here am I, here am I,’ To a nation which did not call on My name.

(Isaiah 65:2) I have spread out My hands all day long to a rebellious people, Who walk in the way which is not good, following their own thoughts.”

It is the picture that we receive within this Gospel of Luke, and in Chapter 4, as I had you turn there, Jesus goes into the synagogue and as He begins to point out the obvious, and that is that we're all sinners, that we need a Savior, especially those that perceive themselves to be righteous. They need to see it more than anybody else.

And when He points that out, if you look in Luke 4:28, it says,

(Luke 4:28) “And all the people in the synagogue...”

This is a place of worship, right? It's a place of worship. This is where people are really, really nice?

“And all the people in the synagogue were filled with rage as they heard these things;

(Luke 4:29) and they got up and drove Him out of the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built, in order to throw Him down the cliff.”

Now, that's the beginning of His ministry. Literally, things go downhill from here on. So, things get worse.

What's interesting is that in the very next section in this particular chapter is that He goes into the synagogue and finds a man, if you look in verse 33, “possessed by the spirit of an unclean demon.” You say, “Why would an unclean demon feel at home in a synagogue of all places?” But he was feeling at home.

And if you look in verse 34, as the demon begins to cry out, he says, “What do we have to do with You?” It's another way of saying, “Get out of here, You don't belong here.” And all the way through, what we're going to see are the religious leaders saying, “Get out of here, You don't belong here.” And we know it's the spirit of the world that says, “We don't want you telling us that we're wrong.”

Psalm 32 says, “Blessed is the man that just confesses that he's wrong, and in him there's no deceit.” In other words, you don't lie about it. You just say, “You know what, I need a Savior. There's something wrong with me. I need help.” And he just admits the truth. How blessed is that man.

Well, as you go through the Gospel of Luke, you just continue to see reports about Him. Everybody hears about what He's doing.

And if you look in Luke 5:17, it says,

“One day He was teaching; and there were some Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem...”

And they began listening to Him. You would think, “What wonderful words.” He's saying the wonderful words of life, right? God in the flesh is saying, “Yes, you're a sinner, but I came to save you. We're going to rescue you.” And yet what they begin to get angry about is that He seems to be saying it to everybody. I mean, He's going to be nice to everybody.

And so, in Luke 5:29, Levi, who we understand is Matthew, is a tax collector and He's sitting there with them in his house.

“... and there was a great crowd of tax collectors and other people who were reclining at the table with them.

(Luke 5:30) The Pharisees and their scribes began grumbling at His disciples, saying, “Why do you eat and drink with the tax collectors and sinners?””

Well, that would be everybody. I mean, everybody's a sinner, right?

In Chapter 6, the scribes and the Pharisees are watching Him closely to see if He healed on the Sabbath in order that they might find reason to accuse Him.

And in verse 11,

(Luke 6:11) “But they themselves were filled with rage...”

I mean, things just begin to escalate. And all the way through this wonderful book you begin to see the mercy of God and the mercy of Christ as He walks and He's healing people and He's helping people. While all along, you have those that are perceiving themselves to be far

more righteous than anybody else, oppressing people and holding people back and telling Jesus, "Get out of here."

You come to Chapter 9, and it really is a change in the venue because from Chapter 9 onward, Jesus is on His last trek and He's heading from Galilee to Jerusalem for the last time. He has done this for 2 1/2 years or more. Now, in His final year, His final months, His final weeks, He makes the trek to go to Jerusalem. And it actually starts in Chapter 9, and it goes to the end of the book in which He goes to the cross for those that He loves.

In Luke 9, He is dealing with His disciples. He is sending them out. He wants them to proclaim the message of the good news. And as you come to verse 22, He lets them know what's going to happen.

His statement is,

(Luke 9:22) "... "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests..."

You can only find these people in Jerusalem.

"... and scribes, and be killed and be raised up on the third day..."

“This is what's going to happen.” I mean, it's about as clear and as succinct as you can get. The wonderful message.

In this chapter, He goes all the way to this high mountain. Different ones have tried to convey what they thought the mountain to be. I believe, personally, it's Mount Hermon, which is at the northernmost part of Israel. And the Mount of Transfiguration, and He's seen as God in the flesh. God declares, “This is My Son in whom I am well pleased.” Elijah and Moses are there as witnesses, and the disciples begin to realize just how marvelous He is. It is from that point on that He starts taking the trek and He starts heading to Jerusalem.

It says this,

(Luke 9:51) “When the days were approaching for His ascension, He was determined (resolutely set His face) to go to Jerusalem.”

He starts going through the region of Samaria. They try to hold Him back. The disciples get upset, and they say, “We can call down fire from heaven to destroy them.” And He

says, "You don't understand why I'm going to Jerusalem, do you? It's to save these people."

So, it says this,

(Luke 9:53) "But they did not receive Him, because He was traveling toward Jerusalem."

Now, perhaps if you just were to read that verse, you would almost sense that Jerusalem is a wonderful place, but Jerusalem is a hostile place. It is the bed of hostility, and He continues to go nonetheless; knowing that there would be greater receptivity in Galilee; there's greater receptivity in some of the other places that He's been. Even though in certain synagogues there was great hostility, Jerusalem is the worst.

But as verse 57 says, they were going along the road, and they were heading into this particular area. And by the time you go through Chapter 10, He's almost in that particular region.

As you go through 11, He conveys how you are to pray, and things just continue to get worse. And one of the reasons why they get worse is, of course, He confronts

those righteous individuals, and He says, “Look, you're just foolish. You shouldn't be thinking this way.” Of course, you tell a person who thinks they're really smart that they're foolish and they just get angry.

And so, if you look in Chapter 11, He says,

(Luke 11:40) “You foolish ones, did not He who made the outside make the inside also?”

“You look nice outside, but you need to clean inside.”

And then He starts doing the whole “woe” thing in verse 42.

(Luke 11:42) “But woe to you Pharisees! For you pay tithe of mint and rue and every kind of garden herb, and yet disregard justice and the love of God...”

“You major on the minors.”

It says in verse 43,

(Luke 11:43) “Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the chief seats in the synagogues and the respectful greetings in the market places.

(Luke 11:44) Woe to you! ...”

(Luke 11:45) “One of the lawyers said to Him in reply, “Teacher, when You say this, You insult us too.”

(Luke 11:46) But He said, “Woe to you lawyers as well! ...”

(Luke 11:47) “Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets, and it was your fathers who killed them.”

(Luke 11:52) “Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge; you yourselves did not enter, and you hindered those who were entering.”

(Luke 11:53) When He left there, the scribes and the Pharisees began to be very hostile and to question Him closely on many subjects,

(Luke 11:54) plotting against Him to catch Him in something He might say.”

And things continue to escalate as He goes. He continues to do good.

One of the statements that Paul makes when he's brought up in charges is, “You know, Jesus went about doing good.” That's such a simple statement, isn't it?

Paul in Acts 17 quotes a philosopher of the day in Athens. And he says, “One of your philosophers actually kind of knows what God is like because he writes, ‘In Him we live and breathe and have our existence,’ and this is the God that I want to talk about.”

I was thinking about that as I was thinking about a quote from a gentleman by the name of Oscar Wilde. He is a poet from the 1800s; kind of a specialist in what are called epigrams. It's like short, pithy statements. And one of the statements that he made was very thoughtful. And it just shows that even ungodly people can think and can know what is true. His statement was, “Some people cause happiness everywhere they go, others whenever they go.” And you begin to realize that Christ, no matter where He was, was bringing happiness and joy and healing, while others were just oppressing and bringing sorrow. He came to set people free. He states that in Chapter 4. He now is coming to the close, and He says, “I've got to finish this work. I've got to head to Jerusalem.”

In Chapter 13, it starts off with kind of the thought that some people are thinking that there are some people that

are in more need of a Savior than other people, and Jesus goes, "No, you're all in the need of a Savior." You need to come to that realization that you need Him. We come to this point in Chapter 13, and it is a passage that portrays the love of God in a most endearing way to me.

When we look at the passage, what we're dealing with is this picture, which is very graphic and very, I would say, heartwarming, because you have what would be a classic fox in the hen house picture. That particular phrase that we use is actually that which describes somebody that is fundamentally untrustworthy, somebody that is opportunistic and cunning, and they're slap dab in the middle of a place in which they're in charge. And you go, "Well, that's like a fox in the hen house." Jesus is going to make reference to Herod being a fox. He's going to make reference to Himself being the hen. That's a very interesting text in which He gives that picture. Don't think for one moment that we invented that clue. I think it was in Aesop Fables, which is basically 500 and 600 years before Christ, in which he was describing the wily fox in particular as the classic trickster using his wit and quick

thinking to get whatever he wants. And so, if you've looked at foxes at all, you begin to realize what they can do, and they're very bright and smart in getting what they want. One individual says that a fox is described as one possessing high adaptability and the ability to learn what the environment is like. It's like he sits back and he figures out what is needed and he goes in there.

It is in that setting that we pick up in Luke 13:31, and the way that it's written, as the narrative goes on by the pen of Luke and by the Spirit of God moving him,

(Luke 13:31) “Just at that time some Pharisees approached...”

Now, you can't read the Gospel of Luke and think at this particular juncture that the Pharisees are thinking, “Oh, we want to be nice to Jesus,” because they've already started the plotting. They're already trying to get rid of Him. So, whatever's coming out of their mouth is pretty cunning. And it's a very interesting picture because, in some way, they're in cahoots with Herod, which neither of them really likes each other. It's like the Pharisees and the Sadducees kind of pull together and they don't like

each other. But both of them have a similar enemy and it is Jesus.

“Just at that time some Pharisees approached, saying to Him, “Go away...”

Now, you just have to stop there. Up to this point, what is that the spirit of? That's the spirit of the demons, “Get out of here. We don't know You. What are You doing here? Get out of here.” It was said to Him earlier, in the synagogues at Gerasene. I mean, the demons come up to Jesus as He's getting ready to cast the legion out of the one man. And the demons go, “Put us in the pigs.” He put them in the pigs. And what happens to the pigs? They all go and drown. I know what your initial thought is, “Well, finally, the demons are gone.” No, the demons are still there. The pigs are dead. Now, you've got to ask, “Where did the demons go?” And I say, in the population of the Gerasenes. Because the very next statement of the population of the Gerasenes is, “You need to get out of here.”

So, we see the hostility of the world, and we see the heart of the world. They are doing it in such a cunning way that

you would perceive that they're trying to protect Him.

“We're trying to protect You. Herod's upset at You. He's going to kill You. You need to get out of here.” But they're not concerned about Him.

(Luke 13:31) “... saying to Him, “Go away, leave here, for Herod wants to kill You.””

Herod's an interesting character. Clearly, up to this point, he's already taken off the head of John the Baptist. He did that, of course, because he had married when he shouldn't have, taken another wife of his brother and divorced his present wife. Now, you wouldn't think that in and of itself would be bad in a sinful world. However, the problem is the wife that he had married to begin with was actually a daughter of a king and was a neighboring king of Arabia. And just to let you guys know ahead of time, you don't want to tick them off. Because if you do, they're coming after you. So, he began a war with Herod at this particular time. Herod knew that the killing of John the Baptist who had accused him of this infidelity, because of course Herod declared himself a Jew, so he shouldn't be doing it. But he had accused him of doing it, so he had to

get rid of him. And of course, he was being encouraged to do so. His thought was, "I can't kill him in Galilee," which is part of the region which he reigned. But he not only reigned in Galilee, but he also reigned in Perea, which kind of went down south and touched into the Dead Sea on the eastern side of Jordan. So, he's got a castle there. And according to Josephus, he takes John the Baptist down there, and has his head chopped off there so he can't upset the whole crowd. They find out about it later, and many of the writers write that the war that was ensuing was God's punishment to Herod for chopping off John's head. Nevertheless, he's always thinking. Herod's always thinking.

The way that Jesus responds in verse 32 is,

(Luke 13:32) "And He said to them, "Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I reach My goal.'"

The passage is telling us, of course, obviously, that Jesus is not afraid; that He has a mission. And it is to be pointed out that the mission, if you look, is to cast out demons, first of all, deceitful spirits, false doctrine, as Scripture will

make reference to, those who influence others to serve other things, those that are unclean spirits that cause harm and malevolent things and hurtful things to people. They're infatuated with death and they're infatuated with pain and they're infatuated with sorrow. They're always accusing and tearing down. Of course, we're talking about the spirits He's casting out. He's bringing in joy and happiness everywhere He goes and taking out the evil that surrounds that and performs cures for those that are suffering and those that are in pain.

The phrase that He uses is “today and tomorrow,” and He's not giving a specific time in which we might perceive that He's just talking about two days, but it's a phrase that just fundamentally is describing a brief time. “These next few days, this is what's going to happen.”

He then declares, “But there's going to be a day called the third day that's going to happen, and that's when everything's going to be done. It's going to be finished. This day that will be declared as the third day.” It is to be noted that Jesus is giving him, in some ways, His whole agenda. In other words, some are saying, “You need to be

afraid,” and He goes, “Well, tell him this- This my agenda. I'm going to be here and here and here, and I just want to let you know ahead of time, I'm heading to Jerusalem.”

So, He's actually giving him the path. He's giving him some sort of timeline, and He's letting him know where He's heading. “So, if you want to catch Me, this is where I am.”

But the point of the passage is that we have Herod the fox and we have the Pharisees that are in cahoots and they're working together. Now, the question is, what are they doing? And it's very simple if you have a wiley mind. If you don't, then let me introduce you. They're chasing Him down to Jerusalem. He's come down from Galilee, which is in the place where Herod's in control; he's the Tetrarch, and that is 1/4 of the land he's in charge of. And so, he was in charge of Galilee. He's now in charge of Perea on the eastern side of the Jordan. And as you go down, you're getting close to Jericho, and he's in that particular region. That's where Jesus is at this particular juncture. And The Pharisees are saying, “You need to get out of here. You need to go.” Where is He going to go? If He goes out of Perea, where is He going? Jerusalem, Judea.

He's going to Jerusalem. This is exactly where they want Him. You have the fox pushing Him where he wants Him, because quite frankly, Herod doesn't need any more problems right now. He's got Arab kings after him. And within short order, the very Caesar that has been helping him is going to die, and then he's going to have to deal with Caligula, and now he's got real problems. That's the short story, but he's not going to live much longer. He's not in a good place. So, he's got to work out a way to get rid of this guy without getting rid of this guy. And what is he going to do? He's going to chase Him to Jerusalem. And the Pharisees are going to help, because that's where they are. That's where the chief priests and the elders want Him.

So, Jesus knows this, and if you look in verse 33, it reads this way,

(Luke 13:33) “Nevertheless I must journey on today and tomorrow and the next day; for it cannot be that a prophet would perish outside of Jerusalem.”

There's a little bit of facetiousness in His statement. And what He's fundamentally saying is that “Jerusalem is the

place of hate. And it's the place that hates the prophets. And that's the place where they die. So, that's where I'm going.”

In fact, if you look all the way back to 2 Chronicles with me, in Chapter 36; you come to the end of Israel and Judah's kingdom in particular in which God is going to take them into captivity because they refused to listen to His prophets. He sent prophets over and over again, in particular to Jerusalem.

It says,

(2 Chronicles 36:11) “Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem.

(2 Chronicles 36:12) He did evil in the sight of the LORD his God; he did not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet who spoke for the LORD.”

And Jeremiah was warning him, “You don't want to go into captivity. Repent.” He wouldn't do that.

(2 Chronicles 36:13) “He also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar who had made him swear allegiance by

God. But he stiffened his neck and hardened his heart against turning to the LORD God of Israel.

(2 Chronicles 36:14) Furthermore, all the officials of the priests and the people were very unfaithful following all the abominations of the nations; and they defiled the house of the LORD...”

If we're in the house of the LORD, where are we? We're in Jerusalem, right?

“... which He had sanctified in Jerusalem.

(2 Chronicles 36:15) The LORD, the God of their fathers, sent word to them again and again by His messengers, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place;

(2 Chronicles 36:16) but they continually mocked the messengers of God, despised His words and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against His people...”

Jerusalem, the place that hates the prophets. They say Isaiah was sawn in two. Jeremiah was hated in the vicinity, actually hung on doors in Jerusalem. Jesus makes

mention of this in Matthew 23:35 from Abel to Zechariah, they killed the prophets. It will ultimately consummate in Revelation 11; God will send two prophets in the future, and those two prophets will be, where do you think? In Jerusalem. And where will they get killed? In Jerusalem. They'll proclaim the truth for 3 1/2 years. After 3 1/2 years, they'll be slain and they'll lie on the streets, and nobody will want to bury them, and everybody will give gifts. In Jerusalem, everybody will give gifts because the prophets are dead. And they'll celebrate it. It's a hostile place. It's a hateful place. It's supposed to be the city of peace. Jesus is going there. "I've got to go," He says. "This is where we go to die."

Then He cries out this in verse 34,

(Luke 13:34) "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not have it!"

Some of you are more experts on this than I am; but they say that the mother hen, even though a fox or a predator

may show up, will continue to try to guard her young. No match for the fox; she will die gathering her young together. It is the cry of God, it is the love of God, it is the heart of God that fearlessly stands with His people and declares this wonderful message, "I have loved you with an everlasting love, but you only hated Me back." It is amazing that as He goes on the cross, Scripture declares that He cried out, "It is finished. Father, forgive them."

What is it He's finishing?

I mean, the passage tells us at the very beginning, in verse 32,

(Luke 13:32) "And He said to them, "Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I reach My goal.'"

One text will describe that and actually it'll be used probably more under the definition "accomplish". "I will accomplish what I have come to do. I'll get it done."

What is it that He's doing? In the midst of all this hatred, in the midst of all this cunning, of course, man perceives that he is far wittier than God is, and he has things under

control, but it's very clear that Jesus is going exactly where He wants to go and doing exactly what He wants to do. And He has set the stage, not them. That's declared in the Book of Acts as well. It is this accomplishing the goal that really is the focus of the text. What is the goal?

We quote a very famous verse, John 3:16. I don't know if we think about all the ramifications of it, but it tells us that God so loved us that He sent His Son, that if you'll just simply believe in Him, in spite of the fact that the way that you treated Him and the fact that you denied the culpability and the guilt of your sins, you denied even that you were a sinner, He still came and died for you. While we were yet sinners, Scripture says, He still died for you. We say that God is not loving. We have it backwards. We're the hostile ones. We're the hateful ones.

John calls upon us in 1 John to have the same kind of love that God has. Take a moment and turn with me to 1 John 2. And he uses an interesting word in it, and that is “perfected”. It is the same word as “accomplished”. It is the same word that makes reference to fulfilling a goal. So, as Jesus says basically, “On the third day, I'll

accomplish my goal.” And as John so wonderfully puts it, He declares, “It is finished.” He accomplished it.

1 John writes this,

(1 John 2:3) “By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments.

(1 John 2:4) The one who says, “I have come to know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him;

(1 John 2:5) but whoever keeps...”

The word there, “keeps,” is actually the word “accomplishes”. That's the word “finishes”. The picture is of one reaching a goal. We'll put it another way- The one who arrives.

God has called us to follow Him. He has called us to be like Him. How do we know that we've arrived? That's the passage.

“But whoever keeps (arrives or accomplishes) His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected (accomplished). By this we know that we are in Him: ...”

How do you know that Jesus was Christ? He accomplished.

Jesus will say in John 17, "You know everything, Father, that You told Me to do? I did it. I accomplished it." Finished. Done.

God will oftentimes tell us to do certain things, and we very much are smorgasbord Christians. We like to pick and choose the things that we want to do. But God says, "You want to know how you'll know that you're Mine? You'll do it. Finished. Complete." Now, the question in the passage is, what is the finish and the complete thing? What am I finishing? And the answer is very obvious as you go through this particular epistle. You finish loving the way He loved. Which, let me say this, is the battle that we wrestle with in this world of hate; that the goal is love. I mean, doesn't Paul write that to Timothy?

(1 Timothy 1:5) "But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith."

I mean, isn't that the goal? This is going to come as a surprise to you, but we don't love those who are God's

children because they're lovable. That's not why we love them. I mean, how many people have you come across, "I just don't like that guy." I don't care if you like him. Is he a believer? Is he God's child? You need to love him. We love because He first loved us. How do you know that you're a Christian? The love of God abides in you. What does that look like? While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. That's what it looks like. We don't forgive people because they are worthy of forgiveness. We forgive people because He forgave us. And that's why we forgive.

Paul says, "I press on towards the mark of the high calling." We have a goal. What does the goal reveal? The goal reveals whether or not we're His or not. What is the picture? Do you have the love of Christ in you; that doesn't pick and choose what you want to do and how you want to obey, but whatever He says, you just do. That's the Spirit of God. And that's the Spirit that we see in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. In the midst of all the hate, He was victorious over it as He went to the cross and died for you and me and demonstrated love. He would have gathered us, and He is now even, saying,

“Here I am. Here I am.” “As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who would believe on His name.” And now, we have the Spirit of God within us. The spirit of His love. How do I know? You'll finish. You'll love completely. You'll stop loving in the way that you are naturally loving and you'll love in a way that's supernatural and that is you begin loving people because God told you so. Because God wants you to die for them. Jesus will write in the Gospel of John, in John 10, He says, “The Father loves Me because I lay down My life for the sheep.” A very simple phrase, isn't it? “This is why He loves Me so much.” What a wonderful Savior we have.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we come before You today, and we ask that You work within our hearts. Forgive us of the many times that we have tried to manipulate for our own good and have, quite frankly, been hateful, condemning, and critical to other people. We have gone the way of the world, and

yet, in the midst of this, You have called us out. There is One that brought happiness everywhere He went. Most of us will only bring happiness when we go.

Your heads bowed and your eyes closed. God is calling you to display His love. He is calling you to walk in His path. He is calling you to receive His love. It is only by the power of the Spirit of Christ in us that you and I can even remotely think this way.