Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Does God Love the World?, Part 1
Scripture: Selected Scriptures
Code: 90-283

Well, as was told to you this morning and indicated in the Grace Today, I want to talk about the love of God. We had been doing a study of doctrines and doctrines that are controversial, doctrines that are often misunderstood. And we started some months ago addressing the issue of eternal security and the fact that we are saved forever and that once saved our salvation is guaranteed forever because in the end it is wrapped up in the decree of God and that got us into the doctrine of election, and then the doctrine of election, sovereign predestination, got us into the doctrine of the extent of the atonement, for whom did Christ actually die, and that raises the question about God loving the world. And that question certainly was raised by a number of you in the midst of our previous study some weeks ago.

If we are saved forever because God predetermined to do that before the foundation of the world, if Christ died to provide a salvation only for those who believe and those who believe are the ones whom God chooses to believe and empowers to believe, then the question comes...does God really love the world? The Bible says God so loved the world. How are we to understand that? And we actually looked at that passage and a number of other passages, but it is fair to ask the question about the love of God.

It was a number of years ago when the publisher for whom I do most of my books came and said, "You know, John, you have written some controversial books. You have stirred up issues with people. We would like to write a book that's not controversial. We would like you to write a book that everybody will like, everybody will enjoy and we think that you ought to write a book on something very simple and very universal like the love of God. Everybody is happy about that idea. And you won't need to be controversial, everybody knows God loves us and loves us unconditionally and that ought to be a book with wide appeal."

And that idea is certainly loose out there in the world. I remember Father Manning on Larry King one night saying, "My Jesus loves everybody." And that is a pretty typical perspective of people within the framework of Christianity. And it makes us realize that while some people may approach this issue of the love of God simplistically, it is far from a simple subject. And I know when I finish the book which was originally called "The God who Loves," and I think now the title has been changed to The Love of God, or the reverse of that. The publisher was scratching his head saying, "Well this isn't really what we expected." But if you expect a biblical look at the love of God, you have to deal with what you get.

So setting aside popular ideas, setting aside simplistic ideas, setting aside an over-simplification of the issue at hand, I want to talk about the love of God in its broadest sense and its highest sense, its deepest sense and its widest sense. It is a very profound and far-reaching subject and the best way to sort of break it down is to take it in three categories. One, God's love for Himself; two, God's love for the lost, the world; three, God's love for His own. And immediately from the vastness of this great subject, we've been able to parcel it out in three slices that make it much more approachable.

Let's begin by talking about God's love for Himself, because this, of course, is where it all begins. This is intra-Trinitarian love, intra meaning inside of, intra-Trinitarian love, this is the starting point to understand the love of God. The Bible says God is love and that is clear as the revelation of the epistle of John indicates. God is love and because it is His nature to love, that love is expressed in the purest essence of His nature which is the Trinity. That is to say the Father loves the Son perfectly, the Father loves the Spirit perfectly, the Son loves the Father and the Spirit perfectly, the Spirit loves the Father and the Son perfectly and they live in this perfection of intra-Trinitarian love.

To help us understand that from the text of Scripture, open your Bible to the fourteenth chapter of the gospel of John. John chapter 14, and I will do my best to give you the Scriptures that help us get as much of an understanding of this as we can, John chapter 14 verse 31, Jesus simply says there, "But that the world may know that I love the Father and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go from here." And, of course, what He is doing is He's heading for the cross. And He's doing this in order that He might demonstrate that He loves the Father. And the demonstration will come in His obedience even to the death on the cross. We tend to think of the cross only as a point at which Jesus demonstrates His love for us, but it is first and foremost appointed which He demonstrates His love for the Father. You will look down into chapter 15 and verse 9 and you read, "Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you. Abide in My love." What precedes and what motivates His love for us is the Father's love for Him and His love for the Father. Verse 10, "If you keep My commandments you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love." There is love within the Trinity and it is a love that causes the members of the Trinity to do that which pleases each other. If you go to the seventeenth chapter of John, you find very similar statements in verse 23. Jesus speaking here to the Father says directly to Him, "I in them and Thou in Me that they may be perfected in unity, that the world may know that Thou didst send Me and didst love them even as Thou didst love Me." Verse 26,. "I have made Thy name known to them and will make it known that the love wherewith Thou didst love Me may be in them and I in them." Here we find a number of occasions, a number of statements in which Jesus celebrates the love that He has for the Father and the love the Father has for Him. God perfectly loves Himself.

That seems bizarre to us, it actually seems sinful to us. But that's because we are sinful to start with and imperfect and unworthy of love. In the absolute perfection of God in which He exists utterly apart

from us and not subject to any limitations imposed upon sinners, God has every right to engage in perfect love of Himself within the fulness of the Trinity.

To further expand the focus of Scripture on the love between the Father and the Son, go back to the fifth chapter of John...the fifth chapter of John. And one could certainly spend a lot of time in this chapter looking at this very subject. But we'll just briefly consider it. In verse 19, Jesus is responding to the hostility that has been generated by the Jews toward Him because He was breaking the Sabbath, verse 18, and worse, He was calling God His own Father, thus making Himself equal with God. And, of course, He was doing that because He is equal to God, He is in fact God. But wanting to follow up on this equality with God, Jesus then says in verse 19, "Truly, truly I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself unless it is something He sees the Father doing, for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner."

That is a monumental statement. To simply sum it up it says this, "The Father keeps nothing from the Son." It is a perfect expression of love to give everything to the object of your love. The Father holds nothing back. The Son does everything the Father does because the Father desires Him to do it. You might say this, all the Father's knowledge, all the Father's secrets, all the Father's privileges, all the Father's works He gives to the Son. This is that intra-Trinitarian love that holds back nothing. And so says Jesus in verse 20, "Why is it that the Father holds nothing back but gives everything to the Son," verse 20, "for the Father loves the Son and chose Him all things that He Himself is doing and greater works than these will He show Him that you may marvel." Love is magnanimous, my father always used to say, you can give without loving, you can never love without giving. And if your love is perfect, you give in perfection. And what that means is you hold nothing back. There is nothing that the Father has by way of honor and glory and privilege that He does not give to the Son. The Father raises the dead, verse 21, so He gives the Son the privilege to raise the dead. The Father receives honor so He gives the Son honor and he who does not honor the Son doesn't honor the Father. The Father holds nothing back. The Father has authority, verses 26 and 27, so He gives authority to the Son. And the Son returns to the Father perfect obedience. This is love at its highest, this is love at its loftiest. This is love in its fullness and its glory. Love gives everything it has and love returns perfect gratitude and perfect obedience. To understand God's love at all, you have to start here with the perfect love within the Trinity, most particularly does the Scripture celebrate the love between the Father and the Son.

Now moving one chapter further into the sixth chapter of John, and verse 36, we come to familiar passage which we have dealt with before, but I want to deal with it in this context. In verse 36, we'll start at verse 37 actually, "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me." Now what I said from chapter 5 is the Father holds nothing back. He keeps nothing from the Son, no secret, no nothing, no privilege, no honor, no authority, no power, no rights, nothing. In fact, in the future the Son sits on the Father's throne and reigns with Him. He is heir of everything the Father has. This is perfect love. And

within the framework of giving everything to the Son is included redeemed people. All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, says Jesus. The Father has willed in giving out of love to the Son to give to the Son a redeemed humanity. That's the point here. This is also what we read in the seventeenth chapter of John, that again Jesus understands that the Father has given Him those who will believe, verse 11. He says, "I am no more in the world yet they themselves are in the world and I come to Thee, holy Father, keep them in My name, the name which Thou hast given Me that they may be one even as we are. While I was with them I was keeping them in Thy name, which Thou hast given Me." Verse 24, "My Father...He says...I desire that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am." I want to see them come to glory that You've given Me.

So the whole plan of redemption, the whole story of salvation embracing all of the people who will ever be saved, is really because the Father loves the Son and wants to give the Son a love gift. That love gift is a redeemed humanity. A humanity who will adore Him, honor Him, serve Him and love Him forever.

So to understand the love of God at all, we have to begin in the primary intra-Trinitarian love that leads to all other loves. Because God the Father perfectly loves the Son, He holds back nothing from the Son, including a bride for the Son, a redeemed humanity who literally will make up as it were the bride of Christ. The Son is willing to pay the immense price for that bride, the sacrifice of Himself on the cross, because it is the Father's will to give Him the bride and He in loving the Father perfectly will obey the Father in paying the price for that bride. Even though it meant bearing sin, even though it meant being separated from the Father, He will do it not so much for our sakes as for the sake of the Father. Because He wants to obey the Father and receive the gift the Father wants to give Him, He comes to the cross. God's loving us, God's loving people rises out of God creating people to redeem a bride for His Son, the Son of His love. Now that in itself is a glorious subject study and would, as I said, require a lot more attention than we've been able to give it tonight. But understand this, any love that comes to us in this whole created world is because of this love the Father and the Son share.

But let's turn from that foundational element of love and talk about not God's love for Himself but God's love for humanity...God's love for humanity. This is the love which God has which is general. It is indiscriminate, it is unconditional, it is unlimited and it is extended to everybody. Titus 3:4, "God's love for mankind," it's called. God's love for mankind. Now God is love by nature, right? God isn't sometimes love and sometimes not, He's always love. God is never so irritated that He stops loving, He always loves. He is always who He is perfectly, His attributes do not come and go, they do not ebb and flow, they do not rise and fall, they do not appear and disappear. He always loves. All of His attributes exist in perfect harmony with all of His other attributes at all times, so God always loves. It is His nature.

And He loves generally, He loves mankind in general. It's fair to say that. Look at Matthew 5 verse 44 and 45, because this is an important text to instruct us. In verse 43 Jesus says, "You've heard it said

you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy." That was kind of the sort of Judaistic rabbinical approach to love. You love your neighbor and you hate your enemy which justified their hatred for Gentiles. Love your enemies, says Jesus, that's something very different, verse 44. "Love your enemies and go so far as to pray for the well-being of those who persecute you." And then in verse 45 He makes this very important connection, "This will demonstrate that you are sons of your Father who is in heaven."

Everybody knew in Jewish culture, in Jewish thinking that to be a son of something meant to demonstrate the character of whoever's son you were. It meant to share the nature, the disposition. And if you want to demonstrate that you are sons of your Father, then you must share the disposition of your Father who loves His enemies. That's the point. God loves His enemies. He goes on to say in verse 45, "He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good. He sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous." In verse 46, "For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Tax collectors do that." You need to love the way that God loves. Verse 48, "You need to be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect." And part of His perfection is perfect love demonstrated toward His enemies. Does God love the world? That says it, definitely He does...definitely. That's a very broad statement, enemies categorically.

Let's look at a more specific illustration in the tenth chapter of Mark, Mark chapter 10 and verse 17. And here He gets very personal. He's not talking about God in heaven as in Matthew 5, we're talking about Jesus on earth who is nonetheless God. In this verse 17 of Mark 10, a familiar story about a young man who runs to Jesus, kneels before Him, begins asking Him, "Good teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" You remember the story. The rich young ruler, he is often called, Jesus says, "Why do you call Me good, no one is good except God alone. Do you have any idea what you're saying here? You know the commandments, do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not bear false witness, do not defraud, honor your father and your mother." And he said to Him, "Teacher, I've done all these things from my youth up." That's the...that's the self-righteous answer. "Oh, is that all I have to do to enter the Kingdom of heaven, is that all I have to do to receive eternal life is just keep all the commandments? I keep them all." He was living out the Jewish illusion. Verse 21 says, "Looking at him, Jesus felt love for him." He's not a believer, he wasn't even open to repent. Jesus went another step and said, "Well, there's another element in receiving eternal life, first you have to recognize you're a sinner, you're not going to do that. Secondly, you have to affirm My sovereign lordship over your life, so let me test that. Go sell all you possess, give to the poor and you have treasure in heaven, come follow Me."

"At these words his face fell, he went away grieved cause he owned a lot of property." Salvation is fairly simple. You repent of your sin and yo acknowledge Jesus as Lord. One he wouldn't do, two he wouldn't do either. He went away. But still the key phrase, verse 21, Jesus felt love for him. Jesus is God. He didn't know him, this isn't some kind of earthly affection, this isn't family affection, this is the

love of the heart of God toward an impenitent proud materialistic sinner. And I think there's even a sense in which John 3:16, "God so loved the world," is intended to convey to the Jews that the heart of God is bigger than theirs. They had this narrow limited view that God loved them and hated everybody else and that's what was reflected in their...their perspective. Jesus said, "You've heard it said, love your enemies and hate your enemies." They thought that was God's attitude. And when we read God so loved the world, this is a blast at the narrowness, the provincial attitude, the...really the racism of those who thought they were righteous and Godlike in hating everybody else. God does love mankind in a general sense.

The question is then how does this love demonstrate itself? And I want to share four ways that it does, okay? And we'll just work through these four and we'll leave the last category for next Sunday night. There are four ways that God's love manifests itself.

Number one is common grace...number one is common grace. "He makes the sun to shine on the good and the evil, He makes the rain to fall on the just and the unjust." God does not discriminate with His grace in the sense of general goodness. In the fourteenth chapter of Acts and verse 15, Paul and Barnabas, probably Paul himself speaking, says, "What are you doing, men? We are men of the same nature as you." They were worshiping Paul and Barnabas as if they were some kind of deities. He says, "We are men of the same nature as you, we preach the gospel to you in order that you should turn from these vain things to a living God who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them." And then in verse 17, "And He didn't leave Himself without witness in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness." That's common grace, that the universal, non-discriminating, unconditional goodness of God to good people, to bad people, on the righteous and the unrighteous. And this is a general reality around the world. If you question the love of God, then ask yourself, "Why He made this planet so universally full of riches and things to enjoy?" Even people who live simply enjoy things. We think, I suppose, that the standard for everybody ought to be the advance scientific technological materialism of western culture. I'm quite sure there are more disillusioned, sad, distraught, depressed anxious people living in this kind of a culture then there are in the simple cultures of the Third World who have very little expectation and find their joy still in a sunset, or a good meal or the love of a family. Common grace extends to the world and it's a demonstration of God's love. If God was not at heart a loving God, why would He create a planet so full of things to enjoy?

There's a second element in God's love for mankind, compassion...compassion. God's love for mankind is revealed in His universal pity and grief over lost souls. Ezekiel 18:32, "I find no pleasure in the death of the wicked." There's no glee in God when a hundred and fifty thousand people are crushed and drowned in a Tsunami. There's no glee in God when a train derails and certain people are asphyxiated, or when a bomb blows up in Iraq and people standing by are blown into eternity. He says, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked." To Jonah He said in Jonah chapter 4:11 when

Jonah was questioning what God was doing with the Gentiles, Jonah had no love for them, absolutely no love for them, didn't want them involved with His God or getting in on divine blessing and God says, "Shall I not have compassion on Nineveh?" The compassion of God is seen in the good things in this world and the good things in life in the way in which God has provided, medical care and protection, and the support of family and food and even the kind of aid the world is rising to give to help other people, that's a reflection of the scarred and marred image of God in man where still you can see the milk of human kindness reaching out. It comes originally from the heart of God. Believe me, that's not born in an atheistic evolutionary process. God in the book of Jeremiah weeps and wails over the destruction of Moab, wicked, wretched, sinful Moab. Jesus weeps over Jerusalem in Matthew 23:37, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, I would have gathered you but you would not." Then again in Luke 19:41 the same thing.

Now listen, this is not a love motivated by the present value of man because he really has no value. He is a sinner and an enemy of God. It is a love that is motivated by the heart of God who sees the lost value in man. It's the love of pity. The Lord pities His children. It's the love of sadness over the image of God so defaced. It's a pained love, even acts of just judgment.

And that leads to the third element of God's love for mankind, the love of God has demonstrated in warning...warning. I think the heart of God is grieved, I think God weeps when He sees masses of people die or when any die on any given day by the thousands as they do in the world. God finds no pleasure in that and that is why God has given to the heart of every man a law, a standard of what is right and wrong, and He's written it in the heart and He's given a conscience to activate it. That's why He sent Jesus Christ into the world. That's why He sent His Word into the world. God's love for mankind is revealed in incessant warnings of coming judgment, the whole of the Old Testament is filled with these warnings and Israel had the responsibility to declare the judgment of God upon the nations that rejected Him, as we do today. We've just gone through that little passage in Luke 13 where when the people were killed in the temple and they say, "Why did that happen?" And He said, "You better repent, the same thing could happen to you." And the tower fell on those in Siloam and they said, "Why did that happen? What caused that? Where was God?" as the question is often stated. And He said, "You better repent or it could happen to you."

It isn't that people just need a...kept thinking about that when they were talking about we need to have some kind of Tsunami warning system. No, that's fine, I mean that's helpful. You know, people can develop those kinds of things and that's helpful but what's far more important than any warning system that protects your body is a warning system that protects your eternal soul. This is the great warning and the Bible is that warning system. It's that warning system.

You say, "Well what if they don't have a Bible?" Well they have a conscience and they have a Law of God written in their hearts. And if they live up to that, the promise of Scripture is that God will bring

them the fullness of His light.

And that leads to the fourth element, the offer of the gospel. What did...what did the Lord say to His disciples at the end of His life when He was leaving? He said, "Go into all the...what?...the world and preach the gospel, take it to the end of the earth and preach it to every creature." Now He didn't say, "Look for the elect and tell them the gospel. Look for those who are predestined and give them the gospel." He said, "Take it to the ends of the earth." Common grace shows that God is a God of love, compassion, the compassion of God manifest through the...even through the defaced image of God in man, you can see that whoever created man had compassion because men have compassion. Warning, the Scripture is loaded with warnings, all through the Old and the New Testament, all of them gracious warnings. And also, the offer of salvation, in the Old Testament and the New Testament, God always offered salvation to the penitent sinner who came, confessed his sin and believed in the Word of God. And we're told to go to the ends of the earth and to preach the gospel to every creature in the worst time in the history of the world. In the future, it's a time known as the Tribulation. It's described in Revelation chapter...basically chapter 4 to the very end. Four and five are actually a scene in heaven where the war machine of God starts cranking up. Start formerly on earth in chapter 6, from Revelation 6 to 19 you have horrific judgments coming on the earth. But with those judgments come warnings. God plucks twelve thousand Jews out of every tribe to make 144 thousand witnesses and He knows who belongs to what tribe even though all the records were lost in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. God knows who belongs to who and He'll put together that great force. He plucks two witnesses who preach the gospel in Jerusalem and bring about a massive revival in Jerusalem and the world hates what they say so badly that they kill them and they're on worldwide satellite television because it says the whole world sees their dead bodies. And while the whole world is watching, Revelation 11 says, they rise from the dead and stand up. But I think the most remarkable thing in the book of Revelation is that during that period of time there is going to be an angel flying through heaven preaching the everlasting gospel. Now you've seen people doing it with a blimp, or you've seen people doing it with a little airplane with a trailing sign. There is going to be an angel flying through heaven preaching the gospel to the world. Paul says, "I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, it's the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes, the Jew first and also the Greek." And he says, "I am really under mandate to preach the gospel to the ends of the earth." In fact, he even said in the Corinthians letter, "Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel." We're to go everywhere and preach this gospel. This is the will of the Father.

God is a God of love and He shows His love in the graciousness that surrounds us in this world, in all its natural wonders which make life rich, the prosperity that we enjoy. He looks on us with compassion. And we live with His compassion. That's why sinners survive. That's why all sinners don't die the first time they sin because God is compassionate, God is merciful. But at the same time, we are warned and warned and warned and warned and warned and warned. And we are also given the solution, the glorious truth of the gospel. In John chapter 6, that same passage we looked at

earlier, we're talking about the Father loving the Son and giving Him a bride, it says, "This is the will of My Father, verse 40, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him may have eternal life. And I Myself will raise Him up on the last day." The Father simply says anybody anywhere who believes will have eternal life. This is the revelation of God's grace. The offer of the gospel is to all. Psalm 34:8, "O taste and see the Lord is good, blessed is the man who trusts in Him." Proverbs 1:24, "I have called and you have refused. I've stretched out My hand and no man regarded." Isaiah 55:1, "Come, buy and eat, come and buy wine and milk without money and without price." Isaiah 65:2, "Behold Me, behold Me, unto a nation that was not called by My name, I have spread out My hands all the day unto a rebellious people." This is God calling, reaching out, extending an offer of salvation. Matthew 22:2 and 3, I love this parable. The Kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who made a marriage for His Son, sent servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding and they wouldn't come. The same thing in Luke 14 verse 16 to 18, "A certain man made a great dinner and invited many and sent His servants at supper time to say to them that were bidden, 'Come, for all things are now ready.' And they all with one consent began to make excuses." Jesus said in Matthew 11:28, "Come unto Me all ye that labor and heavy laden and I will give you rest." John 6:37, "Him that comes to Me I'll not cast out." Romans 10:13, "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Revelation 22:17, "Whosoever will, let him come, take of the water of life freely." This is the extent of the gospel.

You remember what the angel said in Luke 2:10? The angel said this, "I bring you good news of great joy which shall be for all the people." Listen, beloved, in all our understanding of election and all of our understanding of predestination, you have to maintain that...that mystery, that apparent paradox, that irreconcilable reality that a God of love and mercy and compassion and a God of justice and a God of grace has extended Himself in love to the whole world. The good news is available to all. The Law of God is written in every heart. The conscience is there. To activate that Law and a response and to send that person in the direction of God and reason is there, and reason says there is a Creator and there is a moral lawgiver, how can I know Him? John 6, Jesus said He was the bread of God who comes down from heaven and gives His life for the world. He is the Savior of the world. Thomas Boston the Puritan preacher and author used the analogy of a king appointing a physician to be the healer of the people, available to all, the official doctor of the realm. People had to decide whether they wanted to use him or not, but he was the official physician of the realm. And so is Jesus the Savior of the world, declared to be so by God the King and available to all who come for spiritual healing. It was He Himself in John 5 verse 40 who said, "You are unwilling to come to Me that you might have life." You see, you're not going to come unless you know you're sick. That's what Jesus said, didn't He? He didn't come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Those that are sick need a physician.

God loved the world. He loves the world to the extent that He shows them common grace, compassion, warning and gospel opportunity. He has provided a sufficient Savior for the whole world.

But sinners refuse to come and bear the culpability and the guilt for that refusal. Jesus said, "You will die in your sins and where I go you will never come because you do not believe in Me." The responsibility always falls at the foot of the sinner. You say, "I'm not sure how that fits together with election." Oh, I don't know why you would be unsure about that. I'm absolutely positive that that doesn't fit together with election in my mind. But that's very encouraging to me because that means God is a lot brighter than I am. Jesus approached one day in Jerusalem and He wept over the city, Luke 19:41, and He said, "If you had known in this day, even you, even you, if you had just known the things which make for peace, now they're hidden from your eyes." Too late...too late. Yes, God does love the whole world. Yes, anybody anywhere anytime who wants to believe can believe. We know that's a work of God. And yet it's the man or the woman's responsibility to take the opportunity that's offered to them. I know that that doesn't make perfect sense in our minds, but hell is full of people who refused to believe, who held to their sin. And heaven is full of people whom the Lord transformed. But sinners are there because they made their choice. On the other hand, we're in heaven because God made His choice. It's that impossible paradox that exists at every point in the great doctrines of Scripture.

I don't need to sort that out. I don't need to solve that. I just need to be faithful to take the gospel to the ends of the world and beg unbelievers to repent, right? And Jesus did that. We've just been studying it in the gospel of Luke, warning them and warning them, telling them to leave the false religion, to fear God, to confess Him, to commit themselves to the care of the Holy Spirit, to abandon their love of money, to abandon their pursuits in the world and to rush, as it were, to the Kingdom, warning them that they're going to die, that the Lord might come in judgment and it's going to be too late. So while we glorify God for the great work of salvation which is all his work. On the other hand, we engage ourselves in expressing the love of God to the world at every point we can touch the unregenerate world because we've been commanded to do just that.

It makes it pretty simple for me really. I can leave the resolution of the impossible to God and simply be obedient. And isn't that, after all, what loving God is all about? Jesus said this, He said, "I do what the Father tells Me because I love Him." And so as believers we do what the Father tells us to do and that is to take the gospel to the ends of the earth because we love Him. It's not for us to understand all the machinations of the infinite mind of God, but it is for us to be obedient. God is love and therefore within the Trinity exists perfect love. Out of that perfect love comes a desire on God's part to give to His Son a gift of love because He holds nothing back from the Son and so we have what we have in the created universe in order that God can redeem a bride for His Son. And we have been given the wonderful responsibility of being, as it were, friends of the bridegroom, inviting guests to come to the marriage, even to become part of the bride.

There is a third kind of love and we'll look at that next week. It is God's love for His own...God's love for His own. This is that love which He eternally predetermined to set on us. Let's pray.

Father, we thank You tonight for just some time to contemplate these great and deep truths. We..we feel like we're standing at the ocean with a little bucket full of water looking at the vast unchartered sea rolling before us and thinking perhaps that in our bucket we have as much as we can handle of this vastness. Lord, we're in awe of You, we're in awe of Your glory, we're in awe of Your person, we're in awe of Your truth, we're in awe of Your attributes. We're in awe of Your goodness. It is unfathomable to us. And You've never asked us to sort it out, You've only asked us to obey. You have given us good gifts because You love us. And You have asked us in return to show our love through obedience, and that means to spend our lives in this wonderful enterprise of showing Your compassion, warning and grace through the gospel to those around us. We thank You for that opportunity and we ask that You continue to give it to us and may we be faithful simply to throw the seed and leave the results to You. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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