

*Tape 14, Side A*

This entire conference is on the Lamb of God, and the Lamb in itself, as we talked about, is a symbol that points to the reality and the truth about the nature of the true God. The gospel, if we could say it this way, is but a way of communicating in words the same thing that the Lamb communicates by symbol. The Lamb of God is about God and simultaneously it is about God's love. The Lamb of God is about the nature of divine love. What I would like to do this afternoon and this evening is to discuss the word love as it appears in the New Testament. So these are two consecutive conferences that we will have on the nature of that love that Jesus says is salvific, that love that is God when he says God is love. Our discussion will be exclusively from the New Testament, will not be from mystics, will not be from philosophers, it will be from the book that is the foundation document of our faith, the book that's the norm for our life, the New Testament.

In the New Testament, and we begin in a very elementary way, in the New Testament that love that is symbolized by the Lamb of God, in the New Testament love, the word, occurs in nominative, adjectival, predicate form, the word love occurs 338 times in the New Testament. The New Testament is a document written in Greek. All 27 books of the New Testament were originally written in Greek, a form of Greek of called Koine Greek, which just means common Greek. The New Testament, being a document that is written in Greek and is written over a long period of time, anywhere from 20 to may 60 or 70 years, perhaps even a little more after Jesus. So the New Testament is written also without any central authority controlling how it's writing. In other words, Paul's epistle to the Romans and John's gospel are not sent back to some central authority to see if they are correct or not. They are just written from one faith community to another faith community, from a person of faith to people of faith. In the New Testament, across all those 27 documents the word love occurs 338 times. The common Greek word for love is eros, phonetically in English, eros. This is the common Greek word for love. Eros has gotten a bad name in English because it has been exclusively related to sexual love, but the word eros in Greek means, a love of mutual reciprocation. A person would say, for example, I love God, I pray God, God prays to me, I love God, God speaks back to me, we have a relationship going. There's mutual interaction, mutual reciprocation. The same thing would also be said, I love my wife or I love my husband, the word that would be used would be eros. I love my wife, I love my husband, boyfriend, girlfriend, okay? And we have a nice mutual life of reciprocation going. You would also say that something like just the way we speak in English, you might say I love McDonald's hamburgers, you know I really like the taste of them, they taste good and I love them, I get something from them. Well, anyway, that is how eros is used, it's not exclusively sexual love, although it can be conjugal love, it's the love of mutual reciprocation.

Now here's an extraordinary fact. For example, in Plato's dialogue Plato writes extensively about love, and when writing about it the primary word he uses hundreds and hundreds of times is eros. Here's an extraordinary fact at the New Testament. Twenty-seven documents written over a 60, 70 year period, no central authority controlling them, all written in Greek, 338 times love is used and not once is eros employed in the New Testament. Eros does not exist in the New Testament as a word. This, this is stunning when one sees the implications of it. It is absolutely stunning. The word that occurs 319 of the 338 times is the Greek word agape. 319 of the 338 times that the word love appears in the New Testament, the word that appears is agape.

Agape means a love of unconditional care, that's what agape mean, the love of unconditional care.

Now, when we look at the New Testament, by the way just parenthetically, the other 19 times there, or 20 times, the word that occurs is philia, means brotherly or sisterly love like Philadelphia. But all the great passages in the New Testament that deal with love, love the Lord your God whole heart, whole soul, whole mind, whole strength; love your neighbor as yourself; love your enemies; I give you a new commandment, love one another as I have loved you; St. Paul's great hymn on love, if I have all the eloquence of men and women or angels but speak without love I am nothing but a gong booming or a cymbal clashing, if I have faith to move mountains but am without love will do me no good whatsoever, if I give away all that I have piece by piece to the poor and without love, even if I let them take my body to burn, without love I have nothing at all, and of course, God is love. Every single time the word love is used it's agape, not eros. We only have one word to communicate the content of what Greek has four words for.

Now, therefore it really does make a difference. What Jesus is talking about and what the New Testament is talking about as love is agape, the Greek is orthay os agape esten, God is Love. This is the name of God, agape. Eros is not the name of God in the New Testament. The only way this could have occurred without centralized censoring is that from the beginning, in the original generation of Jesus people were quite clear that this is not what Jesus was talking about and this was. So clear that over 27 books spread over 60 or 70 years, no one even thought of using this they just used this. But there is an enormous difference between this and this. The problem with eros is, not that isn't real love but that eros is scented in the emotions. That is, that there must be reciprocation for it to exist. So I love my girlfriend or I love my boyfriend, you know that kind of thing. Oh gee I want to be with them 24 hours a day and I can't wait to get a telephone call from them, that sort of business you know? And then the emotion leaves, and then I get a telephone call and I say tell them I'm out. Love is gone. When the reciprocation ceases love is gone. When I stop getting that back which I need, I love God, God loves me. I pray to God, God answers, we have a nice relationship going back and forth, and all of a sudden I pray to God and there's no answer. I pray to God and things go terrible, horrendous. I don't love God any more, I don't even know if he exists anymore. Or I love McDonald's hamburgers and then after 385 Big Macs I hate hamburgers. I'm not getting what I need to get back, you see, and eros depends on that. Where as agape, its root does not lie in the emotional structure of the person, it lies in the will, the free will. I love, I care just because there is a need to love here, that's all. Just because there is a need to love, period, nothing more. My care is not based on whether I'm getting anything back. I may or I may not get anything back, but the need is there and I respond.

Now, you know the symbol for eros in our world is that, I can't draw it but it's that chubby little angel, you know that flies around, he's has a bow and arrow, and then as the authors of the last century wrote he fired the arrow and he'd shoot someone in the heart and they'd be smitten. And the problem is that arrow only contains in is a finite, the head of that arrow only contains within it a finite amount of that liquid that produces the romantic euphoria. And when the liquid wears off then you get the stuff of tragedy, you get the problems. Whereas the symbol for agape, universally is the cross which resides in the will and which couldn't be a clearer symbol of

loving even though not only is there nothing coming back, loving in the face of just raw evil coming back at you. But loving, you see Jesus teaches of love your enemy it couldn't even be said, you couldn't say love your enemy eros, it couldn't fit, you couldn't say it because eros means you're getting something positive back and the enemy, by his or her very nature is the one that gives you something negative back. It couldn't even be said in human language. It has to be agape of course, and of course it is.

Now this is an extraordinary distinction and becomes all the more important spiritually to us who only speak English because we only have one word for both meanings, and the primary meaning that this people are nurtured in in our society is this meaning through the movies, the television, the magazines, and the newspapers. And therefore, people begin to identify eros in its various forms as what's meant by love in the New Testament. They begin to say, God is love ?????????????????? and so forth and so on, and they mean this cause this is the only love they every associated with. The word means primarily this in the English language, but that's not what it is. It's this in the New Testament. God is love, orthios agape esten. And so what I'd like to do during our two conferences, I would like to examine explicitly agape. It's meaning because if you haven't thought of this distinction before or did not know this distinction before this is critical to your spiritual life. And we all know for example the tremendous breakdowns, I'm sure it's beginning here in Ireland but it's certainly in America, in terms of marriage. People, young people, teens, 20's whatever, cupid comes around shoots the arrow. They are overwhelmed with joy and bliss, they have an eternal relationship, that's part of the experience of romance, that's going to be eternal. Then they come into the priest and they want to be married, and of course Christian marriage vows are forever, perpetual – better or worse, richer or poorer -- they are in terms of this, better or worse, richer or poorer, sickness and in health, till death do you part. It's unconditional, but they are in this euphoric state and they want to be married. And so you're sitting there talking to the person, the man and woman, they are holding hands and the kinds of things that people do in that state, and finally you get around to talking about the Christian dimensions to this. You say things like there is no Christian individually or together without the cross. So then I finally say to the girl, say the boy's name is Ralph, I say to the girl Jane (pointing to Ralph), why do you want this cross? And she'll say back, Ralphie's no cross. And you just look and you know Ralphie is a cross. But eros is blind, love is blind. That's part of what the stuff in the dart does, it messes up perception. So then they go out and they get married on the basis this and then it wears off and then where are you?

Wouldn't it be terrible, wouldn't it be atrocious if the New Testament read, God is love, eros? My or my, that wouldn't be good news at all. If God had to get back positive results from us and positive feelings, and positive feedback in order to love us, we'd be in trouble. But it says God is love, agape. God loves unconditionally, permanently, everlastingly because the love that is God resides in divine will. He chooses to love and therefore it will be. This is altogether different. Therefore the Catholic church's position on the sacrament of marriage is 100% correct. It does not reside on a few statements of Jesus about what God has joined together let no person put asunder. Those are fine, but a sacrament is a way that you arrange material reality, human existence in order to encounter the true God that Jesus proclaims, the true God in Jesus. When you get together, not for marriage, but when you come together in a sacrament, the sacrament of marriage not secular, state marriage, when you come together in the sacrament of marriage what you are doing is, you are arranging your life with another person to encounter the true God,

agape, through that other person. Both people are committed to this or their can be no Christian marriage. That's why we say for better, for worse, richer or poorer, in sickness and in health till death do us part. It's everlasting, it's permanent, it's unconditional. A Christian marriage is not a 50/50 thing. It is a 100%/100% thing. It's an encounter with the true God because through it, through it the other person sees in your unconditional love, love that does not turn away, love that doesn't walk away, etc., etc. They encounter unconditional love, they encounter agape, whereas here if this is all there is then they encounter high romance until the emotion wears off and then they encounter, see you in divorce court. There is a tremendous difference between these two and this is good news, God is love is the ultimate good news. That's what Jesus says when God is Father, but it's God is agape – unconditional, everlasting, permanent love and that's what we chose in marriage. The only problem with the church's position on marriage is that God is love and we are imitators of God. Okay? We talked about that all through this conference. That's what we're supposed to do as Christians, imitate God. By imitating Jesus we imitate God. God is love. We are supposed to imitate God. But what's wrong with the church's position is this, it is only married people that they ask to imitate God. It's only married people that they demand to live agapeistically. And every other location and area of life when things go wrong Christians turn against each other. The nature of the Christian community, community is supposed to be agapeistic. A child is supposed to learn from it's cradle how to love and how to forgive, and how to return good for evil, how to be a reflection of God who is agape. But what we do is, we raise children along the road of God is eros, justice, tit for tat, and then we expect them to live agapeistic life when they go to get married. The community is failing on the sacrament, not the individuals so much, the community is failing on the sacrament because it is isolating the unequivocal reality of unconditional love to one aspect of the entire Christian spectrum, the aspect of marriage.

Now what I want to do here, for the remainder of our time this afternoon, is I'd like to lay out to you first of all two dimensions of New Testament agape that scripture scholars universally agree is there in the person, they are there in the person and the teachings of Jesus. At a bare minimum, at a bare minimum agape means these two things: agape means one, the willingness to serve without the desire for reciprocation. The New Testament theme that sums this up is the theme of the Lamb of God or the suffering servant. The other dimension of agape we're talking about now, this year, the other dimension of agape that is unquestionably in the New Testament in Jesus' words and deeds, is the willingness to suffer, the willingness to suffer without the desire for retaliation. Again, the symbol in which this is encapsulated is the Lamb of God. The theme that teaches it is forgiveness 70 x 7, which means indefinitely. The willingness to serve without the desire for reciprocation, the symbol of the lamb of God and the theme of the suffering servant, and the willingness to suffer without the desire for retaliation, the symbol of the Lamb of God and the theme of forgiveness 70 x 7, or indefinitely, represents the two incontestable dimensions of agape. Some scholars put more in there, but this is the bare minimum.

Now what I'd like to do for the remainder of the day today, the conference this afternoon, is I would like to look, for a moment, first at one and then at the other of these. The one that I'll spend my time on this afternoon in this conference is the willingness to suffer without the desire for retaliation. So that's what we're going to focus on in this conference, the second half. This evening we will look at the willingness to serve without the desire for reciprocation as being a constitutive, irremovable part of Christ agape.

Alright, first of all the willingness to suffer without the desire for reciprocation, the symbol of the Lamb of God, the theme of forgiveness 70 x 7. First thing to look at, this dimension of agape, this content of agape first of all is willingness. Christian love, agapeistic love must be free. There is no such thing as coerced or forced Christian love. It must be freely given. Said another way, Christian love is free love. It has to be. If I hold a gun at someone's head and say, say you love me. And he says, I love you, or she says, I love you; that's not love, that's fear, there's no love. Christian love must be free. There must be a willingness, it has to be your choice. In the entire Christian life, I tell you this for certain, you have done nothing good until you've done it yourself. You must choose the good yourself for it to be morally valuable. You can't be coerced into it, tricked into it, whatever. Christian love must be free. One of the interesting parts of this, in terms of eros is, the nature of erotic love whether it be a hamburger or towards a person or even towards God is that the reciprocation we get back enslaves. We become habituated to the reciprocation and we don't have the choice to do it or not to do it. But every act of Christian love, every act of Christ agape is a human free choice to love rather than do something else in the situation, to stand with Jesus and to be a channel of God's power. It has to be free, there's a willingness that's required.

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Secondly, the willingness to suffer, and this word down here, without the desire for retaliation. Many, many people suffer, they don't retaliate but they wish they could. Many, many people suffer, they don't physically retaliate, but going through their minds like a broken tape recorder over and over and over again is the even and they're figuring out how they could have said this and done that and how they could have gotten the best of the situation, etc. That is not – external behavior is only the consequence in the Christian life of what's going on internally. The great issue is, that I am cleansed of the desire to retaliate against people. That I don't have the desire to retaliate, not just that I don't do it. And why don't I have the desire to retaliate? Well we know that from the prior conferences. I wish to live the life of God on Earth, I wish to be faithful to Jesus, I wish to be faithful to the Lamb of God into whom I was baptized, and Jesus and the Lamb of God do not retaliate, in the face of evil they love. And so I make the choice in freedom, not only not to retaliate but even beyond that, to do away with the desire in myself to retaliate because the desire in me is to love this person as Jesus loves him or her.

So there is really a spiritual dimension here where the great battle of the spiritual life is in the mind. Am I going to cleanse myself of the desire to retaliate or am I not, or am I really wanting to retaliate but I'm too weak or too cowardly or without the abilities to do it and so I don't? those are two different things, Christian agape means I freely choose to dissolve the desire in myself.

Alright, the willingness to suffer without the desire for retaliation. Now, what I thought I'd do that this point is, I thought that I would change the paper and see if we cannot focus directly on this one dimension of agape, the willingness to suffer without the desire for retaliation. Think of the normal conflict situation. The normal conflict situation is that X does something to Y and Y says, well I'm not going to put up with that, and so Y does something to X. Now Gandhi made a point once because he worked at this whole business of nonviolence so hard and for so long all

of his life. He made the point that human beings tend to attack other human beings, whether it's by their tongue or with the gun, they tend to attack other human beings with morally ambiguous feelings. Should I be doing this or shouldn't I, maybe I should say something else or do something else. But the minute the other party attacks back, then they're sure the guy no good and they were right attacking him in the first place. That is when you attack back it solidifies the person's sense that he or she is right. And then of course we know how it goes. It goes that X does something wrong to Y, Y returns, and eye for an eye, and then there's alright well a tooth for a tooth, there we go just like that. And then there's an arm for an arm, and then there's an ear for an ear, until what you have is a blind, toothless, death, armless, legless set of people one of whom is in so much agony and so much pain and humiliation he pleads with the other to stop and this is victory and this is what the world calls peace. There is never, never, never peace through victory. Never is there peace through victory. Victory does not bring about peace. Peace is only brought about by reconciliation, but victory, never. Victory just means that some person who has the power to hurt, whatever that power may be, from the tongue to the gun, has been able to execute more efficiently than someone else or some other group. This is the normal conflict situation.

Alright, in this situation here, what is Jesus teaching? Is Jesus teaching – Y's the Christian say – is Jesus teaching when X does something evil to Y, Y should do nothing in return? No, that is not Jesus' teaching. No human being can live like that. Jesus' teaching is not when X does something evil to Y, Y does nothing in return. That is corrupting of the person and that is not following Jesus. Jesus entire existence is resistance to evil. Under no circumstances is Jesus in his life not resisting evil. When X does something to Y, Y must act in resistance to evil. Jesus' teaching is not that when X does something to Y, Y does nothing. Jesus' teaching is when X does something to Y and Y's the Christian, Y returns good for evil and that's a universe beyond doing nothing. First of all, if you were to do nothing in the face of evil you would be rendered powerless in every sense of the word, but returning Christ-like love for evil, that is a position of power, that is a position of actually confronting evil with the power of God. That's what it is. And therefore, in fact, you are doing the most efficacious thing you can do to resist evil. You are bringing the power of God into the moment.

Now, practically speaking several things happen. First of all, all this doesn't happen. That just doesn't happen. Secondly, instead of X now being sure you're no good, whatever that may be, you've done something good in the situation that causes fact to be different than what X thought it was going to be. Not that we're being clever about the moment because we said just a couple of conferences ago, every deed of love sends ripples out in ways that we don't understand. Maybe X will think about your response five years from now, but love is the power of God. Returning good for evil is the way of Jesus. Even to those who are victimizing him, the Lamb of God serves those who victimize him. So the first thing to note is that when X does evil to Y and Y returns good, it ends all this here. You know that there's a passage in the book of Romans in St. Paul's epistle to the Romans, which I thought I'd read to you on the subject. It is the last paragraph of Romans 12. It's one of St. Paul's statements on Jesus as the Lamb of God, as the non-violent Messiah of the world. It's one of St. Paul's statements on how we should live in the face of evil in the world, and so here it is, I'll just read you the paragraph.

Bless your persecutors. Never curse them, bless them. Your persecutors are X. Bless your persecutors. Never curse them, bless them. Rejoice with others when they rejoice. Be sad with those in sorrow. Give the same consideration to others alike. Pay no regard to social standing, but meet humble people on their own terms. Do not congratulate yourself on your own wisdom. Never repay evil with evil. Never repay evil with evil, but bear in mind the ideals that all regard with respect as much as is possible and to the utmost of your ability be at peace with everyone. Never try to get revenge. Leave that, my friends, to God as scripture says, vengeance is mine, I will pay them back the Lord says, and more. If your enemy is hungry, if your enemy is hungry, give him something to eat; if he is thirsty, something to drink. By this you will be heaping red-hot coals on his head. Do not be mastered by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Now, there are a couple of things here that it seems that we should talk about because they don't seem to make sense. The first one is where Paul says to the Christian, never – which means never – never try to get revenge. Leave that my dear friends to God. As scripture said, vengeance is mine, I will pay them back. And the second one is, of course that statement right at the end. If your enemy is hungry, give him something to eat. The enemy now we are talking about. This is returning good for evil. What general do you know or what soldier do you know in the Irish army, the American army, or in history that when the enemy is hungry they give them something to eat. They starve them to death, that's one of the mechanisms of war is to starve people. But Jesus, Paul says, if you're enemy is hungry, give him something to eat. If he is thirsty, something to drink. Cutting off water supply is quite normal. This is just the opposite, by the way, of what the United States and England and so forth did in Iraq, which no one wants to pay any attention to. They starved and they took people's water supply away to the point that it cost the lives of 46,900 children under 5 years old, under 5 years old. But this is all Christian by the way. This is what Jesus, Paul's teaching here. If your enemy is hungry, give him something to eat, if he's thirsty, something to drink. By this you will be heaping red-hot coals on his head. What does it mean, heaping red-hot coals on his head? That's a terrible metaphor. And what we're saying here, and Paul has just said, don't try to get revenge, overcome evil with good. So how does that fit in? But do not take vengeance, vengeance is God's. God is love. God is unconditional love. We choose evil. Judgment is evil has consequences when we choose it. As we said earlier, if you pour down a quart a whiskey a day, in 15 years when you get the DT's it's not God doing it to you, but the hallucinations, it's what you've done to yourself. The reason that evil is self destructive, that it will destroy itself, is that God has set it up in his love that evil cannot be permanent. It will come to an end. There is judgment and the judgment of the DT's or whatever it is, whatever the case may be, whatever brings the evil to the end. Otherwise people would engage in it forever and ever. But the second part, therefore the vengeance that's talked about is not a retribution of a fury. It's the kind of thing, if I can use the example, it's a kind of thing – did you ever have a child, say about three years old, little boy, little girl, and one day you walked in the kitchen and you'll find out that they are helping you do the dishes. And the sink is filled and they've got tons of soap in it and the water is up high and the dishes are there and they are standing on a chair or on a book and it's just all wrong, you know, and you say to them don't do it that way. Just don't do it that way. But they say, no, no, no, that's the way to do it. And you say no, let me show you. They say no, no, no, no, that's not the way. You say, look here's how you do it. And they no, no, and finally you say, go ahead and do it that way, and four minutes later they're screeching out in the kitchen because there is soap in the eyes or something has happened.

Now, what's the difference between you and the child? The difference is the experience of reality. From the child's little experience of reality he or she knows, logically, what they want to do. The only problem is that experience is so small and your experience is larger, and you say when you can't talk them out of it by word, you say go ahead and do it. You're not being vengeful in the sense that you mean them to hurt. What you are trying to do is, you're trying to communicate a lesson about reality and they'll never do this again. You're watching over them, you're making sure they don't hurt themselves permanently, but you let them go do it, and so also with God. People choose evil, evil has consequences, and those consequences are fiery and vengeful. But it's not God doing it, he's there watching over it. Secondly, what's this business that if you feed your enemy and you give him to drink you'll be pouring red-hot coals on his head? Did you – I guess might call that the something just to use a phrase that's also scriptural would be something like the wrath of the Lamb. In other words, remember the story I told you earlier about Gandhi and about the British spy, or soldier, that went to him and said, I see that you're doing the right thing and so forth and so on and they send me over to guard you and spy on you, but you are living a Christ-life like. I'll join you if you just tell me to put down the gun, and Gandhi says, I'll never tell you put down your gun. You've got to carry that gun until it becomes so heavy you can't carry it anymore. That is it has to be a free decision to follow. It has to be a free decision about what's truth. What does he mean he has to carry that gun until he can't bear it anymore? What he means is, that conversion is a process whereby the truth of what's going on and how inconsistently we are living from the truth becomes a heavier and heavier and heavier pressure on life until we simply have to abandon the evil. It becomes a burden. It becomes a fire in the brain and in the soul that I'm doing this, I'm doing this, I'm doing this and this is not what is true for me. This is not what's of God. And the burden becomes so heavy that in a strange sort of way the heaviness of the burden is what catalyzes the person into changing. I suppose it's much like the principle around which so many groups that work with alcoholics work. That people have to hit rock bottom. They have to be overwhelmed with the misery of what the consequences are of the choice of evil before they desire to get back to doing good. Those are the red-hot coals, the heat on the enemy's head. When he does evil to you and you do good for him. That's what is being talked about. You begin to create the pressure of love and truth in the face of evil and untruth, and that pressure will go on and on and on. And the only choice is to repent or be pushed down further and further by living in the evil consciousness that is untruth and unlove. This has nothing to do with God telling people to throw red-hot coals at each other. Although in the days when the hot stones were used to fight, this passage was taken to justify that to. You know when they used to put them on slingshots and throw them to burn people. The teaching is, of course, return good for evil.

Now, there is never a situation in life where you cannot return good for evil. Regardless of where you are, in the grocery store, at home with your family, with your children, makes no difference whatsoever. There is no situation, you can be paralyzed in bed and you can return good for evil. Why? Because the first step in the process of returning good for evil is always the same, to pray for the one immediately who is doing you evil. Prayer is the way of using your time to serve someone else who is victimizing you. Prayer instantly is a way of returning good for evil. Christ is nailed to the cross and can do nothing, he can't move, but he returns good for evil by praying for those who are killing them. And so also it is with each one of us. Whether it's something that someone says to us that hurts us or whether it's stealing, just the infinite

variety of sins that people can commit that can hurt us in all kinds of way, the first step is always the same, we return good for evil by praying for the one doing evil. Then there may be all kinds of other things we can think of, and those also we should do. It can't end with prayer if there is more to do. But that is always a start, and you know one of the practical things about that? One of the practical things about that is that the minute we start praying for the person who has become the enemy, you know the person who's doing something wrong to us, it opens up our minds. The nature of an enemy mind is that it's narrow. All we can think of is, he hurt me, he hurt or they said this about me or they said... The nature of prayer is it expands the mind out to the infinite. The minute we begin to say, Lord have mercy on John, take care of him, forgive him for what he did and God just be good to him. It begins to expand our mind out of that little, tight, narrow world of enmity. It's very, very practical. As a matter of fact, the entire unstating of Jesus in every form of evil is that is how we're supposed to respond to is, even those evils in the world that do not seem to have human causation. Let me give you an example. Several years ago in a major blizzard in Massachusetts, it went on for two days with over two feet of snow and weather – zero Fahrenheit degree weather and so forth and so on – a child went out to play in the storm, not too far from where I live – 10 years old – and the child didn't come back, and the parents got worried and they start searching for the child. Then the whole neighborhood was searching, and then the community was searching. The search went on for about four days and then everyone realized the child must be dead someplace in the storm, and so they gave the search up. Ten days later the child's body was discovered one foot from the back door of the house. He had obviously, what happened was the snow slid off the roof like an avalanche and he was suffocated under it. Now in some ways it would have been far better if the child was a mile away, because there is always the thought, it's so close. In the United States 85% of the families that experience the death of a pre-puberty child end up in divorce. There is something terrible about innocence that you love being destructive the way it goes through the human being and through the psyche and through the soul. I've watched it twice with good Catholic families, one ended in a divorce and one almost ended in divorce – the way life becomes something other than it ever was before. But the teaching of Jesus remains the same. If I can use that one little example of the child who died in the snowstorm, what that family had to do was one thing and one thing only. They had to draw good out of evil by the use of their will, by freedom. They had to do things that they otherwise would never do, good that would otherwise never do in the world. Good that otherwise would never be in the world but for that death. In other words, when we look at our X does evil to Y and Y responds to good, the basic principle that's involved there is that in normal human life evil catalyzes evil, and in the Christian life evil, by the use of the Christian free will, catalyzes good. I choose to make evil the catalyst for its own destruction. When it comes into my presence, I do good. I don't let it keep going like this. So also with those evils that hit us like train wrecks in the child's story that I just said. If we do nothing evil will go forward and it will destroy in ways that we can't imagine. The fathers of the church say that the mystery of evil is only one inch shorter than the mystery of God, but our task is in faithfulness to Jesus' understanding that God is love we take that incident and we do something good that we never otherwise would have done. In other words, these particular parents set up a little program for children who were from impoverished kind of families and they had learning disabilities, but they could learn. That's what they did, and then they did other things too. That's what must be done. Evil must be met with good and that is the teaching of Jesus by word and deed. That suffering, that's a cross, but we do it because we're not standing by letting evil run rampant. We are standing in Jesus' shoes with Jesus in us and Jesus task in history and for

humanity is not to let evil run rampant, not to cope with evil but to conquer evil by bringing the power of God, the power of love to every instance where evil confronts us.

And so this is the first part agape means. The willingness to suffer without the desire for retaliation, forgiveness 70 times 7, for returning of good for evil, using evil as a catalyst to produce good, being the Lamb of God.