

Let's go to Luke 6. I started out wanting to finish this chapter with you today, but there's no way that's happening. Love is a confusing thing in our culture. And the reason it's a confusing thing in our culture is because we love everything. We will use that word to describe everything from breakfast to our sporting team, to our spouse, to our children. It's like the only word we have that denotes positive emotion. We have a whole slew of words that denote negative emotion. Now, normally when we say or hear or think the word "love" in our culture, we get this emotive kind of idea of Cupid love that I think we got from the Romans. It's this idea that love is this powerful, emotional force that, when it strikes you, you can't do anything but give in to the mysterious weight of it. And it sweeps us away into everlasting joy. Now, that's a fun idea. On Friday night, I went out with my wife and her parents, and we went and ate a great meal. And then we went and saw a romantic comedy. I don't need to tell you which one; they're all the same movie. And we went and sat down. There's that idea—it's just this force, the naked angel in a diaper—bam—got somebody—and now they have been swept away in this mysterious force called "love." I mean, we can't control it. It's either there, or it's not there. Either the naked angel in a diaper shoots us, or he doesn't; but we can't control it. I mean, I can't just decide to love you. Something's got to happen. That mysterious force has to grab me. It's a great idea.

Now, I have some problems with it. Some are philosophical. Like, should we trust any love that has its beginning in barely pubescent junior high boys and girls? It's a legitimate question. Because I contend that it probably should stay back there in junior high. It's not sustaining. It's not fulfilling. And I'm just talking philosophical issues. It's not safe, and in the end it brings about monumentally more destruction than it ever brings joy. If anyone could shoot me an e-mail and help me understand how this definition of love is at any level safe for anyone? Is not one of the definitions of the word "love" safety? A part of love is being safe. So what safety is there in my wife's life if, at any moment, in any hotel room across the country that I've been in, the naked angel in a diaper pops me, and now I all of a sudden I love somebody else. "Sorry. It's this mysterious, monumental force—It's struck me. I never saw it coming. And now all the love that was once on you has completely gone. And I cannot control Cupid, mama. Sorry. I'm out. I don't love you anymore. I don't love you anymore, and I can't control it. It's just too powerful." There's no safety there. And does that little googly junior high "No, you hang up. No, you hang up. No, you hang up. No, you hang up"—how long does that last for anyone? Now it's like, "Baby. Baby, I wasn't done talking." Now it's like, <Click.> "No, I was saying something, baby." So it's not fulfilling. It is cheap. The reason you have all that is because usually you're under the delusion that the person's perfect. So how quickly does perfection fade and the need for grace begin to reveal itself? And I know I put a lot of people in a rock and a hard place tonight. I know some of you are like, "How long 'til it fades, baby?" The answer to that is: It never fades. But it does.

Now, all I've talked about is philosophical reasons right here. I have monumental biblical reasons that this is problematic. And listen, if the Scriptures are the triune God's self-disclosure of life as He designed it, revealing Himself to us in all things, then what God is trying to lead us to when He teaches on love is the deepest, most vibrant, most sustaining, life-giving kind of love there is. And He's going to take love to a place that's very, very, very difficult to comprehend. In fact, I would tell you this right out of the gate. Outside of His regenerate work in your heart, there's no possible way you can experience the kind of love that He's going to unpack tonight in this text. No way. I don't care how virtuous you are, this will take a divine act. So let's kind of deepen our understanding of what love is versus what it's not, and then let's let the Scriptures kind of talk about why this is a good idea, because it's not going to sound good at first. We'll pick it up in verse 27. "*But I say to you who hear...*" Now I need to stop. Over and over and over again in the teachings of Jesus, He's going to say things like this: "He who has an ear, let him hear. He who has been given eyes, let him see." And here He goes again,

“For those of you who can hear.” He is unapologetically saying, “There are some of you who will be unable to hear what I’m about to say. You do not possess the spiritual depth, width, the regenerative power of the Holy Spirit in your life, so what I’m about to say to you might even sound offensive. But he who has an ear, let him hear. He who has the ability to hear, listen.” And if you’ve ever wondered why religious people get angry, nothing is more precious to religious people than the illusion of their own virtue. And when Jesus starts to attack and remove that and reveal the need for grace in everybody, those who have, in their mind, bought into the illusion of their grandeur, tend to get a little upset. So let’s go here. *“But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies.”* So already we’ve got some problems in regards to our current definition of Cupid love and biblical love. *“Love your enemies.”* So the question we’ve got to answer is: how? How do you love your enemies? And we could define who your enemies are here. We’ll probably do some of that here, but let’s look at how we’re to do that; we’ll talk about each. *“But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you.”* These are the ones that require initiative on our part. So watch what He does to love here and how He expands it. He just says, “Do good to those who hate you.” I don’t know if you’ve had the crazy neighbor yet. You’ll eventually get him. If you move enough, you’ll get the crazy neighbor. If you’ve ever had that dispute where there’s that one patch of grass between your two houses and neither one of you will mow it. Before you know it, it turns into Vietnam. There’s ambushes in there. People go missing. Here’s what the Scripture just says. Here’s our initiative as believers, those who hear or those sealed with the Holy Spirit. Here’s our job for those outside the kingdom who hate us. What is our role? What is our response? What is our initiative? Do good. Which means if the crazy neighbor hates me, I mow that part of the lawn. If the crazy neighbor hates me, then I go get his trashcan, and I bring it up and set it up next to his garage door. If the coworker hates me, I do good. If the crazy cousin—you know, crazy cousin Carl—everybody’s got him. If you don’t—hey, Carl. We do good. Let’s not do this. Let’s not be church folk tonight. And what I mean by that is, let’s not hear biblical truth and apply it in some ambiguous fashion. Or maybe know it but don’t apply it at all. Or—here’s my favorite down here—know it so we can tell others to do it. So is there someone who’s an antagonist against you? Someone who hates you? Someone who would actively work against you? The Scripture says you take the initiative. You do good. It’s active. It’s active tense. You do good to them. You seek out good to do to them. Now, the Scripture says that by doing good to our enemies, we’ll heap burning coals on their heads, but I don’t know that it’s the heart of Christ here that you do good to get them. “I want them to be miserable; I’ll do good to them.” No, do good to those who hate you. That requires action on your part, initiative on your part. Do good to those who hate you.

*“Bless those who curse you.”* So if someone—a neighbor, coworker, family member, whoever—if they’re cursing you, saying wicked things about you—then the Scripture says our response to that is to then in turn, bless them. Which means when someone goes, “You know what such and such said about you? They said you were this and you do this, and you’re this and you’re that…” You go, “Really? Because I don’t sense that’s his character. He seems like a great guy. In fact, he seems like a man you could trust.” It means that our response to being cursed is to in turn then find the strength in them and bless. This is really at best a dysfunctional relationship, correct? Yeah. If someone curses you, you bless them. And then, *“...pray for those who abuse you.”* Which means we don’t get to lay in bed at night and wish we could replay it. In fact, I’m telling you just watch that thing, because that’s what we’ll call a root of bitterness starting to drill down into your heart. And then what ends up happening is like thirty years later, you’re still replaying that scene in the break room. You probably need to let that go, move on. So instead of sitting there and replaying the scenario where you had the jab, where you had the thing to say—instead of doing that, what we do is we pray for those who harm us. Pray for those who abuse us. Pray for those who would attack us. That we lay in bed at night and ask God to move in them, stir in them, heal them, help them, deliver them, save them. But we’ll get much deeper

into that here in a moment.

Let's keep going here. Because you have the initiatives—all those are initiatives. Do good to those who hate, bless those and pray for those. Those are initiatives. Now here are reactions. You know what's funny? I can still remember the first time I heard verse 29. *"To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also."* Now, I remember the first time I heard that. Something just doesn't sit well with me on that one. And I'll tell you, I don't think that it means how a lot of people have interpreted it. Lauren and I were at a nice hotel just a couple of months ago, and we were told, "Hey, there's been muggings lately around the hotel. Be really careful." So on the way out one night, I was like, "Look, if somebody tries to mug us, I'm kicking him in the gut. You run for help." We already had the plan. My plan was not "Here's my wallet." Bam. "Kick me." My plan—kick them in the gut, punch them in the throat. Send Lauren to get some help. And I know you're looking at me, thinking I'm all gangly; but don't let the gangly fool you. I'm like a puma. I don't even know what that means, but I'm like one. Let me keep reading some of this because there are two of them that I think go together. *"To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either."* Here's how we are to react. If we get slapped on the face, we offer up the other cheek, and if they take our coat, we give the tunic. Now let me give you the background. Let me give you some history here. Because there's some history that makes this very, very weighty and brings some clarity to what's going on here. In the book of John, John tells this same group a more extensive version of this. He tells them that they're going to be thrown out of the synagogue, that it's coming for them. If you'll watch Jesus—it's one of the reasons why I have such a hard time with certain theologies that think, when all is said and done, there's going to be no suffering for us at all, we're going to get sucked right out of here. I've got some monumental problems with that. One of them is the Bible. And over and over and over and over again, you've got this message that, as believers in Christ, there will be an element of suffering, there is going to be an element of suffering and that suffering's going to be because of our obedience to Christ—not just random suffering but it's going to occur because we do what we've been commanded to do by Jesus here. And so, He's teaching one of those kind of lessons, and He's going, "Hey listen, you're going to be thrown out of the synagogue." Which isn't like being thrown out of a church in the U.S. Because at this point, in this piece of history, this time period, to be thrown out of the synagogue is to be thrown out of pretty much all social networking that you had. It was to truly be ostracized. And He's saying, "You follow Me, and you're going to get thrown out of the synagogue." And one of the things that would occur when you got kicked out of the synagogue is, in the ceremony of you being thrown out, the last thing they would do is slap your face. Now let me show you this actually happening. Jesus is arrested. He is brought before the high priest. He is questioned, which, by the way, was illegal. They were supposed to call two witnesses. Instead of calling the witnesses, they questioned Jesus. Jesus did not respond. Instead, said, "Call the witnesses like you're supposed to." And the servant of the high priest did what? Struck Him. "You're out." Struck His face. This is a way to shame the person. You ain't going to kill anybody with a slap. You ain't lived if you ain't been slapped. Everybody's been slapped. Slapping ain't going to kill nobody. What does it do? Like you let a man slap another man. I'd rather be choked out than somebody slap me. Somebody open hand slap me—that's just complete disrespect and shame. I mean, punch me in the face, don't slap me. It's an act, it's a work of shame. And on the way out of the synagogue, they would be slapped. So He says, "When they slap you..."

Now, I think the second thing is very, very similar. He's talking about the outer garment or the outer coat. It's hard for us because we have, even if there's not much, we have a wardrobe. Most of us have more than one coat. Most of us have multiple sweaters. We have wardrobes. That's not so much the case back here. They didn't go to the closet and wonder which one to wear. No, you had an outer cloak that would actually double, the majority of the time, for their blanket at night. And you get into

1<sup>st</sup> century Christianity, one of the things that the early believers would endure is they would yank from their coats from them to make them feel the sting of winter. They wouldn't have anything to cuddle with at night. They'd be going to bed freezing cold with no blanket. So they would strip their tunic from them. So what is Jesus doing? He's preparing. He'd already said, "You're going to get kicked out of the synagogue. You're going to be persecuted." He goes, "When that happens, when people persecute you because of Me, when people react to you loving them like I'm commanding you to love them, don't retaliate." A perfect example of this would be when Stephen in the book of Acts is about to be killed. They dragged out of the synagogue where he was preaching, they stripped off his cloak, and they began to pelt him with rocks until he died. But do you remember his prayer? "Father, do not hold this sin against them." Who was standing in the crowd? Paul, Saul of Tarsus, who would become Paul, who wrote 75% of the New Testament. The divine act of love, filled with the Holy Spirit, loving those who hated him, laid the groundwork for 75% of our New Testament.

Let's keep going here, because there's a couple of more actions here. Verse 30. "*Give to everyone who begs from you.*" It just says it. This isn't in reference to a con man. Honestly, it's a weird Greek word. It doesn't even actually mean like a poor beggar sitting on the side of the road. It has much more to do with just someone who identifies they're in genuine need, knows you're a Christian, knows you're a believer and so takes advantage of your hospitality, takes advantage of your generosity. They know you're a believer. They know you'll give; so they ask. They have no intention of repaying. He says, "Give." Let's read this next one. "*...and from the one who takes away your goods do not demand them back.*" If you'll think of the Hebrews 11, it talks about how the believers in the 1<sup>st</sup> century were having their houses ransacked. There were people who were stealing all their stuff, and then if you went and visited somebody who was in prison for believing in Christ, then people would come and ransack your house while you were visiting the people who were in prison whose houses have already been ransacked. This is all very prophetic stuff. This is all stuff He's saying, "It's coming." Here's how you need to behave in that moment. And then here's the Golden Rule. "*And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.*" Now, He's going to make it very clear in the next couple of verses, but He already said at the beginning. Right here, do unto others as you would want done to you if you were in the same scenario as them. So here's what I mean. If you were outside of the grace of God, you were outside of the forgiveness of God, you were outside of the love of God, how would you want believing men and women to respond to you in order that you might see the gospel clearly in them? If we battle not against flesh and blood, then we have no human enemies. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you if you were the one outside.

Now, I'm glad He doesn't just stop there. He's going to give an explanation of the command, and I'm unbelievably grateful that He does. Now before we do this, I want to clarify something here. This is how we are as believers to love our enemies, those outside of the kingdom. Now, this is not how we love those who are believers. Those who are believers are to be engaged, disciplined, confronted and if need be, thrown out of fellowship for their refusal to submit to the commands of Christ. Do you understand that? And that in itself is an act of love in the hope that they might repent and come back. So don't take what He just said and unpack it onto believers who refuse to be obedient to what the Scriptures command of them and say, "I'll do whatever I want, whenever I want. I don't have to submit to Christ or anyone." Because that's two different animals. I wish I could go into that in a lot more detail, but you don't want me to. Now I eventually will, because Corinthians is very, very clear. In fact, in the book of Corinthians, Paul goes on a tirade about the arrogance of the Corinthian church of allowing a so-called believer to stay in their midst who is currently sleeping with his father's wife. And they were like, "Well, grace will just have to cover that. I mean, what are we going to do? Who are we to call him out?" Paul's like, "You're the church. Call him out. It's your pride that makes you not call him out." Anyway, that's a whole sermon for free; I don't have time. Let's look at the

explanation. Verses 32-36. *“If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you?”* What He’s talking about here is putting people under your obligation by doing something nice for them when you claim to collect it later. You know what I’m talking about there? “Oh, I’ll do good here, and then later I’ll just remind him of that good I did for him.” *“Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount. But love your enemies and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.”* Now there are two things here. There are two reasons why He says, “Love your enemies. Love your enemies. Love your enemies.” And the first thing He’s pointing out—I don’t know if you’ve picked up on this word “benefit.” Look how many times He says, “It’s no benefit to you. It’s no benefit to you. It’s no benefit to you.” If you remember, what we said early on, and what we try to say, honestly, every week here, is that God, when He gives commands, is not giving a command in order to reduce pleasure but always leads you into the deepest pleasure. Because God’s not glorified by begrudging submission but rather an overflow in joy, depth, beauty, life—all those things. So He’s saying here, “If all you do is love those that love you, there’s no benefit there. There’s no benefit there. There’s no benefit there.” He’s going to say it over and over and over again.

So, what are the benefits of loving people that our knee-jerk reaction is to choke the life out of them? Let’s look at it. He’s going to list a couple of them, and I want to talk about a couple others. Look back in verse 35. *“But love your enemies and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High [God].”* The way this is worded in the Greek is that “You will be viewed as, you will be seen as, you will be known as sons of the Most High God.” This kind of love that He’s unpacking here—that Jesus is unpacking—stands in such contrast to how the rest of the world lives and loves, that to view it and to see it and to be anywhere near it, creates in the heart of the seer, even if they’re not a believer, an understanding that “If there is a God, this man, this woman knows Him, because this is not natural.” This is not natural. When you attack somebody, they attack back. When you bless somebody, they bless back. This is the yin and the yang. This is how the universe operates. God says, “Not how I designed it. Somebody hates you, you do good to them. Somebody curses you, you bless them. Somebody abuses you, you pray for them. You lend without getting in return. Somebody mocks you, jabs you, pushes you because of My name, you don’t retaliate.” If you’ve been here a lot, sometimes I get real agitated at most Evangelical thought and action, but do you see how contrary some of what we do is to what Jesus is commanding here? Let me give you an example. I can’t tell you how many church signs I’ve passed over the years during the summer that say, “You think it’s hot here?” Do you think God would ever be that trite about hell? And could someone help me with the point of that? I mean, is someone going to go, “He’s got a point. We’re going—11:00AM.” That sign isn’t for the lost. Who’s it for? It’s for the believer to go, “Oh, that’s right.” What in the world? Or that, “Oh, we’ll see one day”—that thing? It’s like we’ve been jabbed. We’ve been abused. We’ve been mocked so our response is to sin back. This is a different kind of love. It says, “You love like this, people will go, ‘If there’s a God, that fool knows Him. If there is one, he knows Him.’” By the way, this also stands in strong, strong contrast to most world religions. Even when most other philosophers and religions give the Golden Rule, they switch it and make it negative. So they make it starting with you. They’ll say, “If you don’t want that done to you, don’t do it to others.” Can you see that that’s a flip? That’s not the biblical command. The biblical command is, “Do unto others what you would have them do to you,” not the reciprocal negative. We’ll be known as sons and daughters of God if we can love like this.

That’s the first benefit. Here’s the second one. Everybody in this room’s been harmed, everyone.

Everyone's been betrayed. Anybody not been betrayed? Is there anyone left? I mean, I know my daughter's in here, maybe her. She's five. She just doesn't know I have yet. Everybody's been betrayed. Don't all of us still have that moment we think back on and still get a little upset about? Where that one person said that to us, that one person did that to us, that coworker did that. I mean, don't we all have that somewhere? And sometimes it comes out of nowhere. One of the benefits of loving our enemies, praying for those who persecute us, giving those things over to God rather than holding them in, is—we talk about all the time that it's evident, honestly, even to the secular mind that something's gone wrong with humanity. Something's gone wrong, because education hasn't healed it, and medicine hasn't healed it. And Oprah hasn't been able to heal it yet. She's working on it. She's been giving, there's things happening; but we haven't been able to fix it. Everybody knows something's wrong. Go to the bookstore. The biggest section is "Self Help." We're always trying to fix what's gone wrong in us. Something's cracked. Something's broken. And if we then are obedient to the commands of Christ in loving those who hate us, loving our enemies then that restores us to the rhythm that God created the universe to function in, and now all of a sudden, depth and meaning, those very elusive ideas, become more and more knowable as we submit ourselves to how God designed things. That's another benefit. When David's doing real well, in the book of Psalms, he talks about how well he sleeps. I think he only says it once, but he says it. You know, in that six months he did great. He's like, "Man, I slept well." That's what this is talking about, that kind of peace of knowing that we're lining up with how God wired things.

I've got a couple more here. If you love like this, then I think you can eventually turn the hatred meant towards you and towards us and towards our faith, around. I wish we could get into the next bit of the text here that says, "Don't judge lest you be judged." We'll do that next week. But hear me, if someone is just waiting for you to judge them, to attack them, to work them—they've had bad experience with Christians, which is a lot of people—but instead they're spiteful towards you, they're angry towards you. We picked up coffee a few months ago, and as soon as the guy found out it was for a church, he practically threw our coffee when he gave it to us. He got angry. I don't know him. I didn't do anything to him. So what do we want to do? Ridiculously love him. Like ridiculous tip. Helping him clean up. "Oh, you dropped this. Let me clean that up for you." Why? In the hopes that what? By loving someone who has nothing but animosity towards me right now, he might see the grace, love, mercy and forgiveness of Christ. And then the last benefit—I know nobody likes this one, but I'll just throw it out. Anytime God asks you to do something that's absolutely impossible, and everything inside of you screams to do the opposite; and you have no choice but to die to yourself before Him—that's a benefit. Because we live in America, that doesn't happen to us a lot. Is anything else desperately throwing you at the feet of Christ right now? Like anybody right now going, "Oh, I don't know what I'm going to eat. We haven't eaten anything in days. Help us, Jesus." No, you're not. So this kind of love, this impossible kind of love...yeah.

Let me finish this out. Verse 35 again. "*But love your enemies and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil.*" Anybody else think we misread that at first? He is kind to the ungrateful and evil. He's kind in two ways. You ready? Way number one is common grace, which means very wicked people who hate God, hate anything about God, are breathing God's air. They're having sex which God designed. They're eating food that God created. That is common grace given to all men. And that's one way He shows kindness to ungrateful, evil people. But according to this text, what's the second way? Us. We become that visible presence of the kindness and the mercy of God towards those unworthy in order to authenticate the message of the gospel in the eyes, ears, hearts and minds of people. We love the unlovable, aggressively. We serve those who despise us. This is one of those ideas that makes us so opposite of the other major religions. One of the reasons Jesus is

preaching and teaching this to this group of people right now at this time is because they believed it was virtuous to hate those who weren't their neighbor. Which is why Jesus is going to come back and say, "Who's the neighbor in this story?" and makes the neighbor a Samaritan. Because they had made it virtuous to hate back with venom those who hate them. Jesus is like, "Oh no, no, no. That's not virtuous. It's wicked. Wicked is what it is." We love back. We love deeply.

The Scriptures say, "*These three things remain: faith, hope and love; and the greatest of these is love.*" Does not Jesus model this constantly? The night He's arrested, they show up and grab Him; and Peter pulls out his sword and whacks a guy's ear off. Jesus is like, "Peter, put that away. If you live by that thing, you're going to die by it." He picks up the dude's ear and sticks it back on his head. You'd think the arrest would be over, wouldn't you? It probably would have been if it wasn't part of the predetermined plan of God—book of Acts. They drag Him in and while they're dragging Him in, He looks back to Peter and says, "Do you not know that at any moment I could call out by the word of My mouth a legion of angels and kill everyone here? My life is not taken from me; I lay it down. These men aren't taking My life. I can't be killed. I'm God in the flesh. The very glands that enabled them to work up spit into their mouth and the muscles required to make their lips move to spit it onto My face are held together by the word of My mouth. They don't take My life. I freely give it. The metal that they'll use to drive nails through my hands and feet—I spoke that metal into being. It obeys Me. I could make it disappear in a second. The wood that they'll nail Me to—the Father and the Holy Spirit, together We just spoke it into being. We've known this particular tree. We've known all the trees, but this one in particular, before there was time. No one takes My life; I lay it down." And then I don't know if you've thought about this. They stripped His tunic. They took His cloak. They slapped His face, and then they just beat Him and beat Him and beat Him. He just never says anything. You'd think He'd just kill one of them. That guy—bam—gone—just melt him right there in front of everybody. In fact, even as they're mocking Him, what's He doing? "Forgive them for they know not what they do." And then right before He breathes His last, He utters what I think is some of the greatest words in all of sacred literature: "It is finished." What is? Absorbing the wrath of God so that we might be loved, we might be forgiven, we might be children of God; so He might send the Holy Spirit to empower us to love like this. And then just to show us that that's not the end ever, no matter what kind of ridicule we take, no matter what kind of sorrow is bestowed upon us, no matter what kind of hatred is pent towards us, what happens? He comes back to life. That's why you've got to get this through your head, because I get that there's a lot about Jesus on the TV right now. There's a lot about Jesus being written. Jesus is not just some kind of marginalized Jewish ethicist. He's not a moral philosopher. You've got to be careful with all these people just talking about, "Live like Jesus lived. Live like Jesus lived. Live like Jesus lived." I absolutely agree with that as long as we don't stop there. Because it's not just, "Live like Jesus lived." Jesus was God in the flesh. There must be a crying out for the Holy Spirit of God in our lives and a death to ourselves, not just "Let me try to live like Jesus lived." You ain't going to be able to pull that one off. If you've ever wondered why we're in here—if you're not a believer and you're in this place—I would say you're in here tonight because somebody's loving you. If you've ever wondered why we raise our hands and why we're just genuinely odd, it's because the love that we're trying to describe to you tonight out of this text was lavished upon us by Jesus. And that same love and that effectual call, it's there for you. It is. I know you've probably heard a lot of different things and a lot of "what it is to be a Christian and what it's not to be a Christian." I get it. It's a really, really confusing time with all the information out there, most of which I don't think you should believe. But the example of this kind of love is God in the flesh, Jesus the Christ. And for all those who would call out upon His name: grace, mercy, kindness. And for those who won't, what's our role? Love, blessings, prayer. God help us.

Let's pray. "Jesus, help us. I know for some of us this is very real and that some of us right now have

people who do hate us, and some of us right now we have people who are cursing us. And right now we have people who are abusing us. And so we're going to need Your help. We need Your power. I pray for those men and women in here who don't know You or just kind of questioning You and have come to hang out with us just to hear a little bit more about You. God, I pray that You would seal these things in their heart, that they might hear, grasp and understand, that You might show them who You are and what this thing is. I pray that You would forgive us where we have failed so sadly to do this, and I thank You for the grace that covers our failures. I pray that we would leave this place taking the initiative to love those who hate us. Help us. It's for Your beautiful name. Amen."