

Love Has a Story

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Preacher: Rob Krause

[0 : 0 0] First on chapter 5, I'd like to break it into the three parts where it naturally falls in as we read the Scriptures. We will go into each section. But let me give a sense of context, a bit of understanding, and then we'll read in the Word.

This is the conclusion, obviously, of John's letter as he brings it home the story of God's love or love that has a story.

But it's a different kind of story. A few years ago there was an epic film that we as a family had a privilege to be able to watch in 3D as we went to this massive kind of cinemax of a theater. And so my children were with me. We have two children who are back in Italy, just in his first year of high school and the other in middle school. And we sat down together, again, four or five years ago or so, to watch this great film. And it had in it deep, rich channels of friendship, family with sacrifice, risking of life for one another to the very end where you feel that no one will make it through alive.

It also dealt with deep themes of coping with the inevitable passage of time and life-altering change. How once you cross that threshold in another chapter of life, you can never return.

As well as the deep themes of the anguish of losing good friends. The movie was epic, it was moving.

[1 : 5 0] You might be wondering which one it was. It simply was Toy Story 3. It was an excellent film if you've ever seen it. So when we left the theater, my kids said to me, Dad, that was an awesome movie. And as I pulled the 3D glasses off and wiped the tears from my face, I said, yes, children, that was a great movie. Have you seen it and are willing to admit it? Okay, eight of you.

I say that just because I looked down the row and we were with two other mission families and we as parents were all weeping and our kids were just sitting there just smiling away because some of the things in that story talked about the aspect of friends.

And so we were all trying to hide our tears and we just started laughing because we couldn't hide them anymore. God's story does deal with all of those things. It's not historical fiction either.

My gracious, lovely, kind, frugal, industrious, persevering, wonderful wife.

That's at least seven points right there. She loves to read and she loves to read historical fiction novels.

[3 : 1 5] So it can't, I guess it can't be romantic. It can't be exciting unless it is Elizabethan with carriages and candlelight and horses and villas, etc.

This is historical, but it's not fiction. It is John's teaching of what he witnessed, what he tasted and what he embraced.

God's story. It is a story that is written before time for all of time. It is an exclusive love story which will never have an equal and neither will it ever have a superior.

In this passage that we will see John is using a tense of the verbs called the heiness tense. You may have heard of this before. It is very simply a fixed point in time with an impact that continues on.

In other words, from this moment that this verb takes place, it will change and never be the same. There will always be this ongoing repetitive impact. The world will be different.

[4 : 25] So it is historical. God puts himself on record with this story of love, a love story like no other. Therefore, it must be relational.

In our passage, we will see words of family, love, obedience, prayer, rescue, hope, victory.

These are words of relation. These are words of earnest passion. These are words of God seeking us.

In Italian, we have two different ways to say that we care about someone. When you generally have a caring desire to say, I like you, in English, we generally say, I love you as a friend and there is that Philadelphia kind of love, or Filet-Aus love.

In Italian, it is ti voglio bene. What that basically means is, I want to see you well or I wish you well. But there is another phrase that is used between a husband and a wife, and exclusively for husband and wife.

[5 : 40] And that's where we have the Italian word amore. And in that word of love, it is ti amo. It is the verb of amore. And you would only say that between a husband and wife because of the depth of passion, romance, desire, ache, and sacrifice in a relationship of what you're committing to the other person.

You would not say it to the mechanic even though you worked miracles on your motor and your car, unless you want to get a screwdriver in the chest, maybe. But ti voglio bene is what we would normally say, but in this one, it is not just, I wish you well, God says.

And it's not just, I love you intimately, although John often uses language that is of a marital sphere in describing our relationship with God.

No, this is language that goes even deeper. It is bound relationship for eternity. It is bound relationship that always means through love.

Therefore, when John describes these interactive actions of relationship, for example, when he uses the word sin, covenant.

[7 : 00] When he speaks of idols, for example, he says it is not just a desire or an inordinate desire. It is a binding of a relationship that makes us stupid and makes us oblivious to this fascinating, wonderful love story of God.

It is an alternate relationship against God. That's what John means when love has a story.

Then another factor about this story, this love story of God is that it is a trap. It's a trap, though, in a positive sense. It's a reverse trap, an inverted one of God's love.

It eagerly seeks us out and captures us from our fears and purifies our affections exclusively toward our Father.

Why is it a trap? Why would I say that? Because it's true. Soren Kierkegaard said this, the truth itself is a trap.

[8 : 14] You cannot get it without it getting you. You cannot get the truth by capturing it only by the truth capturing you.

And in this passage, John also describes what is true, not only what is true, but who is true. So it is a trap because it's true and it's a trap because it's also love.

And this one story is a reality of love. It is not just a sentiment of love, but it is the very being of what holds and sustains our world together.

This reality that lifts true love out of the merely sentimental, the sentimental love of our day. But it also exalts God's love vastly beyond the naturalistic and the scientific interpretations of our world and of our origins.

It establishes love that is far superior to all of the philosophies and their constructs. It is love that changes the course of history and radically sweeps up men, women and children into the eternal arms of God himself.

[9 : 32] It is this story that is both knowledge and reality and accessible. It is the story that rightly relates the creation to its creator, human beings, to our loving Father.

This is the story of apocalyptic love. This is John, the apostle, aged apostle, writing passionately against men and women who would tell and persecute his precious church, trying to draw them out of community and say, if you just come and worship with us, well, if you just come and know what we know, a higher knowledge, a deeper knowledge, a more proud knowledge, if you just follow our philosophy, then you'll be in the in-crowd.

A few weeks back, a friend of mine in Italy sent me a video that was translated from English into Italian from a group called the Wayseers. So I started doing research on the Wayseers.

And while I was preparing as well for this message, I said, this is what was being promoted. He was fascinated with this group called the Wayseers. What were they saying? That there's a special group of people in this world who are willing to fight upstream, who will not accept the politics as they are, who will change things because they see more deeply and they have more superior knowledge.

And it was a call, a long, ten-minute call, fight against the constructs of our day, against all authority that's corrupt. So, if you just come and join us in the deeper knowledge, those people of that day started to tell the love story differently.

[11 : 31] They turned the loving father upside down and made him an evil demigod. They were drawing people away. And here comes the apostle John, fervent, passionate, compassionate, gracious, calling his people to say, Remember the love. Remember the story.

There is an apocalyptic love story for you today. It is for me. It is for you. And it is only found in a kind for kind relationship with God.

In the first five verses, we see that love has a story that God wrote. So three simple things. God wrote the story. God reveals the story. And God also rewards the story.

God wrote the story. God reveals the story. God also rewards it. Verses one to five. Let's read. Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God and everyone who loves the Father, loves whoever has been born of him.

And by this, we know that we love the children of God when we love God and when we obey His commandments. For this is the love of God that we keep His commandments and His commandments are not burdensome.

[12 : 50] For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world. Even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the son of God.

This passage is continuing on from chapter four. I believe you'll be looking at chapter four in the future. So I'm going to try to steal as much thunder as I possibly can and then flee the scene.

Here we want to see the aspect that God associates and brings in the story. We wrote this story from the pre-existent Christ that Jesus is the Christ the Messiah promised.

And anyone who understands that anyone who casts his relationship, who puts his story, the narrative of his life into the life of this Christ has been supernaturally born from above.

Born of God. And out of that supernatural birth will come this glorious obedience to the commands of God. This desire to obey Him.

[14 : 09] Not this duty just to obey Him. Kierkegaard also said this. It is really remarkable that while all the other attributes ascribed to God are adjectives.

Love alone is a substantive. And it would scarcely occur to one to make the mistake of saying God is lovely.

Thus language itself has given expression to the substantial element that is found in this very attribute that God is love and that love is action.

We see in these verses John is very strong in bringing out the beauty of the Trinity. The protagonist in every good story, if love has a story, it always has a protagonist.

Every good story has a good protagonist and an antagonist. The protagonist is always the Trinity, the fountainhead of love. The antagonist is simply us in our fallen state, sons of Adam, daughters of Eve.

[15 : 24] Do you know where the first mention of love is in the Scripture? Anyone try to proffer a guess?

It was. Well done, Peter. It was in Genesis chapter 22 and verse two. The first occurrence of the word love is there when it refers to Abraham's love for his only son who was offered as a sacrifice and Mount Moriah, which was the early name for Mount of Jerusalem.

The place of the crucifixion of Yeshua himself. It was a clear reference to the New Testament gospel message that was quoted by this very same apostle when he said it is for God who so loved the world in this way that he gave.

He gave. Who his son. That whoever does believe whoever follows is born of him.

And if it's richness, a number of scholars have noted that the word for love in Hebrew comes from a two letter root with the word this two letter root of a left as a modifier.

[16 : 48] The two the root word means to give. To give. And the a left indicates first person agency.

In other words to love in a have a means I give. So when God starts and writes his story, he starts it with a great call through this earth.

I am love. I give. It is essentially an act of giving. It is sacrificial. It is the quintessential passage of scripture regarding love or Agape as we read it in first Corinthians is love does not seek its own.

It is I give. Therefore the antithesis, the opposite of love is is also selfishness. The root of love is the root of pride and the root of fear, etc.

When God writes a story, he says I give myself and therefore you must give yourself in return. It is kind for kind love like for like.

[18 : 06] That's exactly what obedience is. For everyone for this is the love that we keep as commandments found in verse three. That we keep as commements as commandments are not burdensome.

There's an ease. There's a beauty. There's a there's a joy that comes back in that. There's a sweetness in obeying the commands of God.

It's the expression of relational adoration and Thanksgiving. When we love someone, we return that adoration back in a very relational way.

An empty relationship is one that only sees its duty as I have to love because that's what the person expects. There's no joy in that kind.

No, Jesus says, John says this relationship is so is not burdensome. It does not start from a sense of obligation. It starts from a sense of privilege being born of God, being a child of God, being accepted in his kingdom is a place of privilege.

[19 : 19] It is wonderful to obey. It is not that I have to obey. It is that for the glory of Christ, I get to obey. What a privilege.

It is for the world and Edinburgh that I get to obey as a child of God. I am not lost. I'm accepted. You might say, but I thought that God loved me unconditionally.

Yes, he does without any condition condition that you could offer back to him. But it doesn't mean that he does not desire his love coming back to him from you.

It doesn't excuse us from returning that kind of love back to him. And isn't that what repentance is all about?

It is saying a great big celebratory yes to the person we once denied. It's as the prodigal son did when he came to his father at first and he says, I want your stuff, but I don't want you.

[20 : 25] And then when he came back, he said, let me just work to stay alive. And the father said to him, I want you. I don't want your stuff.

And the son was cast upon by his by the loving heavenly kisses of the father. And the son was brought into the party.

The whole passage, the whole the whole parable is about getting into the party, which is what the presence of God coming home. It is that great relationship.

He re he desires a repentance that is kind for kind. Verses 6 to 12, he goes on and he says love has a story. And that story is the one that God reveals constantly.

So God wrote it, but now he reveals it consistently. And he reveals it because it's anchored in history. It is God given is God given away. Verse 6, this is he who came by water and by blood.

[21 : 29] Jesus Christ. You notice how he keeps centralizing and focusing love and his story on the singular person of Christ Jesus.

This was to fight two different groups in that in that day. The first group of that day felt and maybe you've reviewed this, but there were two different thing thoughts that were quite prevalent.

They were the dosatists. And there was the idea that Jesus came and maybe he was more of an apparition than an actual body.

There was another group that came and said that the Christ spirit, if you will, the God spirit was upon Christ until he got to the cross.

At the moment that he was on the cross, that spirit left him and he was left to die on his own. What's happening? These are men.

[22 : 27] And these are philosophies that are trying to retell the story. And they're abusing it. They're destroying it. And John comes in and he says, you must come in your day and let people see Jesus, the Christ, the Messiah.

Jesus alone. Preach Jesus. Live Jesus. Love Jesus. Share Jesus. It's all Jesus. I'm here as Saint Patrick said, let every eye who sees me see Christ.

Every eye who beholds me. Jesus above me. Jesus before me. Beneath me. Jesus Christ. He's being revealed. How? Not by the water only, but by the water in the blood.

Now, do not be too disturbed by obscure references. They would have a lot of meaning to the original readers. And they'd be a bit more difficult for us today. I understand that.

The two references here of water and also of blood deal mostly from what I can tell with the inauguration of Jesus' ministry. Of the loving invasion of God to come back and take the works of the devil away.

[23 : 37] It was his baptism. Others have also said his incarnation. But most of it is the inauguration of his ministry because he came by water in that sense.

It describes the qualitative nature of his ministry. And the spirit is the one who testifies as we continue because the spirit is the truth. There are actually three that will testify.

It is the spirit and the water and the blood. And these three all agree. If we receive naturally the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God.

It is that he is born concerning his son, whoever continuously believes lives their life in the Son of God has the testimony himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar because he is not believed in this revealed testimony of his story that God is born concerning his own son.

Verse 11. And this is it, the testimony that God gave us eternal life and this life is found only in his son.

[24 : 52] And whoever has the son has life and whoever does not have the son of God simply does not have life.

This simple word life is Zoos. This is the standard word about the ability to have life, the quality of existence, but John takes it and he infuses it with an eternality, an immortality.

He infuses it with the love story being revealed is one that is not found in this world. It is a story that no one else is willing to tell because it is so anchored in heaven.

People cannot get over, people cannot understand where does the supernatural joy, where does the supernatural light come from?

It is being revealed in what? That Jesus Christ was inaugurated into ministry, that he died for us, that he was in history, God went on record, the herald that he came on in history to be examined.

[26 : 00] But John goes on and he says, wait a second, there is also this spirit of God that has been sent and the spirit of God is with us consistently telling us and also empowering us with this eternal life.

He's not just helping us live, he is infusing us with a qualitative life of heaven itself, which is to be transmitted all around us.

This is what we bear witness to. And all three of those things agree for us that every time that we come to understand who God is and relate to him, remember the whole passage is about God's heartbeat of relationship toward him with us as children.

And these three things agree of Christ's ministry, Christ's death, his resurrection and his ascension and the spirit will constantly be telling us and leading us there and allowing us to drink from that fountain over and over and over again.

And I get to that verse, whoever has the son has life. Verse 12. Whoever does not have the son, it is so that we might experience him. The same apostle wrote in John chapter 14.

[27 : 21] He literally told his disciples, if you knew that I was going away, you would rejoice. I believe he was referring to a hebraic understanding of a wedding ceremony where the groom would make a covenant and 12 months later he and then he would go away and the bride to be would go to her home and the groom would go make an apartment, a place to live for his bride to be next to his father's house.

And as he would make this miniature mansion, this small home, another nice thing is once they were finally married, they had a whole year where they didn't have to work, but they just learned to love and to build their marriage.

I would just like that myself. But the husband to be the groom in the middle of the night would gather his party and he would come back for his bride and he would announce in the street.

Now the bride didn't know what time he would appear, but he would announce in the street and he would call her to leave that home and to come live with him forever. And Jesus told his disciples, if you knew what I was doing to go prepare a place for you, you would have rejoiced for I will come back again.

I will not leave you as orphans. I will not abandon you in any way. And when I go away, I will send the comforter, the consolation, the one who will come alongside you and lead you into all the truth.

[28 : 58] He will be there. He will consistently tell you who I am. He will keep you faithful to me. He will keep you passionate for me. It is not just some inanimate or in unincorporated spirit.

It is the Holy Spirit, the loving spirit of God who lives within us. Isn't that great? Isn't that joyful? God loves us daily.

Every moment he whispers to us, he draws us to him. He says, I'm coming for you. God's love story reveals and reveals and reveals and reveals who he is.

The more we walk in Christ, the more we see what he's all about in the past. And that's how I know he loves me today. Because he loved me so much back then.

And that's how I can have life, different life, eternal life. And that's how I can look toward heaven and take the joy of my future and let it infuse me in the present with hope.

[30 : 05] To let it conquer misery. To let it destroy the constructs of my own mind of disappointment and discouragement that would drain my soul.

The book of Hebrews tells us we have one foot in this world and another in that one. We are literally tied to the sun behind the veil, the ascended king who lives in his body for us.

What does that mean for you to have life in that way? Some of us, we are diseased. We have ailments. I'm over 40.

I'm starting to find an ailment every day. It comes up and sneaks up and surprises me. You don't have to say amen. If you know it.

I recently, last summer, I was trying to identify more with the rich preachers of our history. So I decided last summer to identify with Spurgeon and I had a huge attack of gout.

[31 : 11] That's all I could get. That's about as Spurgeon as I go as I come. It was awful. I've had a number of attacks of gout. We've been able to sort that out. And in that attack, I asked one of my brothers, I said, gospel me.

Tell me some of the love story of God because right now my whole leg is not feeling it. How can I have hope? I'm absolutely miserable. I'm grumpy. I'm upset.

My kids are getting it. My wife is hearing about it. Poor wonderful lady that she is. And we suffered through that again and again together.

This brother told me one of the most beautiful things. He said, Jesus is in the your perfect body to come. He won't shed it. He's holding it for you.

He is your hope. He's that kind of life for you. The sun did not go to heaven and ascend there without his body. He holds on to it. And in that encouragement, when I am so ill and when I'm so hurting and in such pain, I know one day that he is the first fruit and I will have his body.

[32 : 23] I'll be made in his likeness and that is hope for me. He who has a son as life. He who does not have a son does not have life. And I understand that that means our souls of what it means to be forgiven and accepted by God.

But that's the kind of relationship that the Spirit tells me. This is what you will have. Verses 13 to 21. Then as we see from the story that God wrote it, but God constantly reveals this love story that God has a story of love that he also rewards and rewards beautifully with assurance and certainty.

We see this here because he says we know we know. Look, look at verse 13. I write these things to you who believe in the very name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.

This is a this is a heartbeat of John. He switches to the singular. He writes and he says that you might know I'm writing these to you little children. I love you. God loves you.

That you as you believe in the name of Son of God that you will be confident. Rightly relating to God's love means knowing him.

[33 : 37] Knowing him, not just sensing him. D. Martin Lloyd-Jones said that we would be filled with God's love constantly.

If we would remind ourselves daily these about these three things. I often preach this to my to my dear folks in Italy.

That we would remind ourselves about who God is, about what God has done and about what God will do. If we can see those, it will deepen our knowledge of him.

And in that knowing, there will be a level of certainty that I see how God is moving in my life and in my world. And every piece is important to him. And what that does is it produces all of these.

You will know. You will know. It's he speaks about prayer. He speaks about prayer and intercession for those who are committing sin. Let's look at these. Let me just share them quickly if I might.

[34 : 40] Here's the confidence John says that we have toward him that if we ask anything according to his will, he will hear us. If we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we also know that we have the request that we have asked of him.

So not only does God give us the answers to the request, but he gives us the request to begin with. If he answers them, he wanted you to know those came from me as well. What a great encouragement to our prayers and to our prayer life.

What is prayer life? Is it not the coming to know relationally, intimately, lovingly our Lord? Isn't prayer the restoration of that relationship to know that God, I'm stuck.

God, I'm finite, but Father, I plead with you and by faith in that moment by faith. I can appeal to you and he hears me.

That's the confidence. There is not a capricious father. There is a listening and attentive father. When I come to know that, I will know that by how he answers my prayers.

[35 : 49] But then I will also know that I'm praying in accordance with his will because he gave me the very request to know how to pray in his name. John speaks of a relationship in communion that is glorious, precious, loving.

And he includes and infuses it with prayer. How do we approach prayer? Do we approach it mechanically?

I know sometimes I do. Maybe too often. How do we approach it? John wants us to approach it with an absolute kind and kind love of relation to him.

He sent his spirit who's revealing to us so we must love him and return and speak with that spirit. Yes. Now what happens at this level of knowing with certainty is that we become wrapped up into God's story.

We have a place in this love story. It moves friends. Here's what happens at the moment when God begins to move through prayers and through intercession and through saving of people's lives from sin and changing our relationship towards sin.

[37 : 02] It moves us from the spiritual or in the spiritual world from the philosophical one. In other words, we stop looking at the Bible just as something philosophical and the very simple commands of Jesus become fresh in our heart and he says, obey those.

Nothing complicated. I think the most intelligent, the most brilliant Christians are the ones who understand how to obey the most simplest of his commands because they walk with the Lord.

You see, repentance is moving, allowing the scriptures to move from the philosophical to the affectional. And I think that's what the Bible does to us as we allow the spirit to move in our heart.

It takes it from just knowing about God and knowing about maybe our traditions, knowing our creeds, knowing our songs, knowing our songs. And it moves it down to what do those things do to our hearts?

It is one big yes to God in a thousand no's to every other desire clamoring for my heart.

[38 : 14] It's one large I know him and he is mine. Read with me through the passage and I like to close with the illustrations.

We know he hears as he's given us these requests. If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask and God will give him life to those who commit sins that do not lead to death.

There is a sin that leads to death. I do not say that one should pray for that all wrongdoing a sin. But there is sin that does not lead to death.

I think a very simple straightforward reading because John is a very straightforward apostle is where we need to come with this interpretation. I know that this passage has really tripped us up through the years as we've read it.

I believe in understanding what he's coming to say is there is a way that when we see believers, other brothers and sisters caught in sin over desires, distracted, not trusting the Christ and who he is, not engaging God in the love story.

[39 : 20] Very simply, if they haven't died from that sin because sin leads to death, then John says plead for them because as much as Jesus prays for you, he will also pray for them.

Plead for them. Why? Because the very power of Jesus Christ can save them from that intercede for one another.

Plead that the relationship of God's love story would be restored in your friend's heart. John says, now there is there are sins that lead to death and the way you know that he's saying if they have died, I'm not saying pray for the dead.

I'm not saying pray for those because he understands that we don't pray for the dead or after as Hebrews 9 27 says there is a judge. There is a time one time for man to die and after that is the judgment.

Yes, there are sins that can instantly lead us to death. But I believe he's saying while we're walking, plead with Christ. Why? Because that's a sign of God's love story.

[40 : 33] It isn't about making up our own world. It's about bringing others in again to the father into the father's house. So I just want to lightly touch on that because I know it's in the passage.

I know it can be difficult if you have questions about it or discussion. I'd like I wouldn't mind sharing with you after we know that everyone verse 18 who has been born of God does not keep on sinning.

But he who was born of God protects him and the evil one does not touch him. We know that we look at all the we knows. Notice these.

We know that we are from God and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. And we know that the son of God, one of the most beautiful verses here, we know that the son of God has come and given us understanding so that we may know him who is true.

And when we are in him who is true in his son, Jesus Christ, he is the true God and the eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols.

[41 : 37] God rewards through the certainty and the knowledge of what he's doing through his son, through the spirit, by guaranteeing our future through the ascended Christ, allowing us to minister one with another now and being able to confront evil and release the creation, release the creation for his good name.

George Washington Carver was a scientist, believe a couple hundred years ago, who found 123 practical uses and discovered them from the peanut.

He studied it most of his life and his career and many practical uses that we still have today. He was a devout believer in Christ and he said that he approached every project and every discovery that he could have with prayer.

He bathed it in deep prayer because he said, the God who made the peanut will release to me the discovery of its use in the created world.

He was one of our first African American scientists in the United States. Some of you know more about him than I do. I just found this story absolutely fascinating. He had a deep loving relationship with God and as a scientist, he rightly related with the Father.

[43 : 03] In that right relationship with the Father, he approached his craft and God released the creation into his hands. It impacted and saved the entire south of the United States who had over farmed their areas with a certain crop and depleted the minerals from the fields.

The whole south was dying. His response was, bring the peanut in and get crops of peanuts as well. And when they did, it revitalized the entire south and saved many people's lives.

That was just one of the things that happened through his life. The point is that I believe in that infusion of eternal life and knowing that we are from God, verse 19, the whole world lies in the power of the evil one, but we are from God.

And when we know that, we can approach our story, our life, our family relationships, our sciences, and our cities with the heartbeat that as we sang tonight, there is a city to come that is pure, sanctified, solid.

In my church, I have a lady that all three of the people I'll share with you have been started to come to our ministry. A very precious lady named Giuseppina.

[44 : 28] Giuseppina came because she had found a little booklet and she wrote across Italy and asked for more information about this booklet that had the gospel in it.

The lady who received the letter noticed her address and her phone number and where she was from, which just, oh, by the way, so happened to be that her brother was in my church and just the next town over.

And so they connected them. Giuseppina came and she's been coming and listening to the gospel. And when I preach, she weeps not because I'm such a bad preacher. Thank you very much. But because she hears God's word and she's weeping except last month.

After hearing, we've been going through the Beatitudes. After hearing about how Jesus proclaims his love and what he will produce in joy. And with her husband, who she's invited out named Hugo.

And with that, God really shook her life and she was so worried about do if I leave the Catholicism. If I walk away from Mary, will I still be Italian?

[45 : 47] So she went to a sanctuary, which is very well known. For Mary went through a big mass reembraced Mary.

She was earnestly confused. I wrote her a note of encouragement. She wrote me back an entire epistle longer than John. Just about how confused and struggling she is.

Why? Because she is very torn between a right relationship with God and a relationship with this world.

Her life and her form, it is Mary, Roman Mary, family tradition and her nation. Another friend of mine, Luca owns a factory.

To him, family is so important. He pled with me over this last year. Tell me, will I be able to see my family again, my wife and my kids? And so he talked all about heaven.

[46 : 45] This man wants to know all about it. And I told him, first thing you need to know is it's not just to see your family. It's God's heaven. And yes, he wants you there.

Therefore, as I work with Luca and you can pray for him, his heart, he's been coming and he sits right on the front row. And he makes sure his daughter and his wife sits behind him so that they won't distract him.

Because he wants to hear God's word. 44 years old. To him, family is so important. He is almost, I believe, there.

Does he lie under the power of the evil one? Except also this year, we've been given another man, very good looking guy, a psychologist and therapist.

And he's coming out of Mormonism in line to be the next bishop of our province. His father-in-law is the president over three state area and a friend from our church simply told him, I've started to learn about grace, started to share a few Bible verses with him.

[47 : 56] And here it was this very well put together man who started to come to church and weep because he knew he wasn't in the right relationship. He sat at our table and he looked at us the other night and he basically said, I could never get the Bible.

I read it all my life. He's late 30s. Read it all my life. But now the Bible is so exciting because I understand grace. God called me into grace. We believe he's a believer now and his wife is coming.

What's the difference? Grace, God's rewarding the story because he sees it because he loves it. He couldn't see it until he embraced it.

All of those in right relationship to God will know and be rewarded. Imagine the power that gets released. Imagine the glory of God that's infused in our society when we're rightly related to him and channeling that love.

Imagine the blessing of God here in Edinburgh by us as we serve this world as one who is known by grace. And then he closes his letter with a strange command.

[49 : 09] It seems keep yourselves from idols. Why? Because love has a story and idols are those physical things that just take that story and twist it.

Those over desires. There were real people who were really following idols in that day from this imperial cult to Artemis.

All across those lands. Keep yourselves from idols as John's call throughout the ages. He earnestly pleads because God has a story and he rightly wants to reward those who earnestly wait for him.

And so I echo John's words. Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus, because we love you. Love is a story that God wrote. Love is a story that God reveals.

Love is a story that God rewards. May you come quickly. Hallelujah. Amen.