

Grab your Bibles and turn to Matthew, chapter 22. That's where we're going to be tonight. Several years ago, a pastor friend of mine, who was teaching through the same text we're about to teach through tonight, shared a story I thought was both hilarious and also very relevant to the central idea of this text. This pastor friend of mine shared the story about when he was in college at the University of Texas. He was with a number of roommates in an apartment, and like most male collegians, most of their apartment was built on cinder blocks. So the whole thing was kind of just poorly put together.

He discovered, one day, he had an extra paycheck he didn't know he had, which, first of all, right there, is a cardinal sin of any collegian...to let an extra paycheck go unnoticed. That's crazy, but he found it and decided what he wanted to do was use this kind of "bonus" paycheck to help really fix up his apartment. So he cashed it and began to deliberate with his roommates about...*What would they do? What does this place need to look like? What do they need to do with it?*

They decided, of course, as any good male college roommate would do, what the apartment really needed to enhance the place was beanbags. So he gave the money to his roommates and said, "Go out and go find, you know, as many beanbags as this will buy, and we're going to make this place look legit." They go out, and hours pass. Literally, hours go by. He doesn't know where they are. They haven't made any contact, and then finally, at the end of the day, they come rolling in. To his surprise, they didn't come back with a bunch of beanbags. They came back with a ferret.

As he is explaining this story, he said it was kind of like this *Jack and the Beanstalk*-type deal. *I sent you out to get a cow, and you brought home beans. Like, what in the world are you doing?* It was this hilarious story that paints the picture that it's easy, in the midst of the mission we've been sent on to, to get distracted and end up not making the main the main thing. What you see in Matthew, chapter 22, is the same heart of that. God has put us here for a reason. He has given us a mission.

We're going to see in this text, all too often, we lose sight of the main thing God has called us to do in this time on this earth, and so Matthew 22 kind of recalibrates our hearts a little bit of what it is that is of primary importance for followers of Jesus Christ. Hopefully, tonight this will just refresh us and encourage us a bit more to fulfill this. But Matthew, chapter 22, we'll start in verse 34, and give you a little background on the text we're in.

At this point in the gospel of Matthew, Jesus is nearing the end of his earthly ministry. It's the culmination of his earthly ministry, and just before this passage we're about to read, Jesus had gone into the temple, had driven out the moneychangers who were using the worship of God as a means by which they could make a profit. That righteously frustrated Jesus, he drove them out, and this didn't sit well with a lot of the religious leaders.

Matthew, chapter 22, you have a set of religious leaders who come to Jesus to try to trap him with some trick questions because they hope if Jesus will answer these questions wrong, it will do one of two things. Either, one, it will prove he's a heretic, or two, at the very least, based upon his answer to the questions that are asked, he'll at least split the camp of followers and divide his followers and lose popularity. In Matthew, chapter 22, you see 3 instances where he is pressed and tried to be tricked in some of these questions.

The first two are by the Sadducees, and they try to trick Jesus, and Jesus just kind of punks them, puts them right down. Then here comes the Pharisees in verse 34, and the Pharisees approach Jesus and say this: **"But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. And one of them, a lawyer...,"** not a lawyer as we would know lawyers to be. This was a scholar of the law, of the biblical Hebrew law. **"...asked him a question to test him,"** in order to trick him or trap him. He asked this in verse 36: **"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?"**

Now if you remember last week, when we were in Galatians, chapter 3, we talked about the idea of what the law was. It was more than just the Ten Commandments, right? There were, in fact, about 613 commandments that governed the nation of Israel. Out of those 613, 300-plus were prohibitions, things you're not to do; 285 of those were actual commands, things we are *to do*. What the religious scholars of the day, the Pharisees and Sadducees, they would get together, and they would begin to argue amongst themselves as to which ones are the greater commandments and which ones are the lesser.

In other words, which ones are the misdemeanors, and which ones are the felonies, so to speak? They argued amongst themselves, and ultimately, they were asking, "Of all the commandments, what is the greatest? What is the greatest commandment? Is it the Sabbath, keeping the Sabbath day holy? Is it, 'Don't kill someone; don't murder'? Is it, 'You're not to have other gods before *the* God'? I mean what is *the* greatest commandment?" And so they came to Jesus.

Now oftentimes, Jesus would answer their questions because he knew they were not asking sincerely; they were asking to trap him. A lot of times, he would often answer with a parable, and he would shroud the truth in there because those who were really seeking it, they could find it, but those who were just trying to trap him, they would get lost in the parable. This time, Jesus doesn't use a parable. Jesus knows this

question is way too important to leave it vague, and so Jesus quotes here, in verse 37 and following, Deuteronomy, chapter 6, which, to a Jew, is a very famous passage in the Hebrew Bible, which contains in it, really, the foremost ordinance for the nation of Israel concerning their God.

Jesus quotes it when he says this in verse 37: **"And he said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment.'**" And then, in verse 39, Jesus quotes Leviticus 19 when he says, **"And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself."** So Jesus says, essentially, if you take all 613 commandments, and you boil them down, they boil down to 2. Really, out of the two, one flows from the first.

The first and great commandment is you would, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind." Then notice in verse 40, Jesus says, "It's on these two commandments the whole Law and Prophets depend." In other words, you take your entire Old Testament, at that time, they all, like a door on a hinge, hinged on these two laws, with one of them being the first and the great: Love the Lord your God. Worship him with everything you have.

At the end of the day, really, if you were to kind of flip this a bit, this becomes the chief barometer for a follower of Jesus Christ, and really for his church, as to what it is that defines you or should define you as a follower. In other words, if we were to just take us as individuals in this room, ask yourself... *How do people know me? Am I defined by the people around me? By what central characteristic? Is it a genuine and passionate love for God, for Jesus Christ? Or are you known by something lesser that would define you as a primary quality?*

As a church, let's take the church, The Village Church for a moment, or specifically this campus, how are we known in the city around us? How are we known in the communities around us? Is The Village Church known, first and foremost, as a church that passionately loves Jesus Christ and loves others around us? Is that how we're known? If it's not, then let me suggest we have missed the main thing. We have missed the main thing, and we're no different from those dudes who went out and, instead of getting beanbags, got a ferret, all right? We've missed the main thing.

So let me just, again, here tonight, what I want to do is I just want to focus in on this first and great commandment: Loving God with all our heart, all our soul, and our mind. We learn, first and foremost, the primary imperative in this statement is *love*. It's not knowledge. As good as it is to love the Word of God and to study it, at the end of the day, that was meant to be a means to an end, not an end. The end is to love God. It's not knowledge. If it were knowledge, it would be philosophy.

You know, the Greek word for *philosophy* is *philosophia*, which means the love of knowledge. It's not the end. It's also not our ministerial activity. It's not how much we can kind of cram into our week, and how many righteous events we can attend versus not attend others. It's not about moral piety and how holy you and I can present ourselves throughout the week. As good as some of those things can be in and of themselves, they're not the end. They're a means to an end. The end, the one command, the one imperative, is to love.

Listen to the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 13 when he says, **"If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing."** Then he concludes that chapter by saying, **"So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love."** It all boils down to love.

So back here, in Matthew, chapter 22, all within this one statement Jesus tells us here, it contains the *what*, the *who*, the *why*, and the *how* concerning that love, and we've already seen the *what*. The *what* is to love, right? But he also tells us in this statement the *who*, and he gives three words: **"...the Lord your God..."** *Lord your God*. It's the idea that God doesn't want to be simply prominent in our lives. He wants to be preeminent above everything else. He wants our love, our affections, our worship for him to be greater than anything in our lives, greater than our careers, greater than our hobbies, greater than even our own families, even our own spouses or children.

The first and primary object of our affections, the center of our world by which every other thing in our life should revolve around or orbit around is centrally the love we have for him. For us, that sounds incredibly selfish, incredibly arrogant. If I were to stand up here and demand the whole world love me with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind. *Love me*. That would sound incredibly arrogant, asking and demanding the world's love for a flawed human being, but for God, it's completely different, especially when you understand the *why* that's packed in this statement.

Again, if you look closely, implicit in this command is the *why* we're to love God. Let's take these three terms he has given us: **"...the Lord your God..."** Let's break them down into *why* it's him. Now first one, the idea of *Lord*, in some of your Bibles, the word *Lord* is in all capital letters, small capital letters, right? I don't think so in the ESV, but if you have that there, the reason is it's letting you know that is the Hebrew equivalent in the Greek for *Yahweh*. This is not just any Lord. This is the covenant-keeping God. This is a God who's faithful to his promises, who's merciful, who's righteous, who's gracious, and who's perfect in his affections. There's no one on this earth who is more deserving of love than that kind of Lord.

But not only that, he also says because he's "...the Lord your God..." He's Elohim. This is a different term. He is the Almighty, All-powerful. He is the Eternal, everywhere-present-at-all-times God, and that kind of God stooped down for us and loved us, but he's not just any Lord and God. Who is he? He's *your* God. He's your God. This becomes very interesting because he's not just some abstract phenomena we kind of meditate and kind of worship from afar, like you're looking at a piece of art in a gallery and contemplating.

It's not that. He's very personal. He's our God. He says, "Love the Lord *your* God." He's the one who is faithful to us. Many of us in this room have the testimony of how God pulled you from your sin, plucked you from the pit, redeemed you by the blood of Jesus Christ, and has sealed his spirit in you as a down payment for eternity, which is to come. Most of us in this room have that story, and so for you, when you think upon your story, it's not just that Jesus is Savior of the world; he's *your* Savior.

It's not that Jesus is just the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world; Jesus is the Lamb of God who took away *your* sin. He took away *my* sin, and so our lives are filled with God's faithfulness to us because he's a personal God. We're to love him above all else because he has loved us better than anyone else, more eternally, more faithfully than anyone else. No one on the face of this earth has loved us like God has. That's why John tells us, in 1 John, that the reason we love him is because he first loved us. If it wasn't for Jesus Christ being the model of what love is, dying for us, taking on human flesh for us, rising for us, when none of us deserved it, we would never even know what love is. He was the model.

Right there, in that statement, I mean we see, so far, *what* we're to do...we're to love. We see *who* we're to love...the Lord our God. We see *why* we're to love him...because of who he is and what he has done for us. Now he tells us *how* we're to do that, and he gives three aspects here, but really, they're all tied into one, but he says...

1. "*The first way you're to love me is with all of your heart, all of your heart*, with all of your emotion, with all of your affection, unreservedly. This is interesting thing about this God: Because of who he is, you're loved back from him. You don't have to guard your heart when it comes to this God like you might have to in a human relationship, wondering how this person is going to treat me at the end of this thing. You don't have to guard your heart with that God.

I mean, you can actually let your love spill over publicly and personally in tremendous ways. This is the one God, the one relationship, whose love can actually be exhibited in a very exaggerated way and be okay. That's the reason why, when we sing, we raise our hands and surrender. Because of all of me is yours. Everything. "You're to love me with all your heart. Everything."

2. He says, "You're to love me with all your soul." Now the root word in the Greek here is the word *psuche*, which means *breath*. It's the same breath in the garden God breathed into the nostrils of Adam and gave him life and thus gave us life. So the idea is you're to love God with every ounce of your soul, your breath, your life, your very being, and specifically here, in the Greek, this is used in terms of our *will* or our *purpose*, the very trajectory of our lives. Everything that defines who we are is meant to end in adoration and affection for him.

3. "You're to love me with all your mind." It's the idea we're no longer conformed to this world, right? How the world thinks about life, we don't think that way. As Paul said, "We're taking every thought captive unto devoted obedience to Jesus Christ." Paul said in Philippians, "Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is good, whatever is excellent, whatever is worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on such things."

I can tell you there is nothing out there that is more true, more noble, more right, more pure, more lovely, more good, more excellent, more worthy of praise than our God. No one. Our mind is to be in worship there. These three things aren't three separate compartments when you read them. They're all meant to be in one. God is literally saying here, "With every faculty I've given you, worship me. Everything. I'm the end of that." There's no greater affection in your life than God, and so this is telling us, now, what God primarily wants for us is that holistic love.

It's pretty straight. It's pretty simple right here, but it's incredibly difficult, isn't it? I mean you read this, and you go, *Man, that sounds great. Thanks for parsing up that text for us, but how easy is that to actually do?* How difficult it is to love God unreservedly with everything he deserves. It's incredibly difficult. In our closing moments here, here's what I would love to do: I would love to just get practical. If you find yourself at a place where your love for God in this capacity has waned, can I just share with you some very practical things of how we can steward the affections of our heart that they might go where they were meant to go, in total adoration to this God?

I think before, though, we look at some of those things, the first thing you have to recognize is an attitude we have to have. It's an understanding there is not one of us in the room who has loved God in the way he fully deserves. There's not one of us, and so when you recognize that it should bring about a humility in you, not a pride but a humility, to fall on your knees, and the first thing we do is confess and go, "Lord, I haven't loved you the way you deserve. I haven't responded out of an overflow of my heart and in a way you deserve, and so I haven't made Jesus Christ the foremost aim of my affections. Thereby, I need the power of the Holy Spirit."

This is where we go in prayer, and we beg, and we plead, and we go, "God, I need you to break my heart for you. I need you to soften my heart. I need you to take all these affections I've had on all these vain and temporal things and wean them and put them onto yourself." That's the attitude by which we must start with. But past that, truthfully, because we have been saved into a relationship with God, I think there are some key aspects in every relationship, human relationship, that apply to what it means to kindle our affections towards God. Here are just a few of them our throw our way: First of all, it goes without saying...

1. *Every relationship we have on this earth requires time in order to deepen and cultivate.* Quantity time and quality time. Man, that's why I love when my family comes together over meals and when we get to sit together around a table, not that backseat and going through fast food, but a table. Y'all know what a table is? It's a really fascinating invention. Like you're forced to face each other. It's really cool how that works, but we get around a table, and at the end of the day, or at the start of day, we can sit around and go, "Hey, what went on today? What are your highs? What are your lows?"

I get to hear my three little girls and my wife and myself get to share, "Here are some of the things we encountered today. Here are some the challenges. Here are some of the victories we've seen today," and we log that time. That's why I love playing with my kids. I like to wrestle with them, and they're three girls, all right? I feel sorry for them, but I have to have some sort of outlet to tackle. I enjoy that.

That's why I love every Friday, getting to go on a date with my wife for just a couple of hours, apart from anyone else, and just to be together, and it's just time. It takes time to cultivate, to deepen. In the same way, if we're going to grow in our relationship with God, there has to be time involved. There has to be time logged with this God who is ever available, ever accessible, and who longs to commune with his children. There has to be time involved.

2. *Every relationship needs clear communication in order to thrive.* I mean it's just the basics. I'm not sharing anything new with you here, but every relationship needs clear communication. For my wife and me, communication is our tether. This past week was rough, man. We misfired, right? We have been married almost 12 years now. We have some of those weeks, and this has just been one of those seasons. Whether it's the busyness of the pace here or whether it has been the transitions in moving back here, we've just had some misfires.

When those happen, distance gets created between us, and we have to work extra hard to make sure we're communicating. Otherwise, if we go long periods of time... My wife has this built-in love tank. When it starts getting empty, man, that "check engine" light goes on. You pull over. You're dealing with it, or you're running out of gas and you're done. All right? So we have to make sure we communicate because when we don't, that distance takes place, and our affections wane. You need communication.

With God, it's the same thing, as well. There has to be a reciprocal relationship taking place, whereby we come to God through his Word so we can meditate, we can read, we can discover what it is he has to say for us. Likewise, we go to him in prayer, not just with a bag of complaints or a shopping list of wishes, but so we can actually supplicate. We can actually confess. We can actually appeal. We can actually render our hearts and our affections to him in prayer. So there's a reciprocal relationship.

3. *Every relationship requires knowledge and understanding of the other.* I mean that's true, isn't it? Now again, knowledge isn't the end but does become a necessary means to the end of loving God. I can honestly tell you, in 12 years of marriage, I love my wife now more than I did when we first got married, and it looks a whole lot different too. Sometimes it's not as flashy. Sometimes there's not even as much fire, at times, it seems, but I can honestly tell you (and she is sitting right here) my love for her is much deeper than it has ever been.

When we were friends, it was fun learning her likes and district likes. *What's your favorite color? Oh, what's your favorite color?* Or when we dated, it got even better because now, all of a sudden, it's... *What are you passionate about? What are your fears?* And you start mining, and now in marriage, there's a whole new foundation for us because I now have gotten to see her in different seasons of our life, as a mother to our children, as my wife, as different talents and hobbies and gifts are unpacked in her. The more we study each other, and the more I learn about her, the more she learns about me, the greater our affections grow together. The seasons where we stop studying each other, that's where they begin to wane.

Essentially, that's what *theology* is. It's the study of God, and with God, there's not just one characteristic that defines him. God is like a diamond, where every time you study him, a different facet is revealed to you. You'll never, in your lifetime, in my lifetime, have enough time to study all the facets, but it's such a pleasure to start mining those Scriptures and learning about who God is rather than just picking it up on a podcast from some preacher who, really, essentially, you're learning about his relationship with God.

There's something completely different about you mining it yourself and learning more about God. As you do, your affections are meant to grow for him, and so literally, we would call this *learning to love*. That's what we're doing.

4. *Every relationship demands holiness and obedience.* Now why would I say this, especially in the South, where we all struggle with aspects of legalism and morality? Because you have to understand this: In a relational context, sin is not merely a judicial concept. It's deeply personal.

When I neglect my wife, when I fail to love her the way I've been commanded to, when I fail to walk in biblical health with my wife, it's not that I've just violated an infraction against her. It's I've created distance between us. I've broken fellowship. First John, the whole book really is themed around that idea that when we sin as a believer, it doesn't separate us salvifically from God, but it definitely breaks the fellowship, and what is needed in that moment is confession and repentance so we can be brought back into a healthy, affectionate relationship for him.

Understand, where there is a lack of time built into a relationship with God, there's distance. Where there's a lack of communication with God, there's distance. Where there is a lack of understanding and knowledge about God, there's distance. Where there is the presence of sin and the lack of holiness, there's distance, and so we can't enjoy a relationship with God unless those aspects are cultivated somehow. So if you find yourself, right now, at a place where your love has been waning, maybe some of those aspects will encourage you just, at least a starting place, to initiate pursuit of the one who has pursued you first.

I couldn't close without saying this: I would bet, in this room, the number one reason why you and I fail to love God the way he deserves is because we have failed to understand the depths by which he has loved us. See until the moment you really understand how God has loved you, what he has done for you in sending Jesus Christ as your Savior, and understand, really, the implications of what that meant, you'll never fully grasp the response that comes from that, that should come from that.

I remember, several years ago, when I was in California, I heard a story that really both encouraged me and really painted a picture for me about the depth of which our heavenly Father loves us. I want to close by just sharing this story with you, and it's a modern-day Prodigal Son story. If you're familiar with Luke, chapter 15, and the Prodigal Son story and the son who leaves and cashes out everything and comes back. This is really a true-life, Prodigal Son story that happened in Salinas, California.

In Salinas, California, there was basically a wealthy landowner. Salinas is just south of San Francisco, kind of just off the Central Valley a bit. This wealthy landowner, much like the Prodigal Son story, had two sons, one who was highly respected in the community. He was very subservient to his father, and then another one who had a bit of a rebellious streak in him, and so the older son, again, more responsible, more respected; the younger one, kind of this "Freebird" going on.

From an early age, this younger brother decided that as soon as he turned 18... His dad had made a promise to them that as soon as these sons turned 18, he would cash out, basically divide the land and the property and inheritance he had and give it to them, and they could basically cash it out and run from there. From an early age the younger son, in his own heart, said, "As soon as I turn 18, I'm out of here. I'm going to grab this, and I'm going to take off, and I'm going to get as far away from here as I can."

Sure enough, as he started nearing 18, he started pressing his father about, "Man, it's time for you to cash in. Do you remember your promise?" His dad pleaded with him because he saw the immaturity in his son, and said, "Now is not the time. Please, just hang with me three more years...four more years. Let me press into you, develop some more maturity, and then it's yours." The son said, "No. A promise is a promise. You said 18. I want 18."

Reluctantly, when his son turned 18, his dad made good on the promise, wrote the check, or basically gave the property... He cashed it in, in an amount for what would be, literally, today, millions of dollars. Imagine a freshman in college having millions of dollars at their disposal. So he did what any freshman would do at 18. He took the money, and he said, "I'm going to get as far away from here and as far away from my dad's rules as I possibly can," and he jumped on a train, and he went to New York City.

As soon as he got to New York, started taking his money and just throwing it away. He grabbed him the nicest sports car he could get. He grabbed some buddies and got an elite penthouse on the top of one of the high-rises. He then began buying every kind of dating relationship money could buy. Eventually, this led to some alcohol problems, some gambling problems, and before long, he began to spend more money and actually accrue more debt than he had to pay off.

Eventually, the creditors came after him. He had to move out of the penthouse. He had to let go of his sports car, and before he knew it, he was on the Upper East Side of New York wandering the streets. His alcoholism had gotten to the point that he was literally pilfering through garbage cans trying to find bottles that had remnants of alcohol still in them so he could drink. The STDs he had picked up now had covered his body in sores, and all of his friends had left him, until one day he was on the street, and he came to a reality check. *If I don't do something about this now, I'm going to die out here.*

He managed to bum some money off of a couple of his old friends that would buy him a train ticket back to Salinas and would buy him a couple of meals. Sure enough, he gets on, and his thought is...*If I can only get back to my dad, then I can just start over*, and so he takes the train ride. A couple of days pass, and he finally winds up in Salinas, gets off the train, walks into the square, and he realizes, *Wait a minute. There is no way I can go see my dad face-to-face. There is no way he is going to accept me back after what I just did and after how I look. He's just going to laugh at me and say, "I told you so."*

He went into a café there and just began to weep and think about what he was going to do, and so he decided he was going to write a letter to his dad. He wrote this letter down to his dad. He went out in the streets. He actually found one of his dad's farm workers, gave him the letter, and said, "Will you take this to

my dad because I can't bear to see him right now?" And so he did. I have a copy of the letter, and I want to read it to you. See if you can feel the angst in his soul.

He said, "Father, I realize what I've done. I've wasted not only your money but my life, which was important to you. I can't even begin to tell you about the awful things that I've done. I'm embarrassed. I'm at the end of my rope. I know nothing else to do but ask you if I can return home. I know that there's no reason why you should accept me back, but I plead and I beg with you that if you would, even as a farm worker on your land, accept me back, I'll do anything for no pay. Just for the room and board."

He said, "Father, I have just enough money to take the train that passes by our ranch in front of the apple orchard near the edge of the property. I'm going by there on the train tomorrow at 1:00 p.m., and if you would accept me back, I would ask that you simply drape an old sheet over one of the trees nearest the railroad, and as I'm passing by, I'll see the signal, and I'll know you've accepted me to come home. If that sheet is not there, then I won't stop at the train station. I'll just keep going. You see, I can't bear to see you face-to-face. I don't have the courage. I've done too much, and I have no idea what's going to happen with the rest of my life. Your son." Imagine being in that position.

A whole sleepless night went by filled with anxiety for this young man. The next morning he jumped on the train. As soon as he got to the train, he walked to the very back of the train, and he sat down next to this old man, and he just put his face in his hands and just began to weep as he contemplated what he may or may not see. He began to share with the old man his story about the things he had done and how he was coming back.

Soon enough, as the train passed outside of Salinas and got to the outside edge of the town around where their ranch was, he looked to the old man, and he said, "Can you do me favor? Can you just go to the window, and just tell me if you see one sheet anywhere in this apple orchard? I can't bear to look," and so the old man jumped up. He went to the window, and he looked out. Then he looked back at the young man, and he said, "I think you need to come see this for yourself." When he jumped up, he went to the window, and he looked out, and behold, as far as his eye could see for five square miles, there was a sheet on every tree.

Jeremiah said God has loved us with an everlasting love. God says, "You want to know how much I love you? Is the sun not enough? Is the moon not enough? Are the food and shelter you have not enough? Is the air you breathe not enough? Then how about this? How about I actually send my own Son to die in your place so you can be with me?" I mean, if your love has waned, be reminded you serve a God who, while we were still sinners, sent Christ to die for us, who has an everlasting love that is unparalleled by any human love you'll ever experience, and then you'll find your heart in a place of worship. Let's pray.

Father, we just confess we fall short. When I contemplate the love by which you have loved me, I am very aware of the fact that I don't love you as you deserve. Father, for any of us in this room who are in that place, we just appeal to your Holy Spirit. We want to cling to the one who did perfectly love you, to Jesus Christ. We want to ask that your Spirit, right now, in this room, might break our hearts, might soften our hearts, might show us the love by which you've given us, and Father, our affections might rise to you as we sing this song. I pray we would do so unashamedly, boldly, publicly, for knowing that no one has loved us more fully and perfectly as you have loved us in Jesus Christ. For that, we worship you in his name, amen.

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