

God Is NOT Doing a New Thing

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[0 : 00] Okay. Okay, good morning, everybody. Great to see many of you that we haven't seen for months and months. Welcome back to church. It is really wonderful to be able to gather and to worship and to see you face to face.

So great to have you with us this morning. The feeling I get is our family did some camping over the last few months.

And, you know, when you camp, you sleep really badly. And so, like, every half an hour, you're looking at your watch or your phone and how long until morning. And it's like half past two.

And you kind of doze back to sleep and you wake up and you look at your phone and it's only three o'clock. And you're kind of waiting for the sun to rise. And then eventually, at around half past five, you see the first rays of sun.

And it feels like morning is coming. And in some ways, I feel like morning is coming. The rays of sun are starting to begin to shine.

[1 : 00] And hopefully, we are moving towards some level of normality. But it's really wonderful to be with you all today. Now, one of the questions I want us to ask is, we kind of like life is transitioning.

Hopefully, the fifth wave is coming to an end and is going to be buried. Hopefully, there won't be a sixth wave. But, you know, but for now, we're in this transition. And what might God want to say to us as the fifth wave passes, as we go back to school and back to work, as we start together, as life starts to get back to normal, what might God want to say to us this morning?

Well, we're going to look at a passage. Annabelle's going to come and read to us in a few minutes' time. And we're looking at this passage. That's a very well-known passage. But the reason we're going to look at it is because this passage in Deuteronomy 6, the nation of Israel, are also at a time of transition.

And a time of transition for two reasons. The one reason is because Israel is coming out of the wilderness. If you know the story of the Bible, they left Egypt. They came into the wilderness. And they've been there for 40 years. And for 40 years, they've wandered through the wilderness, kind of in this limbo stage, neither in the promised land, but also not back in Egypt, wondering, are they coming or are they going?

[2 : 18] They've been waiting to go into the promised land, this land that is described as a place of rest, a place of milk and honey. And they've been waiting. And now at this juncture, they are finally ready to get into the promised land.

They're about to go in. And so Moses speaks to them these words on the cusp of this new season. But the other reason why Israel is in this transition is because Moses, the great leader, the guy who helped Israel come out of Egypt and into the promised land, he's not going to go in with them.

He is old and he's about to die. And he's going to hand over the reins to Joshua, the new young leader. And so in some ways, the book of Deuteronomy that we're going to look at is Moses' final sermon to the people of God, the nation of Israel.

It's kind of like his last words. As they go into their next season, these are his final words to them. He's led them out of Egypt. He's led them through the wilderness for 40 years.

They're about to go in. And he's not going with them. And so this is what Moses wants to say to them. What might God want to say to them in this next season? And what might God want to say to us as we come out of the fifth wave and into this season of normalcy to some degree?

[3 : 36] Well, Annabelle is going to come and read God's word to us from Deuteronomy chapter 6, and then I'll pick up again. The scripture reading today comes from the selected portions of Deuteronomy chapter 6.

If you read along in the bulletin, note that we have the entire chapter printed for your reference. So please skip to the appropriate verse. Starting from verse 6, we read.

Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

And these words I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children and talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise.

You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

[4 : 39] And when the Lord your God brings you into the land that he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, and to give you with great and good cities that you did not build, and houses full of good things that you did not fill, and cisterns that you did not dig, and vineyards and olive trees that you did not plant.

And when you eat and are full, then take care, lest you forget the Lord, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

It is the Lord your God you shall fear. Him you shall serve, and by his name you shall swear. You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are around you.

For the Lord your God in your midst is a jealous God. Lest the anger of the Lord your God be kindled against you, and he destroy you from off the face of the earth.

Then from verse 20, When your son asks you in time to come, what is the meaning of the testimonies and the statutes and the rules that the Lord our God has commanded you?

[5 : 51] Then you shall say to your son, We were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt, and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. And the Lord showed signs and wonders, great and grievous, against Egypt and against Pharaoh and all his household before our eyes.

And he brought us out from there, that he might bring us in and give us the land that he swore to give to our fathers. And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God for our good always, that he might preserve us alive as we are this day.

And it will be righteousness for us if we are careful to do all this commandment before the Lord our God as he has commanded us. This is the word of God.

Amen. Okay, great. Thank you. Let's just pray briefly as we look at this passage.

Heavenly Father, we come before your word this morning. In this season where things are starting to open up, we can start to gather as a church and worship and sing and pray. Kids can go back to school and we can go back to the office.

[7 : 07] God, this season of transition, we want to steward this season ahead of us well. We don't just want to get sucked into the rat race of life.

And before we know it, life is just the way it's always been. And yet we forget about you. So Father, we pray, come and speak to us. Let your word come and find a place in our heart. God, you know where each one of us are at this morning.

And won't you come by your spirit and meet us, God, and both encourage us and challenge us. And let your word speak to us. We ask you to be here in your awesome name. Amen.

So this passage that Annabelle read to us, along with two other passages, Deuteronomy 11 and Numbers 15, in the Jewish faith is called the Shema.

And the Shema makes up the prayers, the daily prayers that Orthodox Jews will pray every morning and every evening. It's like some of the most important part of their scriptures and what they will pray on a daily basis.

[8 : 07] And the word Shema in Hebrew means hear or listen. And it comes from the first word in verse 4. Annabelle read it to us. Hear, O Israel.

In verse 3 again, I think, Hear, therefore, O Israel. Listen up. Turn your attention to me. If you have children, I'm sure you've gone through this experience.

Claire and I had this recently at the dinner table where we had to explain to our children the difference between hearing and hearing. Right? There's a difference between hearing the audio sounds and actually responding or paying attention.

So you say to your kids, Okay, dinner is here. Let's come to the table. And they're grossed in a book or they're drawing something or they're watching something. And what do they say? They say, Yes, yes, I'm coming now.

And then three minutes later, you call them again. Say, I'm coming. I'm just finishing the page. And then seven minutes later, you've got to call them again. And they're listening. They're responding. They're nodding their heads, but they're not listening.

[9:07] Right? Or maybe you've had this where you're trying to have a conversation with somebody and they are on their phone. And they're nodding their head and they're saying, Mm-hmm. Uh-huh. Yeah, I'm listening to you, but they're not really listening.

Right? Well, God here speaks to His people. And at this critical juncture in Israel's life and history, they've just come out of this season in the wilderness and God doesn't want them just to politely nod their heads and say, Mm-hmm.

We're listening. He wants their attention. I'll often say to my girls when they're not listening, I'll say, Okay, look me in the eye. I want your attention. Are you listening to me?

Hear, O Israel. Listen up. I've got something important to say to you. And what does God want to say to His people? Well, look what He says. Hear, O Israel, The Lord our God, the Lord is one.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. These commands that I'm giving you today shall be on your heart.

[10:12] Now, this passage is obviously very famous because later on, you know, in the Bible and the Gospels, somebody comes to Jesus and says, Jesus, there are 600 commands in the Old Testament.

Which one is the most important? I mean, out of 600, I can't do all of them. What must I prioritize? And Jesus picks this very verse. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.

And so all Israel knew this was kind of the central command along with, you know, the first of the Ten Commandments in chapter 5. You shall have no other gods before me.

This was the central command for Israel in the Old Testament. On Wednesday afternoons at the office, we have a preaching meeting where we always review the last Sunday sermon and give critical feedback.

And then the preacher needs to present some ideas and thoughts for the coming Sunday. And we always ask this question, in one sentence, what are you actually trying to say? Because if you can't summarize in one sentence, you don't know what you're saying, right?

[11:12] It's a good test. In our CG, we often say at the end of Thursday night, okay, in one sentence, what does God try to say to you tonight? Summarize it. Well, you could take the book of Deuteronomy, Moses' final sermon, and in some ways, summarize it in one sentence.

Moses, what are you saying to us? As we go into this next season, the promised land, what are you saying? You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your might.

Well, Lord willing, this won't be my final sermon at Watermark. Hopefully, we've got many more years here. But we face the same situation. We're kind of coming out of this holding pattern, being neither in Egypt, but neither in the promised land.

We're in this kind of limbo. It hasn't quite been 40 years, even though it might feel like that for some of us. But we're in this pattern. What does God want to say to us? Here, O people of Watermark, people of Hong Kong, listen up.

The Lord our God, the Lord is one. We shall love God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength. Now, this passage, this verse is very famous, but what does it actually mean?

[12:23] What does God actually say? Well, the point that God is making here is that God's people are to be those who treasure God and trust Him and are devoted to Him with all that they have in every area of their life.

The point here isn't that we are meant to spend hours debating. What does Moses mean by heart and what does he mean by soul? You know, what part of you is your heart? What is your soul? Why does Jesus add mind, but Moses forgets to add mind?

The point here, Moses isn't giving us a diagnostic of the faculties of the human being. The point really is all of your life and every area of your life, bring that before God and treasure Him and trust Him and devote yourself to Him in all of those areas.

In fact, you see, in the ancient world, almost every culture understood and was quite comfortable with the idea of the plurality of various deities and gods.

And so every culture in the ancient world would recognize, there's many gods, right? There's the God of the Jews and there's the God of the Babylonians and the God of the Canaanites. There's

the God of the sun and the moon and the water and the war and fertility and all these things.

[13 : 38] But the general consensus was, you can worship whatever god you want, but when you come into our territory, you know, if you're going to come and live in Canaan, well, then you honor our gods.

If you're going to go and live in Babylon, well, then you honor the gods of the Babylonians. So everyone was okay with the idea that there's many gods. Just don't come and disrespect our God when you live here.

And of course, they also agree there are many gods for many parts of your life. You want to have a child? Okay, well, you pray to the God of fertility. You're going to go off to war? You honor the God of war, et cetera, et cetera.

And so what would happen is that the nation of Israel, they were tempted to do the same thing, to take on this same worldview. And so on Sunday or Sabbath then, I guess they go to the, on Saturday, they go to the Sabbath and they bring their offerings and they worship and they praise God.

But then the rest of life, they want to do other things. They worship those gods. If you're going off to war, you praise the God of war. You want to have a child, you honor the God of fertility. And so like the rest of the nations around them, Israel was tempted to honor God supremely, primarily, but have these other gods in their lives.

[14 : 47] I recently read a story of a pastor from Africa. And I didn't know him, good thing. He was offering various body parts of a young lady that had died in his village.

And so he went to the cemetery and he bought these body parts and he would offer them to the spirits as a special offering to drive out the evil spirits and to try and secure blessing and prosperity for his life.

Okay? But he's a pastor. And so someone challenged him and said, hang on, hang on, aren't you like meant to be a man of God? How can you do this spirit worship at the same time? And he said, yes, I am a man of God.

I only do this outside of church hours. Okay? And we laugh at that, right? When I read that as well, I thought, you've got to be kidding. We laugh at that and we think that is so primitive, right?

That is so ancient, right? You people from Africa, you're so primitive, right? But don't we do the same thing in our own kind of way? We come on Sundays and we worship God and we sing, God and God alone.

[15 : 53] Yes, yes, and we worship God and we take communion. But on Monday to Friday, we go into our city and we are tempted to offer a special offering as the word to the various gods and idols of our own world.

And so on Sunday, we worship God and we take communion. But on Monday, we sacrifice on the altar of Korea our families and our marriages and our children. Or we sacrifice our ethics and our principles on the altar of financial security and stability.

Or we sacrifice on the altar of people pleasing our convictions and our honoring of God. And so in the same way, we can do exactly what Israel and these other people are doing.

But God is saying here that when we do that, when we limit God to one facet of our life, to say forgiveness of sin or to Sundays or to eternal life or one facet of our lives, actually we reduce God into an idol just like the other idols of the nations around us and the idols of our lives.

But look at what God wants to say here. He says, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And the Hebrew there can be translated in various ways.

[17 : 06] If you have a Bible, you'll see there are probably notes at the bottom. There's a couple of different ways it can be translated. But the big idea here is the Lord, Yahweh is His name, He is the one true God.

He's not just the God of Israel. He's not just the God of the Jews. He's not just the God of salvation or atonement or forgiveness of sins or the God who got you out of Egypt. He is not just the bombshell to God that we kind of keep on standby and when things go badly we kind of rush and take refuge in Him.

He is the one true, true, eternally sovereign Lord of all creation of all universes. If there are multiple universes, that's okay.

He's Lord of all of them as well. He's the God of every dimension of life because He is the one true, uncreated, eternally glorious, sovereign God.

He's the God of every facet of life, of all peoples, of all cultures, of all countries and circumstances. He's the God of all of life and all of our lives and therefore the God of every facet and part of our lives.

[18:17] He's not just the God we run to for salvation. He's the God who's Lord over Sundays, service, but He's also the God who's Lord over the Thursday afternoon board meeting. He's God of the prayer meeting on a Thursday night, but He's also God of your staff meeting on a Monday morning.

He is Lord over creation and cosmos, but He's also Lord of our finances and our sexuality and our relationships and our relationships with our parents. He's the God of our longings and our fears and our anxieties and our worries.

The Lord, your God, the Lord is one. God over every facet of life and therefore, He calls us for this undivided love and affection, this undivided devotion and loyalty, this worship and this trust.

Hear, O Israel. Hear, people of God. The Lord, our God, Yahweh, the God of the Bible, is the one true God. Therefore, love Him with your heart, your soul, your mind, your strength, with every facet of our lives.

In some senses, as Israel stands on the verge of going into this new season in the nation, the life of Israel, God is actually not doing anything very new and original.

[19:37] Sometimes, Claire and I laugh to one another because, I don't know if you ever hear this, but we often hear people saying, you know, God, He's doing a new thing in the world. I really just sense God's doing something new in the world.

And we often laugh and say, no, He's not really. He's actually doing the same thing He's been doing for millennia. God, by His grace, is saving sinners and redeeming and rescuing those who need Him. And He's calling all people to love Him with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength.

God, He's not really doing all that much new. He's doing the same thing He's always done. Here, oh, watermark, as the restrictions lift, as we go back to school and university, as life, we go into this new season, what does God want to say to us?

Listen up. I've got something to say. I am the one true God. Love me with every facet and dimension of your life. Now, what does this actually mean?

What are the implications of this? Why is this necessary and important for us? Well, let's look at this passage, and it's going to give us four things briefly why this is important for us. Look, firstly, the reason why this is important is for our own good.

[20:49] For our own good. Look at verse three with me. It wasn't read to us, but it's in the bulletin. God says, listen up, hear my commands, and make sure you obey them, you, your children, and your grandchildren, verse three, that your days may be long, that it may go well with you, that you may multiply greatly in the land that the Lord your God, the God of your fathers, has promised you, the land flowing with milk and honey.

God actually says the same thing in verse 24. He says, In other words, why does God command us to love Him and treasure Him with all that we have?

To trust Him above all things. Well, one of the reasons it is God's love that commands us to love Him. It's not His harshness, it's not His severity, it's certainly not God's insecurity because, you know, He needs some love and affirmation, and if we don't love Him, who's going to love Him? So He commands us to love Him. It's not His insecurity or His need for affirmation, it's because of our best interest, for our own sake. God, in His love, because He's designed the world and designed humanity to flourish and to be blessed as we obey Him, God calls us for our own good because God calls us to be fully human.

There's a pastor by the name of N.T. Wright. I'm sure you've heard of him. He's a very famous British pastor. He's still alive and he writes this. Listen to what he says. He says, what on earth are we here for anyway?

[22:37] I mean, why are we here as human beings? The fundamental answer is that what we are here for is to become genuine human beings, reflecting the God and whose image we made, and we're doing so on the one hand by worship and on the other hand through mission.

We do this, not least of all, by following Jesus. And N.T. Wright goes on and he says, the way that this actually works out is not just by blindly following the rules. You don't become fully human by just doing what God says because that's what the pastor tells me.

Actually, as we give our lives to God and say, God, I'm going to trust you. With this area of my life that's so hard, I'm going to trust you. What happens is that God actually starts to change us and transform us from the inside so that our hearts correspond with what is really true.

So that what happens is you do start to follow your own heart or become authentic, right? We all want to become authentic in this day and age. So you can actually become your authentic self. You can follow your heart. But at the same time, you will also do what God commands because God's commands are written on our hearts. You see what he's saying? He's saying, God doesn't just call us to just be your authentic self, whatever your version of truth is.

[23 : 54] No, no, actually, there is a thing called truth. But as you follow Him, your truth, whatever that is, will correspond with what is actually true and you will be your most authentic self as you follow Him and you will do what God commands because your life will align with what is ultimate reality.

What are we actually here for? We're here to become genuine human beings. And how do we do that? By saying, Christ, have your way in my life. But not only that, not only for our own sake, but also for the sake of the next generation.

Look at verse 6 to 9 with me. Look at what Moses writes here. He says, These words that I command you shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children.

You shall talk about them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way, when you lie down and when you rise. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

D.A. Carson very famously said, if you've been to Watermark, you've probably heard this quote.

He says, One generation loves and treasures the gospel. The next generation just assumes the gospel. And the third generation denies the gospel. Most of us who are parents know that it doesn't matter what you tell your kids is most important.

[25 : 18] Our kids are going to grow up to love and treasure what is actually most important to us. Okay? So, men, those of us that are fathers here, you can tell your kids as much as you want to honor their mother, your wife, right?

But if our kids see us actually treasuring other things, work or video games or ourselves, more than our wives, you can tell them as much as you want our kids are not going to grow up to honor and treasure their mother, right?

Why? Because our kids don't do what we tell them to do. They do what they actually see us doing. Our kids are going to value what's most important to us, not what we tell them is most important to us, right?

I remember our youngest daughter, Shiloh, when she went to kindergarten first, okay, here in Hong Kong. She's three years old and there's this boy in her class. We met him and all he could talk about was Liverpool.

Okay, I know things are bad around here. The state of affairs are really bad. All he could talk about was Liverpool Football Club. And I was like, he's three years old, right? Well, anyway, he followed Shiloh and went from the same kindergarten to the same school.

[26 : 26] And so, even this year, when I see him on the way to school, say, hey, Lucas, how are you? And what is he talking about? Football, right? The Premier League and which managers have just been fired and which ones are coming in.

And he's just talking all about football. And when I met his dad, what do you think his dad spoke about? Football, right? Football. That's all they could talk about. Now, I tried to convert them to a proper football club, but anyway, we're still working on that.

But why? Parents, because our kids treasure what we treasure. Our kids love what we love.

Friends, if we want our children and our kids to love the Lord Jesus Christ and to trust Him and to treasure Him above all things, in this world of confusion and chaos when there's so much that's unknown, if we want to give our kids rock-solid identity that they can stand firm in a world of sinking sand and confusion, we can't just drop our kids at church on Sunday or pray a quick prayer before they go to bed.

We need to make sure that we are loving and treasuring and delighting and trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ above all things, that we love Him heart, soul, mind, and strength, that He is the most important one in every facet and area of our lives so that what is glorious and wonderful and beautiful about Christ to us becomes wonderful and glorious and beautiful to them.

Now, you may be here and you may say, okay, but I'm single or I'm not married or maybe you are married but you don't have kids. I don't, you know, the next generation, that's someone else's

business. Okay, but what about the next generation in Hong Kong?

[28 : 07] What about the next generation in our church? Maybe you don't have biological kids but friends, our city, the next generation is awash with despair and hopelessness and there's a call on us even if you don't have biological kids to stand and to give the next generation hope in the midst of all the hopelessness in the midst of the despair to say, there is a God and He's real and you can trust Him and you can bank your life on Him and friends, our church is a young church.

I know a lot of the students are away now, they've all gone back home but our church is a young church and this church needs men and women that are older, that have walked the life to show us what it looks like to love and trust and honor Christ in every area of our life when you're 40 and you're 50 and you're 60 and you're 70.

If you are 50 plus here this morning, maybe your kids have grown up and are no longer at home, this church needs you because we need to know and see what does it look like to still trust Christ supremely when you're in your 50s and can I just say if you're in your 40s, I know your 40s are probably a crunch period of life, you know, kids, it's full on and work is full on, I'm going to get there soon, I'm almost there, please, if you're 40 plus, Oscar, one or two others, we need you in this church because can I just say, sorry, I shouldn't have said that but can I just say, okay, listen up here, look me in the eye, right, when you're 20 and 25, it's easy to be radical for Jesus, you've got so much time on your hands, you know, you don't have that many demands, I know it feels like university is demanding but it's not really, okay, and it is easy to be radical for Jesus and you go on mission trips and you lead a thousand CGs and you're always serving in a thousand ways but when you're 40, it's hard, it's hard, your boss is breathing down your neck and he's wanting you to work, you know, 70 hours and you're not just graduated but you're also not top of the pile and so you're in that middle management zone and you've got kids and you've got demands and you've got aging parents, it's hard to love and trust Jesus in every area of life.

Friends, if you're in your 40s here, we need you to show us and to show the young people in this church what it looks like to love God with all of your heart and all of your soul and all of your mind and all of your strength because we need examples and so the next generation, not just our biological kids but this city and this church, we need it, okay, so for our own sake, for the sake of the next generation, third reason, this is quick, because of the danger of grace, the danger of grace. Now I know that sounds blasphemous but look at verse 10 and 12 with me. What Moses is going to say here is that God's blessings apart from covenant relationship with God are actually a dangerous thing.

[31 : 13] Look at verse 10. It says, when the Lord your God brings you into the land that He swore to your fathers to give you with great and good cities that you didn't build and houses full of good things that you didn't fill and cisterns that you didn't dig and vineyards and olive trees that you didn't plant and when you eat and are full and satisfied, then take care lest you forget the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

What God is saying here is that, oh let me say it this way, I know it sounds blasphemous to talk about grace as a dangerous thing because at the very heart of Christianity and the heart of who God is is the fact that God relates to us on the basis of grace, not what we earn or our effort or our good works.

It's God's grace. But the whole point of the Bible is that people are saved by grace not by works. But look at this passage that's saying to us, God in His incredible kindness to us if that kindness, if the blessings of God are untethered, disconnected from covenant relationship to Him, those blessings actually have a way of becoming a snare to us, of tripping us up because it's easy to fall more in love with those blessings than the one who gives those blessings in the first place.

And so His very blessings can actually destroy us. And so He says here that these things become more important and we get cut off from the very one who gives those blessings to us.

Look at verse 11. When you eat and are full, take care lest you forget the Lord your God. In the Bible, to forget God doesn't mean to have a lapse of memory. It means God fades into the background and is no longer in our consciousness.

[32 : 58] And so how do we stop the gifts of God's grace becoming a snare to us? How do we stop ourselves loving God's kindnesses more than God Himself? Hear, O Israel. The Lord is one.

Love the Lord your God with every facet of your life, all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. And that brings us to the last and the final point is this. Because God loved us first.

Look at verse 20 to 22 with me. This is amazing. It says, When your son or your daughter asks you in time to come, what is the meaning of the testimonies and the commands and the statutes? that the Lord God commanded us. In other words, your son or your daughter comes to you and says, Why should we obey God? I mean, why should we do all this stuff anyway? Then you shall say to your son, Well, Moses told us to.

I don't know. I'm just doing what Moses said. Because Kevin the pastor just told me to. No, no, no. That's not what you say. What you say is, We were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt.

[33 : 57] And God brought us out of Egypt by a mighty hand. In other words, when your children come to you and say, Why do we do these things? Why do we obey God? And why should we do all these things?

You tell them. There was once upon a time. You remind them of the salvation and the deliverance that God accomplished for you when they had no way of saving themselves.

What's Moses saying here? He's saying, You tell them the gospel. Right? You know, in the Old Testament, the story of God saving His people out of slavery in Egypt and bringing them into freedom by the blood of the Lamb is always a picture of an analogy of a signpost to point them towards the cross.

Right? The way that we were slaves to sin and death and darkness and we were delivered out of that slavery and brought into freedom by the blood of the true and better Lamb, Jesus Christ.

In other words, so when God says, Why should we do these things? Why do we honor God? Why do we obey God in every area of our life? Because once upon a time, friends, you and I were slaves to sin.

[35 : 03] Once upon a time, we were unlovable in our natural state. We were unlovable in our depravity. We were dead in our sin. We were deservedly objects of God's wrath. But God, in His supreme mercy, in His unmerited grace, God poured out for us riches and mercy by sending His Son to the cross, by dying in our place so that we could come out of that place and be reconciled and be welcomed into His family, that we could be set free from bondage to sin and live for God.

Do you know that amazing verse in 1 John? It says this, In this the love of God was made manifest for us that God sent His Son to die that we might live through Him. This is love.

Not that we love God first, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be an atoning sacrifice for us.

You see, in Deuteronomy chapter 7, the very next chapter, God says to His people, It's not because you were the biggest nation or the most powerful nation that I rescued you.

In fact, you were the smallest out of all the nations. I rescued you simply because I loved you. And chapter 8, He says, It's not because you were the wisest nation and had it all going for you.

No, no, you weren't very wise at all. But I rescued you simply because I set my love upon you. And chapter 9, He's going to say, It's not because you were the most righteous nation. No, no, no.

[36 : 29] You were just as unrighteous as everyone else. I chose you and loved you simply because I chose to love you. So friends, why do we love the Lord Jesus Christ with all of our heart and soul and mind and strength?

Because when we were unlovable and had nothing to bring to God, He loved us by sending His Son to die on the cross. And so friends, when our children say to us, why do we need to obey God and do what He asks?

Why do we go to church on Sunday rather than going to soccer club and rugby club and tennis club? Why do we do family devotions around the dinner table rather than just watching TV? Why do we take communion regularly and ask God to forgive us of our sins?

The answer is not because we're Christians and that's what Christians do. The answer is you tell them the gospel. You tell them that once upon a time I was God's enemy worthy of hell but Jesus sent His love upon me and died on the cross so that I could be ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven, that I could be brought into His family.

God loved me so that now I can love Him. And friends, when your colleagues or your workmates or your school friends or your university friends say to you, why don't you just sleep with your boyfriend or your girlfriend?

[37 : 52] If it feels right, it must be right. Or why do you give a portion of your income to the church? I mean, that sounds crazy. Why would you do that? Or why not cheat on this test? Or why not just exaggerate on your resume and get that job?

The answer is not because I'm a Christian and this is what Christians do. The answer is because I once was lost and hopeless and worthy of hell. And Jesus Christ set His love upon me and woke up my heart so that I can love Him.

Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven. Now because Jesus loves me, I love Him with every facet of my life. And friends, when your own heart questions you and that voice in your head says, why do you honor God?

Why don't you do just what feels good? Why don't you just live for yourself? And when that voice comes and says, why don't you hold on to that grudge and just bear and not forgive that person that's treated you so badly?

The answer is not, I'm a Christian, I guess I better forgive them. You preach to your own heart the gospel that once you were an enemy of God and for no doing of your own accord, God set His love upon you and He sent His Son to die on the cross so that you may be rescued, ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven, that you may love Him because with all of your life because Jesus loved you with all of His life.

[39 : 20] Friends, as we come to this juncture, hear, O people of God, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Let's love the Lord our God with all of our heart and all of our soul and all of our mind and all of our strength.

Let's take a few minutes and respond and we're going to take communion in a few minutes' time but I want to, before we get there, I want to just give us three minutes just to sit quietly and Nate, maybe you want to come and just play the keys for us and let's just think, what has God been saying to you today?

And then what does it look like to respond? Maybe you want to think specifically, is there an area of life where I'm still holding on? I've allowed Jesus to be Lord of this area and this area and this area and this area but there's one area that I don't want to let go.

Let's respond to God this morning.