

Love's Reality

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Prepared from the spoken message and lightly edited for readability. Scripture quotations and spoken phrasing are preserved as delivered.

Good morning, and Happy New Year to you, Champion Forest North Klein. I'm so thankful to be with you today. Go ahead and grab your Bible and turn to 1 John chapter 3. We'll be looking at verses 1 through 3 today.

As you're turning there, I don't think you need to hear this, but I want to remind you of how faithful and servant-hearted your campus pastor, Steven Morris, is to lead you well week in and week out. Steven, thank you for letting me be here and speak today. I'm so honored and thankful. We honor Steven, but we give God glory for his life, his ministry, and what God's doing here. We saw baptisms today, lives changed by the grace and love of Jesus.

As you're turning to 1 John 3, it's toward the very end of the Bible. You can use the table of contents. It's right before Revelation, 3 John, and 2 John.

I want to ask you a question as you're getting there: Do you remember the very first time you told someone that you loved them? Your spouse, when you looked at him or you looked at her, and with a full heart you said those words, "I love you." Do you remember that?

Maybe you remember telling someone you had hoped or thought would be your spouse, and now you look back and go, "Thank You, God, that he or she is not my spouse."

Maybe it was a friend. Maybe it was your firstborn, your second-born, or a child you've recently held for the first time. I'll never forget holding my daughter for the first time and saying, "I love you." Maybe it's a neighbor or someone close in your life whom you've said those words to.

I remember the first time I told my wife I loved her. We've been married for three years. We just celebrated that on December 29. We had been dating for about six months, and we had dinner at the fine establishment of Chuy's. We split fajitas. I think one time we had Tex-Mex and didn't split fajitas. I got my own plate, and she got her own. I learned after that: We split fajitas. We don't need the menu because I know exactly what we're getting.

We had a great dinner. We came back, and we're old souls, so we had Frank Sinatra playing - Ol' Blue Eyes. If you're young and don't know who he is, look him up. Listen to him.

We're in the living room, dancing together. I have two left feet, but in the moment they were working. I just remember dancing with a woman I love deeply, her head resting on my chest. I think I counted down from 30 because I was going to tell her I loved her, and I was so nervous.

The reason I was nervous wasn't just about saying those words, because I knew I loved her. I didn't need to convince myself that I loved her. I knew with my whole heart and being. I've never loved another person like I love her. But the weight I felt was that I wanted her to know I loved her.

It wasn't about me saying it and going, "Okay, that's the first time. Now you say it back." It was about my wife knowing, believing, and trusting that I do love her. That's what made that an unforgettable and special moment.

I recognize that some of us here may never have been told by someone else, "I love you" - that you're lovable, that you have meaning, and that you have purpose.

For some of you, maybe you've been told again and again, "Hey, God loves you." You're thinking, "I know that, but I don't know that."

Maybe you've told someone at H-E-B, the grocery store, or Chick-fil-A - don't assume everyone is saved at Chick-fil-A - "Hey, God loves you." They're going, "Does He?"

The text we're looking at today is the text where God is looking at us and telling us He loves us. It's not only because He wants to say it - He does - but even more, God wants us to know, believe, and be confident that we are loved by Him.

As we read 1 John 3, I want to give you the context, the author, and the purpose of the letter. The author is John, the same disciple whom Jesus loved. He wrote the Gospel of John. He wrote 1, 2, and 3 John. He wrote Revelation.

Scholars date this letter to roughly A.D. 90-95, which means he had around 60 years to meditate and let the love of Christ marinate in his heart. He's writing to us by the power and inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

He tells us why he wrote what he did. John 20:30-31 gives us the whole purpose of the Gospel of John in these two verses:

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book.

But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing, you may have life in His name.

— John 20:30-31

In other words, the Gospel of John was written to pave the road to salvation. He's saying, "I've written all of these things, and I wish we had more detail on a few things or expansion on some stories, but that's not the purpose of why I've written you this. The purpose of me writing you this is that you would know the Savior has come, that God has sent Messiah, and that it's Jesus the Christ, the Son of God, who saves you from your sins. I've given you the Gospel of John so that you may believe in Him."

Then he tells us why he wrote 1 John:

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know you have eternal life.

— 1 John 5:13

If the Gospel of John is the way to salvation, 1 John is assurance of salvation. He's writing to groups of house churches around Asia during the A.D. 90s, under persecution and spread out. He's saying, "The whole purpose of me writing you this is because I want you to know God loves you, and I want you to be assured of your salvation."

I have doubted and wrestled with that question: "Am I really saved? I know Jesus died on the cross for me, but I keep doing things that put Him on the cross. Am I really saved? Does God really love me?"

I have no problem telling you He loves you. But isn't it true that the problem is us believing it for ourselves?

First John 5:13 is your assurance today. God loves you, and He wants you to hear it because it's true. He wants us to believe that it is true.

Look with me at 1 John chapter 3. The Bible says:

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.

The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know Him.

Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared. But we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is.

And everyone who thus hopes in Him purifies himself as He is pure.

— 1 John 3:1-3

In the NIV, this starts by saying, "Look." If you get under the text and look at the Greek language, it's an imperative. What's actually happening is God, by His Spirit, writing this to us and saying, "Look. Give attention." It's an imperative: "Right now, stop everything else and look."

It's worthy of our full attention. Friends, we do not graduate from the gospel. You don't master it and then move on to other theologies. You can spend the rest of your life exploring, deepening, and praying to, about, and for the gospel, and never attain all of it until we see Him.

My challenge today, as we start 2026, is to surrender your list of resolutions and goals to the Lord: "God, I want to learn and master the gospel. I want to understand the love You have for me that put Your Son on a real cross, with real wounds and real blood, because You really do love me. I want to sit still, and I want to know that I know the gospel is true."

God, by the power of the Holy Spirit, is telling you to look at what kind of love the Father has given to us.

Look

The first thing for us to do today is look. If you're taking notes, write this down. The title of the message is "Love's Reality." First John 3:1-3 is love's reality for the believer.

Number one: Look.

See what kind. Use your eyes. This is an imperative. He's calling attention to it and saying, "Look." But it's not the natural eye that looks. It's the spiritual eye that looks. It's the grace of the Holy Spirit showing us Christ on the cross, our sins paid for in Him. When you put your faith in Him, you're united to Christ on the cross. We share that middle cross by grace.

He's saying, "Look at this as the Spirit gives you the power to look at it." Be so very careful that we don't look past it and move on to try to understand other things. Look to the cross. See the love given to you and me on the cross.

We should be called children of God, and we are.

Walter Stanley Mooneyham - which is a great name, an awesome last name - said this about 1 John 3:1: "Love talked about is easily turned aside, but love demonstrated is irresistible."

When I told my wife I loved her, I spoke it, but that wasn't enough. I needed to demonstrate it. More than that, I wanted to demonstrate it. It gives me joy to show my wife I love her so that when I say it, she says, "I've seen it, and I know it."

I've had a ton of people in my life tell me, "Hey, I love you," and then not demonstrate it. Well, thank you, but I have a hard time believing that. I've also told a ton of people, "I love you," and didn't demonstrate it. You can say, "Hey, I love you," and they're like, "Yeah, sure." We get busy. We turn it aside. We forget it.

But love demonstrated is irresistible.

Jesus says to His disciples, and to you and me today, "By this the world will know you're My disciples: by how you love, by how you demonstrate the cross to other people."

The gospel inspires action. Love must be demonstrated.

Last summer, I took a group of young adults to Denver, Colorado. Ninety-five percent of Denver is unchurched and unreached. They don't believe in Jesus. They don't believe they need Jesus. They don't care about the church. Ninety-five percent have no gospel foundation, and that's how they want it. It's so far pre-church that it's not postmodern. It's as if Christianity has never been to Denver.

We took a trip there to partner with Riverside, which is a Champion Forest partner. One of the ways they reach people is by getting outside the building to demonstrate love.

We went to Union Station, where the trains come in and go out. We set up this table and a couple of signs that said, "Riverside Church. Have a great day." We got coffee and set it up in one of those containers that keeps it warm.

Well, I'm unwise, so I started pouring out the coffee. By the time people got it, it was kind of cold. No ice - just lukewarm coffee. But we were there to bless people. We were there to demonstrate love.

We were there for an hour or two, and then we went to get more coffee. I had learned, so I kept it in the container. A woman came up to me, and I said, "Would you like a free cup of coffee?"

She said, "Free?"

I said, "Free."

She said, "No catch?"

"No, ma'am, no catch."

"No catch?"

At this point, I'm frustrated. I said, "Ma'am, there's no catch. It's a free cup of coffee. We just want to bless you on your Friday morning."

She looked at me, at the church, and said this verbatim: "What kind of love is this?"

In that moment, I thought two things. One: "This is a cup of coffee."

No, but really, I'm going to believe that woman hadn't been told or shown that she was loved in a very long time, because a lukewarm cup of coffee moved her to ask, "What kind of love is this?"

Number two, I thought, "Oh, I get to tell you what kind of love this is."

I said, "Ma'am, this cup of coffee will last you just a few moments, but the demonstration of this love is all about what Jesus has done for you. If you want to learn more, come join us at church. But I just want to tell you: God so loves you that He gave His only Son."

She saw, but she also heard the gospel that day. God used a cup of coffee to open a heart to the love of Jesus.

See what kind of love this is.

You're saying, "Okay, look to the cross. Well, we have one here, and we have one outside the building. If you go west on 99, you see a 200-foot cross." We can see crosses all the time. Sometimes we get desensitized to the meaning of the cross. We forget that a man, innocent and pure, hung on it for six hours. He hung on it.

You're asking, "How am I supposed to look at it?"

Again, it's with spiritual eyes. It's seeing by the grace of God. But here's where we do look: We look at the Word of God.

But God demonstrates His love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ Jesus died for us.

— Romans 5:8

Love talked about is easily turned aside. God could have, and justly could have, simply said, "I love you," and demanded that we believe the words. But God took it further. God demonstrated it.

When I told my wife, "I love you," I took it further. Again, I get in trouble quickly, so I had her show me the kind of ring she wanted. I did not want to make that mistake. She sent it to me. I went to buy it. I zeroed out the bank account, and I demonstrated my love to her.

I surprised her. I got on one knee, lost all memory, and said something that was really great. I hoped she said yes. We got engaged. I demonstrated my love.

But that's not enough, right? We demonstrate it more. We got married, and in front of friends and family, with God as our witness, we showed and demonstrated our love through the covenant of marriage.

Then it went further. The next day, I woke up, she woke up, and we died to ourselves to demonstrate our love.

If we had just stopped at the first time I told her, the engagement, or the wedding day, love wouldn't be demonstrated. I would begin wondering, "Do you really love me?" She begins looking every day for clues.

Husbands, boyfriends, fiancés - this is free. She begins looking every day for the clue: "Do you really love me? Do your words and your actions line up?"

Friends, when Jesus got on that cross, His words and His actions lined up. He demonstrated His love for you and me.

Where do we look? We look at the cross.

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people.

— Titus 2:11

Flip one page. First John 4 says:

In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent His only Son into the world so that we might live through Him.

In this is love, not that we have loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

— 1 John 4:9-10

No one has a résumé good enough to impress God. We did not win His affection because we were attractive. We did not earn or deserve the cross of Jesus. No, no, no.

In this is love: He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation, the substitute, the grace for our sins.

Friends, we can look and see demonstrated love on the cross.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as the only Son from the Father, full of grace and full of truth.

— John 1:14

How do we understand love's reality? The reality of love that 1 John 3 and the whole Scripture teach is that we've been adopted into the family of God through and by the blood of Jesus. That's our reality.

John says multiple times that if the heavens split open right now, and you are in Christ - a blood-bought, redeemed follower of Jesus - and you stood before God, you would do what we just sang. You would thank Him for the cross. But without any doubts or hesitation, you would know that you know you're a daughter or a

son of the Most High.

It is your reality in Christ. Look to it, because powerful things start happening when we look to the cross and fight to stay there.

Colossians 3 says, "If you have been raised with Christ, keep your eyes on things above, not down below. Your life is hidden with Christ, and when He appears, so will your life appear."

Friends, if you're a Christian, a born-again believer, your life is in Christ Jesus. Your reality is daughter. Your reality is son. No one can take it from you.

I'm here today because I want you to know you're loved. I want you to believe you're loved. I want you to look to the love of God.

David Allen is a pastor and a linguistic scholar of biblical languages. He's brilliant. He says this about 1 John 3:1-3: Every Christian should always live in three arenas.

Number one: What we are - children of God.

Number two: What we shall be - when we see Him, we shall be like Him. We will be glorified with Him forever.

Number three: What we should be - pure, holy, and blameless, not to earn, deserve, or impress God, but because of what He has given to us.

Do you see the difference and the order of it? Look to the cross.

Maybe for some of you, it's not a looking problem. You believe Jesus came and died. You've even made the statement of faith: "I believe He's the Christ, and I've turned to Him for the forgiveness of my sins." Maybe you've responded to the cross. You look at it.

But the harder thing is for you to really receive it.

Right now, if I had the chance to look you in the eyes and say, "I love you," you would hear it. You would see it. But you would have to choose whether you received it.

For some of us, it's not a looking problem. It's not hard for us to believe and see that God loves us. It's harder to receive it every single day. We have a receiving problem.

You feel unworthy. I feel so unworthy of the gospel. You can give God a million justifiable reasons why He shouldn't love you unconditionally. You've got a list that He's made a testimony of. You're saying, "God, I just don't know if You should love me." You're giving the enemy a foothold when God has slammed the door shut and made you a new creation.

You're trying to justify why God shouldn't love you. It's so hard to believe that a perfect, holy, eternal God would choose you and send His Son for you. It's foreign. It's unworldly. There's no parallel.

God is saying, "I know it is hard to believe, but believe it. Believe it by grace."

I'm convinced and convicted in my own heart that if Christians - whether you're young or old, whether you've come to church for the first time today or were born in the church, whatever your story is - would slow down long enough to look at the cross and receive the love God wants to give us, our lives would be radically changed.

There are two words in there that make us squirm: "Slow down."

It's 2026. I can't believe it's a new year. I've got new goals. I've got good goals. Billions of people die with no gospel hope because they don't know it. There are churches to plant in northwest Houston. There are people with whom to share the love of Jesus. There are businesses to start, school to graduate from, families to grow, neighbors to meet, and people to serve. Kids ministry, students, adults - they all have needs. They all want you to serve.

We're all saying, "Hey, man, let's go. Let's go get it. 2026 is our year!"

Then I say these two words: "Slow down."

You're saying, "But how do I do both? How do I achieve the goals God's put in my heart and slow down at the same time? It feels like I can't do it. I'm bent toward going because I want to earn. So I'm going to do and do and do, and I'm going to drift away from this unending love of God because my mind has been fixed on these things."

God is calling us to resolve to pursue and know the cross, not to graduate from the cross, but simply to stare at and look at the cross. I'm convinced that if we do that, we will live radically differently.

I want you to see what John is telling us through the power and inspiration of the Holy Spirit - the same Spirit active in creation and the same Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead.

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.

The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know Him.

Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared. But we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is.

— 1 John 3:1-2

Do you want to know why there's conflict, turmoil, war, strife, division, frustration, and hatred in the world? Sin. It's not because your opinion or preferences are better than another person's. It is a sin problem.

Do you know what this text shows me? We should pray for our enemies to know Christ. If sin is the problem, salvation is the only solution.

He's saying, "The reason there's conflict and division isn't because people don't like you. It's because they don't know Him."

When I start sitting on that and really thinking, I say, "Okay, God, I want them to know You. I want people who have wronged me, cheated me, backstabbed me, and lied to me to know You."

Receive

Beloved, we are God's children now. What we will be has not yet appeared, but we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him because we shall see Him as He is.

Number two: Receive.

Look at the cross. Look to the love of Jesus. Look to His salvation. Look to His hope. But then receive it.

Receive the love of God for yourself. Don't do it only so you can be a better wife, husband, mom, dad, boss, or employee. Yes, do that, but that's missing half of the love.

That's coming to God and saying, "Fill me with Your love so that I can go love people."

God is saying, "That's a great desire, but what about this? I want to fill you with My love so that you know I love you. I want the vertical love to be right."

If the vertical is right, if we look to the cross and receive the love of Jesus, it will naturally flow into our everyday lives. But, friends, we have to be willing and humble enough to receive God's love.

"You're telling me God really loves me?"

Yes.

"But no one's ever loved me that way."

I know it's so hard to believe. I know it's amazing grace. But when the Spirit of God, through His Word, opens your eyes to see it, behold it. Fight to stay on it. Receive the love of God.

The Greek language has a tense that English doesn't have. It's the perfect tense. Whenever the perfect tense is used, it's talking about a past action that has been completed and has everlasting effects.

Let's look back at this one more time:

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God.

— 1 John 3:1

"See." Look. Stop what you're doing. It's imperative. Pay attention.

To what? To the kind of love the Father has given to us - perfect tense.

Do you know what wows me about the cross of Jesus Christ? It is a past-tense, perfected love that has future and eternal implications. The cross plus nothing equals everything.

Past tense. Perfect tense. Present tense. Future tense. The love God's given us perfects us. Hebrews says:

For by a single offering He has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

— Hebrews 10:14

Romans 5 says:

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Through Him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance,

and endurance produces character, and character produces hope,

and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

— Romans 5:1-5

In light of everything we just shared, "since we have been" - past perfect tense - your salvation happened 2,000 years ago on a cross. Since we have been justified by faith, we presently have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Through Him, we've also obtained access by faith into the grace in which we stand right now. We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings.

Why? Because I've been perfected by love. Because I have a sure and steadfast future hope. Hebrews says it's an anchor to our soul.

When I suffer, I'll rejoice because it's giving me endurance. It's giving me staying power to look at the cross longer. As that increases, so does my character. I start living like Christ and serving like Christ. When that happens, my hope only increases.

When hope increases, there's no more shame. Why? Because God has poured out His love into our hearts as believers through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. Perfect tense.

Think about a water park. You've got this kids' area where the water is a lot cooler. That's where I would be. You've got these slides, ladders, and all these things. Above it is this ginormous bucket.

If you're a mom or dad, you've been holding your kid's hand under that bucket more times than you'd like. The bucket starts filling up. It starts wobbling a little because you know the pouring out is coming. You wait for it. The kids start screaming a little. The bucket gets to the brim and starts moving a little more.

Then, in a moment, it pours out. If you're underneath it, it's not just a sprinkling. It is a lavishing. You are drenched and soaked.

In the same way, in and through Christ Jesus, you are drenched in His love. Think about that. It's one of the worst sounds and feelings in the world when you walk around with wet shoes. You're drenched, and you're dripping everywhere. Everyone can tell you're wet.

Believer, brother, sister, you are drenched in the love of God because right now you are a son and you are a daughter. It's love's reality. You have been adopted.

Look to the cross. I promise you, you will not grow tired of it. Receive the love God wants for you every day.

My life has been radically transformed by His love. In the last two months, God has been doing a supernatural work in my life when I'm alone with Him.

I grew up hearing about a quiet time: "Go do your quiet time. Read and journal, and then go out from your quiet time." I don't really like those two words, "quiet time." I use "Father-son time" now. I use war-preparation language now because we're in a battle. When I go meet with my Father, I'm getting ready to go out.

Lately, God has put this phrase on my heart: "Unhurried time with the Lord."

I'd love to preach a sermon on that, but in ten seconds, here it is: Get unhurried. Sit still in the presence of God. You don't have to read. You don't have to journal. Just sit there for half an hour if that's what it takes, and let Him unhurry your soul.

What's that going to look like? All your intrusive thoughts are going to come to the surface. All your comparisons are going to come to the surface. Your sin is going to come to the surface. Your neediness is going to come to the surface.

You're going to say, "No, I don't want to think about this right now. I just want to spend time with God."

God is saying, "I want to spend time with you in that because I want to correct it with My truth. I want to correct the way you feel. I want to shepherd your heart in My truth."

You get unhurried. Your internal engine slows down. All of a sudden, that still, small whisper gets really clear. Your confidence increases. Your humility increases. Your reverence increases. You'll find yourself sitting at the foot of the cross for half an hour or an hour before you even open the Scriptures.

Then you open them, and like Jesus says, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink." You begin being refreshed by the Spirit through His Word.

But you get unhurried to spend time with Him.

What does that look like? It's receiving His love every single day.

It would break my heart to imagine my daughter growing up not knowing her father loves her. I'm going to fight, with the grace of God, to say it and demonstrate it every single day. But I want her to know it, receive it, and live out of it.

Imitate

That's number three: Imitate.

We look to the cross. We receive the love of the cross. Finally, we imitate the love of the cross.

And everyone who thus hopes in Him purifies himself as He is pure.

— 1 John 3:3

The NIV says, "All who have this hope in Him purify themselves, just as He is pure."

This love of Jesus cannot help but transform you. Every funeral He goes to, He breaks up. There's resurrection power. As you become enamored with the love of Jesus, He changes your life for the better.

First John 2 says:

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin.

But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

And by this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments.

Whoever says, "I know Him," but does not keep His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him,

but whoever keeps His word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in Him:

whoever says he abides in Him ought to walk in the same way in which He walked.

— 1 John 2:1-6

We've been called into holiness, not to impress God, maintain our salvation, or earn a little more love. That's not how it works. We're called into holiness because we have been loved. We have been given a perfected love, so we pursue holiness.

But here's grace: If anyone does sin, we have an advocate, a helper with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the substitute, the propitiation for our sins - not only ours, but for the sins of the whole world.

By this we know we've come to know Him: if we keep His commandments.

Obedience is the difference between head knowledge and heart knowledge. You can know all the Bible studies and all the things about God, but if you haven't received the love of God, obedience dries out and becomes, "Well, do I agree with it?"

But a love-based obedience says, "Regardless of how I feel, I'm going to obey Your Word."

By this we know we've come to know Him: if we keep His commandments. Whoever says, "I know Him," but doesn't keep His commandments is a liar, and the truth isn't in him. But whoever keeps His Word, in him truly the love of God is perfected.

By this we may know that we're in Him: Whoever says he abides in Him ought to walk in the same way in which He walked.

Friends, look at the cross. Spend the whole year saying, "God, train me in the cross. Teach me the cross. Don't move me from the cross."

As He does that, because He's faithful, receive the love He wants to give you. He wants you to know you're loved because He loves you. It will be out of that receiving love that we imitate Him. We're conformed to be

more like Him day by day.

A Prayer to Know the Love of Christ

Here's what I want to do to close. I want everyone in the room to stand up. I'm going to read a Scripture, and then I'm going to pray it over each of us.

My prayer today has been one thing: "God, I want them to know how much You love them. I want them to know and believe it in truth. I want them to be confident in Your love."

I'm going to put a Scripture on the screen. It's Ephesians chapter 3. It's a prayer Paul prayed for his church.

I love this. Paul didn't say, "I'm praying that you would grow in numbers. I'm praying that God would raise up more leaders." Paul did pray those things, but when it came to this, Paul said, "The one thing God's put on my heart to pray for you is that you would know He loves you."

It is only the love of God that can transform and renew the unbeliever and the believer. By grace you've been saved. By grace you'll be sanctified.

I'm going to read it, and then I'm going to pray over you. When I say amen, if you need to talk to someone, a pastor or minister will be right up front on these aisles. We would love to talk with you and pray with you. We would love to encourage you in the love of God. We'd love to put resources in your hand.

If you want to get baptized and show the world - demonstrate that you've looked at the cross, received it, and want to imitate Christ - step into the waters of baptism. Show the world what you believe. If you want to become a member, come do that.

Whatever it is, my prayer is for you to know the love of Jesus.

That according to the riches of His glory He may grant you to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in your inner being,
so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith - that you, being rooted and grounded in love,
may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth,
and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.
Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us,
to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.
— Ephesians 3:16-21

Father, in the name of Jesus, I pray right now, in this moment, for Your church and for those standing in front of me. I ask You, Lord, would You give them a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Your love?

I don't know what baggage they have. I don't know what comparisons they make. I don't know the shame they carry. I don't know the things they're striving for. But God, I do know that the cross speaks a better word.

I do know, Lord, that Your love is unconditional, unending, and everlasting. It raises the dead. You want Your children to know that they know that they know they are loved by You. The reality of Your love is that we've been adopted into Your family and that we'll spend eternity with You because of Your love.

So I pray in the name of Jesus that You would open our eyes, that You would open the eyes of our hearts to look to the cross of our Savior.

I pray for those who struggle so much with unworthiness, depression, and loneliness, who have been hurt again and again and again by hurt people. I pray for them right now, Father, that You would lavish and pour out Your love on them.

I pray for those who know in their heads that they're loved, but in their hearts they've drifted. Lavish Your love on them.

May all our lives be lived for Your glory, Your name, and Your renown, Father. May we say, just like John, "We are children of God now."

I ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen.