

Youth Week of Prayer
March 18 - 25 2023

Love is a Verb

General Conference
Adventist Youth Ministries Department

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READ THIS FIRST

- 1. Start Your Planning Now.** Start your planning, develop your target, get your team together, and make sure your pastor is a part of that team.
- 2. Global Youth Day Information.** Get information on the Global Youth Day project. This day will be the launch of the Youth Week of Prayer. Please visit our website, youth.adventist.org, or contact your local youth director to find out how you can participate.
- 3. Commit Your Prayer Warriors.** Get a team of adults together who will commit to praying for you and your ministry on a regular basis. Make sure this is a group with whom you can confidentially share both your personal and ministry prayer needs.
- 4. Choose a Theme Song.** Involve your youth choir. If your church does not have a youth choir, this is the perfect time to get one started. Pick out songs that you all like and which fit the topic of each evening or choose a song for the entire week.
- 5. Form a Week of Prayer Development/Review Team.** Depending on the size of your church, this group can be four to eight persons who will go through all eight readings with you. Include on your team only interested and committed young adults and youth ministry leaders (Pathfinder, Sabbath School, etc., your pastor/s); this is important because it gives ownership to the entire group, rather than just you and your assistant. Ask the group to commit to meeting for at least three weeks—at least one week for four lessons, and an extra week to wrap things up. Be sure to identify the goal and direction you want to go, preferably at the first meeting, and choose a young person to speak for each day.
- 6. Integrate Global Youth Day (GYD) into Your Week of Prayer Plans.** Ideally, GYD should be a time to teach youth how to sacrificially give of themselves by providing opportunities in the church and the community. If you are a small youth group and do not have the resources to arrange a community-based GYD event, you can use this opportunity to break down denominational barriers in the area by partnering with and pooling resources and ideas with other youth groups from other churches in your area.

Tips for Preaching to Youth

Andres J. Peralta

It is exciting to preach to young people. They are beautiful, dynamic, strong, and intelligent. Having travelled to more than 100 countries, preached to millions of them, and conversed with thousands of them, I have learned to love and understand them. They have also taught me a lot. On my travels there is one question I always ask both the youth and their leaders: "What do you think a person should consider when preaching to youth?" The answers were varied, but five of them stood out. They are:

Biblical: Young people want to feel that God is speaking directly to them and that His message has an impact on them. This is only accomplished through God's Word, which is effective, discernible, and reaches deep into the soul (Hebrews 4:12), and which converts and saves (Isaiah 55:10-11), quickens, feeds, and heals (Psalm 119:107; Matthew 4:4; 8:5-8). I am glad to know that young people want the Word of God to be the center of all preaching, as it guarantees a complete transformation.

Relevant: Relevant preaching addresses everyday problems and provides answers to the questions young people face. In addition, it should be noted that language and terms change over time and must be updated in preaching. When Jesus delivered the Sermon on the Mount, people immediately identified with His relevance (Matthew 5). Relevance relates to the "importance" or "significance" of the topic and must be presented in practical ways so that the listener "identifies" and finds answers through the power of the Word.

Illustrative: When young people talk about illustrative preaching, they mean using anecdotes, stories, visual material, or ideas that support the Word. Illustrative preaching helps to clarify, expand, identify listeners, capture and retain their attention, persuade, and create interest. The illustrative form is not the end itself, but a bridge that connects and makes preaching more relevant.

Humor in preaching: Young people speak of humor in preaching as the ability of the preacher to make preaching more enjoyable and relaxing for listeners. A correct and responsible use of humor can be very effective in keeping the attention of young people. However, it is important to note that humor should support the message and not distract. The Bible emphasizes the importance of a joyful heart as "medicine" for bones (Proverbs 17:22).

Sermon length: There is no specific time for sermon length, but most youth prefer short sermons, 25 to 35 minutes. They believe that the Word deserves their attention and respect, but they also believe that long sermons tends to dilute substance and oftentimes do not get to the center of the message.

My passion is to preach to young people. I believe in youth. I also think that if we preach in biblical, relevant, and illustrative ways, sprinkled with healthy and short humorous moments, we will be an instrument of blessing for many.

I hope these sermons written by Dr. Yeury Ferreira will be a blessing to you.

About the Author



Pr. S. Yeury Ferreira

An ordained pastor of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, S. Yeury Ferreira holds Master's degrees in Leadership, Systematic Theology, and Biblical Preaching and a PhD in Preaching from Andrews University. He has worked as a pastor and evangelist and currently serves as the Hispanic Ministry Coordinator for the Greater New York Conference, and as an adjunct professor at Andrews University. He is the author of several books, including *Preach the Word: Guide to Sermon Preparation and Preaching*, *The Preacher and Preaching*; and *Living Without Fear*. His book, *Living Without Fear*, was chosen as the North American Division's 2021 Book of the Year. He is happily married to Mariel Ferreira and is the father of two children, Ernesto and Elizabeth Ferreira.

Day 1

TITLE: To love is **to Sacrifice**

Bible Text: 2 Corinthians 8:9

Introduction

Have you heard the story of the king and the peasant? It is said that a king was very much in love with a humble young woman who lived in a small and poor village of his kingdom. The king was not exactly known for being kind; rather, he was reputed to be a monarch who did not hesitate to humiliate anyone who did not agree with him. However, the love he felt for the humble girl brought out his most human side.

One day the king thought of declaring his love to the peasant, taking her to the palace, and dressing her in beautiful clothes and fine jewelry. He was almost certain that she would be excited and accept his proposal. How could she refuse? He is the king. However, just as he was about to put his plan into action, he asked himself, "But will she love me?" He realized that her going to the palace out of duty or him taking her to the palace by force did not guarantee that she would ever love him. Then he thought, maybe it would be best to go to the village on a regal horse, surrounded by the imposing royal guard. The girl would definitely be overwhelmed by such a manifestation of glory! He would take her and make her his lover, make her one like him. But again, he asked himself, "Would she love me?"

Finally, the king chose a third option. This time he would not elevate the maiden, neither would he oppress her. This time he chose to descend to the status of the girl, he would make his status equal to hers. He dressed as if he were a

beggar, acquired an identity other than the glory of his palace, and renounced his throne to win the love of the girl he loved.

Dear young people, this story illustrates a great truth: *True love brings sacrifice.*

Development

The great apostle Paul also tells the story of a king who was willing to sacrifice everything to regain the love of his subjects. In his second letter to the Corinthians (read 2 Corinthians 8:9) he relates, in a few words, the greatest story of love and sacrifice ever written: "You know our Lord Jesus Christ treated us with undeserved grace by giving up all his riches, so you could become rich."

Dear friends, there is so much to talk about the wonderful story of love and sacrifice starring our loving King and Savior, Jesus Christ. However, this time we will only dwell on two simple truths.

Truth No. 1: Our king was rich. How rich was our king? Every year *Forbes* magazine publishes the list of some of the richest people around the world. By 2022, the magazine had found, in total, 2,668 billionaires worldwide. Do you know how much money these billionaires accumulated in total? Together their wealth totaled a whopping 12.7 trillion dollars! Yes, you read it right....11 zeroes after the 12.7...\$12,700,000,000

But who is the richest person in the world? It is Elon Musk, the owner of the Tesla car brand, whose fortune stands at 219 billion dollars? In addition to being the manufacturer and CEO of Tesla, Musk is the creator of Space X—the aerospace company that opened the door to commercial travel to space; the co-founder of PayPal; and he is Twitter's new majority shareholder.

Also on the list of the world's richest people is Jeff Bezos, the founder of Amazon, whose fortune is \$171 billion, and Warren Buffet, who is considered one of the largest investors in the United States—his fortune is \$118 billion. Forbes magazine also mentions Bill Gates, founder of Microsoft, whose fortune is \$129 billion. (Cited in: https://as.com/diarioas/2022/04/06/actualidad/1649240532_037348.html)

However, although the people mentioned have billions of dollars in their estates, their riches are insignificant compared to the riches that our King and Lord, Jesus Christ, has possessed for us from the beginning of eternity. Dear young people, Jesus, the heavenly king, is rich in power and glory. Notice what Paul says in Colossians 1:16 when speaking to the saints in Colossae,

For in him were created all things, those in heaven and those on earth, visible and invisible; be thrones, dominions, principalities, powers; Everything was created through Him and for Him. (NKJV)

Our King is the creator of all things! He created the universe and all galaxies! He created the sun, moon, and millions of stars! He created the sea and all its varieties of fish! All things we see testify to the power and glory of God, our King. For this reason, heavenly beings never tire of saying: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!" (NKJV)

Dear young people, Jesus, the Heavenly King, was, is, and will always be rich in power, majesty, authority, and glory. His riches are countless, and His resources are limitless!

Truth No. 2: Our King became poor. However, our King was not only rich, he became poor. In 2017, the Australian NGO Fund for Peace made a list of the 100 poorest people in the world, the bottom 100, in response to the famous ranking that Forbes magazine makes every year. The first place was for a Sudanese refugee named Mary Myaluak, who is a single mother and lives with her five

children in a refugee camp, where all she can get to support herself is some food for herself and her children. Second on the list goes to Prem Bahadur Lama, a 45-year-old Nepalese who works 10 hours a day carrying a basket full of rocks, for which he receives \$4 a day. He lives in a hut with his wife and three children. His only material valuables are a wristwatch, clothes and the basket to load the stones. (Quoted by <https://www.lavanguardia.com/internacional/20170629/423758398310/mary-myaluak-gai-refugiada-sudanesa-pobre-mundo.html>)

Hearing of this extreme poverty fills my heart with pain. But did you know that Jesus our King was poorer than Mary Myaluak and Prem Bahadur Lama? How poor did our King Jesus become? Please read it for yourself in Paul's letter to the Philippians, chapter 2, verses 5 through 8:

Care about them as much as you care about yourselves and think the same way that Christ Jesus thought: Christ was truly God. But he did not try to remain equal with God. Instead, he gave up everything and became a slave, when he became like one of us. Christ was humble. He obeyed God and even died on a cross.

Our king became poor! He gave up the worship of the heavenly hosts! He left the hallelujahs of the heavenly world for a manger in Bethlehem! He left the power and glory He had and put on a cloak of poverty! He exchanged His throne for a cross!

Conclusion

What moved our king to such a sacrifice? Could it be His love for us? Yes, my friends. Jesus, the heavenly King became poor for us—which is really the richness of love—sacrificing for the wellbeing of the ones you love. And thanks to His poverty, our lives are made richer today. Now, I ask you: How will you respond to such love? The best answer you can give is surrendering your life as a sacrifice of

love. Remember that *true love comes sacrifice*. In the face of our king's great sacrifice, you and I must be willing to drop everything, sacrifice everything, and give it all out of love for Him. Today I invite you to surrender your life to the heavenly king who, out of love for us, became poor while being rich.

Reflection and study questions

1. What great truth does the story of the king and the peasant show us?
2. What does the Apostle Paul relate in the letter of 2 Corinthians 8:9?
3. Explain in your own words how rich Jesus is and why, being rich, he became poor.

Sermon 2

To love is *to be grateful*

(Luke 7:36-50)

Introduction

Imagine you fall off the side of an ocean liner and, not knowing how to swim, begin to drown. Someone on the deck spots you, flailing in the water and throws you a life preserver. It lands directly in front of you and, just before losing consciousness, you grab hold for dear life. They pull you up onto the deck, and you cough the water out of your lungs. People gather around, rejoicing that you are safe and waiting expectantly while you regain your senses. After you finally catch your breath, you open your mouth and say: “Did you see the way I grabbed onto that life preserver?! How tightly I held on to it?! Did you notice the definition in my biceps and the dexterity of my wrists? I was all over that thing!” (This example comes from John Z’s *Grace in Addiction* (Mockingbird, 2012), which adapts it from a talk by Rod Rosenblatt). Needless to say, it would be a bewildering and borderline insane response—and depressingly, a common one. To draw attention to the way you cooperated with the rescue effort denigrates the whole point of what happened, which is that you were saved. A much more likely chain of events is that you would immediately seek out the person who threw the life preserver, and you would thank them. Not just superficially, either. You would embrace them, ask them their name, invite them to dinner, maybe give them your cabin! Gratitude is a natural response to salvation. It does not require coercion or encouragement; to the extent that the

individual understands what has happened, gratitude will flow organically and abundantly from their heart. The precise form it takes will be different every time, but such is the nature of fruit. (William McDavid, Ethan Richardson, Paul Zahl. *Law & Gospel* Mockingbird Ministries, 2015, 73.)

Development

This sermon will focus on love and gratitude. In Luke 7:36-50 the apostle Luke gives us an insight into love, faithfulness, and gratitude. There are many details of this wonderful story, but we will only focus on the main people involved in the plot.

According to the story, a man named Simon invited Jesus to his home in order to throw a feast in Jesus' honor. But who was Simon and why did he want to please Jesus? Simon was a Pharisee. According to Bible scholars, the Pharisees were strict observers of Jewish law and traditions and considered themselves better than the rest of the people, even calling themselves the "separated", part of the religious elite. They were not content to just simply obey God's commandments, but also "added" their own rules and customs to what God had commanded. For example, the Lord had left the fourth commandment that demands the observance of the Sabbath as a Sabbath (Exodus 20:8-11); This commandment was to be a "holy delight" (Isaiah 58:13), yet the Pharisees made it an unbearable burden.

Simon was a Pharisee who was socially respected, but why did he invite Jesus to his home? The Lord had healed him of the terrible disease of leprosy (Matthew 26:6). Now Simon had invited Jesus to a great celebration, but what moved this Pharisee to provide this feast? Analyzing in detail the development of the story, we can say that Simon was not moved by a sense of gratitude, but rather by a sense of obligation, the "responsibility" to repay a favor, since Jesus had healed him.

Unlike Simon, we find a woman who was not invited to the feast, but who—knowing that Jesus was in the Pharisee's house—decided to attend to give a gift to the Lord. Who was this woman? Dear young men and young women, there are many arguments as to her identity, but one thing we know is that she is usually identified as "sinful" (Luke 7:36-39). And unlike Simon, she was not socially respected, instead she was considered an outcast.

Some believe that this woman is none other than Mary Magdalene, the sister of Lazarus and Martha. She approached Jesus with an expensive perfume and "being behind him at his feet, weeping, began to water his feet with tears, and wiped them with her hair; and kissed His feet, and anointed them with perfume" (Luke 7:38). *(The theologians Maldonado and Cornelius á Lapide affirm, forcefully, that this woman was Mary Magdalene and that the anointing related here is the same that took place in Bethany and is described by Matthew, Mark and John. Ellen White, in chapter 62 of her book The Desire of Ages, holds the same conclusion.)*

Looking at this, Simon the Pharisee said to himself, "Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner." (Luke 7:39).

Our Lord read the thoughts of the Pharisee and said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he answered, "Say it, Teacher." "A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?" Simon answered, "The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt." And he said to him, "You have judged rightly." (Luke 40-43).

The sinful woman had only received lust or judgment from the men. Most likely, all the men in her life would have exploited or condemned her, but Jesus would not. He saw her as more than "that sinful woman." He saw a human being, a daughter, a sister, a person who needed love, acceptance, and forgiveness, just like everyone else.

Being a cultural outcast is not easy. Mary understood that Jesus could remove her guilt and shame, grant her a new heart, and give her a future. The more she remembered her sin, the greater Jesus appeared. The more he wept his sin, the more he delighted in the Savior. His life was a testimony of constant gratitude because his heart was filled with the love of Jesus. Dear young people, love must move us towards gratitude. Mary's story was one of extravagant, generous, scandalous generosity. Somehow, Jesus' forgiveness and love and gotten through and reached her heart.... where it really matters. This story teaches us that to love is to give it all! Mary poured out her alabaster jar as a response to His forgiveness of her sins.

Today I invite you to thank God for His forgiveness and love. Like Mary, who gave Him everything. Bring Him your alabaster jar. Always remember that all sinners have a future. Give Him yourself and accept His forgiveness. This is love.

Let's join the Psalmist David in giving praises to God (read Psalm 103:1-5)

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name!

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

He expresses with David the words that say:

Praise, my soul, the Lord;

Praise all my being His holy name.

Praise, my soul, the Lord,
And don't forget any of its benefits.
He forgives all your sins
and heal all your ailments;
He rescues your life from the grave
and covers you with love and compassion;
He fills your life with goods
and rejuvenates you like eagles. (Psalm 103:1-5)

Reflection and study questions

(Please read Luke 7:36-50)

1. What is gratitude for you and how should it flow?
2. What can we learn from the gospel of Luke 7 (36-50) regarding gratitude?
3. How did Jesus see her and what happened to her after all her sins were forgiven?

Sermon 3

To love is *to forgive*

(John 21:15-17)

Introduction

Bill Buckner was a first baseman and outfielder, with a successful 22-year career in the major leagues who died in 2019 at the age of 69. Buckner led the league in doubles twice and finished in the top 10 in stolen bases twice as well. He was even a National League batting champion in 1980 and an All-Star in 1981. However, there is perhaps no player in MLB history whose career has been more defined by a mistake, despite its merits, than Buckner's.

It was the fall of 1986, the Red Sox had a 3-2 lead in the series and were leading 5-2 over the New York Mets in the tenth *inning*; they were only three *strikes* away from winning the Fall Classic, but in the top half of the tenth inning of Game Six Mookie Wilson, of the Mets, he hit a rollout to Buckner at first base, which slipped between his legs and reached the *outfield*.

The Mets scored on the play to win game six and then won the game to win the World Series. Buckner's mistake at a decisive moment catapulted him to the top of the list of the worst sporting mistakes in history. After his playing days, he even had to move from Boston to Idaho due to the explosive anger of those around him.

Resentments between Buckner and Boston fans lasted for decades, but things began to change when the Red Sox finally won the World Series in 2004 and 2007. The power of forgiveness was on display in 2008, when Buckner returned to Fenway Park to throw the first ball of the opening game; There he

received a standing ovation that lasted almost two minutes and made him cry. (Kevin Mercer. "Former MLB player Bill Buckner passes away, now 'in the arms of his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ'" *Sports Spectrum* (28-5-19).)

Development

Like Bill Buckner, the apostle Peter made a mistake that can be placed on the list of the worst mistakes in history. For three and a half years, Peter was following Jesus very closely and witnessed the great miracles performed by the Lord. Even he was the subject of some of these miracles. It is said that on one occasion, after he had spent the night trying to fish without any result, the Lord approached him and said, "Row the boat out into the deep water and let your nets down to catch some fish." (Luke 5:4, *Contemporary English Version*). The story goes that, "They did this and caught so many fish that their nets began ripping apart." Seeing this marvelous miracle the Bible says that Peter, "knelt down in front of Jesus and said, 'Lord, don't come near me! I am a sinner.'" "

On another occasion, Peter was on the same lake of Galilee along with the other disciples when a great storm came against them with such force that it threatened to destroy the boat, but in the midst of the storm Jesus approached the frightened disciples walking on water. When the disciples saw the person walking on the turbulent waters they were terrified and thought it was a ghost, and cried out in fear. But Jesus encouraged them with the words, "Don't worry! I am Jesus. Don't be afraid." This is the moment when Peter says, "Lord, if it really is you, tell me to come to you on the water." Jesus told him come and miraculously Peter walked on the stormy waters of the Lake of Galilee.

Matthew records another epic episode with Peter and Jesus:

Then Jesus asked, "But who do you say I am?"

Simon Peter spoke up, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

Jesus told him: Simon, son of Jonah, you are blessed! You didn't discover this on your own. It was shown to you by my Father in heaven. So I will call you Peter, which means “a rock.” On this rock I will build my church, and death itself will not have any power over it. (Matthew 16:15-18)

We can all agree that Peter was a great player on Jesus' team, yet at a decisive moment he made a serious mistake. Just before His crucifixion, Jesus addressed His disciples saying, " During this very night, all of you will reject me..." At this statement everyone looked at each other. Then Peter said, " Even if all the others reject you, I never will!" (Matthew 26:31, 33).

Peter insisted again and again that he would never deny his master! However, hours later he not only denied Him, but he cursed and swore that he did not know Jesus. (Read Matthew 26:70-74)

Yes, Peter denied his teacher. He denied Him when he should have defended Him. He cowardly denied the one who had called him and had worked extraordinary miracles in his life. In the face of such an erroneous action, Peter was destroyed and ashamed. And what do you think happened next?

As is known, our Lord was crucified. His body was placed in a tomb, but on the third day of his death he was resurrected. After his resurrection he meets Peter again, in the same place where years ago Peter had witnessed the miraculous catch. Let us look at the conversation the Lord had with Peter:

If you want to know, just read in chapter 21 of John's gospel:

When Jesus and his disciples had finished eating, he asked, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than the others do?”^[b]

Simon Peter answered, “Yes, Lord, you know I do!”

“Then feed my lambs,” Jesus said.

Jesus asked a second time, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

Peter answered, “Yes, Lord, you know I love you!”

“Then take care of my sheep,” Jesus told him.

Jesus asked a third time, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

Peter was hurt because Jesus had asked him three times if he loved him. So he told Jesus, “Lord, you know everything. You know I love you.”

Jesus replied, “Feed my sheep. (John 21:15-17).

Conclusion

Peter, like Bill Buckner, made a grave mistake that was recorded in history, but he also received the grace of forgiveness. Young men and young women, Peter's story teaches us that to love is to forgive. Notice that Jesus forgave Peter despite his mistakes and failures. And He forgave him because He loved him. You may have made serious mistakes too, but the same Jesus who forgave Peter also extends his forgiveness to you.

On the other hand, this story also teaches us to forgive, just as Jesus did. The Lord gave Peter a second chance despite his mistakes. Likewise, you and I must be

willing to forgive. Today I invite you to receive forgiveness, but also give it. Never forget that *to love is to forgive*.

Reflection and study questions

1. How is Bill Buckner's story similar to Peter's?
2. What can we learn from both stories?
3. Explain in your own words why to love is to forgive.

Sermon 4

To love is *to trust*

(Hebrews 11:6)

Introduction

Have you heard the story of the tightrope walker who crossed Niagara Falls walking on a rope? After keeping the crowds fascinated with his recklessness, he asked, "How many of you think you could cross the falls again on the rope, but this time pushing a wheelbarrow with a person sitting on it?"

The crowd applauded. Everyone was sure he would be able to do it, but then the tightrope walker added, "Who among you would like to be my passenger in the wheelbarrow?"

There was a deep silence. The crowd had just been faced with the vital difference between believing and trusting! It was one thing to believe that the wheelbarrow would cross safely over the abyss, but to actually place your life in the wheelbarrow and on the rope was something entirely different. (Morris sell. 1995 *Theses on Justification by Faith*, p. 47)

Development

We are experiencing what some call a "crisis of confidence in the world". According to a 2015 article published in *The Washington Post*, *Millennials don't trust anyone. That's a big deal*, the surveys by the *Institute of Politics at Harvard University*, states that among millennials (18-29 years old) there is a lack of trust in the government, the Supreme Court, and the media. The article further stated that,

"Societywide trust in institutions is at or near record lows." But what is the reason for this mistrust? "There is a feeling that the safety net is gone." The writer of the article believes that "the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, made clear in a very powerful and frightening way that those tasked with protecting us might not always be able to do it." This belief that we were safe and secure before September 11 has disappeared.

The Bible addresses the issue of trust in God. It is very interesting to know that there are three words that describe the relationship of dependence that exists between the Christian and God: *faith*, *belief* and *trust*. But it is the word *trust* that best describes the biblical meaning of dependence on God. For example, wherever the words *belief* or *faith* appear in the Scriptures, they can be replaced by the term *trust*. The Bible says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved." (Acts 16:31, NKJV) But this verse could also read, "*Trust* in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved."

Now, what is *trust* and why is it so important? The Merriam-Webster.com dictionary defines *trust* as: "The belief that someone or something is trustworthy." The Bible in Hebrews 11:6 says, "But without faith no one can please God. We must believe that God is real and rewards everyone who searches for him."

You may be wondering right now: What does it mean to trust God? It literally means having a sure expectation that He is who He says He is and that He does what He says He is going to do.

In the Bible we find many stories of people who placed their entire trust in God. One of these stories was recorded in Matthew 8:5-13. This particular account says that on one occasion a high-ranking Roman military officer approached Jesus, begging him: "Lord, my servant is at home in such terrible pain that he can't even move." (verse 6)

Seeing the sensitivity in the heart of this soldier, the Lord answered him: "I will go and heal him."

It is then that this soldier expresses a degree of confidence that had never been seen before. "Lord, I'm not good enough for you to come into my house. Just give the order, and my servant will get well." (verse 8)

Hearing this, Jesus marveled and said, "I tell you in all of Israel I've never found anyone with this much faith! (verse 10)

This Roman soldier trusted the powerful words of Jesus and blindly believed that the word of the teacher was powerful enough to do the miracle. Something similar happened with the soldier who chased and caught Alexander the Great's horse. When he returned the animal to the general, Alexander thanked him by saying, "Thank you, captain."

With a single word the soldier was promoted. When the general said it, the soldier believed it: he presented himself to the commander, selected a new uniform and put it on; He went to the officers' barracks and chose a bed; He went to the officers' dining room and ate.

He believed it because the general told him to. Dear boys, I wish we could have the same confidence that the military had and trust that God's word has the power to do what it says it can do. This is why it is important that when God tells us to rise, we do so; When He tells us that we have been forgiven, let us free ourselves from guilt. When He tells us how much we are worth, we believe Him; When He says we are saved, let us bury our fear. And when He says He has provided for us, let us stop worrying. (Max Lucado. *He still removes stones*, Editorial Caribe, Nashville, TN: 1994, p.117.)

Conclusion

However, we *cannot fully trust God and His word if we do not love Him. To love someone you must be able to trust them.* To come to love God it is essential that you come to know Him. John's gospel says, "Eternal life is to know you, the only true God, and to know Jesus Christ, the one you sent." (John 17:3)

Trust is the result of love and love grows through a relationship of friendship with God. If you want your trust to be strong in the Lord, you must establish a relationship with Him. You have to talk to him through prayer and listen daily to his voice through reading the Bible; only in this way will you deepen your love for Him and only then will you come to trust His person and His Word.

Reflection and study questions

1. What is trust and why is it so important?
2. Why without faith is it impossible to please God?
3. What does it mean to trust God and how do you build a strong relationship of trust with Him?

Sermon 5

To love is *to obey*

(Mark 10:17-22)

Introduction

Did you know that there was a time when the United States did not have any laws about child safety seats and restraint systems in cars? Tragically, many young children who were not in car seats or seatbelts died in traffic accidents. Today, however, the laws prohibit children from traveling in any motor vehicle without a child seat oriented in the correct direction and properly installed. Even new mothers must install the seat before taking their children home from the hospital.

Of all the expressions of human love, there is probably no purer and more beautiful love than that of a father for his son. However, when a child's safety is at stake, it seems that parental love isn't always enough. Parents didn't always do what was best for their children so many parents needed a law or a limit to make sure their love for their children didn't fall short of perfect love.

God knows that the same is true of our love and devotion to Him and to others. He knows that our feelings are not enough. We need laws and limits, in the form of commandments, that help us fully love Him and others.

Development

Love will always be united to obedience, and while it is true that there can be obedience without love, there will never be love without obedience. Mark's gospel tells a story that perfectly illustrates that truth. The account says that on one occasion an extremely rich young man came to Jesus, humbly fell at his feet and asked, " "Good teacher, what can I do to have eternal life?" This question is the most important question of life and, because of this, we will pause for a few minutes to highlight a simple but significant truth. The young man who approached Jesus had a misconception about salvation; according to their belief, salvation is the result of human work or effort. For him, eternal life was the payment God gave to those who were obedient. Unfortunately, many young people continue to believe this lie! (Read Mark 10:17-22)

Why are we saved? The Bible teaches that eternal life is not achieved; it is received as a gift. Paul tells us in Ephesians 2:8, 9 that, "You were saved by faith in God, who treats us much better than we deserve. This is God's gift to you, and not anything you have done on your own. It isn't something you have earned, so there is nothing you can brag about."

My dear friends, salvation is based on what God has done for us, not on what we do for Him; So the rich young man needed to change his wrong way of looking at salvation. If I want to have eternal life, I have to unlearn everything I had already learned!

To guide the rich, young ruler in the right way, Jesus answered his question, saying, "You know the commandments. 'Do not murder. Be faithful in marriage. Do not steal. Do not tell lies about others. Do not cheat. Respect your father and mother.'"

When the rich young man heard the answer to his question he jumped for joy and with overflowing emotion said, " "Teacher, all these I have kept from my

youth." But just then, "Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me."

You may be wondering: What happened here? How is it that a young man who had obeyed the commandments still lacked something else? What was missing? He was missing the most important thing!

On the topic of the rich young ruler, Ellen White wrote that...

Christ read the heart of the prince. Only one thing was missing, but that thing was a vital principle. *I needed God's love in my soul.* That fault alone, if not supplied, would prove fatal to him; it would corrupt his whole nature. By tolerating it, egoism would be strengthened. In order for him to receive God's love, he had to renounce his supreme love for himself. (E. G. de White. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 478.)

What the rich young man lacked was the love of God! He lacked understanding that obedience should never be separated from love! I often hear many young people say, "I'm a good person and that's the most important thing." But is that true? Imagine a woman, a poor widow with an only child. This mother teaches her child how she wants him to live: to always tell the truth, to work hard and to help the poor. She earns very little money, but with her meager savings she sends him to college. Imagine that when he graduates, he will hardly speak to her again; from time to time he will send her a Christmas card, but he will not visit her and will not even answer her phone calls or letters. He won't talk to her. But he will live as she taught him: honest, hardworking, and charitable.

Would you say this is acceptable? Of course not. My friends, it is not enough to only follow rules, commandments, and principles, it is necessary to have a loving relationship with God, which leads us to a deep life of obedience. (Adapted from Timothy Keller's *Shaped by the Gospel: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City*, Zondervan: 2016, p. 3.)

Conclusion

What happened to the young man in our story? How I would like to say that this young man followed Jesus! However, the story ends by saying: "But he, afflicted by this word, left sad, because he had many possessions."

Dear friends, there may be obedience without love – as in the case of the rich young man – but *there will never be love without obedience*. To love is to obey. When Jesus was asked what the most important commandment of the law was, he bluntly said, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind. 38 This is the first and most important commandment." (Matthew 22: 37-38)

Friends, love and love alone should be the basis of your obedience, for as the Bible says, "Love is the fulfillment of the law."

Reflection and study questions

1. Why is it said that there can be obedience without love, but there will never be love without obedience?
1. What does the Bible tell us about why we are saved and what the young man in history needed to achieve salvation?
2. What is the most important commandment of the law and why?

Sermon 6

To love is *to worship*

(John 4:23)

Introduction

In a recent TV ad, saw a young man torn between whether or not to go ahead with an arranged marriage. In his country, arranged marriages were the norm; however, after living in America, he was hesitant to adhere to this ancient custom, especially since he had never met his future wife.

Even so, when she flew to the airport he waited for her obediently, with flowers in his hand and a gloomy expression on his face, but when he saw her enter everything changed. It turns out that she was gorgeous; Suddenly his gloomy expression disappeared. The thought of marrying this woman was no longer a feared duty, but a delight.

What had changed? He had seen her. (Drew Dyck. *Yawning at tigers*, Thomas Nelson: 2014, p. 54.)

Dear friends, we often serve and worship God out of obligation. We crawl into church, force ourselves to serve others, but our hearts are not in it. We are like that young man at the airport, grudgingly holding flowers for God. We try to live holy because we know we must, but it is heavy for us, we do not do it with joy.

How can this change? See God.

When we have a vision of who God really is, we suddenly feel energized to fulfill His mission. When we contemplate His greatness and His glory, worship

ceases to be arduous. Once we understand His great love, serving and worshipping is not a duty, it is a joy!

Development

In speaking of love as an action, we cannot overlook the subject of worship, since to love God is to worship Him. Now, there may not be a topic that brings more controversies and conflicting opinions than the subject of worship because, many times whenever the subject of worship is discussed, people go to the topic of music. Let me tell you that in our sermon today we will not go into the endless discussions that revolve around the subject of worship, rather we will look at some biblical passages that show what true worship produces in the lives of believers. We will focus on three biblical passages recorded in the Gospel of Matthew.

Let us begin by reading Matthew 2:11-12: " When the men went into the house and saw the child with Mary, his mother, they knelt down and worshiped him. They took out their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh and gave them to him. Later they were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, and they went back home by another road."

The kings of the East, who were astronomers and scholars of prophecy, came from distant lands with the intention of worshipping the "King" who had been born. Can you imagine the time these men spent on their journey to meet Jesus and worship Him? They were willing to endure the difficult road and the inclemency of the weather just to worship the Lord. And when they found Him, they fell before Him and offered Him their costly gifts. What happened to them then? The story goes that after worshipping the Lord " …they were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, and they went back home by another road.

Friends, without wishing to trying to add anything extra to the Bible passage, we can say that everyone who truly worships the Lord will return home "by another way". In other words, a change of direction and purpose will occur in your spiritual life and experience.

A second passage that speaks of the effect of true worship can be seen in Matthew chapter 14:32-33, "When Jesus and Peter got into the boat, the wind died down. The men in the boat worshiped Jesus and said, "You really are the Son of God!" The story goes that a great storm threatened to sink the disciples' boat. In the midst of that storm, Jesus came to them walking on water; when they saw Him, the frightened disciples cried out thinking He was a ghost, but Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take courage; I am, fear not." (Matthew 14:27) It is then that Jesus enters the boat and, miraculously, the storm stops and the raging sea is calm. Observing the Lord's power, the disciples fell at His feet and worshipped Him, for they had seen the Lord's power over the storm. They had experienced the peace that surpasses all understanding, now they could do nothing but worship the Lord. Prostrate at the feet of the master there was no room for fear; The insecurity was gone.

Yes, dear friends, when we witness God's power and worship Him, the fear and insecurity that threaten to sink our lives disappear. The peace that surpasses all understanding fills our hearts, and with confidence we can say, "If God is on our side, can anyone be against us?" (Romans 8:31)

The last verse I would like to share is from Matthew: "Suddenly Jesus met them and greeted them. They went near him, held on to his feet, and worshiped him." (Matthew 28:9)

The Friday before this event, the Lord had been crucified and the hopes of His followers had been dashed. Discouragement, defeat, and disillusionment had knocked on the door of each of them. Only some had remained at the foot of the

cross! Most of them had run away and left the master alone! With great sadness, some disciples and especially some women saw how the body of their beloved master was taken to the tomb! On Sunday, after the Sabbath, these brave women decided to go to the place, but what was their surprise: the tomb was empty! Jesus had risen and He Himself went out to meet them and said to them: Hail!

Seeing their resurrected master, all these faithful believers could do was embrace the Lord's feet and worship Him. There—prostrate at his feet—discouragement and disillusionment came to an end. In adoration of the risen Christ, His experience of seemed like defeat was changed into victory.

Conclusion

What happened to the wise men from the East, the disciples, and the women who went to the tomb on the day they saw the person, power, and authority of Jesus? They worshipped Him and as a result their lives were transformed!

When you focus on God's person, power, and authority, you will love Him, worship Him, and as a result your life will be transformed.

Ralph Waldo Emerson famously said, "We become what we worship." In other words, our object of worship shapes our identity.

The evolutionary scientist Charles Darwin is said to have once written in his autobiography: "My main amusement and my only job throughout life has been scientific work. From this work," he added, "I am never idle," since it is "the only thing that makes my life bearable." (*Charles Robert Darwin and Sarah K. Bolton. Leisure and Culture Magazine*, available at: <https://es.paperblog.com/charles-robert-darwin-sarah-k-bolton-5045596/>)

What effect did dedication to scientific work have on the person Darwin became?

Until the age of thirty Darwin continued to write, "poetry... it gave me great pleasure, and (...) I delighted intensely with Shakespeare... But now, for many years (...) I find it so intolerably boring that it makes me nauseous... My mind seems to have become a kind of machine for grinding general laws from large collections of facts. [This] loss is a loss of happiness (...) [I became] "a withered leaf for all subjects except Science" [which he saw as "a great evil"]. (*Charles Robert Darwin and Sarah K. Bolton. Leisure and Culture Magazine*, available at: <https://es.paperblog.com/charles-robert-darwin-sarah-k-bolton-5045596/>)

Now consider the life of another influential genius, theologian Jonathan Edwards. At the age of 19, Edwards wrote:

Resolved... to cast my soul upon the Lord Jesus Christ, to trust in Him, and to consecrate myself entirely to Him. (Thaddeus J. Williams. *Becoming yourself by mirroring the greatest person in history*, "Introduction", Weaver Book Company: 2017.)

Later in life, Edwards reflected on how his object of worship affected his soul over the years:

[He brought] to the soul an inexpressible purity, brightness, peace, and ecstasy. In other words, it turned the soul into a field or a garden. (Thaddeus J. Williams. *Becoming yourself by mirroring the greatest person in history*, "Introduction", Weaver Book Company: 2017.)

Two gifted men. One became "a withered leaf" and the other a "garden." The object of their worship shaped the very different kind of men they became.

Reflection and study questions

1. Why can we say that everyone who truly worships the Lord will return home by another way?
2. What can happen if we witness to God's power and worship Him?
3. Mention a Bible passage you liked that shows what true worship produces in the lives of believers.

Sermon 7

To love is *to share*

(2 Corinthians 5:14)

Introduction

One of the most shocking stories I've heard is the story of Desmond Doss. Born in Virginia in 1919 to a working-class family, Doss enlisted in the United States Army during World War II. Because of his deep religious convictions that God had exhorted him never to carry a gun with him, he trained as a doctor.

Can you imagine what it's like to go to war without carrying a gun?! Doss's convictions caused him ridicule, abuse from his peers and even contempt from his superiors, but he never gave in to the pressure of carrying a gun.

However, everything changed in April 1945 when Doss's company fought the Battle of Okinawa, the bloodiest battle of the Pacific War. In the midst of the fighting, the Japanese maintained their position; Finally, the American battalion withdrew.

In the retreat, Doss could see the bodies of Americans scattered across the battlefield and knew there were wounded among them. He stayed behind and, not caring about the dangers, rushed to the death zone, carrying the wounded soldiers to the edge of the hill and lowering them alone to safety, with a rope he had made.

For twelve hours he repeated this arduous task, until he knew for sure that there were no more wounded Americans left in the camp. When he finally left the area, Desmond Doss had saved the lives of seventy-five men!

For his incredible feat Doss was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. Years later, he was asked how he found the strength to keep going that night. His answer was simple: every time he finished taking another man down to safety, he prayed, "Lord, help me find one more."

Dear young people, like Desmond Doss, we are on a battlefield where hundreds and hundreds of people are suffering and ready to perish. What is our responsibility? Work tirelessly and pray saying, "Lord, help me find one more." *Love for God and our fellowmen should lead us to share the message of salvation.*

Development

On this occasion I would like to share with you some examples of people who could not remain silent and who, out of love, decided to share with others the good news of Jesus; people like you and me.

The first example can be found in Mark 1:40-42. The Bible tells us that:

A man with leprosy came to Jesus and knelt down. He begged, "You have the power to make me well, if only you wanted to." Jesus felt sorry for the man. So he put his hand on him and said, "I want to! Now you are well." At once the man's leprosy disappeared, and he was well.

As we can see from this first story, a man full of leprosy approached Jesus. Let us remember, young people, that leprosy was known as the "scourge" or "the finger of God in the time of Christ." And you know why? The teacher and writer, Alfonso Roper, tells us that leprosy was a painful and disgusting disease, for which there was no cure.

Yes, dear young people, the man who approached Jesus was condemned to death; however, the Bible says that Jesus spoke, and his skin was completely cleansed. The leper who was condemned by this terrible disease found healing in Jesus. What happened then? Let's see how the story concludes:

Then he charged him rigorously, and then dismissed him, and said to him, Look, say nothing to anyone, if you do not see, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your purification what Moses commanded, for testimony to them. But he left, he began to publish it a lot and to divulge the fact.

After Jesus strictly warned the man, he sent him on his way. He said, "Don't tell anyone about this. Just go and show the priest that you are well. Then take a gift to the temple as Moses commanded, and everyone will know that you have been healed."

The man talked about it so much and told so many people, that Jesus could no longer go openly into a town. He had to stay away from the towns, but people still came to him from everywhere. (Mark 1:43-45)

When the leper experienced healing, the next thing he did was testify of his healer. He couldn't be silent! He spoke of the one who had healed him!

The second example I want to show you can also be found in Mark's own gospel. There the story of a character known as the demoniac Gadarene is told. The story says that in the region of Gadara lived a man possessed by a legion of demons. (Refer to Mark 5:1-20)

It is good to clarify that the term "legion" is of Roman origin, and refers to about six thousand infantrymen and seven hundred cavalrymen. You see, the man in our story was being bound by many demons!

But one day Jesus came to the beaches of Gadara with the purpose of giving liberation to this poor man. Amazingly, Jesus subdued Satan's power and delivered the man from the power of darkness. What happened then?

Let's see for ourselves the answer in Mark:

When Jesus was getting into the boat, the man begged to go with him. But Jesus would not let him. Instead, he said, "Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you and how good he has been to you. The man went away into the region near the ten cities known as Decapolis and began telling everyone how much Jesus had done for him. Everyone who heard what had happened was amazed." (Mark 5:18-20)

Did you see it? When the demoniac of Gadara experienced the liberating power of Jesus he could not remain silent. He, like the leper, went out and began to share and tell others what great things Jesus had done in his life!

The third example I want to show you appears in John 4:8-10. In this passage we read the story of a woman troubled and ashamed by her past. On a hot day Jesus went to the well to fetch water and there, because he was tired from travelling, he sat down to rest. A Samaritan lady came by to draw some water, and Jesus asked her, "Would you please give me a drink of water?" She, as a good Samaritan that she was, knowing that the one who was asking her for water was Jewish, said to him: "How do you, being a Jew, ask me to drink?" It is then that Jesus, who was none other than the one who had created all the sources of water, says to her: "You don't know what God wants to give you, and you don't know who is asking you for a drink. If you did, you would ask me for the water that gives life." (verse 10)

That troubled woman asked Jesus for the water of life! Right there, in that well, she experienced the power of forgiveness and salvation. What happened next? John 4:28-30 tells us that:

The woman left her water jar and ran back into town, where she said to the people, "Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! Could he be the Messiah?" Everyone in town went out to see Jesus.

The Samaritan woman, like the leper and demoniac of Gadara, could not remain silent. When they experienced the power of forgiveness they went out and testified about their Savior!

Conclusion

Dear young people, the Bible says that "the love of Christ constrains us" or, as the translation in Present-Day Language says, the "love of Christ dominates our lives." When the love of the Lord dominates us, we cannot remain silent, because to love is to share. (Read 2 Corinthians 5:14)

It is said that after Christ was resurrected, He ascended into heaven and was enthusiastically received by angels. While the angels praised him for the victory achieved, one of them approached the Lord with the following question:

What plan do you have to continue the work you began on earth?

Without hesitation, Jesus answered:

"I left it in the hands of the apostles. They will take it upon themselves to tell others. And those others to others, until everyone knows.

The angel asked him again:

- And what if they fail? Don't you have any other plan?

The Lord answered:

"I have no other plan.

Oh, dear young people! There is no other plan. The only plan is for each of us to testify about what Jesus has done in us and for us. *Love for God and our fellowmen should lead us to share the message of salvation.*

Reflection and study questions

1. What is the teaching of Desmond Doss' story regarding our responsibility to our suffering brothers?
2. Where should love for God and our fellow human beings take us?
3. Why can't we be silent when the Lord's love dominates us?

Sermon 8

To love is *to wait*

(2 Timothy 4:6-7)

Introduction

The writer and preacher, Max Lucado, tells us a moving story which happened after the earthquake that shook Armenia in 1989—telluric movement that in just four minutes destroyed almost the entire nation and killed about thirty thousand people. Moments after the deadly earthquake, a father ran to school to save his young son. When he arrived, he saw the building in ruins. As he searched through that mass of stones and rubble, he remembered a promise he had made to his son: "No matter what happens, I will always be there where you are."

Driven by his promise, he found the place where his son's classroom had been and began to remove the debris; Then other parents arrived and started looking for their children as well. Many of those who approached the place, seeing the magnitude of the destruction, told him: "It's too late", "You know they are dead. Nothing can be done." A policeman even advised him to stop searching.

But the father did not give up. Eight hours passed, then sixteen, then twenty-two, and finally thirty-six; He searched and searched. His hands were shattered, and his strength had run out, but he refused to give up. Finally, after thirty-eight hours of anguish, he removed a large piece of wall and heard his son's voice.

He shouted, "Armman! Arm!". And a voice answered, "Dad, here I am!" Then the boy uttered these precious words: "I told the other children not to worry, that if you were alive, you would come to save me; And by saving me, they would also be saved because you promised me that, no matter what, you would always be with me." (Max Lucado. *When Christ Come*, Nashville, TN, Editorial Caribe: 2000, p. 21.)

Development

Boys and girls, the same promise this father made to his son was made by Jesus. He said, "... I will come again, and I will take you myself, so that where I am, you too may be." The second coming of Jesus is the blessed hope of the believer and let me tell you that both the Old and New Testaments are full of promises of Christ's Second Coming. For example, there are 1,845 references to it in the Old Testament and a total of seventeen books give it prominence. (John 14:3; Titus 2:13-14).

Now, of the two hundred and sixty chapters of the New Testament there are 318 references to the Second Coming, that is, one out of every 30 verses; 23 of the 27 books of the New Testament refer to this great event; and for every prophecy about Christ's first coming there are 8 about the Second Coming. (Paul Lee Tan. Encyclopedia of 7.700 illustrations: Signs of the times, Bible Communications, Inc.: 1996, p. 1239.)

The Second coming will be Christ's return to fulfill all remaining prophecies. At His first coming, Jesus was the Suffering Servant. At His Second Coming, Jesus will be the Conquering King. At His first coming, Jesus arrived in the humblest of circumstances. At His Second Coming, Jesus will arrive with the armies of heaven by His side.

Through the centuries, Christians have eagerly awaited the fulfillment of the promise of Jesus' return in glory and majesty. One of those faithful who awaited the Lord's return for his day was the great apostle Paul. Being almost at the end of his life and ministry, this great servant of God wrote:

Now the time has come for me to die. My life is like a drink offering being poured out on the altar. I have fought well. I have finished the race, and I have been faithful. So a crown will be given to me for pleasing the Lord. He judges fairly, and on the day of judgment he will give a crown to me and to everyone else who wants him to appear with power. (2 Timothy 4:6-8)

Paul looked forward with love to the Second Coming of the Lord. From the beginning of his Christian life, when Jesus met him on his way to Damascus, this great man of God lived in constant expectation. His assurance was such that he once wrote this to the believers in Thessalonica:

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, *that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.* For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words. (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, (ESV, emphasis added))

Did you notice Paul's assurance in the Lord's return? He believed that Christ would come while he (Paul) was still alive! For this he said: "*...we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord ...!*" However, time passed and the apostle continued to preach and work tirelessly for the cause of the gospel. The passage of time did not diminish his confidence in the coming of the Lord. On another occasion he wrote:

I will explain a mystery to you. *Not every one of us will die*, but we will all be changed. It will happen suddenly, quicker than the blink of an eye. At the sound of the last trumpet the dead will be raised. We will all be changed, so we will never die again. (1 Corinthians 15: 51-52)

The passing of the years did not discourage the apostle Paul! With each passing day, the love for Christ's Second Coming grew larger and larger in his heart! His hope did not wane with the passage of time but grew stronger! Coming to the end of his days, when due to persecution his death was imminent, with courage and faith he said:

I have fought well. I have finished the race, and I have been faithful. 8
So a crown will be given to me for pleasing the Lord. He judges
fairly, and on the day of judgment he will give a crown to me and to
everyone else who wants him to appear with power. (2 Timothy 4:7-8)

Conclusion

Why did the apostle Paul's faith about Christ's Second Coming grow stronger over the years? Because he loved and looked forward to the Second Coming of the Lord! Dear young people, he who loves waits. *To love the Lord is to faithfully await His return in glory and majesty.*

Today I invite you to await with love the coming of the Lord. I invite you to ask God to prepare you for the day when Jesus manifests himself in the clouds of heaven.

May the Lord allow you to have the same attitude that the servants of billionaire Benneth had, in the story that I will tell you next.

Jill Jones wrote about a fabulously wealthy American newspaper publisher named James Gordon Bennett. In 1835 Bennett founded a famous newspaper called *The New York Herald*. He had two luxurious apartments in Paris, plus an estate in France and a yacht moored in Europe; he also had three houses in the United States, although he had not lived in the country for more than ten years, but the

servants of each of his houses always had to be prepared for Bennett's unexpected arrival.

Jones wrote:

Each [house] had all the necessary staff, ready to serve Bennett if he walked through the front door without warning: the cellars were stocked, fires roared into the grates, and sheets were lowered every night. (Jill Jones. *Eiffel's Tower*, Viking Adult: 2009, p. 199.)

This is how we must live: waiting and watching because at any moment our Lord Jesus Christ will return in the clouds of heaven with power and glory!

Reflection and study questions

1. Why is it said that both the Old and New Testaments are filled with promises of Christ's second coming?
2. What lesson does the story of the apostle Paul leave you regarding the expectation of the coming of Jesus? Explain in your own words why it is said that the one who loves waits.
3. What should be the attitude we should assume in the face of the promise of the Lord's coming?