

*New Lamb, Tape 15, Side A*

What we are doing this conference and the last conference, as I said, is we are discussing the word that is the central notion of the Christian life that is the word that the Lamb of God points to. We are discussing the meaning of the word love in the New Testament. And as we said, in the New Testament, the word for love is agape. Earlier, in a previous conference, we discussed the two dimensions of agape. The willingness to serve without the desire for reciprocation, the willingness to suffer without the desire for retaliation. Both of them are symbolized by the Lamb of God. The first is encapsulated in the New Testament under the theme of the suffering servant, which we have discussed before in this conference. The second is encapsulated under the theme, and we talked about that in the last conference, of forgiveness seventy times seven. This conference I'd like to talk about the second of those definitions that I put on the board, which was agape means one of the two things we put up there was the willingness to serve without the desire for reciprocation. We said this is embodied in the symbol of the Lamb of God and in the theme of the suffering servant in the New Testament.

Again, as we said this afternoon, Christian love must be free love, and therefore serving, if it is to be a Christian activity, must be freely done. Serving cannot be imposed or coerced or else it's not Christian serving. It may be other things, but it's not Christian. In order to do a Christian act you have to do it freely because you want to do it, because you believe it is the truth, because you believe you are following Jesus.

Now, in the New Testament the only gospel passage where Jesus sums up his ministry in a single sentence is found at the end of the dispute between the son Yosemite and Jesus. They are looking for a place of glory or honor or rank in his kingdom. They want the two seats next to him is what they say. And Jesus says at the end of his visitation to them he says, the Son of man came to serve and not to be served and to give his life as a ransom for many. That's the gospel in a single sentence. The Son of man came to serve, not to be served, and to give his life as a ransom for many. The willingness to serve in the model of Jesus, it has to be free and it has to be understood that one is doing it because this is what Jesus called us to by the gift of faith, to serve, but to serve without any desire for reciprocation. All kinds of people serve. All kinds of people serve and don't get reciprocated, but they wish they were getting reciprocated. Or they wish they were getting greater reciprocation. Once again the issue is the internal spiritual life as we talked about this afternoon with forgiveness. The issue is that I serve because this is what my Lord wants me to do, not because I'm getting this back from it or that back from it. I serve just because there is a need there. If we make service dependent upon reciprocation, how could we ever serve the enemy because the enemy gives us back negative reciprocation not positive. If it was reciprocation that was needed to serve how would Jesus ever heal the ear of the armed servant of the High Priest of the Mount of Olives in Yosemite the night before he was killed. No, the willingness to serve without the desire for reciprocation means that I choose to serve in order to follow Jesus because there is just a need there, and this person is a beloved child of God and therefore I am called to love him or her as God loves them. To serve them as God would serve them if he were here.

Now, the reciprocation first of all it has to be remembered. All kinds of people serve and serve unwillingly. Serve unwillingly is not Christian service, it's servitude, and there's a world of

difference. But I do things because I have to, because I'll be hurt if I don't. And I do things out of love of Christ and love of neighbor. The imposition of service on people is oppression, it is the use of fear to get something accomplished, and by the very definition where fear is freedom is gone and there can be no Christian activity. So clearly there has to be a willingness to serve that comes with baptism, even if the service entails suffering, suffering servant.

Now, the reciprocations and service that we want, the most obvious is people won't serve unless they're paid. If they are paid, they will serve. That's getting something back. That's eros not agape. You know one of the ways to look at a situation is this, I remember years ago, 35 years ago reading a book when I was in college and reading the book and the book was entitled, psychiatric book entitled, The Purchase of Friendship. So people go to psychiatrists and the psychiatrist listens to them and their problems for one reason only, they are paying him or her money. If they don't have the money they wouldn't spend 10 minute with them. Well that's not what Christian love is about. Christian love is about serving whether there's no reciprocation, even if there is none. But here's the point, the reciprocations that people want to serve are not just money, not even primarily money, it is really a tricky affair how we as people put conditions on our love.

For example, do you remember earlier I told you the story about in the middle of Brother Karamozof by ?????????????? the novel, there was a story called The Lady of Little Faith? Alright. Let me just tell you something a little more about that story and it is this: In that story the lady when she doesn't feel like she is going to die, in that story she goes to this Byzantine holy man, Father Zozima that I told you about, and she tells Father Zozima with all the enthusiasm of a Christian that she wants to go to India and serve the poor. She wants to leave Russia, leave her home, go to India and serve the poor. So Zozima says to her, well that's a noble idea but don't you have a paralyzed daughter at home? And she says yes but I've got money. And she's older now and there are plenty of people to take care of her. So the conversation goes back and forth until finally it comes out. She cannot tolerate caring for the daughter anymore because the daughter never says thank you, never. The reciprocation she wanted was gratitude and she couldn't go on without gratitude. Zozima points out to her, but don't you see that it is precisely the people that can't say thank you, that are most in need are the least and if the Christian doesn't go to them, if the Christian makes his or her service dependent upon gratitude, these people never get served. Gratitude, that's what she was looking for. It's not a big thing but it is something and it can get a hold of us, and it can get a hold of us.

Now, remember the story of the good Samaritan? There's a fellow hurt on the side of the road. Now Jesus tells this story, Jew hurt on the side of the road. The two Jews go by him, the priest and Levi, and then the Samaritan comes along. Now the Samaritan is the arch enemy of Jews. He would be like Protestants and Catholics, that kind of dynamic in northern Ireland, or Croatians and Serbs, history of hateful enmity. And the Samaritan goes by and he helps the Jewish person and so forth and so on, serves even the enemy. Now if you can picture to yourself what that was like as these two Jewish men walked by, the priest and the Levite, the walk by – the first one walks by, the second one walks by – what they were thinking to themselves. What they were thinking was probably, remember that road, it's about a 12-mile road that starts up in Jerusalem and winds down through the desert to Jericho which is the lowest city in the world, blistering hot and the road I the Jesus' time was a treacherous path. There were robbers, there

was all kinds of things, no one wanted to travel it alone. So you can see that Levi and the priest walking by and they say gee this might be a set up, I go over to help him and I robbed. Or I've got to get down to Jericho to conduct services at the synagogue. Or I can't do anything for him anyway, it's not my job, all kinds of things. Basically what they are thinking of is, if I help him gee my day is going to be gone, it's going to cost me money. What they are thinking about is, what will happen to me if I help this person. Whereas the Samaritan comes along and sees him suffering and his question is, what happen will him if I don't help him. In the world of reciprocity, that's one of the ways you judge whether you are in a Christian world or not in terms of service. Are you judging what will happen to me if I do something or are you judging what will happen to the other person if I don't do it? Those are two utterly different standards. And of course in the story of the Samaritan it's a story where the two groups, Jews and Samaritans are in hostile normal relationships. And yet Jesus is clear that what God wants is service, even to the enemy, even if the reciprocation possibly carries with it negativity. Now this word service and servant has gotten all mixed up in Christianity, all mixed up in Christianity because it's all mixed up in culture. I suppose the most blatant misuse of the word is when we have major politicians referred to as public servants. Who wouldn't want to be a public servant with that kind of money and those kinds of prerogatives and the cars and the travel and the meals and so forth and so on, public servants. They are in fact public rulers or public exploiters, but servants no. And you know what the real test of it is? The real test of it is, the higher up you go in being a public servant the more armed guards you have to have to keep those you are serving from killing you.

When Ronald Reagan was shot several years ago, all of a sudden out of nowhere there appeared maybe 75 armed men who were protecting him and nobody even knew where there. And that's the same all over the world regardless of where you look these people travel with an entourage of body guards armed with all kinds of sophisticated weapons and detectives and so forth. Now you know if someone is hurt and you are serving them, they don't try to kill you if you are really serving. But of course everyone knows these people are primarily serving their own interests, whatever that may be. But there is a person, a world class person, world celebrity, known worldwide, known as much as any major politician in the world who goes here and there and so forth, travels quite freely, he's known by everyone, if the person were to walk in here instantly everyone would know, has walked the world without no armed guard, nothing, they just walk like a normal person. Of course that's Mother Theresa because she really serves. And the poor knows the difference between a politician who is trying to make rules for those who support him to use those who do not support him. How take care of the rich and to victimize the poor. They know the difference between servant and ruler. When Mother Theresa received a Nobel Peace Prize, fine she took it, got the money, gave it to the poor. But at the big Nobel Peace Prize dinner where everyone is there with the tuxedos and the kings and all the people that go to those kinds of things, Mother Theresa was in the slums of Oslo having a meal with just poor people there. Mother Theresa walks into places in the world where not even the police will go because poor people recognize that she is legitimate. She is genuinely a servant who has used her life up, not perfectly but used her life up trying to serve those who are the neediest in the world, and hence there is not need for armed protection. In some mysterious way active mercy is the alternative to violence, active service, but real, not fooling around. That is the service we are talking about here, the willingness to serve without the desire for reciprocation. But you say Mother Theresa is a world celebrity at this point. But from 1929 until 1969 no one even knew her. From '49 to '69 she's living in Calcutta, picking people up who are rotting and no one even

knows she's there. She's just caring for them. Indeed that's how it is. Where there is real service people respond differently than when what is taking place is that people are trying to say they are servants when in fact they are trying to use other people. That is when the service is just given because the person is in need versus the service is given because something is gotten back. Christian service is no concern about reciprocity at all. It may come or it may not come, it is just not an issue. The issue is the person in need. However, when we put service in the category of, I will serve you only if I get something back. When that becomes life then what we have is life in a brothel. I will do something for you that is nice if you will do something for me that is nice. That's life in a brothel. To do some things to get something, reciprocation. Jesus is not interested in that kind of life. He is interested in the life of faith, a life of union with God, a life of bringing God in history. Where there is need, let's bring love there, let's bring kindness there, let's bring service there, period. And you say, well if we did that, how would we live? And Jesus say, seek first the kingdom of God and all else will be given. Or as he told Theresa of Avala one time when she was having all kinds of problems and doing his work and everything else and things didn't seem to be working out, in fact they were going terribly, and she kept doing – and so anyway she talked to him and said what's going on here? I'm doing everything you want and so forth and so on. In the same spirit, remember, that he said to Moses march on, he said to Theresa of Avala, you take care of my business, I'll take care of your business. Just seek first the kingdom of God and let the rest. Serve, love as Christ loved in the moment, serve. Don't go looking for reciprocation, don't go figuring out how you can get something back. Just do what you're supposed to do for the person in front of you or whatever it is that you're responding to. In other words, be willing to serve without the desire for reciprocation. That's agape, that's Christian love.

But there is something deeper going on here, as important as that is there is something deeper going on here. There is a mystical quality to the Lamb of God, to the suffering servant. Mystical is the Greek word for hidden. There is a hidden quality that we cannot see with our eyes but we can know if we participate in the reality. The suffering servant that we read the poem earlier in the conference from Isaiah, the one that suffers and somehow through his/her innocent suffering other people are relieved and indeed the poem says, peace is brought to the world. Something else is going on beyond just the person trying to love and suffer. God is working through it in some way. Obviously that is so. Jesus was just one of 10,000 people crucified in that time and that place, that's why it's called the place of skulls, Golgotha. The vultures just ate and the skulls were left there. Crucifixion was normal Roman capital punishment. But the spirit Jesus went into this with and why he did it, there is something else going on. God is working in Jesus. The spirit of God is there. And what I'd like to suggest to you here is this, God has people for you to serve. At the foundation of the world, before the foundation of the world, God has chosen you to serve. You don't know where it is or how it is and what it's going to be, but you have been chosen to serve people, people in your own time, people perhaps in other times, I don't know who it is. But you are chosen to serve if you are given the gift of faith, because if you are given the gift of faith that means you are baptized into Jesus, the Lamb of God, the suffering servant. You are chosen to serve and it's very, very important that you do because God wants to bring peace to people through you, love to people through you. God wants to bring himself to people through you. We all have a Christ-like vocation, to bring God's peace and love and knowledge and goodness, and to participate in God's way of conquering evil. By bringing good into a situation, and somehow with that mysterious presentation good, evil loses its power.

I read you the poem of the suffering servant, which is exactly the same thing as the Lamb of God, in fact lamb in Aramaic you know also means servant as I mentioned to you. What I'd like to do now is I'd like to tell you a little story. The story is from a novel, it is the novel called, The Last Of The Just. The Last Of The Just is a world-famous book in certain circles, spiritual book. It was written by a man by the name of Andre Schwart-bart. It is a presentation by a literary artist of the theme of the suffering servant. It is the finest piece of writing on the subject that I know outside of scripture. Nothing that I know matches it. It's well worth reading. Schwart-bart is a Jew. Schwart-bart lived through the concentration camp experiences, several of them, and was not killed but he saw all the terrible things that went on during the Second World War and the concentration camps. In Judaism there is a theory that at any given moment in history there are 36 men who are suffering servants. Thirty-six men or women chosen by God, but they are chosen to live, 36 of them, there is always 36 of them in history at any given time, and the fact is the way it's understood is they suffer innocently so much that the rest of the world can survive its own evil. Those 36 suffering servants, in Jewish spiritually, are called Just men. It doesn't mean justice people, it means righteous people who have been chosen by God to absorb the evil of the world so that the world can survive its own evil until the Messiah comes. The story of The Last Of The Just is a story about a man by the name of Ernie Levy. Ernie Levy is a cosmopolitan Jew in Germany in the 1930's. He's planning on marrying Golda, he has his business and everything is going along, and his life goes along normally. Oh there are rumors of political upheaval and anti-Semitism, but he doesn't pay any attention. Beyond that, some of the rabbis have gone to his mother and father and told them that there have been visions and so forth that Ernie Levy is one of these Just Men, and he is not going to believe in any of that superstition. He's got his business to take care of, he's got his marriage to start and get going, he's just got to get on with life, he doesn't have any time for this spiritual superstition.

And so, things get worse in Germany and the question comes up for Golda and himself, should they leave, go to South America, possibly in North America? And they make the decision, or he makes it really she doesn't he makes it saying, this will blow over. We've been through a political crisis before, this won't last forever, we'll just live through it, because if we leave we have to – in those days you had to leave everything, you could take no money or anything out with you – we'll lose everything. So instead of losing everything let's stay and we'll just live through it and it will be over in a period of time. Well, it doesn't happen that way as we know. Several months after that decision one night the Gestapo pulls into their little city and collects all the men, women and children in trucks, sends them off to the trains. Golda and Ernie are separated and this begins Ernie's journey through the concentration camps.

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Most of the remainder of the book are things that Ernie went through in the concentration camps, which Schwart-bart lived through and knew. For example, having to stand by a ditch as the Germans would line up 40, 50 Jews, naked, have the machine gun and you're a Jew and you have to through the dirt on top of them and wait for the other 40 or 50 to come in two minutes later, and that's your day's work. The hunger and the cold and the fury and the madness, all described vividly there. And this is what he goes through for several years, Ernie Levy, he's strong, he's young, but then he gets sick. In the concentration world when you get sick, it was

death because you were only good if you were productive. All the concentration camps are built alongside heavy industry and were a source of slave labor. No one was kept that was ill, that's why so many children were killed, they were none productive, all children as a matter of fact. So Ernie gets sick and he can't work any longer, they throw him in a boxcar, he goes on a long 10-day journey in this boxcar. Eighty people squeezed together in a boxcar, no toilet facilities, no air, just locked in there, crushed, no way even to sit down. At the end of the trip he winds up at the extermination camp and over half the people in the car are dead, he's been living with dead people for several days, from starvation, from killing themselves and so forth, madness. They get out of the car, and as was the ritual for the Nazis, they get out of the car and Ernie is walked up with all the others, and there is a German doctor there and those that got some life still left in them he tells them go to the right. Those that are too sick to work he says go to the left. He tells Ernie to go to the left. He goes to the left and he knows what is going to happen because during this time that he has gone through these concentration camps he has not only lost faith in God, he's not only become an atheist, he's become a realist. Nothing means anything. He really wishes he could kill himself a long, long time ago to get out of the pain but he doesn't have the courage to do it, so he feels himself a coward. Then from the boxcar who does he see coming in but Golda. She's absolutely destroyed as a human being. She's mad. And so on top of all the other misery he got comes the misery of, it might have been for they had a chance to leave and they didn't. They take them, as you know was the case, they took them and they, everyone had their hair shaved, everyone had their clothes removed, and they were told they were going to a shower, to a shower. And so they were all standing there waiting for the shower, this group of about 70 people. Over half of them, close to three-quarter of them are children, because children are non-productive. Ernie knows what's going to happen, he doesn't care, he just wants to die cause there is no reason to be alive, there's no reason to exist, there's no reason for existence to be. He's a totally destroyed human being. And so all the people around him they are telling this is going to be a shower, we are finally going to get deloused, we're finally going to get food, he knows it's not so. He doesn't say a word, he just says nothing, he just wants to die. And so they pushed them all into this big concrete shower room, you've probably seen the pictures of them, and everyone is saying how wonderful it is. They are finally going to get a real shower and clean clothes, and everything else. They are keeping up, helping each other keep up the pretenses inside they know, and then the huge iron door is slammed shut and with the heavy clank of the door and total darkness the illusion is broken and people go mad. They are out of their minds with terror because they know what is inevitable now.

If you've ever seen Eldritch you even see that in these shower rooms people trying to get out have actually clawed with their fingers concrete, broken concrete with their fingers trying to get out. Absolutely terrified out of their minds. Ernie doesn't care, he just wants to die. There is no reason to be there, there is no reason not to be there, there is no reason to be, just let me die. But you've got three-quarters of the people are children, and they are caught in a world they don't know to begin with, then they are caught in world of total blackness, then they are caught in a world where the adult world is out of its mind in horror, screeching and yelling, and the children go crazy with terror as only children can do. They have absolutely, remember Schwart-bart was there, he saw these things – they are absolutely out of their minds screaming and yelling. And then one of the children gets it in his head that what is happening is he is being punished for something he did in the past, and so he yells out, Father, Father forgive me I'm sorry I didn't mean to do it. Please, Father, I'll be a good boy, I'll never do it again. And he starts yelling that

so he can be free from the situation. Remember Schwartz-bart was there and he heard these things. One child does it and then it becomes contagious. The other children get the idea, this is what's really happening, and they all begin to yell out, Father, Father, Father please let me out. I'll be good, I won't do it again, I'm sorry I broke the doll. I don't mean and yell, or I'll do the dishes, and they're screeching in terror for the parent to let them out of this horrid situation. The gas is turned on, only a couple of minutes – two, three minutes to live once the gas goes on. Ernie hears them yelling, just wants to die. He listens to the children screeching and the terror behind it. They are all Jews. And then he says to them, he says; children, children, children, don't worry, don't yell, don't yell, don't yell, nothing is wrong. You are going to see your father in a minute, we're all going to messianic banquet. He doesn't believe a word of it, he doesn't believe there is any God or any messianic banquet, anything, but they all know the messianic banquet. And he says we're going to messianic banquet, he starts describing the Passover table, which they would all know, the herbs and the stuff that's on it. And he says, right now, right now your mother is putting this kind of crystal on and your father is over making this. And someone says, one of the children yells out, is Aunt Sophie there? And he says Sophie, Sophie's gone there, Sophie is over there getting the linens for the, you know. And someone says, what about my brother, is he here there? And Ernie Levy says, yeah, yeah he's there. Now all the time he's telling them breathe deeply, breathe deeply, because if you breathe the zyon gas deeply you go without any problem, but if you don't breathe it deeply you strangle. He's telling them to breathe deeply, but that means he strangles because he's telling the story. And he's telling about the green grass and the sky and the Messiah is going to be there and they are listening and they are believing because they want to believe, and they are believing and he's telling them and he's describing the whole scene, and they calm down and they listen and they die and he strangles.

That's the finest example I know of in world literature of the theme of the suffering servant. You see if Ernie Levy did not let the suffering of those children into his presence he never would have had the creativity or the urgency to do anything about it. Any time in this world that we let the suffering of others into our presence we suffer even if it's from the fact that we're impotent to do anything about it. It's much easier to keep the suffering of the world outside, and that's why entertainment is such a big industry. But once you let it in, if you let the suffering of the guy on the side of the road, the homeless man in, if you let the suffering of the elderly person down the rest home who's languishing there, if let the suffering of the families who are devastated in war because husbands and brothers and children and killed and destroyed. If you let it in, you suffer instantly, but if you don't let it in that's a guarantee that you'll never do anything. Ernie Levy, under horrid circumstances where there was only two minutes or three minutes of peace that he could give, let the cries of the children in. Not knowing what was going to happen when he did, but he came up with something because he did.

Secondly, as I said there is something mystical about the theme of the suffering servant in scripture, something hidden. From the foundation of the world God has designated people that you are to serve, for God's reasons in places that we will never know. Our task is to be faithful to the moment and God takes care of the movement of lives. You see, Ernie Levy had to be brought across that atrocious history that he lived. The history of losing his fiancé, losing his family, losing his way of living, losing where he lived – his country, and ultimately losing his life. He had to be brought across all that by God in order to be in that hole in the ground that was a shower room, a gas chamber, to bring peace to those children at that time, because if he's not

there no one's there and they cry out father and no one answers. All of us, all of us who are baptized into Christ have been given the same vocation. There are people in this world that are crying out and we are the ones who have been designated to bring peace to ??????? This is the vocation of everyone who is given the gift of faith in Christ, and it's a terribly serious vocation. But this is it. It's the vocation of putting yourself in God's hands so that you can be where God wants you to give mercy. Now if, on the other hand, we fail; if on the other hand we fail to live our vocation then there is no one there because we have been designated. This is what being baptized into Christ means, for when Christ rises out of the waters of baptism the words that hears from heaven are the words of the opening line of the suffering servant. This is my beloved Son upon whom I favor rests. You and I are baptized into a destiny of being the suffering servant. Said another way exactly correctly, the Lamb of God. Ernie is the Lamb of God. He suffers, he suffers innocently, he suffers atrociously in order to be able to bring mercy, in order to be able to bring the Father's love, in order to be able to bring the peace of God to 75 terrorized children in a gas chamber at an impossible cost to himself.

We really do have a choice. There really is a choice between what we want to be. The suffering is just what St. Theresa was. It is a moment-to-moment vocation where we serve without the desire for reciprocation just because God wants mercy brought here, just because God wants love brought here, just because God wants himself brought here. It is the Christian vocation in the family, in the workplace, in the trolley car, wherever we may be it, it is the Christian vocation. So let me conclude with this and see if it's, as kind of way of summarizing what we have been talking about, and maybe giving you one final insight into the notion of Christian agape. After all that we said, agape used 319 out of 338 times New Testament. The willingness to serve with the desire for reciprocation, the willingness to suffer with the desire for retaliation. This is the Christian life. What did we say? We said agape is even the name of God, ??????????????????, God is love.

All human beings, you and I, every human being, let's say this is a human being – all human beings are goal oriented every second of their conscious existence. You and I are always consciously goal oriented. The goals may be tiny, you know just to get out the door or to pick up the crayon or to listen, but we are goal oriented, and we are constantly like computers making decisions on the means for those goals. So if I want to write on the blackboard, that's my goal, the means are I pick up the crayon, I take off the cap, I turn and so forth and so on. If I want to get out the door I'd walk there. I make judgment on means to goals. And we have a thousand, ten thousand goals during the day from walking down the street to picking up the paper or to combing our hair to putting on our glasses, and we always choose the means to make them happen. And so, the fact is this, there are plenty of goals that we can have. We want to get out the door, we want to comb our hair, and these all pretty technical goals that we can find a means to do it. But there are other goals that we can have. We want to be happy or even more, we want to survive. These are all very, very serious goals in life that each of us has, and we use the means to get there. We choose them and we use them.

Now, what happens in life when we choose certain means to get to a goal and the means are interfered with? So, for example, I want to comb my hair but I can't find the comb. Well, one of the things we can, we can forget about the goal. We can have another goal, I won't comb my hair I'll do something else. Or we can find alternative means besides the comb. We just kind of

brush it with our hands or something. There's all kinds of things we can do, but one of the things we can do is, we can't find the comb so what we begin to do is we get angry and we kick the bureau or whatever the case may be. We attack, if you will, we attack in absence of means. And of course as the goals go down from more concrete to less concrete what we do is, when you want to be happy and you're not happy, who are you going to blame? Well you find someone, that's for sure, and that person is called a scapegoat. They are not responsible for you not being happy, but they are the ones that you attack for being unhappy and so this happens, in Germany after the First World War with the depression and everything it was the Jews fault so they attacked all the Jews. The poor whites in the United States, you know poverty and impoverished all that goes with that, it was the fault of the blacks so they attacked blacks. We always find scapegoat victims when we can't find precisely what is causing our inability to reach the goal. But now all I want to point out here is in the Christian life there is only one goal and that is agape, to live the life of God, agapeistic love, Christ-like love in order to live eternally with God whose name is agape whose reality is love. And the only way to get to that goal, the only means that can get you to that goal are agapeic means. There is no way that I can choose means other than the means of God to get to God. I either love like God wants me to love or I don't achieve the goal of love eternal. It's that simple. So love is a goal, the primary goal. Agape is the kingdom of God. It's the kingdom of God whose name is love, it's the kingdom of love, the kingdom of agape. The only way to that kingdom is by the means of the kingdom which are agape. See what that means. That means that all these other goals are secondary. That if I want to get out the door and for some reason it's blocked and so forth and so on, well that's a problem but that's a secondary goal. My primary goal in life is to live in this spirit. This is my primary goal, to live in the spirit of God. Whether I get out the door or not is irrelevant. What is important is that I live in the spirit. Let me give you an example, suppose that you'd ever occur that someday I were to have a big conference and I was going to talk to all the bishops in the United States. So I'm going to talk to all the bishops in the United States about Christian love, the Lamb of God and so forth and so on, 10:00 on Thursday morning let's say. It's about an hours drive there, so about 8:30 on Thursday morning I come up and I go out to the car to talk to the bishops on agape. I'm going to give them a talk on agape, God is love, God's love, I'm going to give them a talk on that. So I go out to the car on Thursday morning about 8:15 in the morning, 8:30 and low and behold I get in the car and the car doesn't move. And the car doesn't move because the children have been out playing and they let the air out of all of the tires. Now here I've got to give this talk to the bishops on love. Of course it's my big chance. So what do I do? I get furious. The big thing in my life is to get that car out of the yard and here the children let all the air out of the tires playing, and I go in the house and I'm yelling, what you'd do? What did you do that for, and so forth and so on? And I'm on the phone and I'm yelling at the gas station attendant, get down here quickly, and so forth and so on. And so eventually the gas station guy gets there and he fills up the tires and I can go and then give my talk on love. But here is the point, you cannot abandon, in this particular case, you cannot; the point was to live love, not to talk about it. There is no doubt that I was not Christ-like, I was doing nothing Christ-like in that situation. All I was doing was I had transferred the job of getting out of the house to see the bishops, I had made it a higher goal than living a Christ-like life. And that is precisely what we do all the time. We place something over the will of God as revealed by Jesus. The Christian life is very simple, the goal of it is to live a God-like life, to imitate God, to imitate Christ, to achieve, to reach God who is love by living that love moment to moment. And if we don't we just say God forgive me and go on because God loves. What is wrong is,

absolutely wrong when we make something a higher priority than divine love because that's idolatry. We are putting something above the life of God. We do it all the time because we have not been nurtured from the cradle by our community to live lives of agapeistic love. And so we are forever putting things above God. We are forever putting things above loving as Christ loved. But the problem is this, when those tires were without air the way that I was going to make my contribution to the kingdom of God and fulfill my baptismal destiny for what Jesus gave me, the gift of faith and life for, I was going to make my contribution, not by getting out to talk to the bishops on love that morning but by loving in that instant. My talk to the bishops is irrelevant. It means nothing. The Pope could be there, it would be worth zero if the means that got me there were inconsistent with the reality I was talking about. It makes no sense whatsoever. The issue was, under difficult circumstances, which those were because people were waiting, to continue to choose Christ-like love, agape, as the way to go about making decisions and correcting things. And that's what I didn't do in the story. And the reality of the matter is that you and I are called to do precisely that. We drop the groceries at the store, someone's late for dinner, I don't know what are the thousand, million things that can happen, but we don't put them over loving as Christ loved. This is our goal and the only means to it. Agape is the goal and the only means to it is the moment-to-moment choice of agape, Christ-like love, loving as Christ loved.

And so we don't know what the consequences are going to be. But what we do know is, the only way we can fulfill our destiny of serving the people God wants us to serve is moment to moment loving as Christ loved and then God can move us across our history. And even if we make a mistake, if we ask God's forgiveness, God can continue to move us across our history. To serve where God wants us to serve, to be what God gave us the gift of faith in life to be where everything falls apart, and where we become part of the problem instead of part of the solution is when we refuse to love as Christ loved and we say that's okay. Because then we are outside of our destiny and outside of our history, and God's got to start putting effort in just to get us back instead of using us as servants.

And so, agape – agape is the word for love in the New Testament. Of the 339 times agape is used, love is used, 319 – 338 times it's used, 319 it's agape. Eros is never employed, the love of reciprocation. This is really not something that is minor, but it is something if you haven't thought it through before perhaps it's time to ponder what the difference is between love that's eros and love that's agape as a way of examining conscious and directing life more fully into the life that Christ wants us to live from the gift of faith that he gave us.