

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25

BETHANY LUTHERAN CHURCH  
ELKHORN, NEBRASKA  
APRIL 10, 2005  
PASTOR MARK FRY

1 PASTOR MARK FRY: I hope you're taking advantage of  
2 the spiritual fifty day Adventure.

3 Somebody kind of came in and said, "Gee, you guys  
4 are always doing a book around here. Every time I have been  
5 here you have been doing a book. "The Purpose Driven Life"  
6 book, "Get Out of the Boat" book and now you have another  
7 book."

8 This is not exactly a book. It's kind of a  
9 journaling device.

10 It's very helpful; very practical. I hope you're  
11 having a devotional life in your home already, but if you  
12 aren't, this is a nice test the water thing.

13 And it's also just a neat way to put on top of what  
14 you are already doing.

15 It's just a little scripture each week and an  
16 introduction and some questions about it.

17 Last week Pastor Wenda challenged the worship  
18 communities in all the different services about enthusiastic  
19 worship.

20 And if Jesus loves you, this you know, then you  
21 need to sing a little louder. You need to get after it a  
22 little bit more in worship.

23 It's not a pep rally, though, for Jesus. That's  
24 not what this is about.

25 Some people were a little bit taken aback by that,

1 you know, we are Lutherans. Whatever that means.

2 Yes, we are. Saved by grace. But part of our  
3 heritage is music.

4 Garrison Keillor said a couple weeks ago on his  
5 radio program, he doesn't know if Lutherans have had a  
6 decent musical since Johann Sebastian Bach, he said. He was  
7 Lutheran as well.

8 But that's part of it, is the enthusiastic worship,  
9 but we have this goal of growing not only wider but deeper  
10 in our adult discipleship in 2005.

11 So we have been talking about getting out of the  
12 boat, and taking risks, and being more deeply embedded in  
13 the scriptures.

14 So I hope you take that upon yourself to invest in  
15 a small purchase of those books.

16 This week's theme, "When we practice the presence  
17 of Christ we lavish his love on others."

18 What that is going to mean as we look at the  
19 scripture today is, if you love Jesus not only do you let  
20 your face and your voice know, but lift your praises and  
21 sing.

22 But one of the things we do in worship is not only  
23 do we get things here, but we also leave things here, I  
24 hope.

25 I hope that when you leave here not only are you

1 maybe encouraged and enthused, but also you have a sense of  
2 relief; that you have been in the presence of some people  
3 and of a God who loves you and wants to know you so  
4 intimately that you can dump your garbage here and travel a  
5 little lighter.

6 So part of that is when we practice the presence of  
7 Christ we are going to then be sent and make a difference in  
8 the world.

9 And the challenging part of that this week is that  
10 Jesus is saying it's not just on the people we know, but  
11 it's on people we don't know so well.

12 So, if you want to grab your Bible, I want to give  
13 you a little bit of the context of where we are jumping in  
14 today with Jesus teaching.

15 Chapters five, six and seven of Matthew's Gospel  
16 are the Sermon on the Mount.

17 And some of you may have heard of that before, but  
18 this is a great section of scripture.

19 It has the Beatitudes. You are going to see that  
20 right away if you are looking at it.

21 Blessed are the poor. Blessed are the meek.  
22 Blessed are you when people revile vial you and utter false  
23 charges against you.

24 He goes right into the Beatitudes, but notice the  
25 first verse of the 5th Chapter.

1           He went up to the mountain and he sat down to  
2 teach.

3           "When Jesus saw the crowds he went up on the  
4 mountain; and after he sat down his disciples came to him."

5           I just love that image of Jesus. He's on the  
6 mountain, and he has a bunch of people there, but what is  
7 the first thing he does? He sits down.

8           I love that metaphor of he's not talking down to  
9 the people; he's actually speaking up to them.

10           That's one of the things I love about our Lord is  
11 he doesn't just talk down to us, he could, but it's this  
12 reversal.

13           He sits down. It's the position of a rabbi, of a  
14 teacher.

15           And then he goes into this great sermon that is  
16 three chapters long, chapters five, six, and seven.

17           And it was never his style to preach down to  
18 people.

19           He does the Beatitudes and then he goes into this  
20 beautiful melody of, well, you've heard it said, but I say  
21 to you.

22           And he says in there, he says I haven't come to  
23 throw out everything you've learned, but you have heard it  
24 said, but I say to you, and he has these beautiful turns of  
25 phrase.

1           He introduces the congregation and the listeners to  
2 the theology of opposites in some ways.

3           The theology of paradox. You have heard it said  
4 this way, but I say it to you this way.

5           It's not that that way is diametrically opposed to  
6 this way, but you have heard it said, but now I say to you.

7           I want you to look through the words. It's not  
8 getting so much scripture in to you, it's getting more into  
9 the scripture.

10           That's one of those opposites that he's able to  
11 bring his audience in to.

12           You have heard it said, but I say to you. In other  
13 words, he's kind of saying, my way is the highway, but it's  
14 oftentimes the lowly way. The way of simplicity and  
15 opposites.

16           You have heard it said, but I say to you, and so  
17 he's going to spell that out and we jump into that then.

18           That's the context and we jump in at the 43rd  
19 Verse.

20           And you need to understand, he's sitting down and  
21 they're probably a little bit relaxed because of the  
22 beautiful cadence of his teaching.

23           And all of a sudden he kind of gets their attention  
24 with Verse 43.

25           "You have heard that it was said you shall love

1 your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say to you, love  
2 your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."

3 That's kind of a shocker, and I want to say a  
4 couple different things about enemies.

5 Some of you remember the old Pogo cartoon. "We've  
6 met the enemy and he is us."

7 "We have seen the enemy and he is us."

8 This was popular in the '50s, if you believe that,  
9 and also back in the '70s it was kind of resurrected.

10 There is a whole book, a whole web site about Pogo.  
11 It's fascinating reading.

12 If you ever get it, it's neat, because it's talking  
13 about traces of nobility, gentleness and courage persist in  
14 all people, do what we will to stamp out the trend. So,  
15 too, do those characteristics exist within us which are  
16 ugly." Pogo knows us well.

17 And Jesus knows us well, and I believe what Jesus  
18 is teaching in the Sermon on the Mount is you have heard it  
19 said this way, but I say to you this way.

20 He want us to develop a little different  
21 understanding of relationship with God.

22 And sometimes the way we get closer to God is by  
23 getting closer to people who are our enemies and who don't  
24 know God.

25 And that's an alarming thought, so we are going to

1 look at that a little bit here.

2 The Bible speaks differently about enemies, so a  
3 quick little Bible study.

4 Context, New Testament times, Christianity was not  
5 the popular thing to be.

6 They had enemies and their enemies were fatal  
7 enemies.

8 It was literally a life or death matter to be a  
9 Christian.

10 One of the things I really liked about our kids on  
11 Palm Sunday, they did a song about the fish sign, about how  
12 they used to in the sand would trace half of it and if  
13 somebody knew that a person was a Christian they would come  
14 on and they would finish that sign of the fish and then they  
15 knew that person was trustworthy, they were a Christian.

16 But sometimes to find out somebody was a Christian  
17 was something that would get a person killed, because it was  
18 not the popular thing to be.

19 And so we need to look a little bit differently at  
20 the way the Bible talks about who our enemies are.

21 My first reference for this is from the Book of  
22 Ephesians, that's one of Paul's letter, it's in the back of  
23 your Bible.

24 Some of the Bibles, we have different Bibles, one  
25 of them is on page 187, if you want to follow along with me.

1           The other one, I apologize, I don't know what page  
2 it's on.

3           But it's the book of Ephesians, 6th Chapter,  
4 beginning at the 10th Verse.

5           We'll find out a little bit different about  
6 enemies. It's dangerous stuff.

7           "Finally," he says, "be strong in the Lord and in  
8 the strength of his power."

9           Notice whose power it is. It's not the person's  
10 power; it's in the strength of God's power.

11           "Put on the whole armor of God so that you may be  
12 able to stand against the wiles of the devil."

13           This is who the enemy is.

14           "For our struggle is not against enemies of blood  
15 and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities,  
16 against the cosmic powers of the present darkness, against  
17 the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.  
18 Therefore take up the whole armor of God."

19           And if we had time we would look at each one of  
20 those different pieces of equipment.

21           You've got the whole armor of God. It's a belt of  
22 truth, a breastplate of righteousness, shoes of peace,  
23 shield of faith, helmet of salvation, and sword of the  
24 spirit.

25           But if you look closely at each of those little

1 pieces of equipment, except for the sword of the spirit, and  
2 really back in those days you actually had a sword of  
3 protection, it was not one of offensive, but of defensive  
4 posture.

5 All of those different things they are invited to  
6 put on are defensive pieces of armor.

7 They aren't supposed to load their guns; they  
8 aren't supposed to get out the catapults, but rather they  
9 are supposed to put on these things that will be able to  
10 withstand against the power of the devil, the enemy.

11 So it's a little different way of thinking. We  
12 live in a world that worships power.

13 But the kingdom of God worships power in weakness.  
14 That's the whole story of Jesus.

15 It's the opposite. Well, if you are the son of  
16 man, save yourself. Come down from that cross.

17 No, that's not the point. He dies a shameful death  
18 in order to give life.

19 So the enemies are understood a little bit  
20 differently.

21 Likewise in the Book of Romans, the 8th Chapter,  
22 this is on page 151 in my Bible, and yours, I apologize, I  
23 don't know all the different pages. If you have your own  
24 Bible, that's fabulous.

25 I had a seminary professor whose father was dying

1 and he said all he would let us do is read to him from  
2 Romans 8.

3 He said we would go in and say, "Dad, we need to  
4 talk."

5 "No. Just read to me from Romans 8."

6 It's a beautiful message. This is a great chapter  
7 of the Bible.

8 But the last part of it, Verse 38, Paul is writing,  
9 "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor  
10 angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come,  
11 nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all  
12 of creation will be able to separate us from the love of God  
13 in Christ Jesus our Lord."

14 What I think that means is nothing can separate us  
15 from the love of God, except for ourselves.

16 And sometimes I think Jesus is looking into the  
17 crowd's lives and he's saying if you hang too much with the  
18 people you know and love you're going to separate yourself  
19 from me in some ways.

20 Hence, the whole business of, you have heard it  
21 said to love your neighbors, and I'm not saying you  
22 shouldn't love your neighbors, but you've also heard it said  
23 to hate your enemies.

24 I'm saying you need to love your enemies and you  
25 need to pray for those who persecute you.

1           So it's kind of this opposite thing flowing in  
2 here.

3           He's warning against the false complacency that I  
4 believe creeps into every Christian's life and every  
5 church's life of just saying hi to the people you know and  
6 just loving the people you know and just hanging with the  
7 people you know and just saying good morning to the people  
8 you know.

9           I believe that that complacency comes in through  
10 bad theology.

11           And it also comes in through kind of a spiritual  
12 tunnel vision that starts to think about it's all about me  
13 and us; it's not about them.

14           But Pogo says I have seen the enemy, and I've met  
15 the enemy, and he is us.

16           We need to be conscious of that. It's not about us  
17 anymore in the kingdom of God.

18           And the way the grow closer to God is what Jesus  
19 then will describe in Matthew 5:43 and following.

20           It's obvious and it's easy to love our neighbors,  
21 and it's pretty easy to even love the people that we live  
22 with in the same house.

23           But it's not very easy to love our enemy, and to  
24 pray for those who persecute us.

25           One of the things I've learned the last several

1 years is I've got some enemies, and I mean big time enemies.

2 And a lot of times what I find those enemies, their  
3 main purpose in life is to draw me away from the great  
4 commission of going and making disciples of nations, but  
5 rather to hang closer.

6 They get really offended when it's not about them,  
7 and then it kind of becomes this self-righteousness thing  
8 that gets really kind of festering and it gets really ugly.

9 And I think Jesus is saying that happens. We need  
10 to not have tunnel vision about it's just about us.

11 It's not just about us; it's about God, it's about  
12 our neighbors, yes, but it's about people that we don't even  
13 know yet that we need be loving, and praying for people that  
14 persecute us.

15 Love your enemies and pray for those that persecute  
16 you.

17 It's a battle of love and offensive weapons are not  
18 allowed.

19 See, in this world you think if you have an enemy,  
20 you go knock them out.

21 If you have an enemy, take them on, fight fire with  
22 fire.

23 But Jesus says no, no, no. It's about loving them.  
24 It's not about hating them.

25 Because if you start to hate them you'll separate

1 yourself from God and also from the whole concept of grace.

2 Because then you say, well, they don't deserve it.

3 What they deserve is my wrath.

4 But it's the opposite of that. So it's very

5 intriguing, very good.

6 But enemies are real, they are the principalities,

7 the powers of darkness.

8 A lot of times enemies are at work and they are

9 kind of some of Satan's minions, they don't know it, but I

10 believe it's true.

11 But, again, you don't fight them with fire; you

12 don't fight them with love; you love them with love, and

13 it's often times an issue of control for them and they like

14 to be in control.

15 Notice Verse 45. "So that you may be children of

16 your Father in heaven."

17 I would like it even better if that word was

18 become, it's the same Greek translation, but why I say that

19 is it's a process, so that you may be the children of God.

20 Again, if we are just loving the people we hang

21 with, then we are not really being children of God.

22 We are kind of hunkering in the bunker and we are

23 circling the wagons and we are just sort of loving the

24 people that we love, that love us, then we aren't fulfilling

25 that as well.

1           "For he makes the sun rise on the evil and on the  
2 good and he sends rain on the righteous and on the  
3 unrighteous."

4           That's kind of a fascinating concept, because a lot  
5 of people think that God loves them more than he loves  
6 anybody else.

7           And we have said, if God had a refrigerator, your  
8 picture would be on it.

9           If God had a wallet, your photo would be in it,  
10 yes.

11           But you are not the only person in the universe he  
12 loves. He also loves your neighbor.

13           And they might not go to the same church as you.  
14 They might not go to any church at all.

15           They might go to a church that is a Hindu temple.  
16 God still loves everyone, but we kind of get this tunnel  
17 vision thing of I'm only going to say hi to people that I  
18 know.

19           And I'm only going to love people that love me.  
20 I'm only going to be kind to people that say thank you, and  
21 notice what happens then in the next few verses.

22           "For if you love those who love you, what reward do  
23 you have?"

24           In other words, that's a piece of cake.

25           "Even the tax collectors do that."

1 I love that since it's a week before filing our  
2 taxes.

3 IRS is going to love you if you just fill out your  
4 papers.

5 But it's like what is the big deal? I hear a lot  
6 of people say family is the most important thing to me.

7 Great. Love them. But not at the expense of other  
8 people.

9 Love them in addition to and along with and  
10 everything else. That's what he's saying.

11 "And if you greet only your brothers and sisters,  
12 what more are you doing than others? Do not even the  
13 Gentiles do the same?"

14 In other words, he says, yes, even in weird pagan  
15 cultic churches, when they get up in the morning and say  
16 good morning to somebody, you should say good morning to  
17 somebody you don't know.

18 The Christian church is different. It's not just  
19 "Hey, Tony, how it's going?"

20 I don't know who is behind you so I'm going to say  
21 hi to you.

22 We have to beware of that. That's tunnel vision  
23 and some of my enemies confront me and they say, "You don't  
24 know my name, do you?"

25 "No, I don't. I'm sorry. I had something happen

1 to my brain a few years back and now short-term memory for  
2 me is oftentimes lost. Forgive me. God knows your name."

3 But they get offended because, you don't know my  
4 name, and the church is so big everybody doesn't know me  
5 anymore.

6 You have to be careful of that tunnel vision.

7 That's part of the beauty of it.

8 God knows us. We used to be in a smaller church  
9 where you could give communion to everybody and say their  
10 name.

11 And that was kind of cool, but on the other hand  
12 it's like how dangerous is that, because then the person  
13 right behind, when Donna comes up and I don't know her name,  
14 she's like how come he didn't say my name? He must not love  
15 me.

16 And people have said you have different people  
17 serving communion. Exactly.

18 God knows your name, and we are called it says in  
19 here to say hello to those people, and if you greet only  
20 your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than  
21 others? Even the Gentiles do the same.

22 "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is  
23 perfect."

24 We have a strange concept about perfectionism, and  
25 that's not what this is about. This is not be a

1 perfectionism.

2 "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is  
3 perfect." Verse 48.

4 Take a look at Matthew 19:21. I have the verse on  
5 the screen for you.

6 And then the fascinating part of this story, it's a  
7 great little story, Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be  
8 perfect," we all do, we are perfectionists, aren't we?

9 "Go and sell your possessions and give the money to  
10 the poor and you will have treasure in heaven and then come  
11 and follow me. When the young man heard this word, he went  
12 away grieving, for he had many possessions."

13 Some people stop reading the story right there, and  
14 they think perfection, why even try?

15 I mean, if it's about giving everything away, I  
16 can't do that, because I have a lot of stuff.

17 What happens in the next few verses is the greatest  
18 part of the story.

19 "Then Jesus said to the disciples," Verse 23,  
20 "truly I tell you it will be hard for a rich person to enter  
21 the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it's easier for a  
22 camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who  
23 is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven."

24 The sad part of the story is, the rich guy who  
25 heard the first part of the joke didn't stay for the rest of

1 the joke.

2 He's like, oh, man, I could never do that, I'm out  
3 of here.

4 And the point of the joke is, Jesus says, yes,  
5 let's see you get that camel through the eye of a needle.  
6 You can't.

7 He says it sounds impossible. It is for humanity,  
8 but nothing is impossible for God.

9 It's not impossible, but what I read that to say  
10 then is perfection is not achievable, but progress is a  
11 mandate.

12 We have to grow closer to God throughout our lives.  
13 It's not just been there, done that, got the T shirt, bought  
14 the book, read the program, did the fifty day adventure.

15 It's a process to become the children of God, and  
16 the way we do that is not by separating out who is a friend  
17 and who is not; it's by following the commands of Jesus.

18 And he gets real specific then. Perfection is  
19 imitation of God.

20 Notice he goes back to that rain thing. You think  
21 you're getting rained on just because you are a Christian?

22 You have neighbors that are probably getting more  
23 rain than you are.

24 God is a gracious God, period. He showers his  
25 grace and his mercy on the righteous and the unrighteous and

1 we should imitate that and do it ourselves.

2 It isn't just be nice to the people in our church  
3 that we know had their house burn down, but everybody.

4 One of the beautiful metaphors of the Drummond  
5 family, they are an awesome family, I called Doug the  
6 morning I heard about the fire and stuff.

7 He's out looking at his house, this is a mess, he  
8 was so glad for the phone call.

9 But he said people are just responding, and I was  
10 touched, I was moved to tears when I got my paper the next  
11 morning and I noticed most of the people quoted in this  
12 article are Bethany people that are coming to the aid of the  
13 Drummond family. Praise God.

14 They took care of their cat, their dog. One of  
15 schools got a little flute for Katie because her flute was  
16 destroyed in the fire.

17 But one of the things Doug is conscious of is I  
18 don't know who all I need to say thank you to.

19 And that can drive some of us crazy, because I grew  
20 up in a family, man, before you even opened a Christmas gift  
21 you got the legal pad out and you're writing down who it's  
22 from and you write them a thank you note.

23 And if you don't do it, you had my father's wrath  
24 to face.

25 And I can never forget, Wenda married into our

1 family, she's like this is unbelievable.

2 We are at the wedding and my dad was keeping close  
3 score of what his friends had given to us for wedding gifts.

4 Why? He's going to give the same cost amount to  
5 his friends' kids when they get married. We are going to  
6 make it all equal.

7 And I'm not saying we shouldn't write thank you  
8 notes. God bless you if you do.

9 This is a world that is not very good at writing  
10 them.

11 I went to a Campus Life event last Thursday night  
12 down at the Doubletree Hotel and I have been reading this  
13 deal about doing random acts of kindness and love things.

14 I thought I'm going to try this. I pull up to the  
15 little toll thing, you have to pay three bucks to park at  
16 that hotel, and I thought I'm going to just do this for the  
17 heck of it, because they are inviting us in the spiritual  
18 journey book to do something anonymously and not let people  
19 know who it is.

20 So I gave three extra books to the teller there. I  
21 said, "This is for the guy behind me. I don't know him, but  
22 just keep the change."

23 She looked at me like I was nuts. I told that  
24 story to the 7:45 service and somebody goes, "Do you think  
25 they really gave it them?"

1           That's not for me to decide, but I can just see  
2           that person getting up there and getting his wallet out,  
3           "How much do I owe?"

4           She goes, "It's paid for. The guy in front of you  
5           took care of it."

6           He probably would have romped on the gas to try and  
7           catch me to thank me, maybe.

8           But there is something in the Christian story about  
9           that, is how much do I owe you? It has been taken care of.

10          I'll never forget, we did a random act of kindness  
11          deal, this has been a few years ago, down at the corner of  
12          Kwik Shop down in Elkhorn.

13          Our group and a bunch of our kids were out with a  
14          bunch of ice chests with Diet Coke and Coca-Cola and we were  
15          giving them to people free.

16          And we are handing them out, the kids are having a  
17          ball, would you like a free Coke?

18          How much do I owe you?

19          It's free. We Just want you to have it.

20          People were troubled by that. Thank you very much.  
21          Good.

22          Bob Hayes, a guy from our church, he was over at  
23          the Kwik Shop.

24          He saw what we were doing, and I caught him out of  
25          the corner of my eye, he comes out, one of the kids comes up

1 and goes, "We are from Bethany Lutheran. We want to give  
2 you a free can of Coke."

3 He reaches inside of his car, grabs a whole twelve  
4 pack of cold Coke, and gives it back to the kid. The kid  
5 was like whoa.

6 That's generosity begetting generosity. That's  
7 kindness begetting kindness and isn't it cool?

8 One of the awesome things, and I know Doug and  
9 Sandy well enough, they aren't going to be able to thank  
10 everybody.

11 Isn't that awesome? You know what they are going  
12 to do?

13 They are going to thank God, and they are probably  
14 going to go out and do the same thing for somebody else,  
15 anonymously, without their name attached.

16 That's what Jesus then starts talking about right  
17 away in the 6th chapter.

18 "Beware of practicing your piety before others in  
19 order to be seen by them, for then you have no reward from  
20 your Father in heaven."

21 But you do get the tax deduction. He's not saying  
22 don't sign the check, don't put it in an offering, don't  
23 keep track of it.

24 He's saying you have to do that, but do the other  
25 also.

1           Don't expect just credit. Who do I owe for this?  
2 Thank God. That's what it is.

3           He says the whole thing. "Whenever you give alms,  
4 do not sound a trumpet before as the hypocrites do."

5           I remember one time I went to a meeting, we lived  
6 in Minneapolis and I worked with this guy in a clothing  
7 store.

8           I was in seminary at the time. He said, "I want  
9 you to go to this meeting with me."

10          And I was like, "Oh, man, what is this?"

11          We got in his car, we rode for about an hour  
12 through Minneapolis, it was raining.

13          We got to this deal and it was one of these Amway  
14 deals.

15          And the guy got up and he's talking about -- and  
16 nothing against Amway -- but he was talking about if you  
17 sell these products, I just want you to know some of the  
18 great things that could happen to you.

19          Wouldn't it be great, he said, if you are sitting  
20 in your church service and the plate comes by and you just  
21 take a whole wad of hundred dollar bills and just drop them  
22 in the plate. Can you imagine the look on the usher's face  
23 if you did that?

24          I was so offended by that example, because it was  
25 kind of like some people when the offering plate comes

1 around, and I have talked to people, they do the simply  
2 giving thing and they don't give here, they feel really  
3 weird that people are looking at them like what is up with  
4 Tony? He's not putting any money in the plate, but it's  
5 just the opposite.

6 Jesus says some people they do it, and they go look  
7 at this, big amount, go ahead and check the amount, I have  
8 it right on there, it has a bunch of zeros behind it. Look  
9 it over. Aren't I great?

10 He's saying don't let your right hand know what  
11 your left hand is doing, because giving has a randomness to  
12 it as well. It has anonymity to it.

13 I was running around so much before the service I  
14 forgot to bring my little examples.

15 I was going to bring a dust broom, a casserole  
16 dish, and some Hallmark cards.

17 I would love for you to maybe go over and sweep  
18 your neighbor's driveway off.

19 Make a casserole and give it to somebody you don't  
20 know.

21 Send a card to somebody and don't sign it. Tell  
22 them you're praying for them, you are thinking about them,  
23 even put five bucks in it.

24 Can you imagine? They are going to go I want to  
25 send a thank you to somebody. Who do I send the thank you

1 to?

2 But the whole point of it is, if we lavish the love  
3 of Christ on others they are going to thank God and maybe  
4 not us. That's the beauty of it.

5 The challenge this week is to do some of those kind  
6 acts to people that we don't know; to do them anonymously.

7 Because it's kind of like in golf. It becomes  
8 muscle memory.

9 If we do it enough, it's like a golf swing, you  
10 just keep doing it, it's going to become more natural to  
11 you.

12 Even those of us that are horrible golfers, the  
13 problem is usually not enough practice.

14 And the same is true of the Christian faith. Not  
15 enough practice.

16 We get tunnel vision and we are just kind of making  
17 ends meet, but we have to look outside that, Jesus is  
18 teaching us, and we need to move on.

19 "For if you love those who love you, what reward do  
20 you have?"

21 I have those two verses, Romans 12, "Do not be  
22 conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing  
23 of your minds so that you may discern what is the will of  
24 God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

25 There is that word again. It's not about being

1 conformed to this world; that it's all about receiving,  
2 about buying and selling; it's about giving.

3 The word give appears in the Bible fifteen hundred  
4 times. That's more than love, faith, trust, hope. Give.

5 That's the way we imitate God. We are transformed;  
6 not conformed.

7 Finally from 2nd Corinthians 13:9. "We rejoice when  
8 we are weak and you are strong."

9 Notice the opposites of that. We live in a world  
10 where we rejoice when we are strong, supposedly. Only the  
11 strong will survive.

12 But look at what Paul is saying. It's the  
13 opposite.

14 "For we rejoice when we are weak and you are  
15 strong. This is what we pray for, that you may become  
16 perfect."

17 And people who have it, they want to give it away.  
18 Those people that are chasing after perfection, they want it  
19 for other people as well.

20 That imitation of God thing is contagious and  
21 that's what Paul is saying in that, "That's what we pray  
22 for, that you may become perfect."

23 That you might imitate God in your life. Wouldn't  
24 be that cool?

25 What would Jesus do? Well, let's give it a shot.

1 He's telling us some stuff today.

2 And, finally, "If you love those who love you, what  
3 reward do you have," Verses 46 and 47.

4 That's a tough one for us, because it's hard to  
5 love the people that we are married to, it's hard to love  
6 the people that we have as our kids.

7 It's hard to love the people we have as our parents  
8 and our grandparents and our neighbors.

9 We have been talking about loving your neighbor,  
10 yes, yes, yes, but you have to go bigger than that.

11 Because this is a world that's just starving and  
12 thirsting for the love of Christ.

13 And that's the great thing, like I said, if you do  
14 it, maybe they are going to go who do I say thank you to?

15 And they are going to come to the conclusion there  
16 really isn't somebody. I'll thank God.

17 That's how we lavish love on other people, and  
18 that's the reward we have, is the greatness of that and  
19 that's what Jesus did.

20 That's your challenge. It's not going to be easy  
21 to go and love somebody, it's hard enough, and like I say,  
22 we've seen the enemy and he's us.

23 It's hard for me to even love myself a lot of  
24 times, because I've got darkness and some of that stuff in  
25 it myself as well, that's part of the whole nature of the

1 deal.

2           Would you join me in prayer before we go to shine a  
3 light and surprise somebody.

4           Thanks, Lord Jesus, for loving us randomly,  
5 precisely, anonymously, in a lot of different ways.

6           We thank you for the Drummond family and that they  
7 were kept safe through the fire, and their neighbors that  
8 have responded, I just know about the Parkers, the Greens,  
9 the Johnsons, the schools, the church that has responded.

10           It's a neat metaphor, Lord, of being a community,  
11 so we give you thanks and praise.

12           We also ask you, Lord, that we not have tunnel  
13 vision and just love those we know, but love those that you  
14 know and we don't know yet.

15           Thank you, Lord, for these friends. Blessed be  
16 your name.

17           You give and take away, and you invite us to give  
18 and now go away to shine light in dark places. We do so in  
19 the name of Jesus. Amen.

20

21

22

23

24

25