

Baptism Service

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[0 : 0 0] Well, great to see you folks. How good has today been? I tell you what, I was so glad I was not up after those testimonies because I was wailing like a baby, as they say in Scotland, trying to think of anything to stop me crying.

Think of the Ryder Cup, think of the football, but no. I was gone. It's great, isn't it great just to hear that this God who we worship is the God who is in the business of transforming lives. It's awesome. So what I want to do, folks, just for 10 minutes as we kind of wrap up this morning is to get us to think about a few verses that I love in the Bible that I was reading this week. To get us thinking, here's what I want you to do.

I was on Google this week, and I searched for the most frequently used lyric, most frequently used words in songwriting. So I want you to turn to your neighbor for 10 seconds, okay?

What do you think the most frequently used word in songwriting is? And it's not ah or be or it. You know what I mean. Okay, 10 seconds.

[0 : 5 9] Give me some answers. Love. I hear it when people get it straight off the bat. Tell you what, here we go. Love. I don't know where I'm supposed to point this in, guys.

Here we go. Great. Right, think about it. The Beatles, what did they sing? All you need is love.

Okay. The Black Eyed Peas, what did they sing? Where is the love?

What about Anna from Frozen? What did she sing? Don't pretend you've not seen it. What did she sing? Yeah? Love is an open door. No?

Love is an open door. What about Meat Loaf? What did he sing? He would do anything for love, but he wouldn't do that. One Direction, what did they sing?

Baby, I loved you first. No? No, nothing. Wow. And what about Tina Turner? This is for a certain generation. What is she saying? What's love got to do with it?

[1 : 5 8] So our world, our society has got an awful lot to say about love. I'm sure everyone's surprised you to hear me say, as the man who's got the privilege of being a Christian minister, serving the Lord Jesus in my life, that the Bible has an awful lot to say about love.

As a guy who's been following Jesus for close on 16 years, I love what the Bible has to say about love. I'm just going to read to you a few verses from the Bible written by a man called John.

Sabine has already referenced John today. John was one of Jesus' closest disciples. He walked and he talked with Jesus during the last three years of Jesus' life. And the thing about John is the same thing about Sabine and Zoe, what they were saying just there, that Jesus has transformed his life.

And in these verses that I'm about to show you, John wants us to know what the ultimate expression of love is. And you'll find it, he says, not by looking in.

You'll find it not by looking out. You'll find it by looking up. And so here's what he writes to a group of first century Christians. John writes, dear friends, let us love one another for love comes from God.

[3 : 1 1] Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God because God is love.

You see, the Bible is the word of a wonderfully loving God. And this God has existed for all eternity as a loving communion of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

This God, we read in the opening pages of the Bible, he created the universe. He spoke and things just happened. He created the stars.

He created the seas. He gave breath to every single living being. And God looked at what he had made and he declared over it that it was good. And God, the pinnacle of his creation, he created human beings.

He created them male and female. Every single human being stamped with his image, known, loved, and valued by this loving God who made us.

[4 : 19] And now God looks at what he's made, having made mankind, and he declares that it is very good. You see, the Bible's opening scene is a joyously happy one.

Here is this loving creator and here he is living in delightful harmony with his creation. But the thing about that happiness is that it soon gives way to heartache.

Adam and Eve, the very first human beings that God made, they turn away from him. They believe the serpent's lie, that God isn't all that he's cracked up to be. And they rebel against him by disobeying his words.

And the Bible would call that rebellion sin. And the thing about sin is that it is not just something that happened back then. And the thing about sin is it's not just something that happens out there.

I wonder if you know this to be true in your life like I know it to be true in mine, that sin is something that affects each of us right to the core. And our sin has separated us from the holy God who made us.

[5 : 36] Every single one of us, by nature, a rebel against this God, this loving God who made us, deserving of his punishment, and as Sabina said in her own words there, running a hell-bound race.

That is bad news. It's terrible news. But the thing about tasting the sourness of the bad news is that it's so important because without it, we won't be able to taste the sweetness of the good news.

And it's great news. This is what the Testaments have been saying so far, isn't it? It is wonderful news about what God has done for us. And embedded in these opening chapters of the Bible is a wonderful promise from this loving God that despite our sin, despite our inability to save ourselves, he will move to act to rescue.

And he will move to put right everything that has gone wrong. Not because of who we are, but because of who he is. John goes on.

So this is how God showed his love among us. In other words, here's the proof. Here it is. He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.

[6 : 59] This is love. Not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

You see, here is the scandal that even though we are all fearfully and wonderfully made in this image of this God, we did not love him. We wanted nothing to do with him.

We were not looking for him. In fact, the Bible would tell us that the opposite is in fact true, that we preferred the darkness of our sin rather than his light. But God, because of who he is, he pursued us.

God, because of who he is, he came down and found us. God, because of who he is, loved us. He loved us. And he showed us it. He demonstrated the length of that love by sending his Son, Jesus, into this world and into our mess to deal with my mess and to deal with your mess.

Isn't that awesome? That Jesus, heaven's hero, he left heaven's glory and he stepped down to rescue us. That Jesus, heaven's hero, would live a totally loving life, a totally obedient life, a totally sinless life, the one that you and I cannot live.

[8 : 16] And his life that started in the crib would end on the cross, the place where the perfect Son of God goes to take the punishment that our sin deserves upon himself.

And this Jesus didn't stay dead. Three days later, on the third day rather, he rose again to prove that the price to buy our freedom is really being paid.

And he has ascended to the place. He now sits at the right hand of God, where he reigns today, as the Savior and as the champion of the world.

Here is the good news, that Jesus came to make a way for you and I to be forgiven. That Jesus came to make a way for you and I to be made right with this God who made us.

That Jesus came so that you and I could be restored to the thing that we were made for in the very first place, to worship this God and to enjoy him forever.

[9 : 26] That is good news, friends. And gloriously, this Jesus will return to make all things new. Do you not cry for that as you look at the brokenness of the world? That he will come to make all things new.

He will come to put all things, all wrongs to right, as he justly judges the world. What is it we just sung? Amazing grace, right?

Grace just means getting something that we do not deserve. Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. Like me.

I once was lost, but now I'm found. I was blind, but now I see. And so the question for all of us to think about as we finish up today, having seen the problem of our sin, and having seen the outrageous way in which this God has shown his love for us and sending Jesus for us is will you accept Jesus Christ as your saviour and your king?

Because let me tell you, as one who's been following him for over, as I say, 16 years of his life, there's no one like Jesus. There's just no one like him. There's just absolutely no one like him.

[10:42] And do you know what? He is the rescuer that we all so desperately need. And what difference does that make? John goes on, Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

No one has ever seen God. But if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is made complete in us. So in other words, if we truly grasp how much God has loved us, if it truly changes us, then we will be different.

And we will love one another. Because we've understood how much he has loved us. And that's the thing about Christians, isn't it? That we're not claiming to be good people. Christians don't claim to be perfect people.

Christians don't claim to be moral people. Christians claim to be transformed people. And that's the reason why we love one another. Because this God first loved us.

Because the love of this God, the gospel, the good news about heaven's king, the good news about this king of love, who he is, what he's done, what he's doing, is transforming us day after day after day after day.

[11:53] Friends, as a society, we've got an awful lot to say about love. Boyzone, what did they sing? How deep is your love? Elton, as we watched Nala and Simba and the Lion King, what did he sing?

Can you feel the love tonight? Wet, wet, wet, one from the 90s, what did they sing? Love is all around us. It's everywhere we go.

And this one really is old, okay? Foreigner, who remembers Foreigner? What did they sing? I want to know what love is. I want to know what love is. I want you to show me.

Well, in these verses, John says, let me show you what the ultimate expression of love is. And you'll find it not by looking in.

You'll find it not by looking out. You will find it by looking up to the God who is love. This is love. Love.

[12:55] Not that we loved God, but that he loved us. Friends, get your head around that. He loved us and sent his son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

Friends, just as we finish up and before we sing our final song and before the craziness of kids coming here, okay, why don't we just pause for a second and let's be quiet. And in light of everything that's gone on this morning, everything we've heard, everything we've sung, everything we've read and seen, why don't we just pause and each of us, let us be still before the God who made us.

and then I'll pray. Dear God, we thank you so much for today and being able to celebrate the truth that you are the God who is alive and active and that you are the God who is in the business of transforming lives.

and so it's our prayer that you would help each of us today, wherever we are, whoever we are and whatever's going on in our lives, to comprehend, to grasp something more of how much you have loved us.

So Father, thank you for today. Thank you that you hear our prayers because we make them in the name of heaven's King, Jesus Christ. Amen.