



WHAT MATTERS?

Written by Rev. Dr. Robert Newton,
former President of the LCMS California-Nevada-Hawaii District

What Matters?

Week Seven ~Love Matters

“And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours.’” (Luke 15:31)

Day One: What really matters.

“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel” (Genesis 3:15)

It’s time to wrap it up. For six weeks we have been exploring the question, “What matters?” The hope of our study was to better inform us about who we are and what we were intended to be and do in this world. Knowing what really matters enables us to know what to do with our lives. It gives us wisdom to know how best to invest our time, our energy, our gifts or talents—to invest ourselves. It’s time to bring this study to a close, recapping a few essentials and, then, putting what we’ve learned to work.

The most significant of these essentials is this: What really matters most in life finds its origin in our heavenly Father. Your life—its wellbeing and purpose—matters to you. It matters even more to God. He made you. Your family members matter to you. You want them to live full, happy, safe, and fulfilling lives. Again, they matter even more to God. The chances are good that if you made a list of all of the things that matter most to you, you would find that most if not all of those things matter also to the Lord.

Another essential is that we desire that all things be made right again. We have a clear and strong sense of what this world and what life in this world should be. We know that everything that God created, He called good because it was. We also know that everything that God made has been horribly distorted by sin. Everything is broken. At the same time, everything longs to be restored to what God originally meant it to be. As St. Paul writes in Romans, *“For the creation was subjected to futility . . . in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God” (Romans 8:20-21).*

Which brings us to a third essential. God is in the restoration business, making all things new. It is His Family Business shared by His beloved Son, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. Paul reminds us, *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold the new has come. All this is from God . . . that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting*

to us the message of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:17-19). His restoration centers in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ and His death on the cross. Our Lord Jesus continues steadfast in this ministry until all things—in the heavens and on earth—are restored.

Finally, as the above paragraph suggests, our heavenly Father chose each of us to belong to Him and enlisted us to serve with Him in the Family Business on earth. Our participation in God’s ministry of restoration is an essential characteristic of His restoring work. It marks the fact that we have been restored. As restored children of our heavenly Father we share His loving concern for this broken world and choose to invest our personal time, talent, and treasure to make an eternal difference. I find it simply amazing that God chose to make us, sinful, broken people essential partners in His ministry of restoration.

Three great stained glass windows, each standing 55 feet tall and 12 feet wide, adorn the chancel of St. Peter Lutheran Church in Lodi. These theological masterpieces were designed by LCMS artist Roger Hogan to confess the creating and restoring work of our Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They shed light and wisdom on those in worship and those on the street, detailing the story of our salvation in Christ and our partnership with Him in the salvation of the world. The pastor told me that one of the purposes of these windows is to speak to the hundreds who daily drive past the church of God’s love for them in Christ. “We hope that these windows will speak to people who are feeling tired from a long day or defeated by the challenges of life. They will see these windows and be reminded that God has not abandoned them.”

Near the top of the window depicting the work of God the Father appear the figures of our first parents, Adam and Eve, cut from purple glass. Adam is found running away from God while Eve stands still shoulders bent in sorrow and shame. At the same time, Mr. Hogan depicts her carrying a man-child in her womb, with radiant beams streaming from his face to all creation. The scene recalls God’s words to Satan, “*I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel.*” God said in so many words, “Satan, do you see that woman over there bent and broken by shame and guilt for what you deceived her into doing? She still belongs to Me and I choose her this day to join Me in my cosmic war against you. She will give birth to the Champion who will destroy you and at the same time restore all that you have destroyed.” While these words were spoken to the evil one, imagine the impact that they had on Eve. Still tortured by the question God

asked her in the garden, “*What is this that you have done?*” she overheard God speak of her essential role in the salvation of the world.

Satan did not anticipate God’s choice. He planned that Adam and Eve’s fall into sin would force God’s hand of judgment against them. God would have to eternally condemn His children for their rebellion just as He had eternally condemned Satan and his army of evil angels. However, instead of condemning Adam and Eve, He enlisted them to serve with Him in restoring the world they had broken. God’s choice determined Satan’s undoing.

The pastor at St. Peter, Lodi, pointed out to me that some of the glass used in the three windows was made of shards of stained glass taken from other windows that had been broken. How apt to use broken glass to tell the story of God’s work of restoring His creation. Each of us was designed by our Father to be a theological masterpiece, reflecting His light and glory in the world. Each of us by our own sin has shattered what God made beautiful; our lives lying broken like so many shards of glass on the floor. Here, too, lies the genius of His restoring work: our Lord in His death gathered all of our brokenness into His own body and in His resurrection raised us up, shards and all, as new stained glass windows to reflect His beauty and grace to the world still shrouded in darkness.

For personal reflection:

- 1) What does our Lord’s words to Satan concerning Eve say to you as you participate in the Family Business?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, in Your Son You restored us to Your family. We thank You for making us partners in the ministry of reconciliation. Amen.

Week Seven ~ Love Matters

“And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours.’” (Luke 15:31)

Day Two: Our Father’s eyes, Seeing what matters

“When He saw the crowds, He had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (Matthew 9:36).

What’s to be seen at a shopping mall or a busy street? We might only see crowds, conglomerations of individual people going this way or that. Jesus sees much more. Matthew tells us that the sight of crowds filled Jesus with compassion, an emotional reaction seated deep in his soul. We might say, “His heart went out to them.” What did Jesus see that moved Him so deeply? In a word, “Life without God.” Matthew described their condition as *“harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.”* In case they were sheep trying to survive without the kindness and protection of the Good Shepherd.

The descriptions, “harassed” and “helpless” are intentional. Harassed describes sheep in a panic. Picture a wolf harassing a flock of sheep with no shepherd there to protect them. The sheep circle up facing outward, while keeping the helpless lambs behind them in the center. The wolf darts here and there making the sheep shift their attention from one place to another. With each shift they become increasingly anxious. With mounting anxiety they begin to break rank distracted by their own immediate predicament. Soon they scatter leaving the lambs defenseless. The wolf, without much effort snatches a lamb and makes off with a tasty meal.

That’s harassed. And it describes peoples’ lives fairly well. Like big sheep they work hard to provide for their families and protect them from life’s difficulties. One thing after another, however, causes them to get off balance—expenses greater than income, commitments greater than time in the day, conflicts at work or at home, Satan’s constant accusations . . . The accumulated effect is panic. Many people feel in a panic most days. In that panic they lose focus on those they love and how best to serve. It becomes every person for him or herself.

At the same time, Matthew tells us, the sheep are helpless. That is, cast down. Sheep that are cast down are really stuck. They can’t get back onto their feet and they are unable to bleat for help. Unless a shepherd finds them and gets them back up they become an easy mark for a predator. That’s helpless. People get that way too. They may be cast down by the sins they

commit, or guilt, or seemingly unbearable problems. Some are rendered helpless by their pride. Some are convinced that no one else cares. Still others simply do not know to whom or how to cry for help.

That's what Jesus saw in the crowds. These weren't random or isolated incidents. Matthew says that Jesus "*went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues . . .*" He saw harassed and helpless everywhere. Rich, poor; slave, free; men, women—all were the same. What do we see when we look at our communities, or our schools, or our neighbors? Do we see what Jesus sees?

One of the ways to begin seeing with the eyes of Jesus is to connect with people who spend a great deal of time and energy dealing with the "crowds." As an example, what would happen if you invited the mayor of your community, or the principal of one of your elementary or junior high schools to address your church council some evening. The purpose of the meeting would be to listen to what they have to say about the "crowds" for whom they are responsible. You might ask them questions like, "What might keep you awake at night about our community?" or "What is it about the children in your school that might cause you to lose sleep?" Then, listen. We listen with our ears, but listening opens our eyes.

From those kinds of conversations we begin to see the crowds the way Jesus sees them. And we will begin to serve them the way Jesus served, beginning with prayer. "*The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into the harvest*" (Matthew 9:37-38). We begin to use part of our prayer time in worship services to pray for the needs of those who are "harassed and helpless." Then, we pray that the Lord will "send out" laborers, that is, people who will serve them. Finally, we are moved by the Spirit to be God's answer to our prayers.

For personal reflection:

- 1) Jesus saw people as harassed and helpless. What do you see as causing people to feel harassed and helpless? What do we want to do about it?
 - a. Personally: Who around me is harassed and helpless? What do I want to do about it?
 - b. As our church family: Who around us is harassed and helpless? What do we want to do about it?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, give us Your eyes to see people as You see their needs. Let our hearts go out to them so we may show Your mercy to them. Amen.

Week Seven ~Love Matters

“And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours.’” (Luke 15:31)

Day Three: Sacrifice: Determining what matters

“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life? Or what shall a man give in return for his life?” (Matthew 16:24-26)

These words of our Lord have shown up a number of times throughout these seven weeks of study and for good reason. They comprise Jesus’ clearest, most straightforward statement regarding the true cost of discipleship. Yet, they raise a question. How can someone find his life by losing it? That seems confusing.

It is confusing unless we understand that Jesus didn’t mean that we should “lose our lives” by throwing them away. No, we lose them by investing them in someone or something other than ourselves. We’ve looked at this idea of investing in previous devotions. The point Jesus wants to impress on us in these words is that real investment always requires sacrifice. We have to give something up in order to gain something we believe is more important or desirable. Sacrifice involves setting priorities—determining what is more or less important and attending to the more important at the expense of the less.

At the beginning of every month I sit down to pay my bills and financial obligations. There always seems to be more things that I need to pay, (or, perhaps, want to buy), than I have money. So I have to make choices which involves setting priorities. My tithe, mortgage payment, groceries, utilities head to the top of the list; items that I deem less important move toward the bottom. Since I know that I cannot do everything on the list I sacrifice those things I consider of lower priority in order to attend to those things I consider of higher. The things that matter most get addressed.

Now, consider Jesus. He deemed us more important or of higher priority than Himself, so He pushed our lives to the top of His list and placed His own at the bottom. He attended to that which mattered most to Him—the restoration of our lives and purpose at the expense of His own. That’s what it meant for Him to lose His life. He didn’t consider His sacrifice a loss. It was an investment. And it bore much fruit.

That's the "losing" to which Jesus calls us as His brothers and sisters, serving with Him in our Father's Business. It requires sacrifice, even as St. Paul instructed the Christians at Rome, "*I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship*" (Romans 12:1). As with our Lord, sacrifice involves setting priorities. How or to whom do I give the time, talents, or financial treasures that I have been given? Who or what moves toward the top of my list, ahead of myself? What moves to a lower place? Those people and things will become evident in our hearts and minds as we look at our world through Jesus' eyes. By so doing we "*discern the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect*" (Romans 12:2). In short, we determine what really matters and invest in it.

For personal reflection:

- 1) If you were to make a "list of priorities" that follows the heart and mind of our Lord, would anything change in the way you use the time, talents, or treasures that you have been given? What would move to a higher priority on the list? What would move to a lower place?

Prayer: Dear Jesus, You did not count the cross as loss keeping Your eyes on our salvation. Give us such vision as we respond in gratitude to serve You and our neighbor. Amen.

Week Seven ~ Love Matters

“And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours.’” (Luke 15:31)

Day Four: Storing up Treasure in Heaven, Investments that matter

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:19-21).

We live today in the wake of what is reported to be the worst financial crises since the Wall Street crash of 1929. Like then, many people today have lost most if not all of their financial investments. Resources they were storing up to provide them a source of income and financial security in their retirement. This financial crisis has further impacted our lives as people are still losing their homes or jobs. Investments that seemed so sure, so secure a few years ago have gone up in smoke. Recent events underscore Jesus’ teaching regarding earthly treasure, *“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal.”*

Jesus’ words need to be understood as clearheaded financial advice on how to invest our earthly resources. He tells us that we can focus our investments in company(s) that will eventually go under and all that we invested is lost, or invest in a company—the Family Business—which endures forever and promises an incredible return that no one and nothing can diminish. He is not simply spiritualizing human experience regarding financial investments; he is placing His Father’s work right in the middle of all of the “Dow,” “Nasdaq,” and “S&P 500” and asking, “Where do you want to invest your earthly treasures?” Note, He didn’t tell us that investing in earthly enterprises is a sin. He’s simply telling us it’s foolish to set our hearts on them. They’re not permanent. So, set your heart on what is permanent, that which the schemes of men, or ravages of time, or even the gates of hell cannot take away.

What, then, are these heavenly treasures in which He exhorts us to invest? Many of us were taught that they refer primarily to our personal salvation. By trusting in what Jesus has done for us on the cross, rather than trusting what we have done, we receive eternal life. That is absolutely true. But I have to wonder, especially after hearing Jesus talk about “bearing much fruit” and that such fruit will “abide” or last forever, if my personal salvation was the major investment He had in mind. Once again, the focus turns

back on me. As we learned in earlier devotions, Jesus' idea of a fruitful or abundant life speaks to matters greater than simply my life and where I spend eternity. The abundant life He promised can't be measured in the abundance of what's been given to us, but in what we give to others. The same must be true for treasures that we store in heaven. They must refer to more than my eternal life.

They do. My heavenly treasures are those people whose lives I shared a part with God in restoring. They include the once pagan priest in the Philippines to whom I spoke the Gospel and witnessed his life renewed by faith in Jesus. They include my wife, my children and grandchildren, the members of my parish, my next-door neighbor, my best friend of more than 50 years. My heavenly treasures consist of all the people in whom I have invested God's love in Christ. You have treasures stored up in heaven too. Who are they?

Our heavenly investments do not decrease or fade away. Moreover, consider the great dividends already being distributed—*Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents (Luke 15)*. Such are the treasures (investments) our Lord exhorts us to store in heaven.

For personal reflection:

- 1) Consider the “Family Business” as an investment opportunity. What would that mean for you and how you presently invest the time, talent, and treasure that you have been given?

Prayer: Lord God, our dear Heavenly Father, You invested Your whole being in us. Enable us to invest ourselves in those whose lives we touch. Amen.

Week Seven ~Love Matters

“And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours.’” (Luke 15:31)

Day Five: More than a servant

“But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.’” (Luke 15:17-19)

We don’t know the reasons behind the young man’s decision to demand his share of the family estate and then leave his family behind. Was it a perverted sense of entitlement? Did he think that he had been held under his father’s thumb all his life and needed to wiggle free? Or was it simply that he was completely self-absorbed? Whatever the reason, he took off leaving a big hole in the heart of his father.

After months or maybe years of debaucherous living he ran out of cash and options. His so-called friends deserted him. Humiliated and destitute he hired on to a local farm to slop pigs. Despite the shameful and desperate conditions of the pigpen, the job gave him time to reflect. It was impossible to ignore the radical contrast between the life he despised and discarded as a son in his father’s home and his present existence as a despised and discarded servant. Even the pigs fared better.

Eventually, as Jesus tells us, the young man came to his senses. With what mind he had left he recalled how good the servants in his father’s house were treated. Life as a servant on dad’s estate was infinitely better than what he had presently. So he turned his face toward home. He banked on his father’s kindness, yet, even that was a stretch after what he had done to the family. Perhaps he had miscalculated his father’s love.

In fact he did miscalculate his father’s love. He grossly underestimated it. Dad virtually ignored his confession of sin and interrupted him before he could ask to be hired on as a servant. It’s not that his humble confession wasn’t significant. It simply couldn’t improve his standing before his father. His father had already received him back as his son, nothing less. *“For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.”* The boy’s life and privileges as a son were completely restored.

I often think about the radical change such love must have made on this young man. I picture him rising the next morning, while the servants were

still sleeping, and heading out to his father's fields to work. He would work hard all day and head back to the house long after everyone had gone home. This extra investment of time and energy was not generated by a prolonged sense of guilt nor by obligation for how kindly his father received him. No, its single source was his father's incredible love. He had truly come to his senses and that made all the difference.

The goal of these devotions has been to help our hearts comprehend more fully and grasp more firmly the "*breadth and length and height and depth*" of our Father's love for us in Christ. As St. Paul prays that we may "*know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that [we] may be filled with all the fullness of God*" (*Ephesians 3:19*). It's His love that moves us to invest our lives in what really matters, dedicating all that we are and have to Jesus and His business of restoring His creation. St. Paul described such motivation in these words, "*For the love of Christ compels us, because we have concluded this: that one had died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised*" (*2 Corinthians 5:14-15*). Jesus' love moves us to join Him. His death doesn't obligate us to serve with Him in His Father's work. Rather, it provides the opportunity. We died and were raised with Him so that once again we might live and love as true children of God.

For personal reflection:

- 1) Do you find yourself underestimating the love God has for you in Christ?
If so, in what ways?

- 2) What does the phrase, "The love of Christ compels us" say to you about your work in the Family Business?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, we will never understand the depths of Your love. As it touches our minds and hearts, may we live in gratitude to Your goodness.
Amen.

Week Seven ~ Love Matters

“And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours.’” (Luke 15:31)

Day Six: All that I have is yours

“And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found’” (Luke 15:31-32).

The boy who ran away wasn't the only son who struggled with his father's love. His older brother did too. In fact, the real focus of Jesus' story is on the son who didn't leave. Consider the context in which Jesus told the story of the “Lost Son” as well as the “Lost Sheep” and “Lost Coin.” Devoutly religious leaders—men who fully dedicated themselves to following God's Word without compromise—were struggling. They couldn't grasp Jesus' love for those who had left the “fold” and were living lives of sin. Something was terribly wrong. Jesus heard their grumbling, understood their struggles, and left his party with sinners to talk things over with them. You see, He deeply loved them, too.

Jesus' story is about two boys, not one. The famous one left in rebellion, the other stayed and served; neither understood their father's heart. We focus in this devotion on the older brother who didn't leave. By all respects he was a faithful son to his father. He invested his whole life in the “family business.” Undoubtedly he was up before sunrise, worked long hours, and came home late each evening. We find him still in the fields after dark while dad and little brother are partying away in the house. He was truly faithful, and, at the same time truly stuck. He was stuck in his inability to comprehend who he truly was as his father's son; how much he was loved, without condition; and how much he truly possessed as an heir of his father's world.

This inability to comprehend his father's love manifested itself in his inability to love his younger brother and serve him. Like the story of the Lost Son, Jesus' stories of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin share common elements. Something or someone is truly lost. The difference lies in the response of the owners. The owners of the sheep and coin do everything in their power to find what belongs to them. In the story of the Sons, no one goes looking for the lost boy. Jesus wants us to catch that point. The question before us is who should have gone seeking? The answer lies in the story. Jesus tells us that when the younger son asked his father for his share of the inheritance, the father, *“divided his property between them.”* That means that both sons received their inheritance that day. The younger one

received a goodly share. But his older brother received, by far, the most generous portion. In effect, the entire family business had been handed over to him to own and manage. Included in the business were all of the servants and siblings, for whom now he would care. In other words, his younger brother became his “possession.” Thus, he was the owner, and the one responsible to go search for him in “a far country” until he found him. He didn’t. Even worse, he was so stuck he was unable to celebrate the return his brother—his property. He was truly lost. So his father left the party to go in search of him, and upon finding him to restore him to the family. Such is this father’s love.

The older son unloaded: *“Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!”* Can you hear the pain and confusion?

I picture his father coming near him, putting an arm around his son’s shoulder and drawing him close. *“Son,”* he said gently, *“you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours.”* “You didn’t have to ask me for a young goat. It already belonged to you. It was yours to do as you pleased.” Such was this father’s love. The story ends with the two of them in the field. We do not know what happened next. But I think we can appreciate the struggle this faithful son was having. We, too, struggle much in trusting our Father’s unconditional love and inexhaustible treasure. Yet, He won’t give up loving us and sharing His life’s work with us.

When we lose our way He comes looking. He first sent our true older brother to find us when we were hopelessly lost. Our Brother not only searched until He found us, He laid down His life to ransom us from the hopeless situation—slavery to sin and death—in which He found us. No price was too high for Him to pay. Like the younger son, we were found and brought home. Like the dad in Jesus’ story our Father raced to greet us at our return. He placed His best robe on us and gave us a place at the table and in the Business next to our Older Brother, Jesus. Like the younger son, it may take us awhile to comprehend just how great is our Father’s love.

It’s that love that grows us from the place as younger siblings to that of older ones. In other words, our Father’s love matures us to become older brothers and sisters, who like the older brother in our story was given all things—the most precious gift being the loving heart of our Father. From His love we live, serve, and rejoice in the growth of our Family. Like dad, we cannot help but celebrate the return and restoration of each of our siblings. The

passion our Father has for those children still lost, becomes our passion; we desire to invest ourselves in His work of seeking and saving all of His lost; and we share in His exceedingly great joy at their return. We finally understand what matters.

For personal reflection:

- 1) Which family member do you most identify with in the story: Dad, big brother or little brother? Why?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we have known Your love from the day we were adopted into Your family in the waters of baptism. Help us to grow so Your passion is ours reflected in love for the people You seek. Amen.

Week Seven ~Love Matters

“And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours.’” (Luke 15:31)

Day Seven: Father, send me!

“And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?’ Then I said, ‘Here am I! Send me.’” (Isaiah 6:8)

Read Isaiah 6:1-8. This last devotion finds us standing with the Prophet Isaiah in the very heart of God’s Temple. We face the Lord Himself, seated on His Throne, the train of His robe filling the entire building. He’s surrounded by two great seraphim, with one proclaiming to the other,

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!”

The sound of the angel’s voice shakes the foundations and God’s house is filled with smoke. As with Isaiah, the vision is too much for us.

Overwhelmed, we cry out with the prophet, *“Woe is me! For I am lost; I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!”*

The curtain between heaven and earth has been pulled open and we see God, the Creator of all things as He really is. We also see ourselves—people of unclean lips. That is, people incapable of speaking His Truth, and, therefore, of representing Him accurately in and to this world. God’s work of restoring all things has everything to do with speaking His Truth. By His Word He created all things. By His Word He restores all things. People of unclean lips can’t do such work.

From our heavenly Father flies one of the angels with a burning coal he took from the altar. Touching our lips he announces, *“Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.”* The Lord has spoken; we are again restored to Him.

Then, God asks His incredible question, *“Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?”* Our healing at the hands of the angel intended more than forgiveness. It also carried a personal invitation to join our Lord in His service to the world, complete with a “restored desire” to be about the Father’s business.

Our time together finishes with a practical consideration of how we choose to answer our heavenly Father’s question, *“Who will go for us?”* There is an implied “blank” in His query: *“Who will go for us to _____.”* It’s time that we honestly and prayerfully ask God to help us fill in the blank and, then, respond with Isaiah and all the other saints, *“Here am I! Send me.”*