

The Most Important Commandment

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Preacher: Jon Hueni

[0:00] Revelation chapter 2. We're going to read the first seven verses. To the angel of the church in Ephesus write, I These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands.

I know your deeds, your hard work, and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name and have not grown weary. Yet I hold this against you. You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen. Repent and do the things you did at first.

If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place. But you have this in your favor. You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the church or what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

[1:16] Now would you turn with me to Matthew chapter 22. It's tag team wrestling and everyone's ganging up on Jesus.

One goes into the ring with him and comes out bloodied and beaten, only to tag the next combatant who jumps in to have a go at Jesus.

But he too is bested and crawls out off of the mat defeated. And on it goes. No, it wasn't physical wrestling, but it was verbal wrestling.

Not with half Nelsons and arm bars, but with words and trick questions, trying to catch Jesus in something that he said, so that they could level an accusation against him that would cause them to come out the winners in the eyes of the people who were there.

And so we're here in Matthew 22. And in verse 15, the Pharisees are the first ones on the mat with Jesus. And it's all about the tax question. Well, they drag themselves off defeated and the Sadducees tag in on the resurrection question.

[2:27] And now in verse 34, we read, Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together.

One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question. Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the law?

Now, the rabbis had identified 613 different commandments in the Old Testament. They were often found discussing the relative importance between the commandments, trying to line up these 613 in order.

And they had their own ideas. Which commands were lighter and which ones were heavier? Which ones were smaller and which ones were greater? So he puts the question to Jesus.

Teacher, you tell us, which is the greatest commandment in the law? By greatest, he means the most important.

[3:32] Indeed, those are the words recorded in Luke's account of this encounter. Little did he know that the one standing before him was the one lawgiver who gave all 613 of those commandments.

And that he knew exactly what it was that God wanted most out of men. Which one really is the greatest, the first, the most important command.

Amen. So Jesus replied, Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.

This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it. Love your neighbor as yourself. All the law and the prophets, a term for the Old Testament, hang on these two commandments.

These two commandments sum it all up. And everything else is just commentary. To love God and to love man.

[4:39] So love is the supreme commandment. This double-pronged commandment of love. And we'll begin with love for God this morning because that's where Jesus begins with this man.

The most important thing to do, the first and greatest commandment is to love God. What he wants from you more than anything else is your love.

Now this is no superficial allegiance. It's the whole-souled commitment. As we see, all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, all your strength.

It's to be completely devoted to him in love. He loves the whole of you. He wants the whole of you to love him in return. Now, he's after the singular place in our hearts then.

To be the ultimate. The uncontested. The unrivaled love of our hearts. So Jesus is setting before us the most important command.

[5:48] I wonder if we think of that. Do we, do we, in our Christian lives, think about what Jesus is saying to us here? Do we bring our lives in line with this? He wants my affections, my desires, and my pleasures, to find their center in him.

He wants to be the one you daydream about. The one your mind keeps running back to during the day. He wants to be the one you just can't talk enough to throughout the day.

The one you find most attractive. The one that pulls your heart towards him more than anything else. Any other pull and attraction in the world.

This is what God wants from you more than anything else. Your love. And Jesus here, from this wrestling mat, labels it top priority. The most important.

the first and greatest commandment of all. So that means every day you wake up, this is at the top of your list of things to do. So it's, it's Sunday, January the 23rd.

[6:58] And the most important thing for you today, whoever you are, is to love the Lord your God with all your heart. And we're doing that in a certain way today that we'll not do tomorrow.

But tomorrow when you wake up, the top thing on your list of things to do is to love the Lord your God with all your heart. Twice a day, once in the morning, once in the evening, every pious Jew recited this very command to love the Lord their God with their entire being.

That wouldn't hurt us a bit, would it? To start the day remembering. John, the most important thing today is that God is loved with all of your heart. Let's start there.

And then when I pillow my head at night to remember, out of all the things that got done and didn't get done, you know, today the most important thing was to love the Lord my God with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength.

Wonder if somebody following you around for a week would come to this conclusion. You know, the thing that this guy is about. The most important thing to that woman is that she loves God.

[8:17] This is basic to the Christian life. We're coming back to basics. What's more basic than the most important commandment in all of Scripture? And so we start with love for God.

Number one, loving God is the most important commandment of all. But number two, as soon as we say that, we notice there's been drift because there is a whole lot of religion where this love for God is absent.

By far, the most religious people in Jesus' day were the Pharisees. But for all that they did in their religion, they had no love for God. This was the very element that was lacking in their lives and in their worship such that Jesus must say of them in Luke 11, Woe to you Pharisees!

Judgment is deserved. You deserve judgment. Woe to you Pharisees! Why? Because you give God a tenth of your mint, rue, and all other kinds of garden herbs, but you neglect the weightier matters of the law.

You neglect justice and the love of God. You should have practiced the latter without leaving the former undone. So here are these very religious people and they're so scrupulous in tithing that for every ten sprigs of mint that they cut out of their garden herbs, they give one to God.

[9:45] They're very careful to see that God gets one-tenth. And all the while, they're ignoring the most important commandment of all, which is to love God.

You strain at a gnat and you swallow a camel, Jesus says. You're so careful that one out of ten tea leaves be tithed to God while you swallow and ignore the fact that you're ignoring to love God.

So you're majoring on the minors, tithing garden herbs, and you're minoring on the major, loving God with all your heart.

It seems to me the church in every age is in danger of doing the same thing, drifting away from the most important, overemphasizing lesser things, even good things, and there's no end of these minor things that can replace the main thing.

But all the while that the predominant focus of any church is on these lesser things, the love of God is suffering.

[11:08] And so may it help us to keep the main thing the main thing, and it's to love God with all of our heart. There's a lot of religion today where this is missing. Someone has well said that the difference between saving religion and damning religion is about 12 inches, the distance between your mouth and your heart.

Isaiah 29, 13, the Lord says, these people come near to me with their mouth, and they honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.

And so they miss heaven by 12 inches. all the while claiming to love God.

But God sees their hearts and knows that it's not His. Our God comes to us saying, give me your heart. That's what I'm after, your heart, and all of it.

and He's not content to be thrown a bone on Sunday morning. A prayer here and an offering there.

[12:29] He wants all of you all the time. Your heart set on Him. Amen. Now, if you stood outside of every church on Sunday morning as the worshipers filed out and you asked one question of them, do you love God?

What would you hear? Well, of course I love God. Yes, I love God. That's an easy question. Why do you ask it? Well, here's why, because there's a lot of religion where it's missing.

What many of them mean when they say, I love God, is I love the God that I have in mind, in my mind. I love God as I like to think of God.

I love this non-judgmental God who is nothing but love and who accepts everyone just the way they are and in the end sends everybody to heaven and maybe only a few of the really bad guys go to hell.

Yes, I love God, but if you were to give them an assignment to read through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation and mark down everything that they see about God in this book, who He is and what He does and then return a year later and ask again, do you love God?

[13:59] If they were honest, they would have to say many of them, no, I don't love the God I read about in here. I don't love the eternal God who made everything for Himself.

I don't love a holy God who gives commands to be obeyed and then enforces His laws with His judgments. I don't like a God who expresses His wrath every day, nor a God who chooses which sinners He will show mercy to and save.

I don't like a righteous God who sends all unbelieving sinners to hell and only saves those who believe on His Son and are repenting of their sins.

The God they love is a God of their own making, a God that only exists in their minds. To some of the most religious people on the planet who would have sworn on Jerusalem and all the gold in it that they love God, Jesus said, but I know you, I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts, John 5, 42.

And that's what moves me to say there's a lot of religion that's lacking the main thing. If you ask them, those Jews in John 5, do you love God?

[15:33] Of course we love God. Oh, but He's not the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Not at all. They loved a God they'd imagined was ever so pleased with their religious law-keeping, a God who grades on the curve and really thinks their good deeds outweigh their bad deeds.

But they hated a God who said that they were so sinful that the only way they could go to heaven is if God damned His own Son in their place.

They didn't like that kind of God at all. And so be sure, be sure that the God you are loving this morning is not a figment of your own imagination, but is the only real living and true God that's revealed in Scripture.

this God. Do you love Him? It's not a small thing to say you love God. So be sure it's the true God and be sure it's real love because the third lesson this morning is that those who really love God keep His commandments.

2 John 1.6 says, John tells us this is love. This is love that we walk in obedience to His commands. That's what loving God looks like.

[16:59] And Jesus said it over and over and over again. If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I wonder why is that such a repeated phrase of Jesus?

If not the fact that many people are claiming to love Him who don't obey Him. And so He says it not once but again, don't miss this. Don't claim to love me and not obey me.

Don't go to your deathbed thinking you love God when you don't really. This is what it means to love, to obey my commandments. So recite with me the Ten Commandments.

Let's say them together. You shall have no other gods besides me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything.

You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God. Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Honor your father and your mother.

[18:05] You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

You shall not covet. That's what loving God looks like. How do I love thee? Let me count the ways. Here's ten ways that you love me, God is saying. And then He gives us sixty-six full books explaining what that means to love God that way.

Love is the fulfilling of the law, Romans 13. And all the law and the prophets hang on these two commands, loving God and loving man. So Jesus says, whoever has my commands and obeys them, he's the one who loves me.

And he who loves me will be loved by my Father and I too will love him and show myself to him. But he who does not love me will not obey my teaching. There are a lot of people who think they love God, but they don't really.

[19:20] There are a lot of people who are sure that they love God, but God is just as sure that they don't. And here's the proof.

They're willing to break God's commandments to get to what they really love. love. So here's a man who in his heart of hearts loves money. That's his beloved.

That's what causes his heart to thrive. That's where his mind is going through the day. How can I make more money? How can I keep more money? But he goes to church and he says he loves God.

But here's the proof of that love. What happens when standing between him and his beloved are some stubborn commands of God. on how he gets money and what he does with it.

So here he is with love in his heart for money and yet here stands a command. You shall not steal to get it. And he shows himself willing to trample on God's command to get his beloved object.

[20:26] Or he's willing to trample on God's commands about giving so that he can keep his beloved object.

When a man shows himself willing to trample on God's commandments to get to what he wants he shows that he does not have the love of God in him. Money is God with him.

or any other thing in life that shows itself to trump God's commandments. commandments. No if you really love me you will keep my commandments.

That will be the way that your life looks. Not perfect but when you fall you'll repent and you'll come back on board with what I say. This is love for God to obey his commands and his commands are not burdensome.

But you know without love for God his commands are burdensome. Can you remember that? Can you remember when you were not saved? And those commandments that we recited and all the others that we found sure some of them fit well with us and we obeyed but there were those that just rubbed us the wrong way and we didn't care to walk in those ways.

[21:56] We found them bothersome to us. We found them to be grievous to us. It's burdensome. But love makes us want to do things that please God.

You see it's love that changes that. If we love God we'll want to see him pleased rather than ourselves. And we see this on a human level don't we?

We become different creatures because of the one we love. We seek to please her. We seek to please him. I've seen amazing changes in men due to love for a certain young woman in their lives. Love changes men. I know it. And when the object of love is God the changes are not less but more.

Loving God is a powerful rearranger of a man's life. All the things he used to do and think and say and live like he now loves God and he wants to please him and he comes to this book and he's

reading what it means to love God and he's walking this direction now.

[23:06] He's repenting of his old ways and he's taking on board the commands of God because this is how I love Jesus. This is it. I do what he says. I do it with all my heart.

I do it out of thankfulness for what he saved me from. You see the law is a reflection of God's nature. So if you love God you'll love his reflection in his law.

The Lord Jesus showed his love for the Father in this very same way. John 14:31. The world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me.

Jesus is becoming a man and he wants to demonstrate his love for the Father and so how does he do that? He says, well I'll do exactly what my Father tells me to do. And in doing so the world will learn that I love the Father.

Do you see the connection that it cannot be broken? If you love me you'll obey my commandments. A fourth lesson this morning.

[24:16] Loving God is a supernatural thing and I trust by now we've seen that. So the worldling spends a year reading this book and he's marked down all that is true of God and what God does and he says I can't love a God like that I'm sorry.

And we say of course you can't. You're born with a heart that hates God. You're born with a heart that loves sin and God's a holy God.

Of course you don't love him. Of course you can't. Turn over to Romans chapter 8 if you need this verse. It ought to be one we memorize. It ought to be one that's very familiar with us because it just tells us so plainly that no sinner loves the God of the Bible.

For all they may say it's just not so. Let God be true and every man a liar. This is what God says about the sinful mind. Romans 8:7. The sinful mind is enmity or hostility towards God.

God. It does not submit to God's law nor can it do so. How can you love a God whose law forbids everything that you love as a sinner?

[25:33] We don't love that kind of a God. My heart says I like to do this and there's God's words saying no you can't do that. You can't serve that instead of me.

You can't make that the object of your love instead of me. And at every point our sinful desires are being thwarted by these laws of God. We don't love that kind of God.

And how do we show that we don't love that kind of God? How do we show that we're hostile toward God? Well he tells us we refuse to submit to his law. Isn't that interesting? How do you know a person that loves God?

He obeys God's law. How do you know a person who hates God? He refuses to obey God's law. He plants his feet and says I won't. I'll do this and this and this but I won't do that.

And they make deals with God but they refuse to submit to put themselves under the book and be governed by it. Love is not natural to us sinners.

[26:35] I was not born with one ounce of love to God in my heart. If there's anything there this morning it's all God's fault. Love. It's because he's come and made me a new creature.

Love comes from God. John tells us in 1 John 4:7. Love comes from God. It's not found welling up in the sinner's heart. It comes from God.

Everyone who loves has been born of God. So if I love God it's because God has given me new birth. By my physical birth I didn't have any. And so God had to rebirth me by his spirit and make me a new man in Christ that now will love God in his ways.

Love is the fruit of God's spirit isn't it? The fruit of the spirit is love. It comes from him and we only love him because he first loved us.

1 John 4:19. Our love is but our response to his prior love for us. So that if you love God it's because God has created that love in your heart.

[27:48] Love is supernatural. It's a supernatural thing. We are walking miracles if we love God. He gets all the glory. The fifth lesson, you must fight against a cooling love for God.

You must fight. I must fight against a cooling love for God. Now let's think for a moment. Sometimes it's good for an army to try to get inside of the mind of the enemy.

If I were Hitler what would I be wanting to do about now? Or if I were so and so and put ourselves into their minds and try to think like they think. Okay, so let me get this straight.

Jesus says loving God with all my heart is the most important thing for me to do. What do you think the enemy is going to put a bullseye on and be shooting his arrows at?

Could it possibly be the most important commandment that God is setting before me? Satan is jealous of your love for God.

[28 : 55] We see that in the book of Job, don't we? He hates it. He hates to see people love God. He's out to destroy it or at least to weaken it. Turn to Matthew 24.

Matthew 24 and I believe Pastor Jason may be dealing with this. We've certainly seen something of it in 2 Thessalonians but here in Matthew 24 in verse 12 and 13 we read because, these are Jesus' words, because of the increase of wickedness the love of most will grow cold.

But, he who stands firm to the end will be saved. Our love for God cools the way water in a bathtub cools.

One degree at a time. When you got in it was hot. When you get out it's cool. And here Jesus identifies one of the causes of its cooling.

Because, do you hear that? That's a word about causation. What causes something. Because of the increase of wickedness the love of most will grow cold.

[30 : 19] The word wickedness is lawlessness. Isn't that interesting? Love is obeying God's laws. Hatred is not obeying God's laws. And here's an increase of hatred.

An increase of lawlessness. Wickedness. And lawlessness, wickedness, is like ice cubes in the bathtub. It sends a chill right up the spine of love for God.

Don't miss the causal connection. The increase of wickedness around us can cause a decrease of love within us. It can cause our love to grow cold.

Any compromise with evil eats the heart right out of love for God. God. And where do we live? We rub shoulders with ice cubes in this world.

The world's lawlessness is the expression of their hatred toward God. They just don't live as God says. And that's ice to the Christian.

[31 : 24] That's cold to a hot heart for the Savior. Savior. And so to live in a world and do nothing is to find our hearts cooling toward the Savior.

That's why I tell you in this point, number five, you must fight against a cooling love for God in this world. Let's shudder at the very thought of a cooling love for Jesus.

That's what happened in the church at Ephesus, wasn't it? The passage that we read together, Revelation 2. Let's think about this church for a while.

The church at Ephesus, founded by an apostle. Wow. Someone that received truth directly from Jesus started that church.

And they had an apostolic helper named Timothy to be a resident leader in that church. Wow. And they had one of the New Testament epistles written to them.

[32 : 27] called the book of Ephesians. Wow. This is a promising church, wouldn't you say? And yet, just a generation later, the Lord Jesus, who walks among the candlesticks of his churches, and was walking up and down the rows in Ephesus, must write a letter to them in which he complains about drifting that has taken place.

and he says, I have this against you. You've forsaken your first love for me.

Your first love, the love you had at the first, your first love, that which trumped every other love. It's history.

It's a thing in the past. It's not continuing in the present. Lord Jesus could use the words of Jeremiah 2.2 and say, I remember the devotion of your youth.

I was a bride. You loved me. But the honeymoon is over, and you've moved on to other things. And you need to remember the height from which you've fallen.

[33 : 43] Repent and do the things you did at first, or I will come and remove your candlestick from its place. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life which is in the paradise of God.

Have you thought about that? To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat of the tree of life in the paradise of God. Overcomes what, Lord?

Lord, overcomes a cooling heart. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of the most will grow cold and only those who endure to the end will be saved.

To those who overcome a cooling heart, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God. To those who overcome the world, the flesh and the devil that combine their work to steal our love for Jesus.

We must be overcomers in the battle for a heart for Jesus. To battle to the death, we must be ruthless with anything in our lives that diminishes our love for the Savior.

[35:03] Ruthless. Right eye, pluck it out. Right hand, cut it off. Right foot, you can get through life without it. Rather than to enter into hell with both feet, Jesus says.

That's how serious. You must get the knife out and do radical surgery with anything that's diminishing my love for Jesus.

Is that person in my life diminishing my love for Jesus? It must be put right. Is that activity, can I move right from that activity onto my devotions and talk with Jesus and sing to Him my love?

If not, something's wrong. That's got to go. We must come back and confess our two-timing ways to the lover of our soul, our compromises with sin, and we must taste afresh the kiss of His forgiveness and cry for this first love intensity to return.

More love, O Christ, to Thee. more love, to Thee. We must guard our heart with all diligence. It belongs to Jesus, death to all rivals. When I read Revelation chapter 2, the thing I find amazing is that the high king of heaven would stoop to ask of me the love of my poor heart.

[36:28] that he would even care that John Heaney is not loving him like he ought to. That he would even notice that my love has cooled a degree.

That he would even care that I love him with first love intensity. Does that not speak of his love to me? That he loves me so much that he has to complain John, you've cooled toward me.

We have not loved him as we ought, nor cared that we are loved by him. His presence we have coldly sought and feebly longed his face to see.

Lord, give a pure and loving heart to feel and own the love thou art. Is it not the greatest grief of the Christian that we do not love him more?

that we sin against such love as he has shown to us. Oh Lord, and shall I ever live at this poor dying rate? My love to thee so poor and thine to me so great.

[37:45] So we come back, we repent, we do the first things. We don't leave it as it is because it's cooling and it's going downward. we must fight against the cooling heart.

Let me close with two ways to recover and to maintain first love intensity for Christ. There's many more things that could be said, I think, right away of Jesus' words to the Pharisee about that woman, she who has been forgiven much, loves much.

Yeah, we need that. We're not even going there, but there's many things in the scriptures to instruct us on how to keep and maintain a first love for Christ. But I just want to set two general points before you.

Number one, draw near to God and he will draw near to you. That's a promise. What do you do with your cooling heart? Well, you bring it close to a hot heart.

And that's Jesus' heart for you. It's always hot there. So you bring your cold heart close up to Jesus. You draw near to him with the promise that he'll draw near to you.

[38:52] And what happens when you bring a cold heart up to his hot heart? Well, you start loving him more. As you start tasting and seeing more and more of him and his love for you, you begin to wonder, what's going on here?

I've got to love him more. I've got to obey him more. I've got to die to my own self more and live for his pleasure more. Find my joys in him. Draw near to God and he will draw near to you.

In the manger, see his love stooping. In Jesus' life, see his love working. In his temptations, see his love obeying.

In Gethsemane, see his love sweating. On Calvary, see his love bleeding. In the resurrection, see his love triumphing.

Do all for you, child of God. You've been outside on a cold winter day like today and you've been out there for a while and when you come in, you're in where it's warm but for some reason you're not warm.

[40:02] You know what I mean? You're chilled to the bone. You have that phrase, we speak about it and you've been inside for a while, half hour, an hour and you're still cold. what do you do?

Well, you go to the shower and you turn it up and the whole bathroom gets steamy and you stay in there long enough until the heat penetrates right down to the bone and at last you're warm.

And you can come back out and now you feel warm. The cross, the cross brethren is our hot shower.

and when we have that chill to the bone in our hearts and we feel it, Lord, I'm not drawn to you as I am, I'm drawn to this world, I feel the pull to this temptation and that sin.

What do we do? We've got to run to the cross and we've got to sit there and gaze upon him loving us by laying down his life for us, suffering for us, bleeding, dying for us, living for us, coming again for us.

[41:06] We've got to get back to the cross and there find our hearts warmed again. Because the cross is the standing demonstration of God's love.

God demonstrates his love for us in this, Romans 5, 8, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. So when I speak of drawing near to God, I mean getting right back to the cross and letting your heart soak in those rays of love emanate from the cross.

What wondrous love is this, oh my soul. And keep looking and looking until something of that love starts to thaw the coldness from our hearts.

we live in an icy cold world. That's what I'm trying to say. That's what Jesus is saying in Matthew 24. And because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold.

people. And we can spend hours in front of the world's television programs and in front of the world's recreations and we scarcely give a few minutes to putting our cold hearts close to his hot heart.

[42:29] That's a formula for a cooling heart. That's a formula for a cooling heart. we must fight to get to keep our hearts close to his loving heart.

But a second way, draw near to God. He will draw near to you, but secondly, draw near to God's people. We live in this icy cold world whose lawlessness would cool our love for Jesus.

That's where we live. We rub shoulders with icebergs in a world that hates God and his ways and it's chilling, it's bone chilling out here. What are we to do? Well, that's one reason why when the saints are meeting, you can't afford not to be there.

Hebrews 10, 24, and 25, let us consider how we may spur one another on toward what? Toward love. Toward the most important thing of all.

Let's consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds and let us not give up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another and all the more as you see the day of approaching.

[43:44] One of the means of grace that God has given to keep the heart warm in a cold chilly world is to get all those hearts together and to fellowship and to worship to pray and to sing.

So a wise old minister was making a house call on a member who had not been coming to church regularly and he was invited in and they sat down in front of the fireplace. And so the old minister got up without saying a word and went over to the fireplace and took the poker, stuck it into the hot coals and found one and just shoved one coal off to the side.

He stood and watched it. What was once brilliant red started to fade and cool and turned black and cold.

And after a period of awkward silence he stuck his poker in again and slid that cool coal back into the hot coals and watched again.

as what had been black and cold grew hot and glowing again. He hung up the poker and smiled and nodded to his host and went on his way without a word.

[45:12] Lesson learned, truth applied. One of the means of grace to keep our hearts hot is to gather with the people of God.

God, we can't do without it. We can't do without it. Read Matthew 24, 12 and 13 until you realize I can't live without that.

love. In your temple, oh God, we meditate on your unfailing love.

So we gather to meditate on his unfailing love and we hear the gospel again, the old, old story of Jesus and his love. And he gathers us together and he draws near in the preaching of his word and reveals himself to us and we go away saying, oh how our hearts burned within us when he opened to us the scriptures.

That holy burning heart. Because Jesus comes and preaches in the preaching of the word, revealing himself. And together we sing of that amazing love, how can it be that thou my God should die for me?

[46:36] And our hearts are warm to love him in return. We come together to pray and to praise him for his love and to fellowship around his love. Let me tell you what the loving kindness of God

has done for me and my family this week.

And in hearing my heart grows warm. And in hearing the prayers of God's people I'm stirred to love this God who hears the cries of his people and answers out of his unfailing love.

And we sit down to the feast of love at the Lord's supper together, don't we? Together. Where for the night the whole activities of the church are put on hold, we stop to gaze again at the greatest demonstration of love in the universe.

God's love at Calvary. And it's here that the Holy Spirit sheds abroad God's love in our hearts. And we're given power together with all the saints to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ.

And oh how our hearts burn hot with love for God then. I don't know about you but I find that that sort of thing has to happen over and over and over again in my life in a regular way or I grow cold.

[48:01] It's just that cold out there and I still have a refrigerator in here and I don't get that sort of thing on a regular weekly basis.

I'm drifting. I'm cooling. The gatherings of the church to fan the flames of love.

To overcome the down drag of the world and our own flesh that chill our love for God. We're back to basics folks. We're back to the first, the greatest, the most important command.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, with all your strength. And it's the most reasonable command, isn't it?

There's no more lovable being in the universe than God. There is enough in Him to cause us to love Him forever and ever.

[49:00] never get tired of loving Him. To be ravished every moment of eternity with that love. Oh, remove the dimness from our eyes.

Draw near to this heart to have your own heart warmed. Heaven's going to be full of surprises. One of the things that will surprise us is when we see Jesus, we'll wonder why we loved Him no more than we did.

Oh, for grace to love Him more. William Featherstone of Montreal was 16 years old when he was converted. Shortly after his conversion, he wrote the words to our closing hymn, and it's got the marks of first love intensity all over it.

These are the words of a man who's just been translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of his dear son. He's just been forgiven all of his sins, put under the blood of Jesus, never ever again to be brought up in judgment against him, and brought over into the favor of God for eternity.

How does he write? My Jesus, I love thee. I know thou art mine. For thee, all the follies of sin I resign.

[50:27] There's not a thing in his song, in that first love intensity that should not be found in the oldest Christian here. So maybe as we sing this song, we need to come as poor wandering sheep back to the shepherd, confessing our lack of love even as we sing, oh for greater love for you, Jesus.

Let's stand and sing 547 and have dealings with this lover of our soul. Sing it directly to him. To him. To him.