

Good morning.

I'm actually going to start with a brief announcement, but it relates to my sermon, but I just want to make sure you hear it. So part of my role at Sherwood Oaks is a nonprofit called the Unleashed Network. Tagline, Unleashing the hearts of pastors and their churches. So we looking for ways to encourage pastors. And we did this before three months ago and do it again.

We're doing it today. Out in the lobby, there's six oversized greeting cards. They're like this big. I mean really big and bunch of colored sharpies. We just want you to sign your names on them and here's who they're going to.

We're trying to encourage pastors around Bloomington and even multiple counties. So up on the screen. Yeah. Okay. Matt and Tammy Tucker pastor a church in Martinsville.

So we're going different counties. Bruce Rose, Second Baptist Church here in Bloomington. He's been here for a number of years in Bloomington. Nature started in 1872. Adam and Laura Strausser, they're from Bloomington, but he pastors a free Methodist church in Bedford.

Mike and Kara Southard are in Bean Blossom Community Church, which I don't even know where that is in Brown county, but somewhere. Adam and Abby Johnson, pastor at church in Columbus. Adam's dad was a pastor and he knew Tom Ellsworth. And then last one might jolt you a bit, but Father Patrick Hyde from St. Paul's Catholic, they have 40 Bible studies for college students and young adults.

There's. He told me his passion for the college students there is they have Jesus in their hearts and they be sexually pure. So. And. And they are very Bible centered.

Jesus centered as Father Patrick, Father Reginald, Father Ben. I know them. There's stuff about what they do that I'm not. Don't jive with their stuff with what Presbyterians do. You know, people don't.

But the center of the spirit of Jesus is there. So those are out in the lobby to read us the sign. And then I found out yesterday Sean's out of town today. So I made a card for Sean and Amber. You can sign that, too.

We send gift cards. Restaurant gift cards. Amber's here, so don't tell her that we're doing this. I didn't know she was going to be here. And we send restaurant gift cards.

We're selling. They're going to give Sean and Amber White Castle gift cards. Not really. So I might slip one in there for \$5. Just so Sean can I even know if he likes it or not.

But. But that's our. That's one of the things we're, you know, try to encourage other pastors. You might know some of these people. But anyway, so the topic for the day is love.

So we're gonna start off with love songs. My wife and I got married. I don't know how many years ago. I should know that offhand, but. And at our reception, you know, when you dink the glasses to get the couple to kiss, the DJ at our wedding said, the couple will kiss.

If around your table, you figure out a song that has the word love in it, you stand up and sing it. And when they say love, the couple has to kiss. So I thought it was a dumb idea at first, but it actually worked out pretty good here. I actually rewatched my wedding reception about a week ago. Here's some of the songs they stood up and sang.

All right, first one. Somebody had to be religious. Table stood up and sang, Jesus loves me, this I know. Okay? We kissed, right then.

What the world needs now is love, sweet love. We kissed, all right? Then going to the chapel. Then we're gonna get married. Go into the chapel of.

All right. Somebody else had to be religious. Jesus loves the little children. Then another table stood up. Let me call you sweetheart.

I'm in love with you. All right. And one table stood up. I remember this without even watching it. All they sang was the Love Boat.

And then my brothers. I have four brothers. They sang a song from Hee Haw. Where, oh where are you tonight? Why did you leave me here all alone?

I searched the world over. Thought I found true love. You met another and you was gone. All right, but. So every time they said love, we had to kiss.

If my wife was here now, she'll be in the next service. I would probably say, anybody wants to stand up and sing, I'll come and kiss her. But I'm not going to do that. Right? But.

But love is a. Love is a big. Everybody. Everybody likes the word love. Every religion loves the word love.

And it gets thrown around in our culture. If we just loved each other, we'd get along. And it's kind of a, you know, we are the world kind of thing. But we're gonna look at the passage today in a way that Jesus uses it that I think challenges me and I hope will challenge you about what does it mean for us to love each other. All right, so in the series we're finishing today, it's called Flourish.

The whole idea is that our hope for each one of us is a flourishing soul. By that I mean full of supernatural peace. Full of supernatural joy, full of supernatural hope. And the first week of this series, I actually talked about Psalm chapter one. And about you flourish when you ground your life in the word of God.

And I challenge you. Then I'll just add it again here. If you don't have a habit of reading the Bible on a daily basis, start it. It'd be the best thing you'll do in your whole life. It'll be the beginning of your flourishing life.

It's not about legalism. It's about listening to the voice of God. And then for other weeks, Sean talked about being connected to Jesus, about how do we sustain ourselves, how we latch the false vines. You know, money, image, and those kind of things. Last week, Sean talked.

If you weren't here last week, make sure you go find us online and watch or listen to talked about. Sometimes God wants to prune us for us to flourish. And it feels harsh or hard, but the end goal is he wants. God wants fruit from our lives, fruit flourishing in our souls, but other people as well. So today we're gonna be talking about flourishing together.

All these messages, most of them come from John 15. And in John 15. So John 13, 14, 15, 16, 17 all happened the night Jesus was arrested. He's hanging out with his disciples. They start in the upper room.

They have the Last Supper. They pose for the painting for Leonardo da Vinci, not really, but. So this was that. But it was a big deal night. They didn't know what was going on.

They knew something was going on cause Jesus was different. He washed their feet. Judas got up and left at some point. And then in John 15, we don't know if they're still in the room, if they're walking to Gethsemane, weeded. But they're all together, Jesus and the 11.

And he says, I'm the vine, you're the branches, and you have to stay in me if you want to flourish. And then he talks. He tells him, I'm telling you a new command. And it's about loving each other. So here's what we're gonna read in John 15.

This is part of the chapter. We're gonna read it out loud together. So this is Jesus again. He might have been walking along the road with disciples. They may have sat down on some tree stumps.

They might still be in the upper room, we don't know. But it's Jesus and the 11 in a very relational, intimate setting. All right, read this out loud with me. This is what Jesus said. I have loved you even as the Father have Loved me.

Remain in my love. When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father's commandments and remain in his love. I have told you these things so you'll be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow. This is my commandment.

Love each other in the same way I have loved you. That last line again. This is my commandment. Love each other in the same way I have loved you. So he's telling these guys, love each other.

Well, might be difficult. All right, here's these 11 guys over here. Matthew, tax collector. He worked for the Romans. If he were alive today, we'd say he's on the political left.

Jews thought they were corrupt. They were deceived, that they're deceptive. They never were allowed to, you know, even testify in court because they were so low on the social ladder. And they were far left on the political ladder because they worked for Rome. But then another disciple was Simon the Zealot.

The Zealots, they wanted to make Israel great again. Miga M I G A right. They wanted to make Israel great again. They were all. They wanted the Romans out, they wanted the Greek language out.

They wanted the way things used to be and should be. And they were sometimes violent. These people hated these people, vice versa. And their disciples. Now, granted, the hate probably wasn't strong then after three years with Jesus.

But you also have James and John. They're the ones who ask Jesus, hey, Jesus, when, when you get into your kingdom, can we have the right hand and left hand seats? And said, when the other disciples heard about it, they were indignant. They were ticked off at these guys. So don't think initially that disciples were this, you know, we are the world love gang.

They had to work through stuff. And they were all followers of Jesus. So sometimes it's difficult to love people who are followers of Jesus. I said that in a pastor's meeting this week with some of the pastors. I won't say which one, but one.

I'm kind of laughing. He goes, of course it is. It's difficult to love other people who follow Jesus. So here's my question for you. Who is a follower of Jesus that is difficult for you to love?

Let's name names. No, not really. Right. So I put a chair up here because I want you to envision that person sitting here. All right?

You can put a Bible on the chair. Because Jesus is talking about loving others in the body of Christ. Those who spirit of Jesus. He's

not talking about, in this case, loving Our enemy, which we're told to do. He's not talking about loving those who hate us, which we're told to do.

Now he's talking about love each other. Now, who might that be for you again? Maybe there's somebody in this church. They have the spirit of Christ in them, but you just have a hard time loving them. You have a hard time even liking them.

You avoid them.

Maybe it's someone in your family who has the spirit of Jesus, but they just rub you the wrong way. You tolerate them. That's not love. You tolerate them, but you don't really love them. Maybe it's your spouse.

No elbows, please, right now. Maybe it's your spouse that's hard for you to love at times. And if you're married. You know what I mean, right? Maybe that's your spouse.

They have the spirit of Jesus, but it's just hard for you. You may not even feel warm fuzzies toward them right now. Maybe it's other people in the body of Christ who have different traditions spiritually. Presbyterian, Charismatic, Pentecostal, Catholic, Baptist, Reformed. Again, I'm not talking about just because they.

I'm talking about feeling the spirit of Jesus in them. But they have different traditions. You might. I'll just confession on this one.

Years ago, I worked at a different church in Bloomington. Years ago, and I used to think that our church was the only church anybody in church should even go to. And one of my friends said, and they were. They were talking about Sherwood Oaks. I won't throw this person on the bus.

I don't even live here. They said Sherwood Oaks is like salad bar Christianity. We serve meat. That was pretty arrogant, right? But I'm saying we do that.

Christians do that with each other. We figure out we're better than that. But I'm so. So whether this person in the seat is a person who you know is a follower of Jesus, who's from another church in your family who you're married to. Why is it so hard?

And why did Jesus, if he said must be hard? Cause it wasn't like, it's easy. If he said, eat more ice cream, that's easy. He's saying something that we know is hard. It's hard to do.

I have a list of. This is like 60 different postcards. They're all addressed to pastors in Bloomington or subsequent counties. And I'll

put that here, too, along with, you know, whatever person you're putting there. And there's some pastors in there that I have a hard time loving.

I believe that the spirit of Jesus, either I think some of their traditions are weird, or they're just weird. They might think the same of me, right? But what does it mean to love those people? And why was it so important to Jesus?

I mean, Jesus. This is John 15 when he says, love each other. Two chapters earlier, which might have been maybe two hours earlier, he washed their feet. Servant task. And he said, do as I have done to you.

Here's my commandment. Love each other. Cause love is action. It's not warm, fuzzy. It's the kind of love that's talked about here.

The Greek word is agape. You may have heard that word. That kind of love is love in action, not warm fuzzies. So Jesus washes their feet. Do as I have done to you.

Love each other, he said. In the passage we just read a few verses later, in John 15, he says the same thing. New commandment. Love each other. So this is the night he's gonna be betrayed and arrested.

And he's saying that to them twice, three times, counting John 13. He must know something that we need to understand. It's really important that we love each other.

Paul in Romans echoes this. Love each other with genuine affection. Peter, who would have been there that night 30 years later when he writes, First Peter writes, love each other deeply, with all your heart. Love each other as brothers and sisters. And then John, who also would have been there 60 years later, he's the last remaining disciple alive in the.

In the book of First John, he writes, if you just did a search on love each other in First John, it just pops up all over the place. Because after 60 years of being a follower of Jesus, he knew and he remembered what Jesus said, and he thought that is the most important thing. Love each other. Not by merely saying it, but doing something. Love each other because God loves us.

Love each other because God is in us. And his love in us becomes fully expressed in how we love one another. Again, we're not talking about loving our enemies. Yes, we're supposed to. We're not talking about Love those who hate us.

Yes, we're supposed to. We're not talking about loving strangers, aliens and orphans. Yes, we're supposed to. He's talking about loving

people that have the spirit of Jesus in them.

Couple things about that. Cause it's hard, right? First of all. So I want you to think for a second, who is this person that's hard for you to love? Maybe it's another pastor, Maybe it's another in your family.

Maybe it is a spouse and Right now, it's just hard to love them.

Here's four things I want you to think about this person. And I have in this list of pastors. There's two pastors in here that just recently I realized they bug me. I think some of their thinking about some things theologically is off and wrong and bad. They bug me.

I think they have the spirit of Christ in them. Just yesterday, I'm gonna put this down here. This is my phone. Somebody called me, an old friend from the past. I didn't answer.

Cause they bugged me. My wife called me on that. She's like, you're speaking about love each other tomorrow and you're not even doing. Maybe that's what. Maybe God wants you to answer the phone and talk to the guy.

So I'm putting them. So who are you putting there? I got my people there. Who are your people? Right.

That are hard to love. Here's some things we gotta know. Jesus commands us to love. He didn't say, a new suggestion I have for you. Love each other.

He didn't say, I have an idea. You might want to try. Love each other. He used the word commandment. I don't have a choice.

If I want to be alive in Jesus, I have to love them. That sounds like dutiful. That sounds like giving. Somehow I have to. Then I'll give them White Castle gift cards.

I'm not saying that, but we have to do it. It's a commandment from Jesus. It's not optional. Secondly, this love in action will cost you. He washed their feet.

That was love in action. That's what agape love is. It's love in action. Jesus dying on the cross. Love in action.

John in First, John says we have to love in word and deed. Love in action. Part of the reason we send these gift cards to pastors or these greeting cards to pastors and include gift cards in there is money. Is love in action. Right.

My heart follows my money. If I give money to another church, if I give money to another person, usually my heart follows that. If I give

gifts to my wife, my heart follows that. Sometimes I don't always feel it, but I know I want to. It's moving my will.

So loving this person may mean something that God's calling you to do that requires action on your part.

Third thing that's true about this kind of love is when we love these people in action. Costly action. It points people to Jesus. And you're like, wait a minute. How does that.

Well, Jesus said, this is my commandment. Love each other. The world will know you are my disciples if you love each other. Well, how will they know that? Are we supposed to announce it?

We love each other. Get billboards. We love each other. There's 33,000 denominations in the world. We love each other.

Right. So what does he mean by that? Same thing. In John 17, Jesus says, if you're unified. If you're.

He says, God. God, may they be unified. Kind of love each other. Because I want the world to know that you sent me and that you love them. How does that work?

Maybe our love for one another. My love for my wife in a Jesus kind of way. My love for any of you in a Jesus kind of way. My love for some of these pastors in a Jesus kind of way. Your love for these pastors in a Jesus kind of way somehow must unlock something in the invisible world.

Scripture tells us that the God of this age, Satan, has blinded the eyes of those who don't believe. So maybe our love in action with the spirit of Jesus toward others in the body of Christ, maybe that starts to block the work of Satan, who blinds the eyes of those who don't believe. And maybe your friends, neighbors, co workers who don't follow Jesus. Something opens up in their connection to God. It's not a direct.

It's not like we announce it, but something's happening because Jesus said it would. We love each other. Something breaks open in the invisible world.

Last thing about this kind of love is it's not possible. Sorry. It's humanly impossible. You can have warm fuzzies towards somebody that go away. It's not possible to love somebody in the way Jesus says to.

Except Jesus says this. He says to God, will your love for me be in them? That means the love that God has for Jesus becomes in us. Because Jesus comes in us supernaturally. We have then been changed.

And we're able to love others well, who are difficult for us to love well. It's a supernatural reality. It's because something inside us can change. Cause we've invited the spirit of Jesus in us. The love of the Father is in Jesus.

Love of Jesus is in us. And I can start to love somebody in ways that humanly don't feel like it's me, but then it becomes me. Cause it's Jesus in me. Same with you. Cause Jesus said, father, will your love for me be in them so they can love each other.

Supernatural. That's why I think part of the. Partly why it all of a sudden opens up the eyes of unbelievers because they see this supernatural love among Christians. They don't understand forgiving somebody who's hurt you. But they're a Christian.

That doesn't make any sense to people to love each other. So a couple other how to's but love each other. If you remember in the passage we just read the phrase remain in me, because that's all throughout this chapter of chapter 15, Jesus says, remain in me. You know, this is the vine remaining. The branches remaining in the vine remain in me.

Remain in my love. We're talking about what that means. Everybody says, remain in me. Stick, stick with me. Because he said, if we remain in him, we produce much fruit.

If we remain in him, we have boldness and prayer. If we remain in him, we have great joy.

Remain in my love, he says, when you obey my commandments, you remain in my love. So when Jesus says things like forgive others, let your yes be yes and no be no. Don't lie to people. Don't hate people, don't call people idiots. Give, he says, give to those in need.

He says, tithe, give to your church. Jesus has things that he says, if you do these things, that's how you remain in me. You don't remain in Jesus just by saying I'm a Christian. That actually almost means nothing anymore in our culture. You remain in Jesus if you follow the ways of Jesus, which means obeying the words of Jesus.

That's how you remain in Him. And if we all remained in him, it'd be easy to love others. Because if I remain in Jesus, my wife remains in Jesus, then we're gonna love each other, right? I played in band in junior high. French horn wasn't all that good, but.

And in high school, often in band class, this teacher would stop and he would tune all the instruments. We'd each have to. He'd come to my, you know, he'd have a machine and I'd play a note and he'd say, you gotta adjust something in your instrument. In my case, the French wanted to pull this slide out a little bit. So instead of being like meh, it was meh, you know, that kind of thing.

So we had to tune ourselves to a common instrument. A.W. Tozer is one of my favorite pastors. He pastored in the 50s in Chicago area. And he said every instrument tuned to the same note is automatically in tune with one another.

That's why band directors do that in junior high and high school. And if you've ever been in an orchestra concert, you might hear the oboe hit the note A. It's called concert A.

You might think at first, what are they doing? Then you realize everybody else starts playing the same note. And what they're doing is they're tuning their instrument to that one note. Cause then the whole orchestra then is in tune with one another. Now, if we don't tune with that, it's called dissonance.

If this is Jesus, this is you, this is what it sounds like, right? That's why we don't love each other. Because we're not all tuned to that note. So I want you to listen for a second. This is in Philippians chapter two.

We're told to have the attitude of Jesus, tune ourselves to Jesus. All right? He says, do nothing out of selfish ambition. Think about the person you have a hard time loving.

He says, think about the other person before your own, before yourself. Think about their interest, before you. All right? Tune to that. Wash feet, serve that person, even though you'd rather not.

All right? Tune. If we all tune to Jesus, we're automatically in tune with one another. And the orchestra that comes from our homes, our marriages, and from our churches becomes a beautiful music, a beautiful melody in the unseen realm. And the rest of the world looks on and is like, what is going on with those people?

They love each other.

That's what we're called to do. So I don't know who's hard for you to love. I could name names for me. But then I have to remember I have to tune myself to Jesus. Which might mean I have to wash their feet.

It might mean I don't try to impress them anymore. This is all from Philippians 2. It might mean I'm not selfish anymore. It might mean when I'm tired and exhausted, I enter the dishwasher instead of expecting my wife to. I do empty the dishwasher on many occasions.

I'm just saying that. All right, but. No, but am I willing to do something for that person because I want to tune myself with Jesus? Am I willing to do something for another pastor or another person from another church because I want to tune myself with Jesus? Am I willing

to forgive people who've hurt me, especially those in the body of Christ?

If I want to tune myself to Jesus? He said, we have to forgive people. Do I want to tune myself to Jesus when he says, give to those in need? You tune yourself to Jesus. Then we tune ourselves to one another.

And then the commandment of Jesus to love one another, love each other, becomes real. And all of a sudden the world changes because something's different. We're not these competitive Christians who try to fight for who has the biggest, best church or whatever else. Because if there's a spirit of Jesus there, that's all that matters. I'm not saying that other theology doesn't matter, but the spirit of Jesus, what matters the most, right?

So we tune ourselves to Jesus because the reason they choose an oboe for an orchestra, because the oboe, when played well, is a steady and penetrating sound. If it's not played well, it sounds like a sick duck. You know that all right. But if it's played well, it's like this steady, penetrating sound. That's the spirit of Jesus in you.

It's the steady, penetrating sound that might be telling you you need to love your spouse, that person, this person. You need to love them. Maybe it's the steady and penetrating sound of Jesus voice in you that says, wash their feet. Don't be selfish. Look to their interest first.

Give them something. Do love in action. It will. And it will, I promise you. At first, it's like I was hard.

It will cause your soul to flourish. That's the promise. We don't do it just because we're supposed to. That's dutiful Christianity. We do it because in the end, Jesus has our best interest in heart.

He wants your soul and my soul to flourish. That's why he tells us these things. So, Jesus, we love you. Even that passage Philippians were told that because of you, because of who you are, because you didn't consider your needs above others, you gave yourself for us. And Scripture tells us that God gave you the name above every single name and the name of Jesus.

Every knee should bow, every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, the glory of God the Father. That's why we tune ourselves to you, Jesus. We want to live the Jesus way. We want to change the world the Jesus way. We want our souls to be fully alive, awake and free and flourishing because we live the Jesus way.

So I pray for these, my sisters and my brothers here this morning, that we would hear the penetrating, clear sound of your voice. So we love each other, change the world and our souls flourish. Amen.