

“As You Wish”
1 John 4:7-18
July 26, 2026

Sermon series: At the Movies – The Princess Bride Week 2.

The Woodside Church

July 26, 2026

Good morning. My name is Scott Burgess. I am a member of the sermon team as well as the Director of Woodside’s Prison and Recovery Ministry. I’d like to welcome you to today’s service, whether you are here in the building or watching online.

This is God’s word.

God’s Love and Ours

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. ¹⁰ This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹ Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit. ¹⁴ And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. ¹⁵ If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. ¹⁶ And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.

God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. ¹⁷ This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. ¹⁸ There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

We love because he first loved us. ²⁰ Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. ²¹ And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.

May God bless this reading of the Word.

I’ve noticed there are different types of movie watchers. Some people can watch and enjoy a movie once and never see it again. Others rewatch a movie a couple of times to find out what they may have missed, or just to see it again. Then there are those who watch the same movie, or movies, over and over. Anybody care to guess which type I am? I can recite scenes from Monty Python and the Holy Grail by memory. There are no more surprises for me in the Bourne trilogy, and my daughter and son-in-law are used to coming over Sunday afternoons and seeing a Harry Potter movie playing in the background. The Princess Bride is another movie

where I've lost count of the number of times I've seen it. I know the next scene, and the next line before it happens. Anybody else here know the movie? Let's see how we do in a game of "Say the next line."

Vizzini: “No more rhymes now, I mean it!”

Fezzik: “Anybody want a peanut?”

Vizzini: “He didn’t fall?”

INCONCEIVABLE!”

“Hello. My name is Inigo Montoya. You killed my father.

Prepare to die.”

“Farm boy, polish my horse’s saddle. I want to see my face shining in it by morning.”

“As you wish.”

“Farm boy, fill these with water, please.”

“As you wish.”

“Farm boy, fetch me that pitcher.”

“As you wish.”

The Princess Bride is a fantasy-adventure film directed by Rob Reiner and released in 1987. The movie starts with a young boy, played by Fred Savage, playing video games. Because he is sick, his grandfather, played by Peter Falk, arrives to read him a book, “The Princess Bride” by S Morgenstern. The movie stars Gary Elwes, as the farm boy Westley, and Robin Wright as Buttercup, living in the mythical country of Florin. Buttercup enjoys bossing Westley around, and Westley always replies, “As you wish.” Eventually, Buttercup realizes every time Westley says, “As you wish”, he really means, “I love you.” She is then surprised to find she loves him as well. They pledge their love to each other and Westley leaves to seek his fortune overseas so they can be married. Westley’s ship is captured by the Dread Pirate Roberts, who never leaves survivors. In grief and despair, Buttercup locks herself in her room and swears she will never love again. Five years later, Buttercup becomes forcibly betrothed to Florin’s arrogant Prince Humperdink. The rest of the movie revolves around the surprising return of Westley and his attempt to rescue Buttercup and resume their love for each other.

After the grandfather explains where the book originated, and why he was going to read it, the grandson asks if there are any sports in the book, his grandfather replies, "Are you kidding? Fencing, fighting, torture, revenge, giants, monsters, chases, escapes, true love, miracles!" The Grandson deadpans, "Doesn't sound too bad. I'll try to stay awake". Wikipedia describes the movie as a fantasy-adventure-comedy film. To me it has always been a love story, True Love, with plenty of fantasy, adventure and comedy.

True love. What is True Love? The answer to the question depends on where you are looking for the answer. If you believe in the power of marketing, true love depends on how much you spend on your loved one. Campaign titled, “Diamonds are Forever”, “Give a little more”, and “Every kiss begins at Kay” suggest the extent of your true love depends on how much money you spend on your partner.

Music has thousands of songs about love. From “Ain’t no Woman Like the One I Got” by the Four Tops, to “Baby I’m Amazed” by Paul McCartney, to “Levitating” by Dua Lipa there are any number of songs focusing on the romantic side of love.

Looking at the AI definition online it reads: True love is a deep, unconditional emotional bond built on mutual respect, trust, and commitment. It goes beyond fleeting infatuation, requiring active, reciprocal effort where both partners support each other's growth, accept imperfections, and prioritize each other's well-being.

How does scripture define True Love? The first part is simple. We are called to Love one another

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

We are called to love one another. Jesus showed it often during his ministry. Sure, he loved his disciples. He loved his friends such as Lazarus, Mary, and Martha. But he also fed, healed and comforted strangers – all signs of love. Compare this love with the fake love of Prince Humperdink. He chose Buttercup for marriage because she was beautiful and innocent. His plan was to have her killed and to blame her death on their rival country, Guilder. Then he expects his countrymen to rise up and support a war giving Humperdink more power. Obviously, the Prince didn’t feel true love for Buttercup. There was no love at all.

We often see this phony love in movies, and all too often in real life. There are people who marry for prestige, looks, and of course – money.

Have you ever heard the phrase, “I am third”? It was made popular in a book by former football great, Gale Sayers, and was the inspiration to the movie, Brian’s Song – probably the first movie I ever watched while trying to hide my tears, unsuccessfully I might add. The phrase is part of the saying, God is first, my friends are second, and I am third. I have heard the phrase with “others” replacing “my Friends”. Simply put, it is placing other’s needs in front of our own. Loving generously shouldn’t be limited to your friends and family.

We love because he first loved us. ²⁰ Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. ²¹ And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.

I saw something in verse 20 which I never noticed before. John is equating hate to not loving. You can swap the words in those two sentences, and they say the same thing.

Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar.

Whoever claims to love God yet does not love a brother or sister is a liar. And...

For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God...

For whoever hates their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God...

Does the person have a different faith – love them

A different political view – love them

A Cowboy fan – love them. Hey, if I can love a Yankee’s fan, you can love a Cowboys fan.

We’ve even been told to love our enemies. It isn’t always easy, but it is what we are called to do.

Love With Mercy

God loves us despite our flaws.

But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. ⁶ And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,

Did I say flaws? Perhaps a flaw is a bit of an understatement. When I think of a flaw what came to mind initially was a slight imperfection in a diamond. First of all, there is no way I can compare myself to a diamond. A piece of coal, maybe. Secondly, a slight imperfection? Really? Dead in transgressions means spiritually dead through sin. And while spiritually dead, I killed Christ. Yes – I said, “I killed Christ”. We often hear how the Romans killed Jesus, or the Pharisees and the Jews were responsible. But Jesus didn’t just die because of the Romans or the Jews.

My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. ² He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

The sins of the world, and the world includes you...and me. Despite those sins, those transgressions, God forgave us. Jesus asked God to forgive us:

Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing. And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

And he did that while on the cross. Did you ever think about that? He could have waited. After he rose from the grave and spent time with us. After he had ascended to heaven, sitting at the right hand of God, he could have then requested the Father forgive us. But no. He made the prayer while his lifeblood poured out at the cross. And God granted it. That’s love. That’s forgiveness. That is mercy.

As a child Inigo Montoya saw his father murdered. He spent 20 years, learning how to be a great sword fighter, and then searching for his father’s killer. Why? Because of the great love he had for him. What Inigo did not have...was mercy.

“Hello. My name is Inigo Montoya. You killed my father. Prepare to die.”

Admittedly, Count Rugen was not a nice man. He killed Inigo’s father and was helping the Prince in the plot against Buttercup. Oh, and did I mention he tortured Westley as well. And yet, God showed Mercy on us, didn’t he? Perhaps it would have been better if Inigo said, “Hello. My name is Inigo Montoya. You killed my father. I forgive you.”

Mercy and forgiveness – similar, yet different. Mercy is withholding a punishment or penalty. Forgiveness is letting go when you have been wronged. And yet, we can forgive or show mercy even when we are not directly involved.

In 2009 I had been part of prison ministry for about a year and a half. Michelle and I were watching the news one night when there was a story where LA Angels rookie pitcher Nick Adenhardt had been killed in a car accident caused by a drunk driver. Michelle commented she felt bad for the driver as he was going to have to live with that the rest of his life. I couldn’t believe it. I replied, “Are you kidding? What about the young man killed through no fault of his own?” She looked at me and said, “You’ve been worshipping in prison with men for over a year now, and you have no idea what most of them are in there for. You can’t show a bit of mercy for

this young man?" She might as well have cracked me over the head with a two-by-four. I learned a bit about myself that day, and realized I had a long way to go. Some days, I feel I still do.

Love With Sacrifice

This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. ¹⁰ This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. This is the capstone of True Love – sacrifice. God, the Father, sent Jesus to us to teach us how to love and died so we could live. Jesus chose to die for us. He made the final decision at the Garden of Gethsemane when he surrendered his will to the Father's. Yet not as I will, but as you will."

Being fully God, Jesus knew what was coming. It stands to reason he must have known this his whole life – as a young boy, as a teenager, and on. Being fully human, it must have been terrifying to know the pain which was coming. Betrayed and denied. Beaten and abused. Mocked and crucified. And yet he went through it all, for us. What sacrifice.

Westley and Buttercup attempt to escape from Humperdink by cutting through the dangerous fire swamp. However, the Prince is able to bypass the swamp and arrives with his men at the exit point as Westley and Buttercup appear. The Prince orders Westley to surrender as his men surround them with crossbows. Westley is prepared to sacrifice himself at this point, but it is Buttercup's sacrifice which caught my attention. Immediately after Westley yells, "Death first!", Buttercup agrees to go with the Prince - if he promises to let Westley go. When Westley questions what she is doing, Buttercup responds, "I thought you were dead once, and it almost destroyed me. I could not bear it if you died again, not when I could save you". She is surrendering her freedom so Westley can live. That is True Love.

It was more than 45 years ago, but I still remember it vividly. I was staying over at a friend's house, and it was after 2 am. Everyone else in the house had retired, and I was preparing to do the same when the house phone rang. On his way home one of our friends had run off the road and his car was stuck in the mud. When he told me where he was, I realized it was over 30 minutes away. I told him to sit tight, and I would be there as soon as I could. I hung up the phone and began putting my sneakers back on. Hearing a noise, I looked up and the girlfriend of one of my best friends was standing there. She said, "I heard the phone ring. Who is in trouble?" I explained the situation and as I was putting my coat on she asked me if I'd like company to make it easier for me to stay awake. I said I couldn't ask her to do that. She replied, "You didn't ask, I offered." Gratefully, I accepted.

There are stories of people sacrificing their lives for others, like the soldier Doug mentioned a month or two ago who threw himself on a grenade. People sometimes donate organs for family, friends, and even strangers. But sometimes the sacrifice can just be the simple act of missing some sleep to help out a friend. True love. We all have the capability.

At the very end of the movie, grandpa finishes the book and the grandson says, "Grandpa, maybe you could come over and read it again to me tomorrow." Grandpa replies, "As you wish."

Please pray with me.