

The Hiding Place

by Jim Cymbala

The love of God is the hardest message to preach, but it's also the greatest gift of all, and we should strive to give as God gives.

Duration: 34:18

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 13:35, Romans 8:28, 1 John 3:1, 1 John 4:7

Topics: "Love Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker compares the power and wonder of the sun in our solar system to the love of God. Just as we cannot directly look at the sun without harming our eyes, we cannot fully comprehend the depth of God's love for us. The speaker emphasizes that through God's love, we are saved and have the assurance of eternal life. The sermon encourages listeners to open their hearts and strive to understand and appreciate the immense love that God has bestowed upon us.

Transcript

Sometimes I'm not sure what to preach on or I do my best to pray but today I'm more sure that I'm preaching on the right subject. I want to talk about the hardest message that I could ever preach because when you preach there's two parts. There's me and then there's you.

For me this is the hardest message because it's an impossible message. I'm already told in the Word that I can't do it properly and yet I'm to do it. For you it's the message that Satan wants to rob from you more than any other message I could ever preach possibly.

So I want you to remember my words and whatever you're going through the words of Scripture, whatever you're going through now might be deep. You need to hear this today or you might be fine but you're going to need this a week from now or a month from now. But trust me, Satan will try to erase these words.

You know the Bible says when the seed is sown the birds of the air come and try to pluck it out of the ground. This one will be plucked at quickly but you remember it. It's called the hiding place and our passage is from 1st John 3. 1st John 3, behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us that we should be called the children of God.

Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us that we should be called the children of God. Also in Ephesians there's a reference to this subject in this way and I pray Paul says that being rooted and

established in love that you may have power together with all the saints to grasp how wide, how long, how high, and how deep is the love of Christ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge. How do you know something that can't be known? The knowledge of it is impossible to grasp but I want you to open your heart and understand it.

The writer says that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. The text says behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us that we might be called the children of God. One little piece of grammatical housekeeping that we could do at the beginning really literally that sentence should read this way not behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us that we should be called the children of God like look God loves us so much that we're his children but what it's pointing at is behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us in order that we might be called the children of God.

So what John is trying to get us to focus on is the love of God that it took in order to bring us into the family of God. He wants us to behold and study and meditate on this love that took us from so far away so messed up so alienated from God was it's all about the love of God. We're all here today because of God's love.

You're alive today because of God's love. You didn't get diseases that other people got and then they became terminally ill. You're here today.

I'm here today. We're alive all because of the love of God. So the writer is saying that it's good for believers even though it surpasses knowledge to try to understand the love of God.

But how do we do that? It's like going to the Pacific Ocean with a thimble and saying let me measure how much water is in the Pacific Ocean. What do you have? Well I got this thimble. You can't do it with that.

It's like saying to someone look all around the world we have the influence of the sun, the warmth of the sun. We would die if it wasn't for the sun. If the earth was further away from the sun no life could exist.

It's 93 million miles away from us. But plants grow. Life goes on.

Why? Because of the sun in our solar system. So then just look at the sun. Look directly in the sun and then you'll understand how powerful it is and how wonderful it is.

But you can't look at the sun. You can't even glimpse at it for a millisecond or your eyes will burn out. We share in the blessing of it.

We know the influence of it. But how do you look at the sun? You can't look at the sun. And this is the same when God tells us behold what manner of love God has bestowed on us in order that we would become the children of God.

We're not lost today. We're saved. We're not lost.

If we die today we know where we're going. And it's all because of the love of God. Underneath there there's nothing else.

The love is the foundation of everything. How do you measure the love of God? Behold what manner of love. The way the Bible tells us to look at it is that God's love is best seen in contemplating his son Jesus Christ and what he did on the cross of Calvary.

If you want to know what love is, if you want to understand God's love, although you won't understand God's love, though it surpasses knowledge, you have to meditate and study and contemplate the gift of Christ and what he did on the cross for all of us 2,000 years ago. So what do we learn about this love? As we meditate on this love, we see a couple things. Number one, unlike human love, the love that God has for us has nothing to do with any loveliness in us.

When the Bible says God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that world was not lovely. That world was cursing him. That world didn't want him in their lives.

That world was in rebellion. That world wanted to go its own way. That world did not want to submit to his love, but he loved it anyway.

It's different with us, isn't it? How do you fall in love with somebody? Because you think they're the prettiest, the handsomest. How does a man fall in love with a woman? When he falls in love, she's the most beautiful person. She's the prettiest in the whole city.

She's beautiful. I just want to just look at her because that's what love does. Love sees beauty in the object that it loves.

But not only that, listen, her inside is prettier than her outside. She's got character traits. She's got elegance.

She's respectful. She's humble. She's kind.

She's all these things. That's why I've fallen in love with her because these things drew me to her. She's pretty.

She's this beautiful, whatever. Then these other things, that's why I love. I just, I love her because she's to be loved, but not with God.

God loves things and people like us, like me, that are not lovely. A man who falls in love with a girl says, listen, I can't even explain why I love her. You know, that is a mystery in life, how someone loves another person, what that chemistry is.

I'm not talking about lust now, I'm talking about love. What is that chemistry that makes you fall in love with someone? You can't control that. You can't want to fall in love with someone.

You either fall in love or you don't. And nobody has figured that out. But we know one thing, when a man falls in love with a woman, you know, they go, no, let's pass them by.

She's a 10 or even better than a 10. She's fine, which is even more powerful than a 10. But God's love has nothing to do with anything in you and me.

He loves because He is love. He loves because that's His nature. You didn't do anything to earn His love.

So don't let the devil tell you you've lost His love. He loved you before you were born. The Bible says, I have an everlasting love.

He loved me before I was conceived in my mother's womb. How can I understand that? Failure that I am in so many ways. How in the world could God love me before I was born? And yet the Bible clearly says

that this love is so vast, so high.

We use words how deep, how vast, how wide. And they fall paltry at our feet. There's no way to understand this love because it has nothing to do with our loveliness.

Oh, how many are happy God loves you because He is love. Can we just put our hands together and say amen to that? He will love me tomorrow. He loved me yesterday.

He loves you and me because He is love. Another thing as we contemplate Christ coming to earth and what He did on the cross is this. The only thing that God, who so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, the only thing that He asked is to be loved back.

He doesn't ask for money. He doesn't ask for your house. He doesn't want a billion dollars from you.

He's God. But the great thing that God asks in giving His Son and showing His love is would you love me back? And I know the only way I can win your love is to show my love. Now the deepest pain, and this brings mysteries that we don't understand, the deepest pain in the world is to love someone and then not be loved back.

Ask a parent who raises a child and loves that child and then the child gets older and goes, I don't want to know about you. A man or a woman who loves somebody and they don't return that love, that's the deepest pain you can know. I remember many years ago I went with some of the pastors here on a trip.

We went to Grand Rapids, Michigan to go to some Christian used bookstores and just be away and eat meals together and browse and buy some books to help us study the Bible and do a better job in ministering to you. So we landed in Grand Rapids in the airport and I was maybe in the 10th row so I got out but a bunch of people had gotten out before me and when I came out into the area there, the gate area, there was mayhem going on. There was crying, there was screaming, there was gnashing of teeth, there was a feeling that you just stepped out and you felt something is horrible and yet when I looked up there were balloons, balloons in in the gate area.

So I saw men, you know, consoling a guy. I saw the men crying. I saw women just looking down.

I thought, what in the world happened? So I grabbed somebody and I said, what just happened before I got out? Well, a woman came out before you, a young woman with her mother. She was like in the first or second row and she came out and the whole thing was a setup by this guy that loved her and as she came out he knelt in front of her, in front of all the people that he had brought and said, will you marry me? And she took one look at him and she said, no. And then she walked away and mayhem broke out.

I'm telling you, you could feel it. It stayed with me to this day. To this day I remember that because that's love.

I need you. I want to be with you and that's the deepest, deepest pain anybody can ever feel is to be love, love somebody and we all know that. My wife and I were in a bank recently and we saw what we would look like a man, a son with his elderly, elderly mother forcing her it seemed to withdraw some money for him.

It didn't look kosher at all and she actually was getting irritable. She was older, she was getting flustered and he's saying, no sign here, sign here, you know. But when she runs out of money, I wonder how close

that that son will be.

See, when you love somebody and they don't love you back, that's, so this is a mystery that we don't understand because to love someone is to risk yourself. God so loved the world and that means that somehow in the universe, even though heaven is a perfect place, there has to be pain because God's love is rejected every day. While I'm talking all over this city, God is loving and reaching out to people and they're saying, no, I don't want your love and that breaks the heart of God.

The Bible says that Jesus before he was crucified, he came into Jerusalem and he wept over the city. Why did he weep over the city? Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how many times I would have gathered you. All I wanted to do was hold you close to me, but you wouldn't let me and he wept.

The son of God wept. He cried tears because his love was being rejected and I don't know how that all works because it surpasses knowledge, but I know one thing, even though the Bible says God delights over his people and he does and he takes joy over us, think of the pain that there must be with this kind of love because you can't control love. God can't say, well, I'm not going to love that one because I'm going to be hurt because they're going to turn me away.

Love doesn't work that way. When you love, you love. In fact, the Bible says that this bond of love is so incredible that God has for us that in the Old Testament, it says about his people in all their afflictions, he was afflicted.

How in the world can God Almighty be afflicted? You know how God can be afflicted? Because he loves people so much that when he sees them hurting, he feels the hurt. Come on, we know what that's like. Don't you have a child? Don't you have anyone you love and when they you suffer with them? I'm the worst at that.

I cannot take anyone I love. I can't see them suffering. I should be better at it.

I've never gotten better at it. I stay around situations because I have to and I'm called to as a pastor, but if you tell me, you know, go and be with that person while they're suffering, it's the hardest thing in the world if you love them. In all their afflictions, he was afflicted, but you say to me, Pastor Simbala, they brought it on themselves.

What does it matter how they got the pain? When you love someone, you feel the pain. It doesn't matter. You can't glibly say, yeah, well, you made your bed, now sleep in it.

Love doesn't do that. When your daughter is away from God and away from you and you see her self-destructing, you never point a finger and say, you're going to get what you deserve. You weep.

You weep. Somehow God must be weeping maybe over some of us here today. Not with vengeance.

Preachers who present that image of God, that's a travesty. As Martin Luther said, any picture of God outside the face of Jesus Christ is from the devil. Any image of God that any minister presents that doesn't fit with the face of Jesus Christ is false.

And Jesus wept. And Jesus had compassion on the multitude because they were like sheep without a shepherd. Behold what manner of love God has bestowed on us.

He loves us because of nothing in ourselves. And all he wants is to be loved back. What kind of love is that? See, in most people's love, they say they love someone, but they got an angle.

There's very little of this kind of love that you're going to find anywhere. There's another thing as I look at Jesus Christ and God and his love and giving his son, and it's this. You always measure love by the quality of the gift.

Whenever you really love someone, you want to give. Show me anyone that doesn't want to give to someone, they do not love that person. Don't go by anything they say.

Love gives. God so loved the world that he gave. When guys don't want to marry a girl that they say they love because they don't want to give up their own selfish ways, and they don't want to share life and take responsibility financially, they might want to go to bed with her, but they don't love her.

When you love somebody, you want to give. You just give. Anytime you love someone, you want to give.

Give, give, give, but you already gave me. I'll give you more. Why? Because love gives the kind of love that God wants us to look at.

His kind of love. When my oldest granddaughter was born, Susie Joy, was born under peculiar difficult circumstances. My wife and I helped raise her, and she was the joy of our house.

Children had grown up. We had Susie Joy. So she's, because of all the circumstances, she's always held a special place in our hearts.

We love all our grandchildren, but Sue lived with us. She got to be like 11 or 12, and I was always trying to take her out to buy her things. I made up a little story.

I would say, let's go for a ride. She says, mommy doesn't want me to go with you. You buy me too much.

I said, tell her we're going to go just look at the stars, and that was our code between Chrissy and Susie Joy and I. I say, tell your mom we're just going to go out to look at the stars, and I would wheel her to Toys R Us or someplace, and why? You think anyone had to teach me that? You think you had to wake me up in the morning and tell me give something to your granddaughter? That's what love does. So she got to be about 12 or 13, and her mother must have really got after her, because he's married then, and got other kids, and but I still, I had a habit. It's like crack.

Am I right? When it calls, you come. I'm telling you. So one day, I took her to a department store, and we're just walking through it, and there's all people around us, and I said, Susie Joy, do you like those jeans over there? And she said, yeah, they're nice.

I said, come on, I'll buy you one, and she stopped because her mother had programmed her, but I don't listen to her mother. I'm telling you that right now, and she stopped, and she said, Papa, that's enough. You're not buying me anything more today because you spoil me, and you can't stop giving.

Now stop it. Back away. She rebuked me in Macy's.

It doesn't matter. I'll just wait till my next chance. How many know what I'm talking about when you really love someone? Anytime you find someone who's cheap around you, they don't really love you.

Was that profound? When you love someone, you're not a taker. You're a giver. That's a sign of love.

Even between men and women, I wonder sometimes as I counsel couples, there's always a, for a man and woman, they're going to get married as a physical element, but sometimes that's so overshadows for the guy or the girl, usually the guy, that when he's satisfied sexually, he just didn't care. He wouldn't give anything. That's not love.

That's lust, and when you get tired of that, you get tired of the person. My wife pointed out a problem to me sometime in the past. I said, would you talk to this woman? Deeply affected me.

So she's married to this guy, and all he does is yell at her, berate her, verbally abuse her, even in front of their children. Hasn't worked the whole time they're married. She's the one who works, and if he gets any money, he won't give it to her.

It's his money, but when he wants her to go to bed, then he'll use her, and as she wept, I didn't want to break down in front of her, but I was crying inside. The world is so horrible without love. Am I right, brothers and sisters? It's all dog eat dog, and then God says as I close, consider my love.

I gave my only son. Now the Bible talks about the fact that Jesus in the book of John and elsewhere talked about how much the father loved him. So what kind of love does he have for you and me? That he would make his son leave glory, leave heaven, as the second person of the Trinity, father, son, and Holy Spirit.

What kind of love is that that he would say the only way I can get those people I love to be with me is I have to let you go. What kind of love is that? I have one son. I'm not giving him up for anybody, no one, much less enemies and people who curse me, and the measurement of that love is that he had the choice of keeping his son with him or sending him into a cruel world so that you and I would have the ability to be saved, have our sins forgiven, be born again, come in a relationship, become the children of God, and God's love is so great for you and me that he said, son, you go.

Otherwise, I can't have them. I can have you stay, but then they'll never come, so you'll have to go because I got to have them with me. What kind of love is that? But worse, Jesus not only was given and sent to earth, the Bible says he ended up on the cross, and now push really came to shove because crucifixion wasn't the worst way that Jesus died.

Thousands were crucified before him. Thousands were crucified after him. Religious tradition tells us that Peter possibly was crucified upside down.

That's the way he met his end. Crucifixion was developed by the Assyrian empire and further refined like people like the Roman empire, so it was slow. It was excruciating, but that wasn't what the death of Christ and the agony of Christ was about.

It was that at some moment, we don't understand the sins that you committed and I committed every filthy thing you and I have ever said, and that for the whole world was laid upon him, and he became sin. He became a sin offering. We don't understand it, but we just know one thing.

He died for our sins. He bore our sins on his body, the Bible says, and this was God's son. This wasn't some stranger.

This wasn't an angel. This was God's son, his own son hanging on a cross, and then when the sin came on him and the only way to save us was to punish his own son for our sins so we could be free. God had the choice.

Do I curse my son or do I let my son go? No, I'll curse my son and I'll punish my son because I love them so much. Who would do that? What kind of love are we talking about? God punished his own son because he loves us so much. No wonder the Bible says it surpasses knowledge.

What does this all mean? It means, first of all, that we ought to be praising God every day for his love. I don't care if you had a good day or a bad day. Every day is a good day when you remember this.

Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us that we might, in order that we might become the children of God. Saw no loveliness in us, only asked to be loved in return, just giving all the time, and when he had the choice of delivering his son and losing us, he said, no, I'll punish my son so I can have them. But besides praising him, can I give you just two sentences that I felt the Lord brought to me while we were praying for a couple three hours here on Friday night about this subject of the love of God.

I was standing here and I was thinking about the love of God and worshiping God, and these two thoughts came to me. And like I was supposed to tell you this, number one, let the love of God be your hiding place. You know, David, when he was being chased by enemies, King Saul, the Bible says over and again in the Psalms, he said, but you are my rock.

You're my strong tower. I run to you. You are my hiding place.

And I want to tell you something today, when everything is going crazy around you and you can't take it anymore, and you feel you might go under, you got to run into the love of God. You got to let him put his arms around you. You got to affirm it.

You got to sing about it. You got to confess it with your mouth. He loves me.

God loves me. I'm frail. I make mistakes.

Take me as I am. But God, I know one thing I'm sure of today, you love me. What a hiding place that is.

What a place of safety and security that is. It's like one day I was thrashing about in Reese Park as a kid, swimming, and the undertow took me out, and I was thrashing. I didn't know how to swim that good, and I was being pulled out, and I could remember panicking, and out of nowhere, my dad swam, a strong swimmer.

He came up underneath me, and he held me, and just all the turmoil, all the fear, everything disappeared in a second because my dad had his arms around me, and that's how the love of God is today. If you're just been bent out of shape, beat down, you got inner turmoil nobody knows about, you got to just run into God's love. You got to come to his presence and say, God, please hold me and love me and take care of me, but I know you love me, and I find rest in that.

You can't depend on people. People go up, people go down. You can't depend on the economy.

Don't depend on any politician. Don't depend on anybody. Only the love of God is our hiding place.

Can we say amen to that? Lastly, Caleb was playing the keyboard and singing that song and leading us in that song that God gave him. He'll be faithful to the end, and one line that he sang just went like an arrow in my heart. I think the words are, he will be faithful, faithful to the end.

He will provide time and time again, then two lines later it says this, his love is stronger than my pain. You know, we pray for a lot of bodies to be healed, and God does heal body, but I'm thankful that God can heal a broken heart. His love has the ability to heal your broken heart, and if you're here today, someone has hurt you, whether they meant it or not, it doesn't matter.

A broken heart is a broken heart. A shattered arm is a shattered arm, even if something accidentally fell on it, but this love of God, oh, don't we love God for his love? How many just love God today? Lift up your hand. Just love him.

Think how he's loved us. Let's close our eyes. If you're here today and say, pastor, that message was for me.

I got turmoil. I got pressure. I got such stuff going on right now in my life.

I just want to run into that hiding place of God's love today. I want to sing about it. I want to embrace it.

I want him to embrace me, or possibly you're here today with a broken heart. Your heart's been broken. Just get up out of your seat, either one of those two categories.

Not going to lay hands on you. You're not going to do anything. You're just going to, by coming forward to the front, you're saying, God, I receive your love.

People have let me down. People have hurt me, but you will never hurt me. You love me.

Just come out of your seat and stand here. God, thank you for your love. We don't understand it, but we treasure it.

How wide, how deep, how great. Satan, you're defeated because God loves us with an everlasting love, and he will make all things work together for good because of his great love. If we love and take care of our children, how much more will God take care of his children? Help us to live every day praising you for your love.

Give us deeper understanding of your love. Increase our peace and joy, not by what people are doing around us, but by your love. Help us now to love one another.

No wonder you said, by this shall all men know you're my disciples because you love one another, because you are love. How could we be in your family and be full of hate? So help us to love one another and give us a beautiful rest of the day, we pray in Jesus' name. And everyone said, Amen.

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