

First Baptist Church

May 17, 2020

“Christ, The Church, and Coronavirus: God” (Pt. 1)

Pastor Jared Gustafson

It is my joy to welcome you to the online worship service of First Baptist Church on this Sunday, May 17. It is a joy every single week to gather, to worship the Lord in prayer, in song, in the study of His Word, and we are glad you are here to do that with us. If you are a member of the First Baptist family, again, we miss you, we are praying for you, we are looking forward to the weeks and months ahead being able to get back together in different-sized groups and resume some of our in-person ministry. And we will continue to update you on progress and plans that are being made. We also are so blessed for the ways that you have shifted to giving online or mailing in your checks. Your worship of the Lord through giving is allowing us to continue the ministry that God has entrusted to us here in Cambridge and Isanti County, and to the ends of the earth.

If you are a guest with us, we want to welcome you and thank you for being with us this morning. And if you would like to learn more about the ministries of First Baptist Church, especially if you are in this area of Isanti County, MN you can go to our website at [firstbaptistcambridge.org](http://firstbaptistcambridge.org) and find all kinds of resources there for every age member of your family. If you are not from the area, we want to bless you and encourage you as those resources are available to you as well. But we are glad that you are here to worship with us.

As we begin, will you join me in a word of prayer?

Heavenly Father, we thank you so much for the gift of this time of worship together. We know that by the power of your Spirit you are present in every room, in every home where your children are gathered right now to lift your name on high and worship you. We thank you for all those that are here worshipping you this morning. We thank you for those who are from our church family and from this area, and we thank you for those who are from far away. We pray, God, that you would draw near to each one at this time of

worship. That you would bless us, encourage us, and teach us. Be glorified in us as we worship you now. We pray this in your matchless name, Jesus. Amen.

This past year we have been studying through the gospel of John. And for me, as I have shared many times over the course of the past year, that was a powerful, life-giving study. I hope you were encouraged and blessed. If you have missed weeks here and there, or maybe you are new to First Baptist and you would like to go back and see where we have been over the course of this past year, all of those messages are available on our website. If you go to the Resources tab you will find sermons going back a couple of years and we invite you to do that if you feel so led to do so.

As we finished that, we decided to turn and have a series that will probably go the next several months that is called, "Christ, The Church, and Coronavirus." I do not know for you, but for me this season of world-wide pandemic has caused all kinds of questions to come flooding into my heart and mind. It has raised some concerns. At times some fears or doubts. It has turned all of our lives upside down! It doesn't really matter what your station in life is. What your family situation is. What your job situation is. The reality is that every single person on the face of the planet is being impacted by this world-wide pandemic.

We are going to spend the next couple of months asking some really important questions. You know, "God, what are you doing in the midst of this pandemic? What are you wanting to do in and through your children? In and through your church? How are we supposed to respond in ways that give you honor and glory? What can we learn from this? And how can we become more like our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ?" So, that's what our series is going to be about. We are excited to do this together.

If you have questions or concerns, or thoughts that God has impressed on your heart, your mind, that you would like to be considered as part of this series, please email me at [jaredg@firstbaptistcambridge.org](mailto:jaredg@firstbaptistcambridge.org) and I would love to have some of those ideas, some of those thoughts, some of those concerns and questions that you have to be a part of this series that we are going to be working our way

through. With that said, will you join me in prayer as we turn to the study of God's Word?

Again Lord, we come before you so grateful that you have made us, that you have called us unto yourself, and that you have made a way for us now to seek wisdom from your Word and from your Holy Spirit about how to navigate this unique and challenging season of life. We thank you once again, God, that you are in control. We worship you as the Sovereign God. We thank you, God, that you are love and that we have been recipients of your love. You have lavished your love on us, and we want your love to be the foundation of our very lives. So we give this time of worship to you through the study of your Word and ask that by your Spirit and by your Word, you would change us from the inside out, helping us to become more like our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. And we pray these things in His holy name. Amen.

If you want to turn in your bibles to Genesis 1:26-28, I want to remind you that as a human being, you were created by God. This was something that He designed from the very beginning. You were created by God to have some power and authority, some dominion and control. That's what we see in Genesis 1:26-28.

<sup>26</sup> Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

<sup>27</sup> So God created mankind in his own image,  
in the image of God he created them;  
male and female he created them.

<sup>28</sup> God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

So you, brother, you, sister – no matter your age, no matter your stage of life, station in life, family situation, job, or any of those things – you were created by

God to have some dominion, to have some authority, to have some power and control. And the reality is, when a world-wide pandemic comes along and turns our lives upside down, that can wreak all kinds of havoc. That can create all kinds of problems and challenges, anxieties, fears, concerns, issues inwardly and outwardly. And sometimes as believers in Jesus Christ, we are not quite sure how to respond and what to do in that situation. You have been given by God's design the authority to rule and to reign and yet situations like this seem to pull the rug out from underneath us.

Max Lucado in his book, "Anxious for Nothing" mentions this briefly in one of his chapters:

"In the treatment of anxiety, a proper understanding of sovereignty" (*the ability to rule and to reign*) "is huge. Anxiety is often the consequence of perceived chaos. If we sense we are victims of unseen turbulent random forces, we are troubled. Psychologists verify this fact when they studied the impact of combat on soldiers in WWII. They determined that after 60 days of continuous combat, the ground troops became emotionally dead. This reaction is understandable. Soldiers endured a constant threat of bomb blitzes, machine guns, and enemy snipers. The anxiety of ground troops was not a surprise.

"The comparative calm of fighter pilots, however, was. Their mortality rate was one of the highest in combat. Fifty percent of them were killed in action. Yet, Dog Fighters loved their work! An astounding 93% of them claimed to be happy in their assignments even though the odds of survival were the same as a toss of a coin. What made the difference? Those pilots had their hands on the throttle. They sat in the cockpit. They felt that their fate was theirs to determine. Infantrymen, by contrast, could just as easily be killed standing still or running away. They felt forlorn and helpless. The formula is simple. Perceived control creates calm. Lack of control gives birth to fear. Anxiety increases as perceived control diminishes."

I don't know about you, but when I read those few paragraphs I was struck. I mean, that so perfectly describes some of the things that I have been enduring and

experiencing in the midst of this pandemic. And I am sure that is true of you. So, one of the things we need to do is take a step back and say, “Okay. Why is it that in the midst of me losing control, is all this anxiety and fear? And how can I reframe my heart, my mind, my life to allow God’s peace to rule and reign?” And one of the most important things that we need to do is to recognize, to remember, to grab ahold of and depend on the truth that God is sovereign.

Now last summer, Pastor Scott and Pastor Dan preached through an entire summer on the different characteristics of God. The qualities of God. What is true about God. So many of them are true of God alone. And one of them is that God is sovereign. God rules and reigns over all. And the way that we are supposed to rule and reign was by His design. Again, you were supposed to have some dominion, some authority. You were made to be a king or a queen. To have a kingdom or a queendom. You were made to have some control. But that authority, that power, that control was to always flow from the ultimate authority, power, control, ruling and reigning of the one true God. It was not meant to be exercised apart from the authority, the ruling, the reigning, the control, the sovereignty of our God.

One of the things that I think this pandemic has revealed to me, and maybe to many of you as well, is perhaps we had in our normal everyday life (minus a pandemic) gotten too used to largely being in control. Largely being the ones who had authority. Largely being the ones who dictated our lives. Then all of a sudden this pandemic comes in and upsets the applecart. It makes us feel like we are losing control. And all of a sudden our heart, our mind, our lives go haywire.

But if we maintain our focus on the sovereignty of God, on His power, His authority, His control, that even when we seem to be losing some of our control – whether it be over our health, whether it be over our job, our finances, our marriage relationships, our children, our friendships – when we begin to lose control, if we have a proper perspective of God’s sovereignty, of His control, we can be at peace. We can be at peace. This concept of God’s sovereignty is all throughout scripture. I am going to walk us from the beginning of scripture to the end very quickly through a whole bunch of passages. You probably won’t have time to turn there in your bibles unless you pause the message as we are going through here.

Genesis 1:1 begins with “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” So, yes, you were made to have a kingdom or a queendom to rule and reign, to have responsibility over God’s creation to bring about good in the lives of other people and in His creation as an image-bearer, as a representative of our good God in this world. And yet, all of that authority flows from the God who created the heavens and the earth.

In Job 42, Job endured incredible hardship, and pain, and tragedy, and loss. The kind of loss that some people in our day are dealing with, but the kind of loss that most of us in our lifetime really couldn’t quite compare to. We can’t quite empathize with Job because we have never experienced the kinds of loss in succession that Job did. But listen to what Job says, “Then Job replied to the Lord, ‘I know that you can do all things. No purpose of yours can be thwarted.’”

In 1 Chronicles 29:10-13 we read this:

<sup>10</sup> David praised the LORD in the presence of the whole assembly, saying,  
“Praise be to you, LORD,  
the God of our father Israel,  
from everlasting to everlasting.

<sup>11</sup> Yours, LORD, is the greatness and the power  
and the glory and the majesty and the splendor,  
for everything in heaven and earth is yours.

Yours, LORD, is the kingdom;  
you are exalted as head over all.

<sup>12</sup> Wealth and honor come from you;  
you are the ruler of all things.

In your hands are strength and power  
to exalt and give strength to all.

<sup>13</sup> Now, our God, we give you thanks,  
and praise your glorious name.

In Psalm 103:19 David says,

The Lord has established his throne in heaven and his kingdom rules over all.

## Psalm 135:5-6

<sup>5</sup>I know that the LORD is great,  
that our Lord is greater than all gods.

<sup>6</sup>The LORD does whatever pleases him,  
in the heavens and on the earth,  
in the seas and all their depths.

Our God is able and is doing whatever He pleases. He is greater than all other gods. All other gods are false gods. He is the one who is in control. He has the authority. He has the power.

In Isaiah 46:9-10 we read this:

<sup>9</sup>Remember the former things, those of long ago;  
I am God, and there is no other;  
I am God, and there is none like me.

<sup>10</sup>I make known the end from the beginning,  
from ancient times, what is still to come.  
I say, 'My purpose will stand,  
and I will do all that I please.'

The prophet Jeremiah in chapter 32 verses 26-27 records this:

<sup>26</sup>Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: <sup>27</sup>“I am the LORD, the God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for me?”

The reality is, brothers and sisters, that this pandemic did not suddenly catch our God off guard. It did not surprise Him in any way, shape, or form. This pandemic is not something that is beyond His control. It is not something that scares Him. It is not something that causes Him to be worried or concerned in the ways that we are worried and concerned. This is completely, totally within His control. Now I do not believe that God caused this pandemic, but our God is at work in incredible ways through this pandemic. He is bringing about His will, His purpose, His desires even in the midst of this difficult and trying time. And that's what so many of these scripture passages talk about.

When you turn to the New Testament, more of these same concepts are repeated over and over again.

Matthew 19:26 says:

<sup>26</sup> Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

Jesus said this to his disciples. They were debating who can get into heaven and who can't, and Jesus said it's nearly impossible (*I'm paraphrasing*) for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. And the disciples were like, “Well, if the wealthy were the ones blessed by God immensely and cannot get into heaven, who can?” And Jesus said to them, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

Paul picks up on these themes of the Old Testament and on the life of Jesus Christ and what he did in his life, death, and resurrection. In Romans 11:33-36 we read,

<sup>33</sup> Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!  
How unsearchable his judgments,  
and his paths beyond tracing out!

<sup>34</sup> “Who has known the mind of the Lord?  
Or who has been his counselor?”

<sup>35</sup> “Who has ever given to God,  
that God should repay them?”

<sup>36</sup> For from him and through him and for him are all things.  
To him be the glory forever! Amen.

Paul goes on in Ephesians 1:11-12

<sup>11</sup> In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, <sup>12</sup> in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.

And in Colossians 1:15-17

<sup>15</sup>The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. <sup>16</sup>For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. <sup>17</sup>He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

Our God is sovereign. Our God is all-powerful. I mentioned a couple of weeks ago that there are somewhere between one billion trillion stars and one trillion trillion stars in the known universe and our God is holding every star, every planetary system, every galaxy together! And, He is holding your life together in the midst of this global pandemic. Our God is able. He is almighty. He is sovereign. He rules and reigns overall. And we can rest in that truth no matter what life brings our way.

Max Lucado goes on in his book and says this:

“The bible has a better idea. Rather than seeking total control, relinquish it.”

The reality is this, you and I like to have control in our lives. Again, largely because we were made to rule and reign, to have some authority, to have some sovereignty in our lives, that sovereignty, ruling, and reigning was placed under the sovereignty of God. We are to submit our lordship, our kingship, our queenship to His Lordship. And then as we receive instruction from Him, blessing from Him, as we receive ways He wants us to go out and be His image-bearers and love and serve and care for others, we are to exercise our authority and control under His. We submit to Him. We bow to Him every single time. But because we were born with that innate desire to do that, many of us like to have control in our lives.

Some of us (*and you can maybe raise your hand at home, or if you are a family member of one of these, you can maybe lovingly pat them on the shoulder*) are a little bit of control freaks. We want to be able to be in control of everything. This pandemic has certainly removed our ability to control so many things about our lives.

Max Lucado goes on to say,

“You can’t run the world. But you can entrust it to God. This is the message behind Paul’s admonition to rejoice in the Lord always. Peace is within reach. Not for lack of problems, but because of the presence of a sovereign Lord. Rather than rehearse the chaos of the world, rejoice in the Lord’s sovereignty as Paul did.

“And this is a quote from Philippians 1. While Paul was in prison, this is what he wrote, “The things which happen to me, have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel. So that it has become evident to the whole palace guard and to all the rest that my chains are in Christ.”

“To read Paul is to read the words of a man who in the innermost part of his being believed in the steady hand of a good God. He was protected by God’s strength. Preserved by God’s love. He lived beneath the shadow of God’s wings. Do you?”

I’ve been joking on some of the Wednesday messages that I have been sending out to our church that man, right now, I can’t even control my hair! I do not have the ability to go to a barber and have my hair cut the way that I normally do and to this point my wife has still been ixnaying the idea of me shaving it off really short. I have had some of my church members say to me, “Why don’t you do it in a mohawk?” Or “Why don’t you have a ponytail?” Awesome. Some really fun ideas. But the reality is that something as simple as my hair I have no control over right now.

And then there are much more profound things. Much deeper things. My wife suffers from some underlying health conditions that make this Coronavirus situation very scary. Some heart and lung and immune issues that mean this could be a very, very dangerous situation if she were to get sick. So, I do not have control over simple things like the shape and length of my hair right now and I do not have control over some really important and big things like my wife’s life. And yet our God is in control. Our God is sovereign. And so, I can rest and trust in Him. No matter what happens. No matter what comes our way, I can rest in the knowledge that I worship a good and loving God who is sovereign over all.

Matthew 10:29-31 ties together this concept of God being in control, with the next one that we are going to briefly look. The fact that our God is love. Here Jesus says to his disciples:

<sup>29</sup> Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. <sup>30</sup> And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. <sup>31</sup> So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

Our God is holding every living being together. Caring for everything on the face of this planet. And God cares for you and for me even more than that! Brothers and sisters, our God is sovereign. Let's be reminded of that. Let's bow to Him as sovereign. Especially in these seasons when we are completely, utterly incapable of having any control over so many dimensions of our life. Let's rejoice that our God is sovereign! That He is all-powerful. That He is in control. And let's from this moment forward seek to live in that way each and every day, each and every week of our life. Even as life hopefully begins to have some normalcy back, may we not soon forget. May we not soon take back the reins. May we exercise dominion and authority over our little kingdom and queendom in honor of our God, and to exalt Him, to praise Him, to worship Him, and to give everything that we are and everything that we have to bow our knee to Him and give that to Him. That is the way that we are to live.

The second thing that I want to briefly mention as we look at the character of God is that God is love. You know, it's so important for us to begin there. I hope that no matter what happens in your life – good things or bad things – that your first thought is to always reflect on God, to worship God, to seek God, to pray to God. I pray that is your natural reflex. And I am praying that becomes more and more my natural reflex. That's why we are beginning this series by looking at these attributes of God. But the second one that we are going to look at is that God is love.

And again, scripture is chock full of passages that talk about the reality that God is love.

## Psalm 63:1-3

- <sup>1</sup>You, God, are my God,  
earnestly I seek you;  
I thirst for you,  
my whole being longs for you,  
in a dry and parched land  
where there is no water.
- <sup>2</sup>I have seen you in the sanctuary  
and beheld your power and your glory.
- <sup>3</sup>Because your love is better than life,  
my lips will glorify you.

I pray that this season of life, this trial, this challenge that we are all going through has caused you to long for God. To desire Him more than you have before. To cry out to Him and earnestly seek Him. The love of our God is more than all of the rest of life combined.

Psalm 103:8-18 says,

- <sup>8</sup>The LORD is compassionate and gracious,  
slow to anger, abounding in love.
- <sup>9</sup>He will not always accuse,  
nor will he harbor his anger forever;
- <sup>10</sup>he does not treat us as our sins deserve  
or repay us according to our iniquities.
- <sup>11</sup>For as high as the heavens are above the earth,  
so great is his love for those who fear him;
- <sup>12</sup>as far as the east is from the west,  
so far has he removed our transgressions from us.
- <sup>13</sup>As a father has compassion on his children,  
so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him;
- <sup>14</sup>for he knows how we are formed,  
he remembers that we are dust.
- <sup>15</sup>The life of mortals is like grass,  
they flourish like a flower of the field;

<sup>16</sup> the wind blows over it and it is gone,  
and its place remembers it no more.

<sup>17</sup> But from everlasting to everlasting  
the LORD's love is with those who fear him,  
and his righteousness with their children's children—

<sup>18</sup> with those who keep his covenant  
and remember to obey his precepts.

#### Psalm 115:1

<sup>1</sup> Not to us, LORD, not to us  
but to your name be the glory,  
because of your love and faithfulness.

Our God is worthy to be praised for countless reasons and one of them is because of His great love.

#### Lamentations 3:22-23

<sup>22</sup> Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed,  
for his compassions never fail.

<sup>23</sup> They are new every morning;  
great is your faithfulness.

We are not consumed in the midst of a global pandemic because of the love of our God. His faithfulness. His compassion. His mercy.

#### Zephaniah 3:16-17

<sup>16</sup> On that day  
they will say to Jerusalem,  
"Do not fear, Zion;  
do not let your hands hang limp.

<sup>17</sup> The LORD your God is with you,  
the Mighty Warrior who saves.  
He will take great delight in you;

in his love he will no longer rebuke you,  
but will rejoice over you with singing.”

Jesus, in John 3:16-17, one of the main verses that we have come back to over and over again over this last year, said:

<sup>16</sup>For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

<sup>17</sup>For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

Paul again picks up on so many of these themes from the Old Testament, from the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, and ties them all together.

Beginning in Romans 8:28-39 he says,

<sup>28</sup>And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. <sup>29</sup>For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. <sup>30</sup>And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

<sup>31</sup>What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? <sup>32</sup>He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? <sup>33</sup>Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. <sup>34</sup>Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. <sup>35</sup>Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? <sup>36</sup>As it is written:

“For your sake we face death all day long;  
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”

<sup>37</sup>No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. <sup>38</sup>For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither

angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, <sup>39</sup> neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Even in a global pandemic, God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purposes. There is nothing anyone could ever do, there is nothing this world could ever throw at you, there is nothing this world-wide pandemic could bring into your life that would ever separate you from the love of Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 3:14-19 (*I love this prayer of Paul*)

<sup>14</sup> For this reason I kneel before the Father, <sup>15</sup> from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. <sup>16</sup> I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, <sup>17</sup> so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, <sup>18</sup> may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, <sup>19</sup> and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Paul is saying that I pray you would have power from God. You would have power from on high. You would have supernatural power at work in you so that you can know God's love. So that you can know the love of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. So that you can know the love of the Holy Spirit. You need power, supernatural power to know that, to believe that, to understand that. And, you will never fully understand God's love! That's how great it is! It's unknowable. I want you to know God's love. I am praying for God's power, God's work so that you can understand God's love. And yet, this side of heaven we will never fully understand that love.

As we understand more about God's perfect love for us, we are filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. We become more like Christ as we understand and live out of His great love for us.

## I John 4:7-16

<sup>7</sup> Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. <sup>8</sup> Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. <sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. <sup>11</sup> Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. <sup>12</sup> No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

<sup>13</sup> This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit. <sup>14</sup> And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. <sup>15</sup> If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. <sup>16</sup> 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.

We know and rely on the love God has for us. We rest in God's perfect love most powerfully on display through the life of Jesus Christ. Jesus taking on flesh, coming and living among us. Being perfectly obedient to his heavenly father. Allowing the Spirit to dwell on him and in him, and lead and guide him throughout his entire life. And having lived a perfect life, taught us how to live. Showed us how to live. Performed miracle after miracle after miracle. Then went to the cross, bearing our sin and our shame. Being brutalized on his way to the cross. Shedding his blood and breathing his last so that your sin and my sin could die with him so that you and I could receive the forgiveness that can only come through a perfect sacrifice that is Jesus Christ. And rose again, conquering sin and death, making it possible for you and me to have everlasting, eternal life. A life of intimacy with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit here on this earth and for all of eternity.

And Jesus, shortly before he went to the cross, said this to his disciples:

## John 15:9-13

<sup>9</sup> "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. <sup>10</sup> If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I

have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. <sup>11</sup> I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. <sup>12</sup> My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup> Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.

Jesus Christ has laid his life down for you because he loves you and he desires to call you friend if you would put your faith and trust in him. If you would cry out to him for forgiveness and salvation, he will come to you and live with you by the power of his Holy Spirit, and teach you how to receive and live out of the love of our heavenly father moment by moment, day by day to live by the power of the Holy Spirit that comes to live in you and me.

Brothers and sisters, in this day, in this season, in this trial, God is sovereign and God is love. May those two truths, those two realities fill your heart and mind. May you dwell on them. Meditate on them. Go over these passages of scripture, and so many more that I didn't have time to cover this morning. May you rest in the sovereignty of our God and in his great love for you as we continue to endure together what this pandemic has brought into our lives.

I love you, and that is my prayer for you this morning. Let's pray together.

God, we are overwhelmed by your power, by your sovereignty, by your control. And the scriptures scream! They tell us over and over and over again about how powerful you truly are, about your sovereignty, about your control in all things. So, we rest in that knowledge. We thank you that you made us to rule and reign, but to do that underneath you. And that when we begin to lose some control or some understanding of what is going on in our lives, we continue to rest in your power, in your authority, in your sovereignty.

And God, we thank you that you are love. That your love caused you from the beginning of time to make us your own, to name us, to create us, to woo us, to draw us unto yourself through your Son and your Holy Spirit. We desire to live in your love. To rest in your love.

Thank you for my brothers and sisters who have received that ultimate demonstration of your love by receiving the sacrifice of Jesus Christ in their lives. By crying out to Him for forgiveness and salvation by placing their faith and hope and trust in Him.

I thank you for everyone listening right now who has received that incredible gift. And Lord, you know that there are some who are watching and listening right now who have not yet received that gift. I pray, God, that by your Spirit would work in a miraculous way. Bring them to that point of repentance and belief where they would cry out to a God who loves them enough to send his one and only Son. A God who loved them enough to take on flesh, to die on the cross bearing their burden, their sin, their shame and rise again. A God who loves them enough, Holy Spirit, to live inside of them. May they receive that gift.

May we all live out of the reality that you are sovereign and that you are love. Help us to live in such a way that makes those truths obvious to the world around us. We pray these things in Jesus' matchless, holy, powerful name. Amen.

May you go this week in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. May you rest in the sovereignty of our heavenly father knowing that He is in perfect control. And may you walk by the love that God has for you, and by his Holy Spirit wants to pour into your life and through your life into the lives of other people. God is sovereign. God is love. And you and I are His children. Be blessed in His name.