

BELPRES CHURCH

Sermon Title: Love Deeper

Rev. John Kim

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Scripture: 1 Peter 4:8-10

⁸ Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. ⁹ Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. ¹⁰ Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.

Transcript:

Jesus, when we think of your love, we see you in the way you love people unconditionally so much, in fact, that you would give your life up for us, and that kind of love is so big, so deep, and it's supernatural. So this morning, teach us how to love supernaturally like you did. In your name we pray. Amen. Well, good morning, Bell Pres. Welcome those who are shipping online. It's so great to be back. My name is John Kim, and I'm one of the mission pastors here that serves this community. Now, one of the things that I love about seeing life return somewhat back to normal is the return of weddings. Now I love seeing photos pop up in my Facebook feed of my friends and their kiddos getting married. And I love the Instagram glamor photo shots that my photography friends are taking. And as a pastor, now one of the things I get to do is provide premarital counseling to those young couples that are getting married. Now, [Sol 00:01:11] and I, during our sessions, share tons of stories of how we fought, argued, cried, and talked about calling it quits over and over. Now, our goal was to share all of our failures in marriage so that couples we counsel come away saying, "Boy, we might have some issues, but the Kims, they've got issues." Now, we want them to know that if we can make it, anyone can make it. Now, one of the stories I share is in the first couple of years of my wife and I being married is when my wife went to visit her mom. And I thought it was great that Sol went back home to see her family. She was there for a few weeks and her sister called me during her trip back to Minneapolis and I said, "Hi, Sue, how are you doing? How are things going? Are you and Sol having a blast?" And she says, "John, do you know why Sol is here in Minneapolis?" I said, "Sure, she's visiting you guys." And she goes, "No, she's here because she left you."

And I said, "I know that. She left to go spend time with you." And, again, my sister-in-law said, "No, John. She's here because she left, really left you." And I stopped smiling and I thought, oh boy, I have missed this. I thought, okay, this isn't good. Sol eventually came back. Not because she wanted to, but because her mom kicked her out of her house saying, "You've got to work this out with John. You can't stay at my house." I can laugh about it now years later, but it was a very difficult time. We shed many tears, talked to counselors, and had to dig deep into what a marriage relationship is supposed to be. I mean, there are stories after stories of how I messed up in our marriage and I'm grateful to Sol for her forgiveness and love to put up with a Neanderthal like me. Now I share this because we all fail in how we love others. Whether it's in our marriage, our family, in our work, relationships, and even with our neighbors, and especially with strangers, I think if we can all have an honest conversation we can say that we need help in the area of loving people and loving others. So today we're going to look at a passage in the Bible that I believe will help us in how to love others deeper. It comes from First Peter chapter four, verses eight through 10. Peter says this, "Above all, love each other deeply because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms." Now, as I studied this passage, I found two parallels, one linking God's grace in verse 10 and love that covers over a multitude of sins in verse eight. The second parallel I found links living a life of hospitality seen in verse nine and serving others seen in verse 10.

You see, I believe Peter is giving us a secret on how to love deeper. The first secret to love deeper is experiencing God's grace and loving each other because love covers over a multitude of sins. And the second secret to love deeper is living a life of hospitality, which is serving others. Now look at verse eight. It begins with the words "above all". Peter is saying, "Do this. Make this your priority in life. This should be the most important thing you do." And then he says, "Love each other deeply." Why? Because love covers over a multitude of sins. Peter took this from Proverbs chapter 10, verse 12 where it says, "Hatred stirs up dissension, but love covers over all wrongs." Now, do you think Peter was speaking from the heart when he wrote this? When you look at Peter's life, you see all the failings and screw ups he made throughout his relationship with Jesus and as a leader in the early church.

Peter was brash, prideful, violent at times. He was rebuked by Jesus when children wanted to come to him. His selfish ambition was seen in arguing with the other disciples about who was going to be the greatest. Jesus gave his strongest rebuke to him saying, "Get behind me, Satan." How would you like Jesus to say that to you, call you Satan? Peter at first refused to have his feet washed by Jesus, because that is normally done by a menial servant. Peter denies Christ three times and then he quits being a disciple and he goes back doing his old job, being a fisherman. And even after being recommissioned by Jesus and as a leader in the church in Jerusalem, he pulled back from fellowship with Gentile Christians because he was afraid of the criticism from the Jewish Christians that believed it was necessary for all Christians to be circumcised. Because of Peter's hypocrisy, he even led other Christian leaders astray like Barnabas. Apostle Paul himself had to confront Peter about these issues.

Now, can I be honest for a moment? When I was thinking about this phrase, "love covers over a multitude of sins", I had a difficult time reconciling this. You see, just a few weeks ago, I had the opportunity to visit Poland and go to Auschwitz and Birkenau. And I walked through the death camps where over 1.5 million men, women, and children were killed. And I walked into a room that had a glass wall where behind that wall was hair that filled that room. And it was women's hair, all that was left of those that were killed in the gas chambers. I held back tears just walking through the room. The intensity of the camps, how large and how immense the place was, how it was all designed to exterminate people, it was heartbreaking. As we walked over to the Birkenau camp and walked through the buildings that were used to house and kill people, a group behind us, a group of Jewish young girls, were singing.

At first, you could only hear it above the wind and as they walked right behind us, you could hear their beautiful voices. And I asked our guide, "Who are they?" And she told me that they're from Jerusalem and that they're singing songs of hope and love. For the entire tour, I cried at times. I was angry. I was stunned. And when I listened to these young Jewish girls singing these songs of hope and love my heart was lifted. I felt the hope that they sang. My heart wasn't filled with sadness anymore, but love. And my rational thought is that there is no cure for the multitude of sins of what happened here in Auschwitz and Birkenau, but the songs of hope and love sung by just a dozen or so young Jewish girls supernaturally affected my heart, my soul. And that's what love does. When you love, it covers over a multitude of sins. I can't explain it, but love is powerful and it can break through the walls of anger, pride, brokenness, selfishness, and change our hearts. In the midst of tragedy, these beautiful singers brought me hope.

Now, can I make a suggestion? If you're going through a difficult time where you might be wronged, maybe struggling to love someone, maybe your heart has been cold and empty for some time, can I encourage you to make a playlist of songs on Spotify or iTunes? You can make a playlist of Christian songs of hope and love, even your favorite hymns, and go for a walk and listen and sing those songs to the Lord. I can't tell you how many times my Spotify Worship playlist has lifted my spirits, helped me through some difficult times, and I know God will help you. 3:23 says, "For all who have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." And Romans 5:8 says, "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this while we were still sinners. Christ died for us." See, Peter, with all of his character flaws, he always found forgiveness in his relationship with Jesus. In John chapter 21, when Peter went back fishing, he saw Jesus on the beach and he got so excited he jumped into the water and he swam to meet him. Jesus was smoking some fish for Peter and the other disciples, and that's where Jesus asked Peter, "Do you love me?" three times, and Peter tells him each time, "Lord, you know that I love you." And Jesus says to him, "Feed my sheep. Take care of my sheep." And in that moment, the grace of God supernaturally came pouring into Peter's life, restoring him, forgiving him, reclaiming him for the purposes that God had for him. I love First John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from unrighteousness." Can I encourage you, if you want to love deeper, you have to experience God's grace? And one of the ways you experienced God's grace is when you clear the air with God each and every day, Bell Pres, this week,

your homework each morning, every morning, when you're driving to work or you have a moment of peace and have some breathing room, confess your sins to the Lord, what you've done wrong maybe the day before or the week before, and God's grace will fill your life and you will love deeper.

You see, God's grace is best seen in the cross of Christ. Now, wouldn't you agree that love is the identification mark of a Christian? It's our birthmark or our tattoo. Now, it identifies that you belong to Christ, and that's what Jesus said. "They will know you are my disciples if you love one another." Look at the word "deeply". "Love each other deeply." It can be translated as fervent love. The word deeply literally means strenuously. It's a word used in ancient times describing a horse at full speed, a horse stretching and straining its muscles. That's the word for deeply. It's also used to describe an athlete who would stretch or strain her muscles to win the race, giving everything she has to cross the finish line. So now let me translate this. When you love people, give it all you've got. When you love people, hold nothing back in your love for them. Love people like you're trying to win the Love Olympics. Love them like you're trying to win a gold medal in the love pentathlon. I mean, that's what it means to love deeper. Now, the second secret to love deeper is living a life of hospitality, which is to serve others. Now, Peter in verse nine says, "Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling." Hospitality is a New Testament word that literally means loving the stranger. In the original language, hospitality is made up of two words, [foreign language 00:14:42], which means love for one another or love for a friend, and [foreign language 00:14:48] which means stranger or foreigner. That's where we also get the word hospital, a place where you treat people who are in need. And you may not know them, but you are hospitable to them. It means to love a stranger. Now, here is why this is vital to the early church. You see, when Peter was writing this letter, the church was struggling and in persecution by Rome and Nero. If you were a Christian, you probably lost your job, you probably lost your home, and you were put in prison and many died.

So Christians were becoming refugees and Peter was telling Christians to show love to the stranger. "Go out of your way to help them. It might mean open your homes to them, feed them, giving them your clothes and giving them your support." See, when it comes to loving strangers or the foreigner, as one of your mission pastors, we have been engaged around the world with global partners that are meeting the needs of refugees in Greece and Lebanon. Now, as you know, when the U.S. left Afghanistan, we saw a few of the Afghans that made it onto planes that went to Europe and other Western countries like the U.S. But what you don't know is that there is a mass refugee exodus coming out of the Middle East from Iran, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and other countries numbering in the hundreds of thousands of people. Global poverty, religious persecution, and war is causing this mass exodus. Turkey is talking about building a wall to stop these refugees from coming into their country and many are trying to get into Greece where they hope to get refugee status to move to Europe, eventually to places like Germany.

And even before the Afghan crisis, we, Bell Pres, have been partnering in Greece with two partnerships that are meeting the needs of Iranian refugees, Afghan refugees, Syrian refugees, Iraqi refugees. We are providing social services, food and medical

care, housing. And we are discipling refugees with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We also have two global partners in Lebanon meeting the needs of Syrian refugees. When Peter exhorts us to live a life of hospitality, we as a church are doing so much to help the refugees in Greece and Lebanon. And I want to thank you, Bell Pres, for your generosity and for your love. This is a kairos moment in history where thousands of Muslim refugees are able to hear the Gospel for the very first time. This past month, as I shared, I had the opportunity to go with my wife and my youngest daughter, Emma, to Wrocław, I think that's how you pronounce it, in Poland.

Emma was invited to be on Team USA, very cool, and to compete at the World Archery Youth Championships. She was on the under 18 year old team. Over 60 countries set their best teams to compete against each other. It was so cool to be around so many different people. I got to know a father who came to support his daughter who was on the Swedish Team. I met a coach from Iran and we talked about his family and how he became an archery coach. To represent your country at an event like this is just awesome. One of the coolest traditions, as athletes build friendships with other athletes, they would exchange jerseys with one another, extending friendship that goes beyond just competing against one another. And Emma made a new friend with one of the Swiss archers, Liliana. And I brought Liliana's jersey that she gave to Emma. Pretty cool. And she represents the Swiss Team. And Emma gave her team USA Jersey to Liliana and now they've become fast friends. And they're talking about Liliana inviting her to Switzerland and to [Losone 00:19:14] and to train with her.

And I thought, "We've got to save some money for that one." And it's just so cool to see a friendship being birthed and the closeness that comes from giving each others' jerseys. As we look at living a life of hospitality, can I encourage you to start a tradition? Maybe you have clothes that are new. Give them to a women's shelter for someone in need. Maybe you invite a friend or a neighbor over for coffee and dessert, and you just ask them how they're doing. Spend time listening to them and ask what is going on in their life. If someone is sick or having surgery, bring a meal or meals to their family, or buy a Door Dash gift card. Or you can get involved here at Bell Pres and become part of our volunteer community by joining a serve team. Our Next Steps Team is in the lobby today or you can head to our website and sign up. I think you get the picture.

Start a tradition in your home and in your family where you love on someone by meeting their needs, giving them something of value to you so that you can love them by meeting them where they are. We have some of the best people who have served here at Bell Pres volunteers and staff, people look and walk and love like Jesus. It's almost as if you saw Jesus in them. And when I think about people who epitomize loving each other deeply and offering true hospitality, I think [Gabe 00:21:04]. When my son was just starting out at UW, Gabe didn't know him, but would head over to the UW campus to meet some of the Bell Press college students. He would stop and meet with my son, Ethan, bringing him [inaudible 00:21:19]. And I remember my son telling me how much it meant for him to have Gabe come and talk to him. My daughter, Audrey, who serves in our youth group, Gabe, invites her over all the time. Audrey's

learning how to box and to have Gabe and Kara, his wife, love on her as she's trying to figure out college and life means so much.

I know this story is told by people all over our church and our community. Gabe, loves people deeply. Recently, I was serving on a Sunday and a young man came to Bell Pres who definitely did not look like an east-sider. I mean, he was not well dressed or put together. This young man was troubled and did not look like he was okay and Gabe just took off to help this young man. He called his wife Kara to bring clothes and shoes and he cared for this young man like it was his own family. And what makes Gabe so special is that you don't see Gabe, you see Jesus. You see how a person loves deeper, how a person shows true hospitality. So, Gabe, thank you, brother. You wear our master's cloak well. You inspire us to love deeper and to live a life of true hospitality. Jesus, your love for us, it changes us and it makes us look just like you and when we love others and live a life of hospitality like you did, we can love deeper. Jesus, show us the way. In your name we pray. Amen.

Discussion Questions:

Read 1 Peter 4:8-10 and answer the below questions with your friends, family or All In small group.

Ice Breaker Question:

- What is something that sparks your curiosity and want to learn more about?

Opening Questions:

- Looking back, were you able to apply any of the things we talked about last time to your life this week? What did you do? How did it go?

Scripture Reflection Questions – Together read 1 Peter 4:8-10 and discuss the following:

- What do we learn about God (e.g., traits, personality, what matters, priorities) in this passage and sermon?
- What do we learn about people, and ourselves in particular, this week?

Sermon Reflection Questions – Reflecting on this week's sermon, discuss the following

- As we continue to struggle through this pandemic, what have been the highs and lows of the relationships that you have with your spouse, significant other, family, co-workers, friends, neighbors?
- Why do you think Apostle Peter is or is not an example of someone who loves others deeply?
- When you think of hospitality what comes to mind? After listening to the sermon, has that view changed in any way? This week, what will you do to show hospitality toward others?

Closing Question and Application:

- Given what we've discussed together today, how might God want you apply these learnings to your life or in the life of your community this next week? Who might you share this with?

Closing group prayer: Spend a few minutes together in your group sharing prayer requests and then praying together for each other. Thank God for the time together, the conversation shared, the other people in the group, and for encouragement in the week ahead.