

Prestonwood Connection #1

Loving God: Passion

Matthew 22

Wednesday, August 28, 2002 • Dr. David McKinley

[Praise and worship led by Rick Briscoe]

[Testimony on screen by Bill Albright]

[Prayer led by Neal Jeffrey]

[Musical Praise]

[Dr. McKinley, message, *Looking For Love*]

[soft background music] And Father for all of us in this place tonight there's a great sense of need that we would be consumed and strengthened by Your power and Your Spirit. We do thank you for Bill and Shannon Albright, for Liz, for Tyler. We love them, so many of them praying for them and Father tonight we embrace Your being the strength of their day today and yet Lord I know there are many others who are making journeys similar to this, friends and family, people that we love and Father tonight we bring the brokenness, the need, the weakness to You. We thank You that if we cast our cares upon You that You care for us and so Father in this moment we place these cares before You. We ask You Lord to lift our eyes tonight to see Your strength and Your power and Lord we are trusting You even now as we open Your Word to open our eyes, to renew our vision of the wonder of our God and of His Christ and Lord to do something fresh and new in our lives for it is in Jesus name that we pray together. Amen. Amen.

[deep breath] Thank you Rick and praise team and thank you, each of you, for coming and being a part of this first of our Prestonwood Connection Services. And I really think that everything that this gathering of, is about and everything that we've been praying for God to do is really expressed in the very simple words that are over my shoulder tonight, "Get Connected." We are really praying that God is going to build within the heart and the life of our church and our ministry a time of gathering in the middle of the week where we connect, where we connect with God bringing our weakness, bringing our need, bringing our problems and pressure points to Him and that we find the strength of His power in life. We're praying that we're gonna be connected to one another and that what God's going to do is to teach us how to pray together and to teach us how to care for one another as a community of faith and then we're praying that there will never be a time that we come and that we gather, that there will not be a deep sense in which God has brought ministry to our lives and to our hearts and that He has fueled the passion of our love for

Himself as well as our love for one another and our love for others.

If you have a Bible tonight I want to invite you to take it and open it to Matthew chapter 22. Just a few a... days ago Connie, my wife, and I were sitting in a restaurant, a Mexican restaurant, and as I was consuming my hundred and third chip filled with salsa, [pause for congregation laughter] she looked at me and said, "How did we live for 10 years without this kind of food in our lives?" [congregation laughter] And all I could think was, O the price that you pay to be a missionary [congregation laughter] for the Lord in a place like Florida. [pause for congregation laughter] There is something about the spice of Texas that is the bonding agent of this state and of this community. You can't live here and not be surrounded by and ultimately captured by a culture of "Tex-Mex." In fact I've learned wherever I go in the country when I meet Texans the greatest topic of conversation is to hit a city and start naming the Mexican restaurants [pause for congregation laughter] and everybody know them because it's something that we share together. It's a love, it's, it's a desire, it's as though it were a passion if you live in Texas. In fact I've noticed in the 6 months that I've been here that there's this little cycle that I go through in my life. I never know exactly how or when it's gonna come but suddenly in the course of the day, often times late at night a... I'll be watching a television broadcast or a news broadcast and suddenly there's one of those commercials, Mexican food, and that eye just seeing it is a stimulation to my mind. I can be driving down the North Dallas Toll Road and suddenly I see one sign and another and it's just like a little seed thought and suddenly I'm stimulated and stimulation comes and that's the first step of the cycle, there's a stimulation of that desire, a stimulation of interest and then it's not long till suddenly my whole mind is saturated. I'm just saturated with thoughts, there's a saturation in my mind and, and in my thought process of how can I get it, when can I get it, where will I get it? [pause for slight congregation laughter] Anybody identify? [pause for congregation laughter] And then there is starvation. That's the third part of the cycle. [pause for congregation laughter] What stimulates my mind and begins to saturate my well being and my emotions suddenly creates a starvation in me and I've just got to have some Mexican food and it's something that I really believe is just a part of the culture of living in Texas.

But just as much as I believe that's a natural part of the culture of living in Texas and in Dallas in particular; I believe that the Bible teaches that there's something that should be a part of the culture of true followers of Jesus Christ, that there's something that should be a hallmark and a point of identification for everyone of us and that it is indeed a part of how we live our lives. In fact Jesus, in answering a question that was intended to bring about a debate ultimately answered that question by giving a clear and specific directive as to what is to characterize our lives, what is to be a part of the culture of those who follow Jesus Christ and who live in Him and this is how He describes it, Matthew 22, verse 34, I'm going to use *The Message* on the first time around because this is what it says, it says:

³⁴When the Pharisees heard how He had vested the Sadducees they gathered their forces for an assault. ³⁵And one of their religious scholars spoke for them posing a question they hoped would show Him up. ³⁶"Teacher, which command in Gods law is the most important?" ³⁷And Jesus said,

Can we read it together? Can you see it here on the screen? It's also there in your a..., in your worship guide tonight. But let's see what Jesus said. Would you read it out loud with me?

³⁷...*"Love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence. ³⁸This is the most important on any list."*

Jesus said you want to know what the greatest thing is? It is to be a person whose life is marked by a passion for God, that there is a man and there is a woman who lives their lives in such a way that their life is God **stimulated**, their life is God **saturated**, their life is God **starved**, literally, there's a hunger for God [pause] that it becomes the obsession of their life and Jesus said, this is what living is all about.

My New King James Version, that I use, simply says it this way and most of us are familiar:

³⁷... *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your [What?] heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸This is the first and the great commandment."*

You see these guys approached Jesus and they said, we have a legal matter we want You to resolve. And their whole understanding of what faith and religion was about was something legal, some sort of a system of does and don'ts and regulations. But ultimately Jesus said to them, that's not what any of this is about. The life that I want you to live is not legal in nature it is about a relationship, it is relational, it's about a relationship with the Heavenly Father because I have made you for relationship with Me. And the greatest thing that any of us can ever know and see is that the craving that we have deep within us will only be satisfied when the heart of us is filled with a hunger and a love for God. That's what it's all about. This is the first on the list. This is what the process is intended to bring about in life, it is to be a relationship with God, a love affair with the Father and living to experience His love and living to express my love for Him.

In a wonderful book entitled, *The Sacred Romance*, Brent Curtis and John Eldridge wrote these words:

"Above all else the Christian is a love affair of the heart. It cannot be lived primarily as a set of principles or ethics. It cannot be managed with steps and programs. It cannot be lived exclusively as a moral code leading to righteousness. The truth of the gospel is intended to free us to love God and to love others with our whole hearts."

What I want to talk to you about tonight is living a God saturated life,

being a person who has passion for God and the reality is, is that we are going against the grain of our culture because we want to be a God stimulated people and a God saturated people and a God starved people in a world that is over stimulated, over saturated and, yes, starving with the emptiness that nothing in this world can fill. You see what we all need and what we all long for in life is love. We long to know love, to experience love, to ultimately express love in life. But sin has brought injury, sin has deformed us and has ultimately made us dysfunctional people and so it's so important that we try to understand what Jesus is saying in this text tonight.

I want to look at it in two ways. I want to look at the two sides of the coin. You know the flipping of the coin? Heads I win, tails you...? [loose – congregation] Okay, so let's start with loosing. Let's start with the loosing side of the coin and let's tonight begin by examining the frustration of a love-starved life. Many people are living life today but they're living their life love starved and the Bible warns us against looking for love in the wrong places. Now Johnny Lee a writer wrote these words:

*"I spent lifetime looking for you,
single bars and good time lovers were never true,
playing a fool's game, hopin to win,
telling those sweet lies and loosin again.*

*I was looking for love in all the wrong places,
looking for love in too many faces,
searchin her eyes... [turned tape] ...
is of what I'm dreamin of
hopin to find a friend, a lover
I'll bless the day I discover
another heart who's looking for love."*

That expresses where so many people are living their lives. They're living looking for love but it's in all the wrong places and the reality is that they are living out the frustration of a love starved life. The Bible warns us about living in this condition and about the shift that can take place in life where by we miss God's plan and purpose for us. You have your hand there in the book of Matthew. I want you to look over in the book of Isaiah chapter 55 and as you're turning there I want to identify the first part of the frustration of a love-starved life as being the **search without satisfaction**. That's what we've just said, "Lookin for love in all the wrong places." It's a search but there's no satisfaction. The prophet Isaiah describes that condition of life and this is what he says in Isaiah 55 and verse 2:

Why do you spend money for what is not bread,

Literally the Bible says, why do you spend money for the bread of deceit? It's a foolish thing. It's something that looks like bread but it's not bread. It doesn't satisfy. It doesn't fill. It doesn't ultimately meet the

need of your life. And so the prophet says:

²*Why do you spend money for what is not bread, And your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance.*

And then it says down in verse 6:

Seek the Lord, while He may be found, Call upon Him while He is near.

And what is the result of seeking the Lord and calling upon Him? Look in verse 12:

For you will go out with joy, and be lead forth with peace; and the mountains and the hills will spring forth before you and the singing, and the trees of the fields will clap their hands.

Do you want to know what a full life is, a meaningful life, a satisfied life? You've got to come to terms with the fact that you can search everything in this world and you're not gonna be satisfied. In fact the prophet Isa..., the prophet Jeremiah, the compliment to Isaiah says it this way in Jeremiah 9 and verse 23. Write that verse down if you don't a..., have it marked in your Bible you will want to do so. Listen to what the Bible says in Jeremiah 9 and verse 23:

²³*Thus says the LORD:
"Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, and
Let not the mighty man glory in his might,
Nor let the rich man glory in his riches;
²⁴But let him who glories glory in this,
That he understands and knows Me,
That I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness,
Judgment, and righteousness in the earth.
For in these I delight," says the LORD.*

What is it that our world seeks? Our world is constantly seeking wealth and wisdom and power. The Bible says don't glory in any of these things because every one of them is a search without satisfaction. You see that's in the sphere of our world it's a search without satisfaction. But then there's another idea here of a love starved life and it's not only searching without satisfaction. It's having the appearance of a life that's full and satisfied but that has no substance, an **appearance without substance**. Look back over if you will on the other side of the New Testament, the other side of our text in Matthew and look with me if you will in the book of 2nd Timothy chapter 3, 2nd Timothy chapter 3. Because in 2nd Timothy 3 we see this warning about living a life that is love starved but ultimately a life that is frustrated because it is a life that only has appearance but has no substance. The Bible's describing the last days. I think that has great relevance to us. It says in chapter 3 verse 1:

¹*But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: ²For men*

will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³unloving, unforgiving, slandering, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, ⁴traitors, headstrong, haughty, [pause] lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of...

[Who?] *lovers of God,*

And then it says verse 5:

having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!

The Bible says that it's possible to live life in the world of religion. It's possible for you to be a religious person but what you have is a form of godliness but no power. And tragically while our religious freedom and our religious heritage has been a wonderful part of the history of our nation, tragically today there are churches all over America that have the form of godliness but they have no power because they don't know the love of God in their lives.

One of my favorite Bible commentators and teachers is John MacArthur and in the prelude to his book on Christian Character, he relates the story of something that happened in the life of the architect Christopher Wren. Christopher Wren is best known for his design of Saint Paul's Cathedral in London. It's known as one of the 10 most beautiful buildings and structures in the world. But there's an interesting story associated with a lesser-known building that Wren helped to construct and to design. As I understand it when he was involved in the process of renovating the Town Hall of Windsor, Wren brought the city fathers in to see the progress of his work but when they got there they were very disturbed by the fact that the pillars, the columns in the building didn't seem right. The problem was there weren't enough columns and so they had a meeting and told Wren that if he was going to complete the project he had to do it by adding additional pillars and columns because they wanted it to look right. And MacArthur says this:

Wrens solution was as devilish as it was inspired. He did exactly what he was told and installed four new pillars thus meeting the demands of his critics. Those extra pillars remained in the Windsor Town Hall to this day and they aren't difficult to identify because they're the ones that support no weight. In fact they don't even reach the ceiling. [pause for congregation laughter] They're fakes. Wren installed the pillars to serve only one purpose to look good. They're ornamental embellishments built to satisfy the eye. In terms of supporting the building and fortifying the structure they are as useful as the paintings that hang on the walls. While it saddens me to say this, [this is John MacArthur] I believe many churches have constructed a few decorative pillars of their own, especially in the lives of their people. In an effort to renew the church and make it work better many leaders have implemented attractive styles of worship and teaching along with innovative organizational formats designed

to attract more people to the church. Substance has been replaced by shadow. Content is out. Style is in. Meaning is out. Method is in. The church may look right but it bears little weight."

This trend is perhaps most evident in the area especially close to my heart [he says] the teaching of the Word of God. To many churches today have forgotten that their main purpose is a simple one quote, 'As the church of the living God they are to be the pillar and the support of the truth instead they built the facade that offers no support bears little weight, falls short for reaching heights that God designed for His church to reach.'"

Ladies and gentlemen it's possible for us, any of us, to buy into a context of having appearance without substance. I want you to know that one of the greatest things that I love and appreciate about our church is that there's always substance in this pulpit when we come under the leadership of our pastor and I thank God that a part of the heartbeat of this gathering was a pastor who looked and listened to the needs of people and said, "You know, I believe we need to add another dimension, another dynamic of what God can do in the life and ministry of our church because as God continues to build us out, we want God to build us up and to deepen the core and to strengthen our faith and to make us a people of weight and substance in this community and that's got to be the heartbeat of this connection service.

There's one other warning of a love starved life and that is not only that we would have a search without satisfaction and that we would have an appearance without substance but this is the one that may cut the deepest as it relates to you and to me and that is that we can have **performance without passion**. We're performing. We're doin a lot of good things but we've lost our passion for God. Jesus made it clear in His other words on love found in the book of Revelation chapter 2, if you'll turn there with me for just a moment. Most of you are familiar with the church at Ephesus and there Jesus talked about the world of church and what churches do and obviously the value of the church and Jesus died for the church and Jesus loves the church. But when he spoke to the church in Ephesus in Revelation chapter 2 this is what He said, He said in verse 2:

²"I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; ³and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary. ⁴Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love."

"You have left your first love." Why does that matter? Because it's the all-consuming commandment. It's the thing that is of first importance on every list. It's all about love, loving God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength and while the church could be com...commended for its performance it had lost its passion. And my deep prayer is that God will work in our lives together to nurture a love for Him and for one another that will stir the flames of passion within us with a love that is so hot

for God that people around us cannot escape it. You see the Bible simply says that you can do the right thing and still not be right with God. You can do all the right things and still not be right with God.

After I left here in 1992 I went to pastor a church in Florida and obviously my heart was focused and my commitment sincere and my drive and desire intense to be used of God but several years into my ministry there I looked at myself one day and I was constantly thinking about, what can I do more to reach more people and to do more things? And I think those were legitimate objectives in my life. But it wasn't long until I kept trying to refine me and enhance my performance and to make myself sharper and stronger and better. I wanted to be more efficient as a leader and more effective as a pastor and those are all good things. But one day I woke up and had to ask myself the question am I more concerned about being a professional preacher or being a mature Christian? Because the whole passion of my life and my walk with God is that I might be a mature Christian, someone who would grow in Christ likeness, who would love God with all his heart, soul, mind and strength and who would live every day to express what a God saturated life looks like and there's great frustration in every heart and in every life when we have performance without passion, when we have appearance without substance and when we search in all the wrong places and find no satisfaction.

Let's flip the coin. Let's flip the coin tonight and let's go back to what Jesus was saying here in the gospel of Matthew chapter 22 because the reality is, is that I believe what He's calling us to here tonight is the satisfaction of a God saturated life and what God wants us to know and experience is what it means to be saturated with Himself and to know the satisfaction that comes from it.

A. W. Tozer[? Spelling] said this:

"Search the hearts of those whose longings have been awakened by the touch of God within them."

And God wants you not to live your life full but hungry for Him and so what does it mean to have a God saturated life? What does it mean to be a person of passion? In fact that's how I'm describing passion; passion is a God saturated life, passion for Him. So when Jesus says, "*Love the Lord your God with all you heart, and you soul, and your mind, and your strength.*" What is He saying? What does that mean? Well if you haven't already discovered I enjoy making acrostics. I illiterate and I do acrostics. I go both ways, I'm like a mental crossword puzzle going on all the time. [pause for slight congregation laughter] And sometimes I get myself crossed up in the process. [pause for congregation laughter] But if this is all about loving God what does loving God mean? Well let's talk about LOVE.

L It means living for His approval. It means that everything in my life, my whole mind and heart and strength is about His approval. More than anything in my life I want the approval of God, the smile

of His approval. If all this is about a relationship with God then one thing that I've learned in relationships in my life is that love is a facial thing, it's in the face. When you are in love with someone there's an expression of that, that, that love of that affection and the way that you respond to them and the greatest fear that any one of us ever has in a relationship with someone that we love is that we would see in their face something that says, "Un, un don't go there," because love is always seeking the smile of approval and I think one of the greatest things that to be a lover of God means is to be a person who everyday say Father would you show me a way today to find the smile of Your approval in something that maybe nobody else knows and nobody else sees, that's just between me and You. I'm living for your approval.

O Means **obeying His Word**. Jesus said, "*If you love Me keep my commandments.*" In fact next week we're gonna talk about loving God in obedience and what that means. But what this is all about is the fact that once I become a lover of God whether it's an extreme point of obedience or a very simple point the desire of my heart in all things is to be obedient to Him. I want to conform to His will. I want to live up to His expectations and while the Bible is not intended to be a rulebook the Bible is intended to be a letter, not a legal document that I go over to say am I within the limits of the law? It's a love letter that constantly challenges to bring out the best in me to live my life for God and for His purpose.

V **Voicing His praise**, voicing His praise! When I love God, whether my days or good or my days are bad, whether I have joy or I have pain like Bill and Shannon Albright. The heart of me is to voice praise for God because in that voice of praise my praise is nothing more than faith turned inside out and I'm saying God I love you and therefore I trust you with my life and therefore I am voicing His praise.

E **Expecting His return**. To love God means to live in life of this realization, that my heart, my soul, my mind and strength is focused on a point in the future when I will see Him and when I will experience Him. The apostle Paul, who loved the Lord Jesus and gave His life in service and 2nd Timothy chapter 4 talked about at the end of his life how that he was ready to depart, how that he had fought the good fight, how that he had run the race and he had kept the faith but this is what he said in 2nd Timothy 4 and verse 10 [misquote should be verse 8]. He says:

Finally there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not only to me but to all those who loved His appearing.

You see to be in love with Jesus is to live my life wanting to see Christ to be caught up in the realization that absence does make the heart grow fonder and that the great desire of my life day in and day out is O that I might see and be with Jesus Christ.

A couple of days ago I called my mom and dad. They live in Memphis, Tennessee and I told them that in the next few days I was going to come home and see them. Having lived the majority of my adult life and my married life some 20 hours away by car in Florida it's nice to be within a, at least a days range of drive to be able to get there. But something I'll never forget the other day on the phone as I was talking to my mom and day, they were both on the line I began to ask them about a date and I said, "I want to come home and see you and I'm gonna bring the family." And their voices changed just like that because I heard in their voice the eagerness, the anticipation, the desire to see their son. In fact I remembered a day in 1983 when I left Memphis and I moved to South Florida for the first time. I remembered my dad helping us pack up the car and us driving up the street and as far as I was concerned for Connie and me we were on a great adventure of faith. My dad later told me that the tears streamed down his face the entire time that he watched us drive over that hill and he said when he got to the back door he wanted to kick the door down, was how he felt, because we were walking out of their lives. Between that time and this every time we've had a time to get together there's a joy, there's a satisfaction because there's an anticipation in seeing one another and if that's true of human family love whether it's children that have gone off to college or whether it's family, the extended family, the joy of it all is living to see the one that we love. So to love Him is to live loving His appearing.

And tonight we begin that journey of love. Tonight we begin that discovery of what it means to love God and to live a God saturated life. And tonight we need to examine ourselves and to ask are we living in the frustration of a love starved life or are we pursuing the satisfaction of a God saturated life?

I want to ask you to bow your head and close your eyes tonight. We've talked about God being our holy fire. We've asked God to move and to work in our hearts tonight and I believe that there are many different kinds of need in this building tonight. It may be that you're here tonight in this building and there's a deep sense in your life of a need to correct the course, maybe just this week needing to get life back in perspective and to really put the love of God first in your life. It may be that over these next few moments as we pray together and seek to minister to one another that you would just wanta slip out from wherever you are in just a moment and to just simply move and come here to this altar at the front and knee and have a season of prayer and just say Lord, "I want to renew the fire of my heart for Jesus." Maybe tonight you have a need for someone to pray for you. We prayed for others earlier but you literally need someone to pray for you and I'm gonna ask that our prayer partners who are in those sections that they simply stand wherever they are right now and that they would just be around and would be available. If you wanta move toward one of these prayer partners they're here tonight to help, just to take a moment and to pray for you in a point of need in your life. [soft background music] The pastors of our church are also gonna be here and they're gonna be at the front. If you wanta pray with a pastor they're here to pray with you. If you want tonight to make the greatest life

connection that you can make, the connection to know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, Jesus loves you, He's come that you might know Him and experience His love, He died on the cross for your sin, He was buried, He rose again and He extends to you the gift of eternal life and tonight if you want to know Christ, to trust Christ I'm gonna invite you in a moment just to make your way here to the front and speak with one of our pastors. Maybe you want to make a connection with Prestonwood. Maybe you're ready for this to be your church home, your church family, again our pastors are here to help. So the pastors will be at the front. The altar will be open. The prayer partners are available. Tonight from wherever you may be and from whatever the need may be I'm going to invite you and encourage you to simply take a step, to let God guide you and lead you in this time of ministry.

Father I thank you tonight for Your Word and for its call upon our life and heart. I do pray that You would stir a fire within us tonight. I pray that You would do what we cannot do in ourselves by the work of Your Spirit. I pray that You would minister to every need and every heart right now. I pray that you would give faith and courage and conviction. In Jesus name. Amen.

Our musicians are going to sing. I'm going to ask you to stand if you will and we're just going to be in the spirit of prayer and you may move to one of the prayer partners, you may move here to the altar, you may speak with one of our pastors. We're waiting for you tonight.