

First Love

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[0 : 00] The scripture reading for today comes from Deuteronomy chapter 6.! Please follow along in your Bibles, on the screen, or in your bulletin. Here, 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 shall 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. And when the Lord your God brings you into the land that he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, 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 were around you.

[1 : 40] For the Lord your God is 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.

You shall not put the Lord your God to the test, as you tested him at Massa. You shall diligently keep the commandments of the Lord your God, and his testimonies and his statutes, which he has commanded you.

And you shall do what is right and good in the sight of the Lord, that it may go well with you, that you may go in and take possession of the good land that the Lord swore to give to your fathers by thrusting out all your enemies from before you, as the Lord has promised.

And at verse 20 we read, When your sons ask 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?

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.

[2 : 59] And he brought us out from there, and 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, that he has commanded us. This is the word of the Lord.

Great, thanks Annabelle. Let me pray for us, and then let's dive in. Father God, as we come to your word this morning, this passage which is so famous, but so important. Oh God, we pray that you write these things in our hearts, Lord.

Help us to know and hear you, and understand what you have to say to us. Lord, we want to love you abundantly, and so help us, Lord, to understand and to apply your word. In your name I pray.

Amen. I wonder how you feel about change. Some people love change. Some people can't stand change. Some people love every few years kind of changing the furniture in their house, and their bedrooms, and just, you know, something fresh or new.

[4 : 11] Some people like leaving things exactly the way they are for the next, you know, 30 years. Some people love changing jobs, and cities, and careers, and cars, or something like that.

And some people, if you stay in the same job, in the same city, in the same country, in the same home, for the next 20 years, you will be as happy as Larry. I don't know who Larry was, but happy as Tiffany, okay?

How do you feel about change? Well, I ask you this question because we at Watermark are in a season of change. If you are new to our church, in three weeks time, we are moving from this venue to a new venue in Wong Chuk Hang.

We have been in Parkville for the last 15 years, and for the first time, we are going to be moving to our new venue in Wong Chuk Hang. And there is going to be a lot of change. We are going to be moving from a school hall, into a new office venue.

We are going to be moving from somebody else's space, that we borrow on a Sunday, to our own space, that we use permanently. We are going to be moving from a place where we sit up, and break down each week, to a place that is more permanent, and we can make our home.

[5 : 21] And so, there is going to be lots of changes. Maybe changes in our community. Maybe new people come. There is going to be lots of changes. How do we feel about that? How do we feel?

Over the next couple of weeks, we want to consider, that as there is lots of change going on in our church, there are some things, in fact the most important things about Watermark, must not change.

Must remain unchanged. Our venue can change, but our values must not. Where we meet can change, but who we are, what we love, what we prioritize, should stay the same.

And so, like the enduring waves of the ocean, or the great mountain cliffs, I love the picture behind us, the most important things in life, and the most important things in our faith, and the most important things about Watermark, should not change, and should remain unchanged.

And so, the next few weeks, we're going to be looking at some of these things, and reminding ourselves, of the eternal truth, the thing that make us, who we are. And so today, we're looking at this very, very wonderful, and famous passage, in the book of Deuteronomy.

[6 : 31] And, Deuteronomy is a very special book, if you don't know the book of Deuteronomy, I encourage you to read it, on your own sometime. But the book of Deuteronomy, is Moses' final words, of instructions, before one, he passes away, and two, the nation of Israel, leave the wilderness, and go into the promised land.

I don't know if you've ever had, a loved one, that is either very old, or maybe very sick, and you get a call from the hospital, saying, we think they do not have, much longer to live.

We think you should come, and have your final conversation. As you go to the hospital, what would you want to say? What would you want to hear? What would that final conversation involve?

Moses here, is about to pass away, and he's been the leader of Israel, for 40 years, and he's now having his final sermon, his final conversation, to the nation of Israel. But it's also, the final set of instructions, he's going to give them, as they go into the promised land.

It's kind of like, if you're a parent, and your child, transitions from one stage of life, to the next, you might, give them a set of words, right? Maybe your child, turns 13, then they become a teenager.

[7 : 42] It's a new stage of life. Or maybe they go off to college, or they're about to get married, and you take your daughter out for dinner, or you write her a letter, and say, things are about to change. But these things, I want you to remember.

I want you to know this. Don't forget this. You affirm them, you encourage them, but you also speak them, the things that you want them to remember. As the nation of Israel, is about to go, into the promised land, Moses gives them his final words.

And so, let's look at, what he's going to say. And so, this is, what Moses is going to say to them, is going to shape, who they're going to become, for generations. And so, look at what Moses says here.

Look at, chapter 6, verse 4. He says, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Now, this passage, in Jewish communities, is known as the Shema.

Shema is the Hebrew word for hear, to listen, and it's, because it starts off, it says, Hear, O Israel. Jewish families, will recite this prayer, every morning, and every evening, and when they put their kids to bed, it's the last thing, that they'll say to their children, before their children fall asleep.

[8 : 50] Hear, O Israel, Shema, or Yisrael. Hear, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. It's kind of like, when you, when you say to your kids, sorry, lots of kids analogies this morning, when you say to your kids, listen up, look me in the eye, right?

You really want to get their attention, they're kind of all over the place, and say, look me in the eye, I want you to hear what I'm saying. That's kind of what God is saying to Israel. Listen, hear, O Israel, I've got something important to say to you.

And what does he have to say? Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. In ancient cultures, the various nations and countries, all had their own gods, and deities, and ethnicities, right?

So, the God of the Canaanites, they would have their gods, and the Babylonians, they would have their gods, and the Persians would have their gods, and they would say, and Israel, they've got their God, right? He's Yahweh.

But Yahweh here says, actually, no, that's not the way it is. I am not just one of a plethora of gods, like a buffet that you can just choose which god you want to serve. I am the one.

[9 : 54] I am the one true God, the uncreated one. I am above every culture, every nationality, every nation's god, or deity. I'm not just one of a variety of gods.

I am the Lord, the God, the one, over all people. I'm the one who brought all people, all nations, all civilizations, into existence, all the cosmos, into existence. The one uncreated being, who has had no beginning and no end, I am the Lord, who's God over everything.

I am the Lord, the God. But, but God's not only saying, I am the one existentially, factually, though that is true, he's also saying, I am the one relationally, personally, covenantally.

In other words, God is saying to Israel, I am the one for you, the one and only God that you should serve. It's like, when Claire and I got married, Claire became the one, right?

There are lots of ladies in my life, lots of friends, but Claire is the one, the one and only, right? The one that I give my heart to, my affection to, the one I adore, the one I give myself to.

[11 : 02] God here says, hear O Israel, the Lord, the uncreated one, he is the one, existentially, factually, that's true, ontologically, but also personally, relationally, I'm the one for you, the one God that you should serve.

And friends, in some ways, this is, the very heart of the Christian faith, is that the God that made all things, is existentially, factually, above all things, that's true, but the heart of Christianity, is that this God is also relational.

He's not just an idea, he's not just a philosophy, a thought, he's relational, he wants to know us, he wants us to know him. He wants to be the one, sovereign, the one Lord, the one God of our hearts, that rules our hearts.

And because, he is the one God, who is above all things, that has implications, for the way we relate to him. And so look at what verse 5 says, hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one, verse 5, therefore, you shall love the Lord your God, with all of your heart, with all of your soul, and with all of your might, or with all of your strength, all of your abilities.

The word might there means, your resources, your economic resources, your physical resources, with all of your being. Now, many of us will know that, many hundreds of years later, you know, 1500 years later, somebody comes to Jesus Christ, and says, Jesus, there are 600 laws, in the Old Testament, okay, in the first five books of the Bible, there are 600 laws, which is the most important?

[12 : 37] And Jesus comes to this very verse, and says, this is the most important, out of all of them, to love the Lord your God, with all your heart, and all your soul, and all your mind, Jesus says, and all your strength.

And Jesus says, and to love others, this is the summary, of the entire Bible. You want the Bible, in two verses? Love God supremely, and love others. And Jesus says, this is what it's all about, to, sums up the entire Old Testament, to love God.

The most important thing, about us as a church, and us individually, is not which building we meet in, buildings will come and go, it's not how popular, or unpopular we are as a church, it's not how big, or how small we are, those things are not important.

Pastors will come and go, people will come and go, the most important thing, about us as a church, is this. Are we those who, who comes down to this question, who love the Lord our God, who treasure him, who prioritize him, above all else, who revere and prize him, who delight in him, who adore God, above everything else, in our lives.

So God says, this is the most important thing. Watermark, the building, okay, sure, Viva, it'll be nice, sure, but that's not important. Okay, there's car park there, fantastic, that's not important, right?

[14 : 00] There's an MTR line there, that's, that's not the most important thing. Watermark, the most important thing about us, is will we be a church, that loves, loves God, with everything that we are, and all that we have.

But as we think about that, there's something strange, about that commandment, isn't there? Because it's, there's something strange, about commanding, one's affections.

You know, I can, I can tell my children, what to do, you will be home, by a certain time, okay, or please make your bed, okay, or whatever it is, but to command, somebody's affections, that's a bit more difficult, right?

There's some things, that either you do love them, or you don't love them. You love dumplings, or you don't love dumplings, okay? You love broccoli, or you don't love broccoli. It's a bit hard to, command somebody's affections. But actually, the Bible has no problem, commanding our affections, and telling us, you must delight in God.

You, you must, you shall, revere God. You shall be in awe of God. Why does the Bible do that? And the reason is, in the Bible, to love something, is a combination, of both our commitment, and our affections.

[15 : 11] Both what we devote ourselves to, and what we delight in. So, if you think about it, to love something supremely, to be the most important thing, involves both of those things.

When I say to Claire, I love you, it means, I delight in you. You bring such joy to my life. My life is better because of you. I love waking up in the morning, and knowing you're part of my life.

But love, it can't just be affections, because, to be honest, affections do go up and down. Sometimes I'm self-seeking. Sometimes I love myself, more than my wife. Actually, often I love myself, more than her.

That's a problem, right? So if my love for is only, based on how I feel, okay, that's not a very solid love, commitment. But if love is only, based on commitment, well that's a bit stoic, right?

Imagine I come to Claire one day, and say, love, here are some flowers. She says, they're lovely, thank you. And I say, yeah, well I made a commitment, once a year, I'd buy you flowers, this is the day, so, you know, take them, and 3rd of August next year, you can expect another bunch.

[16 : 13] Okay? There's no heart, there's no affection. That's not very loving. Love, both involves commitment, and affection, delight, and devotion. God comes to us, and he says, watermark, my people, those that know me, love the Lord your God, give yourself to me, but don't just, as formal stoic commitment, devote yourself, delight in me, let me be the most precious thing, in your life.

And God says, let this happen in all of our life, with all of our being, and all of our doing. A few years ago, I read the book, Shoe Dog, which is by Phil Knight, the creator of Nike, if you haven't read it, it's a wonderful book, really enjoyable, but there's a line, that really stood out to me, listen to what Phil Knight says, he says, in many ways, he's talking about his growing up, he says, in many ways, my father was a conventional Christian, a believer in Jesus Christ, but he also worshipped, another secret deity, respectability, a colonial house, a beautiful wife, obedient kids, my father enjoyed, all these things, but what he really loved, above all else, was his friends and neighbors, knowing that he had them, right, I love Jesus, but actually there's a secret, there's a God, there's a deity, there's an idol in my heart, respectability, being admired, revered, by those around me, friends, how easy it is to come to worship, on Sundays, declare God's greatness, and his goodness, and on Mondays to Fridays, there's another secret deity, in our heart, and God says, if you want to flourish, if you want to be the people, that I'm calling you to be, buildings, buildings, whatever, wherever you are, the most important thing, love me with all of your hearts, with all of your soul, with all of your being, with all of your doing, listen oh Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one, and in a sense, we get that in verse 6 to 9, look at, here is a picture, of someone whose entire life, all of their being, all of their doing, everything they do with their hands, everything they look at with their eyes, everywhere they go, their business, their home, their family, all of their being, all of their doing, is shaped, by the one, and the majesty of God, look at what verse 6 to 9 says, and these words, these words I command you today, shall be on your heart, you shall teach them diligently, to your children, talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise, bind them as a sign, on your hands, tie them as frontlets, between your eyes, you shall write them, on the doorposts of your house, and on your gates, in all of your doing, in all of your being, everywhere you go, let my words, let who I am, shape you, and who you are, and again, we may feel like, hang on, but God's talking about loving him, and now he's talking about his commands, and his words, and how do those two things relate, how do you feel friends, when somebody rejects your words, again, hypothetically, just take your children, right, how do you feel, when your children ignore you, right, you say to your child, please don't pick up your phone, put your phone down, and they pick it up, and look at it, right, or maybe you say to, somebody at work, hey, please can you do that thing, and get that report to me, and they say, no, that's not my job, or you say to your child, hey, please be home by nine o'clock, right, and they come home at midnight, how do you feel, you don't just feel slightly annoyed, you feel frustrated, why, why, we feel disrespected, when somebody ignores our words, it's not just the words, that are coming out of our breath, they're actually ignoring us, when someone rejects what I say, it's actually rejection of me,

God says here, take my words, what I speak to you, and write them on your heart, let them be precious to you, let them be important to you, why, because I am precious to you, because I am important to you, so how we deal with loving God, part of that means, loving his words, what he says to us, his heart, the way he shares his heart with us, friends, when God calls us to love, and treasure, and delight, and in his words, and his command, he's calling us to delight in him, with all of our being, and all of our doing, friends, and all the change, that's going to happen at Watermark, of the next few weeks, and months, this is one thing, that should remain unchanged, in a hundred years from now, when we're all, six foot down in the grave, if Watermark still exists, let this be the one thing, that is true of us, this is a church, that loves the Lord our God, with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, now here's the question, why, why is that important, in this passage, Moses gives us three reasons, I want to try and run through them, relatively quickly, okay, three reasons, why this must be, the most important thing, for us as a church, and most important thing, for us individually, the first reason is this, because of the danger, of self-sufficiency, when things go well, the danger of self-sufficiency, when things go well, many years ago,

Claire and I had some good friends, actually they still are good friends, but back in Cape Town, South Africa, and this couple, a few decades older than us, a little bit older than us, and these friends, many years before we'd known them, had fallen on some very difficult times, they had decided to start a business, and so they borrowed some money from the bank, started this business, and the business bombed, it completely failed, and so now they're in tons of debt, and so the wife, had to go out, and get some work, and the guy, Christo is his name, for a couple of months, he was selling soap and candles, out of the back of his car, as a way of making ends meet, just to put food on the table, and put his kids through school, selling soap and candles, out of the back of his car, but he was actually, accomplished businessman, in some ways, and so he got a job, at an IT firm, and he worked his way up, worked his way up, and eventually, after about 15 years, he became the CEO, of this IT company, and then his management team, they bought the company, from the owners, a few years later, they sold it, at a premium, and my friend Christo, did very well, and so, by the time we got to know him, he was pretty successful, financially successful, and one thing, that Christo said to me, was this, success and prosperity, will always test my faith, far more than failure, ever will, and that always stood out to me, that someone had gone through, such a hard time, wasn't scared of going, through difficulty, but was more afraid, of financial success, and prosperity, because he knew, that it had the potential, the propensity, to damage his faith, now look at what God says here, in chapter 6, look at verse 10, when the Lord your God, brings you into the land, that he swore to your forefathers, 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, when you eat, and are full and satisfied, take care, lest you forget, the Lord, who brought you, out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, friends success, prosperity, comfort, convenience, have an inherent danger, built into them, which is that, we can easily become, susceptible to pride, or self-sufficiency, because we start, to look at the things around us, the good gifts, that God brings, and gives us, and we start to think, these things, are come our way, because of our brilliance, because of our genius, look,

I've got everything, under control, because I am somebody, who's able to keep things, under control, and we start to look, and think, you know what, I think I've got life, under control, and we forget, the Lord our God, look at verse 12 and 11, when you eat, and are satisfied, take care, lest you forget, the Lord, who brought you, out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, to forget God, doesn't mean, you know, to have a lapse of memory, like, hey, who is the God again, what is this, Jesus, that's right, it doesn't mean, to forget Jesus name, it means that, who God is, just fades into the background, becomes smaller, and smaller, and smaller, until he's no longer, plays a role in our life, and when God's blessings, are disconnected, from relationship, from loving him, above all else, the blessings, and the good things, that he gives us, can actually corrupt our faith, and make God small in our eyes, as the other things become big, and as we become big, in our own eyes, and so friends, as we move to Viva, it will be more comfortable, it will be more convenient, there's hopefully, going to be a lot of things, that are nicer, friends, let's make sure, that God is big in our hearts, majestic in our eyes, and that we love him, above all else, the danger, of when things go well, but then, there's also a second danger, the opposite side, the danger, when things go wrong, and the danger here, is bitterness, or hard heartedness, when things go wrong, when God, doesn't seem to be near, one of the things, that can happen, is we can, we can grow, our hearts can get hard, and say,

[25 : 35] God where are you, I thought you meant to be faithful, you meant to be good, God promises, that he will be with us, but that doesn't always mean, that he promises, life is going to be rosy, or easy, Jesus said, in this world, you will have trouble, in this world, things are going to be, hard and difficult, especially, if you choose to follow me, but take heart, I've overcome the world, Jesus mean, doesn't mean, that life is always going to be easy, but he means, that he will be with us, and friends, one day Christ will return, and all the suffering, and all the darkness, and all the things, that are wrong, and the world will be put right, but between now and then, things will sometimes, be challenging, look at what verse 16, says here, Moses says, you shall not put, the Lord your God, to the test, as you tested him, at Nasser, but rather, you shall diligently, keep the commandments, of the Lord your God, his testimonies, and his statutes, that I command you, what's Moses talking about, when the nation of Israel, left Egypt, they were passing, through the wilderness, and they're in the desert place, and they come to a place, where there is no water, and they're thirsty, and they're hungry, and they're grumpy, and they're frustrated, and they're agitated, and they come down the hill, and they expect to find water, and there is no water, and what happens, they start getting angry, and bitter, and they start accusing Moses,

Moses, how can you bring us here, and the accusations, start to turn towards God, God, are you good, are you trustworthy, God, maybe you should have, just left us in Egypt, we were better off, as slaves in Egypt, than your people, in the wilderness, and their hearts, grow hard, and bitter, and they start to grumble, and complain, and get angry, towards God, and towards his people, and of course, God does provide them, with water, and they keep going, but Moses names, that place, Massa, which means testing, or Meribah, which means grumbling, and complaining, because of their accusation, and their accusing, and their challenging, of God, what's happened, hardship has come their way, and when things, are not working out, the way that they expected, they thought they were, going to walk straight out, of Egypt, into paradise, and when things, didn't work out their way, their hearts grew hard, and they started to grumble, and complain, and accuse one another, friends, in this life, things will get hard, if you're a follower of Jesus, you're going to have to live, by faith, from now, until the day you die, and there will be challenges, and there will be conquests, and there will be things, that you have to overcome, and the temptation, is to either, let me put it this way, suffering will either, make us better, or it will make us worse, it will either make us, more humble, and God dependent, or it will make us, hard and bitter, and self-sufficient, and when suffering comes, the challenge, is to keep our hearts, soft towards God, rather than hard-hearted, this is the most important thing, hear, oh people of God, the Lord our God, the Lord is one, so love the Lord your God, with all our heart, and keep our hearts, soft towards him, thirdly, why should we love God, with all our hearts, here's the main reason, because long before, we ever, decided to love God,

God loved us, and moved towards us, in amazing grace, look what he says here, in verse 20, Moses says, in time to come, when your sons, or your daughters, ask you, what is the meaning, of the testimonies, and the statutes, and the rules, that the Lord your God, commanded you, then you shall say, to your son, and your daughter, we were once slaves, in Egypt, and the Lord brought us, out of Egypt, with a mighty hand, the Lord showed signs, and wonders, great and grievous, against Egypt, and against Pharaoh, against his household, before our very eyes, in other words, there comes a time, in future generations, when the nation of Israel, might not remember, God's great deliverance, and the children, are going to come, to their parents, and say, mom dad, why should we love God, why should we serve him, why do we obey, all these commands, and the laws, these things are so uncomfortable, why do we confess our sin, and have communion, and go to prayer meeting, and give our tithes, and offerings, God why do we do, so many sacrifices, can't we just live, for ourselves,

God this is going to be, so much easier, and Moses says, when your children, ask you that, you tell them this, we were once slaves, in Egypt, we were once dead, and lost, and God, by his amazing grace, and because of his, profound love for us, God moved towards us, and rescued us, and saved us, friends in the Bible, rescue from Egypt, is always an analogy, a picture, of God's great rescue, of those people, who've come to trust in him, and love him, from hell, and darkness, and judgment, and depravity, forever, remember how, just as God's people, were delivered, from judgment, that came upon Egypt, by the blood of innocent lambs, who died in their place, that they could be set free, so we too, who are in Christ, have been delivered, from the judgment, that we deserve, that our sin deserves, by the blood of Jesus, the lamb of God, who died in our place, that we can be set free, and Moses tells the people here, that when they come, to the promised land, they will be tempted, to forget, the great, and awesome deliverance, that God undertook, to save them, and their sacrifices, and their service to God, will easily become dry, and meaningless routines, they'll go through the motions, and they'll come every Sunday, and they'll do their thing, and they'll sing the songs, but their hearts, would have forgotten, what God did for them, and Moses says, don't let that happen, don't let that happen, remember what God did for you, remember his amazing love for you, remember when you were lost, and you had nothing to give him,

God moved towards you, and gave everything to save you, friends you and I, were once lost in our depravity, we were dead in our sin, we were deserving, of judgment and hell, but God in his great love for us, determined to show, the immeasurable riches, of his kindness, and his grace, and his love towards us, he came to us, he sent his son, Jesus to die on the cross, the lamb of God, who will be slain, innocent, shed his blood, so that we who are slaves, can be set free, and delivered, why should we love the Lord our God, because long before, we had done anything for him, his great love, rescued us, friends why should we give anything to God, because he gave up everything for us, in the book of, one John in the Bible, God writes this, well he says this, this is the love of God, made known to us, that God sent his only son into the world, that we might live, this is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his son to us, to be an atoning sacrifice, for our sins, we love him, because he first loved us, friends why does God love us, not because we good, not because we moral, not because we devoted, not because we strong, not because we beautiful, not because we've got a great building, not because we've got great pastors, why, because when we had nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing, he sent his son, he set his love upon us, and actually the book of Deuteronomy, says this again and again, in chapter seven,

[33 : 13] God says, why do I love you, is it because you're the biggest, no actually Israel, you're the smallest, is it because you're mighty and strong, no Israel, actually you're weak, is it because you're righteous, and holy and moral, no actually Israel, you weren't very righteous, and moral and holy at all, why did God love Israel, he loved them, simply because, he chose to love them, friends why does God love you, simply because he's chosen to love you, and he demonstrated that, by sending his son to die on the cross, and so friends, when our own hearts question us, and the voice inside of our head says, why should we serve God and honor him, why should we make these sacrifices, why don't you just live for yourself, do what you please, if it feels good, it must be good, you remind yourself, when I was a slave to sin, and dead in my sin, Jesus Christ went to the cross for me, God loves me, and gave everything for me, now I can give everything to him, and friends, when things are tough, and change feels hard, and you're tempted to run away, or you're tempted to grow bitter, or resentful, or you're tempted to become self-sufficient, you remind yourself, when I had nothing,

Jesus gave everything for me, he loved me, and now I get to love him in return, and friends, when your own heart tells you, to compartmentalize your life, to give yourself to God on Sundays, and to yourself the rest of the week, you tell yourself, I once a slave to sin, I was dead in my sin, but God being rich in his mercy, because of his great love, with which he loved me, made me alive with Christ, and raised me up with Christ, and now I get to serve him, and love him in return, watermarked, many things that are going to change, over the next couple of months, and the next few years, but here's one thing, that must not change, here's one thing, that must stay strong, and unchangeable, like the great oceans, tides of the ocean, and the enduring cliffs, the mountain cliffs, here oh people of God, the Lord our God, the Lord is one, the Lord is the one, so let's love him, with all of our hearts, with all of our souls, with all of our mind, with all of our strength, with all of our being, and all of our doing, love him till our dying breath, let me pray for us, as we come to him,

Lord Jesus, we do love you, God we must confess, our love is imperfect, it's up and down, but God thank you, that though our love is so imperfect, your love for us, is not up and down, it's not imperfect, God you don't love us, just when times are going well, you don't love us, just when times are going not well, you are as consistent, as the ocean waves, you are consistent, as the mountain peaks, that have been around, for millennia, God your love is unchanging, and therefore we are not consumed, Jesus for those of us here, that are struggling, to know your love, for those of us that, feel far or distant, for those of us God, for whom you have become, small in our hearts, for those God, who may be, the hardship of life, has made our hearts hard, God by your spirit, and your grace, once you move towards us in love, once you melt our hearts again, and cause us to sing, cause us to delight in you, God for those of us, who the commitment is strong, but our affection is low, help us to treasure you, and to adore you, with all of our hearts we pray, in your great name,

Amen, Amen.