

## Animate Talk 5: Clever Disguises

Good morning Woodland Hills. Good morning, or good afternoon or good evening pod casters, podristioners and others who are watching at some other time; it is good to see all of you here this morning. We've come to worship God together and to hear His word. I'm Greg Boyd, I'm the senior pastor here at Woodland Hills church.

I've had an interesting morning so far; I woke up at 4 in the morning, which isn't too unusual, I get up a lot at this time but usually I start reading or something but this morning I had this urge, odd urge I might say, to go out and run. So I went for a jog. Usually I go for three or four miles, something like that, but I was feeling really energised by the beauty of the morning, and it was so brisk that I ended up going farther than I thought. I found some trails and I kind of got lost in these trails down by the Mississippi river and it was really interesting and finally I was making my way back home and I found a stray cat who was very friendly – clearly a house cat, it had a little collar on, and I ended up returning the cat to its owner at five in the morning. I'm such a good deed doer you know! So I had a lot of time outdoors this morning, and right about now I'm about ready to take a nap, but that last song got me pumped up. If that doesn't get your juices flowing, I don't know what will.

So anyway, we're in the middle of this Animate series ... not in the middle, we're at the very end, we'll continue it next week a little bit and maybe the week after that; we'll see how this goes. We've been talking about how we can animate; bring to life... that's what the word means our walk with God. So that we're not just people walking around with this head knowledge, with all sorts of facts in our head, but rather we are experiencing some of the truths of the gospel, the truth about who God is and the truth about who we are. We laid the biblical foundation for this, we showed how its played out in church history and how it integrates with neurosciences and some other things and then we applied the use of the imagination, the inner sanctum as it was called in church history, and applied this to our relationship with God, because everything about the Kingdom is centred on our having a relationship with God where He is the source of all of our life. Then we talked last week about how we can use this, the imagination; what Paul calls the heart and mind, the inner sanctum, in adjusting our relationship with ourselves, and God showed up in a powerful way with the sculpting and other things – it was really powerful.

This morning we are going to look at how this affects, at least can affect our relationship with other people because the centre of the Kingdom as Jesus said is about loving God with all our heart, mind, body and soul and loving our neighbour as ourselves. We get this done, we get everything done that needs to be done. So we'll be applying it to this area. This is called 'Clever Disguises', we are entitling this 'Clever Disguises', because if we move in this area we will find that the world becomes one giant clever disguise, which if we have eyes to see, we'll see the Lord behind it. We will see God's love, God's grace, God's mercy operating in every person's life, if we have eyes to see it. These clever disguises that the Lord wears.

I want to open with a reading from the gospel of Matthew and then a quote from the book of Revelation. In Matthew 25 the Lord here is speaking to some people and is really saying what He is going to say on the judgement day. He says "Then the King will say to those on His right 'come you who are blessed by my Father, take your inheritance, which is the Kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world' and here's why 'for I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me. Truly I tell you whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me. Therefore take your inheritance' ... you clearly are part of the Kingdom. Then here is another passage that doesn't look like it has much to do with the passage in Matthew at all but we're going to see here that it has everything to do with it, because in Revelation 12:10 it says that the accuser of our brothers and sisters that is Satan (Hasatan in Hebrew – means the adversary, he's the accuser), he accuses them before God day and night but .... With the coming of the Kingdom of God ... he has been hurled down. Praise God.

I have asked Terri to read another one of her poems. It is found in the last chapter of the Animate booklet, which helps to orientate our mind and hearts on this topic. It is called 'Finding You'

*I caught a glimpse of You just the other day  
In the wide open eyes of that screaming baby  
As my frazzled nerves were moving me to forget.*

*You're not fooling me*

*I saw You shuffling down the street  
Begging for my loose change  
Your hand stretched out and  
your breath smelling like whisky  
I almost missed You there.*

*I recognised Your voice  
Just underneath the voice of that woman  
When she was irritating me with her heartless gossip  
Thank You for getting my attention  
Just in time  
Before I unleashed a harsh judgement ... or joined her*

*You are so good*

*I love the way You come to me  
In clever disguises  
Holding up a mirror so that I can see myself too.*

*I am looking for You Jesus  
Where will You show up today?*

Beautiful. If we can learn to see with the eyes of the Kingdom that poem expresses how we will be engaging in the world. Where will we find Jesus today? It might be in unexpected places; like the person approaching us to bum a dollar for a cigarette who smells like whisky. Let me open with a word of prayer.

Father I pray that You would give me the words to say what really is beyond words. Holy Spirit, anoint these words with Your authority and Your power and open up our hearts and minds and the hearts and minds of those who are listening through pod cast or some other means, to receive Your word. To be confronted with Your word and that You would free us from the demonic bondage that keeps us from loving people the way that You have loved us. That keeps us mediocre in the category of love, that keeps us from being the radical, the reckless, the outrageous, beautiful servant disciples that You've called us and created us and saved us to be. Free us in Jesus name we pray and all God's people said Amen.

Satan is called the accuser in the passage that we read here this morning. It is a role he plays throughout the Bible. I am convinced that every problem we have in life, individually and socially is because we've got this accuser in our brain. He shows up in the garden; we saw several weeks ago in Genesis 3, and the first thing he does is bring an accusation – he is the cosmic lawyer (no offence lawyers!) Satan is the cosmic lawyer. He is the cosmic legalist; he is always judging; he is always accusing. He crops up in Genesis 3 to bring an accusation against God and gets Eve to believe it, and as soon as Eve believes the accusation against God, Eve starts living in an accusation against herself. Every lie about God involves a lie about who we are and that then gives forth to lies about who Adam is and then lies about who Abel is and it goes on and on. The accuser has infiltrated the human race and ultimately every problem I think we've got is the result of that. We find in Zechariah 3 that Satan is accusing Joshua. You find in the book of Job that Satan accuses God and then accuses Job and it goes on and on. He is the accuser. Every problem we have individually and socially is directly or indirectly due to that fact: the fact that we have got the accuser in our brains like a demonic virus infiltrating a computer. He is in there with all of his judgements. We judge God, we judge ourselves, we judge other people and every one of those judgements blocks the flow of love from God to us, and from us to ourselves and us to other people, which is the bulls-eye of the Kingdom. It disrupts everything. That is why the original tree is called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, because when we eat of this tree we believe that we can define, as though we were omniscient, we can define ultimate good and evil. We trust our own ideas about who God is and who we are and who other people are, we trust those ideas more than we

trust what God Himself says about who God is, who we are and who other people are. We are in bondage to the accuser. He has infiltrated our brain and it blocks and screws up everything.

One piece of evidence of just how deeply embedded the accuser is in our fallen brains is that many people, when they begin to see the beauty of who God is and the beauty of who God has created them and saved them to be, when they begin to see that, they begin to feel guilty. Some of you know what I'm talking about. When you begin to see that God looks like Jesus Christ and you hear the message about how beautiful God is, that He is altogether good; there is not a malice streak in Him whatsoever; He is for you and not against you and so on, you may intellectually believe it but there is a part of you that says 'yeh, right! This is all just fluffy, fluffy good news... the other shoe's got to drop sometime... what about the harsh side of God, there has got to be more to this story'. It feels wrong. It feels to some people wrong that God really is this beautiful.

Then when you hear about the good news of who you are and what God has created you and saved you to be. You may believe it and see it in the Word but there is a part of you, for some of us anyway, that is saying 'Yeh right! This is la la land theology, it feels wrong to believe this about ourselves ... its too good to be true'. Whenever we have any part of our brain that says, with regard to our beliefs about God or our beliefs about ourselves that are rooted in the Word and it says 'it is too good to be true, this has got to be one side of the story' you are confronting at the accuser in your brain. To the degree that you give in to the accuser in your brain and just don't dare believe that what God says about Himself in Jesus Christ or what He says about you and Jesus Christ ... you can't believe that as true... to that degree you will find it impossible to live in the fullness of Kingdom life. You will find it impossible to fully and passionately be in love with God and fully and passionately be in love with yourself... you will find it impossible to live out of a centre of fullness rather than out of a centre of desperation which is what the fall causes because to the degree that we believe a lie about God it cuts the flow of life off from God to us and therefore makes it impossible for us to know overflow of love towards ourselves and towards other people. How vital it is, absolutely crucial, central to everything that we dare to believe that it is not too good to be true, that we dare to believe that what God says about Himself is true regardless of how it feels in our brain - to believe it. How crucial it is that we dare to take God at His word about who He is and who we are. How crucial it is that we confront the accuser in our brain. How vital, absolutely essential it is that we give God more credibility than our own brain, because our brain is damaged - we are all brain damaged! So we've got to have a source of authority and credibility that is bigger and stronger and more solid than our brain and that is our Creator. How vital it is that we believe Jesus when He says 'when you see me, you see the Father' ... don't go looking for the Father in any other place. How crucial it is that we believe that He is the Word of God, the singular image of God, the perfect expression of God. How vital it is that we believe that God really is that beautiful, in fact, however beautiful you think God is, know that far from being too good to be true, you're not even close. He is infinitely more beautiful than that. He really is the God who became incarnate and died on a cross and His heart is revealed in his prayer 'Father forgive them they know not what they do'. God really is for you and not against you, He is on your side and not in any sense opposing you - He is a God who has given His life for you. How crucial it is that we confront every element of the accuser that says 'Yeh right, that sounds too good to be true'. So it is with regard to ourselves - how vital it is that we trust God's authority more than our own fallen brain about who we are. That we believe that what God says about us because of what Jesus has done for us is absolutely true, no qualifications, ifs, ands or buts. For instance we have here in this booklet, page 74 and 75 a listing of things that the Bible says is true about you and in this particular exercise it is given to apply to other people but we also should apply it to ourselves. Do you dare? Do you have the audacity to believe that what God says is true when He says, for example, and this is right out of the Word, that you are God's child, that you are Christ's friend, that you have been justified, that you have been united with the Lord and are at one with Him in the Spirit. Do you dare believe that that is true? Regardless of how it may feel in your brain when you believe it. Do you believe? Do you dare to believe that you were bought with a price that you belong to God, that you are a member of Christ's body, that you are a saint who is declared holy? Do you dare to believe that you have been adopted as God's own child? That you have direct access to the Father through the Holy Spirit? Do you dare to believe that you've been redeemed and completely forgiven of all of your sins. Do you dare to believe, and confront the accuser in your brain, believing that you are complete in Christ, that you are free from all condemnation, that you can know and be assured that all things are working together for the better because you're called according to His purpose, that nothing but nothing can separate you from the love of God? Do you dare to believe and have the boldness to believe and confront the accuser if he disagrees that you are established in Christ, you are anointed with Christ, you are sealed with Christ, that you can know that He who began a good work in you will see it through to the end, that you are a citizen of heaven, that you are hidden in Christ, that you haven't been given a spirit of fear but of power and love and of sound mind? And it goes on and on and on and on and everything, everything hangs on believing that that is true, let God be true and if any part of your brain disagrees it is a lie. We're all brain damaged, don't trust your

brain. You've got to go to the Word. The accuser is in our mind making it feel like it's wrong to believe that about ourselves and wrong to believe this about God but how crucial it is that we confront that accuser and just plough forward with the truth of God, but it is not enough to have it in the form of information as we've been saying throughout this series. The truth has to be incarnated if it is going to be transforming and impacting in our life so it is vital that we spend time, as we've been talking about in this series, time with the Lord, where we use all five senses and we find the place and we encounter the living God and we behold, not just reflect abstractly on but we behold His glory and His goodness and His love and we drink deeply from the well of His infinite love and we experience Him with all five senses because that is what's transforming. How vital it is that we spend time not just knowing about the truth that is in the Word about us but experiencing that; I encourage you to have time that you set aside where you just run videos, however you do that, in your brain (and we're all different) but you run videos of what you look like when you're manifesting the truth of who you are, when you're displaying the masterpiece that God has created you to be. Run previews of situations where you tend to look least like Christ and then imagine what you would be like, what you would think like, what you would feel like, how you would respond when you manifest the **truth** of who you are in Christ. What do you look like when you're walking around knowing that you're the temple of the living God and that the Spirit of God is within you and His love, and joy and peace and patience is inside of you and that you're a child of God and a citizen of heaven and there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ and you get all your life from Christ and from no one else so it doesn't matter what people think – how do you look differently when you really know that, and live that? In times of prayer ask the Lord to give you a picture of the real you, in fact prayer can be a sort of rehearsal for real life; a practice – you'll never be good at anything if you don't practice, practice running previews seeing yourself as you really are according to God's authority, responding to situations where you tend to be least like that. If you can't see it and experience it in your brain I can guarantee you it will never happen in your outside life, but when you meditate on the truth of who you are in Christ it is just a matter of time before you start to manifest it in your outside life. So we need to experience the truth about who God is and the truth about who we are and in the process of doing that we confront the accuser between our ears.

The same thing holds true of our relationship with other people. Here we need to take every thought captive to Christ as much as in our relationship with God or our relationship with ourselves. The trouble is we've got the accuser between our ears – this is all wrapped up with our view of God and our view of ourselves. If we are believing a lie about God, we're not going to be getting the fullness of life and significance and worth and security that God wants to give us; we were created to have. We are created to get that from God alone and then to overflow with love and fullness towards others, but you see if we're not getting that from God because we're believing the accuser and his picture of God then we have to try to be getting it from other people. If I am not feeling good about myself and fully alive because of my relationship with God I'm going to try to feel fully alive by my relationship with you in some way – I may not even know that is what I'm doing, but I'll be doing that: 'how am I doing? Do you like me? Am I holy? Do you think I'm funny? Am I a good preacher? What do you think?' We suck life from people and we can't help it! You've got to get life and if you're not getting it from God you're going to be trying to get it from other people, but you see the minute we do that, the second we do that, we're eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, because the second we do this we all of a sudden put on filters and we are now looking at the world in terms of its potential 'food', it's a source of life for us. So we're always evaluating, we're always judging and we call 'good' what confirms our sense of fullness of life and we call 'evil' what doesn't confirm our sense of life and we get life from the very fact that we are judges. If you can step outside your brain sometimes and just listen to yourself think as you're driving down the highway or going shopping in a mall you may find there is this compulsive chatter going on in your head about everything you see and everyone you see. All these opinions, all these evaluations, all these judgements that is the accuser in your head, and every one of those thoughts, in so far as it doesn't express Calvary like love, every one of those thoughts blocks Calvary like love. The accuser is in our head and it affects the way that we view people. Evidence of how deeply rooted the accuser is in our brain is that for some people, in fact for many people, it feels absolutely wrong to love unconditionally certain groups of people. You start to love them and you feel guilty, like 'I'm supposed to not love them like this, I'm supposed to confront them and be harsh towards them'; it feels wrong to love like this. It is evidence of how deeply rooted the accuser is in our mind, especially if you have been raised in a religious environment because part of idolatrous religion is it trains us to get life by contrasting ourselves with certain other groups and we feel righteous by not loving them unconditionally, we feel righteous sometimes by despising them and looking down and judging them, in fact if you follow it through you feel righteous for hating certain kinds of people. In fact if you follow it **all** the way through and you're allowed to do it, you may find yourself feeling righteous for killing these people – historically people have felt righteous for doing that all the time; we're righteous because we want to kill these people. It is absolutely demonic but it is evidence of the accuser in our head and who we decide to withhold love from or to despise or to hate or to maybe even kill is completely,

completely arbitrary. It feels so self-evident to us but that's just because the accuser is in our brain making us feel that way but in fact it is totally arbitrary. It depends on what nation you happen to be born in, or what kind of political ideology you were raised with because whoever opposes your political ideology is going to be the enemy and you're going to feel righteous hating them. Or it may depend on a particular religious group that you were raised in because every religious group has its scapegoats; people that it likes to look down on so it can feel special before God and righteous and the rest. It is totally arbitrary; not based on anything factual – not based on the Word – it is just based on the fact that the accuser is between our ears.

For example; a number of years ago a person came up after the service and had a question, a conundrum they were in. The conundrum was this: some people moved in next door to her and they're gay and now they're throwing a party to get to know everybody in the neighbourhood and she doesn't know if she should go or not. I said 'why? What is the problem?' and she says 'well if I go to this party, then I suspect, in fact I've seen folks visiting their house and I think a lot of their friends are gay, and so if I go there I feel I'm condoning their lifestyle. If I go there I feel I have to say something to let them know that I don't agree with this lifestyle. So maybe I just shouldn't go'. I said to her 'ask yourself this question. What is it about this particular issue; sexual orientation issue, that makes you have to wrestle so hard with this question? Would you feel the same kind of internal consternation and conflict and the need to speak out if instead of it being an issue of sexual orientation it was an issue of let's say, idolatry. Let's say that you have reason to believe that they are actually getting life from how successful they were; how big their house was or their nice car or something else. Would you have the same kind of internal conflict? Because the Bible speaks a whole lot more about idolatry that it does about sexual orientation. Or would you have the same kind of internal conflict if their issues was maybe not sexual orientation but greed; it seemed like they were selfish and didn't care about the poor – maybe they spend 97 or 98% of their income on themselves (which actually is the American average) and they hoarded more resources than they needed in a world where there are people who have less resources than they need, that is what the Bible calls greed. Would you have the same kind of internal conflict if you felt that they were greedy and that maybe their friends are going to be greedy? Would you have the same kind of conflict if maybe they hoarded more food than they needed in a world where there are people who have less food than they need because the Bible calls that gluttony and the Bible has a whole lot more to say about gluttony and whole lot more to say about greed than it has to say about sexual orientation. Or would you feel the same way if maybe you sensed that they were gossipers, they just chatted about everybody, and their friends did too, would you have the same kind of conflict? Because the Bible says a whole lot more about gossip and slander than it does about sexual orientation. Or would you have the same kind of internal conflict if lets say they were self-righteous and tended to judge others? Because the Bible has a whole lot more to say about judgmentalism than it does about sexual orientation. What is it about this particular issue that makes it so monumental that you might actually come across as a very unfriendly neighbour and not going to their party because they invite you over?"

The answer is there is no objective reason why this particular issue gets highlighted as the deal breaker issue other than the fact that this person, and I understand it and have total compassion towards them, has been socially conditioned by a community of people that is under the influence of the accuser and has been trained to look down on this class of people in this sort of way, this is how you're conditioned. So it forms the exception to everything. Religious groups always do that; 'however imperfect we might be, well at least we're not gay! At least we don't have that particular sin'. That is the religion of the Pharisees to a tee. It is the religion of the accuser. The Pharisees looked at Jesus who went to the parties with the tax collectors and the prostitutes and other kinds of sinners and they were the ones who said 'oh, birds of a feather flock together. Look He's condoning their behaviour, He must be one of them'. Full of accusations. But see Jesus, the one sinless person on the planet, He is actually hanging out with the sinners and the tax collectors and the prostitutes. It's not that He's condoning everything they do but He has a love for them that goes beyond whether he condones or doesn't condone everything they do. Our job, Kingdom people, is to live like and love like Jesus and to rebuke the thoughts of the Pharisees; the accuser in our head. We've got the accuser in our brain. We need to confront this deeply rooted accuser that makes us feel guilty for loving people too much – that is so demonic, precisely because it feels so obviously true if you're afflicted with it. How desperately we need to take the word of God, what God says about every other person on the planet, and He says it on Calvary, that they are worth dying for, that they have unsurpassable worth. How crucial it is that we take that truth and live it and think it and breathe it and use it to confront every aspect of the accuser in our brain that tries to tell us that we're not supposed to love that radically. Paul says this in Ephesians chapter 5, He says 'live in love as Christ loved us and gave His life for us'. I love this passage – it is Christianity 101 but it is so profound.

Look at the implications of this. 'Live in love' that means there is no off button – we are supposed to love, lock it in! How are you supposed to love? Well you're supposed to love like Christ loved us and gave His life for us. We are supposed to live like this, that means we never have to decide whether we should love like Christ loved us, we are just supposed to do it. How did Christ love us? Well, when we were yet sinners Christ loved us to the point of dying for us. 'When we were yet dead in our sin' the bible says 'Christ loves us and gave His life for us'. When we were at war with God ... when as Ephesians 2 says, by nature enemies of wrath, when we had given God every reason we could possible give not to love us, He loves us to the point of becoming a human being and dying a God forsaken death on the cross for us. That is how we're to love. The person who gives us every reason a human being can ever give another human being not to love them – that's the person we're to love, like Christ loved us and gave His life for us. So it is with every other person on the planet. Live in love as Christ loved us and gave His life for us – it is the bulls eye of the bulls eye, it is the centre of the centre, it is what the Kingdom of God is all about. We are the dome over which God reigns, to the extent that we live like this. We are not the dome over which God reigns to the extent that we don't love like this. It means it is never wrong to love too much. It means you can't possibly love too much. It means that the only thing that's wrong is you withhold love because of something you see in another person. Live in love as Christ loved us and gave His life for us.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 16:14 "let everything you do be done in love". **Everything** you do. Everyone say 'everything'....*everything*. **Everything**... that is kind of all-encompassing I'm thinking. I'm thinking it probably includes ... everything, which means that every thought we think is to be done in love, every word we say is to be done in love, every attitude we have is to be held in love, every behaviour we engage in is to be done in love and what is love? 1 John 3:16, defines love by pointing us to Jesus Christ who gave His life for us while we were yet sinners. Everything about us is to be conformed to that. That is what it means. 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 – to take every thought captive to Jesus Christ, that everything be characterised by that kind of love, let everything you do be done in love. It means that if you can't do it in love then don't do it because everything is supposed to be done in love. It means you never have to decide whether anything you're going to do should be loving or not ...no! it defines it for you ... let everything you do be done in love.

Jesus puts it this way: Luke 6 – He says love like the Father causes the sun to shine and the rain to fall ... love like God does ... He loves like the sun shines and the rain falls. Now the sun doesn't decide who it should shine on, it just shines. The rain doesn't decide who it's going to fall on, it just falls. Jesus in fact specifies it; God causes the rain to fall on the just and the unjust and the sun to shine on the righteous and the wicked, it just does what it does, regardless of who receives it. That's how we are to love, we are to love indiscriminately, we are to love like the rain falls, we are to love like the sun shines, which means that we never have to give a nanosecond of a thought as to whether a person – any person on the planet – deserves our love or not. They do, because its not about them, its about what we're called to do, we're called to love like the rain falls and the sun shines. It is to be an out flowing of love towards others – radical, indiscriminate, reckless, scandalous love – the kind of love that God had towards us and He gave His life for us on Calvary while we were yet an enemy. To believe that means that you let go of all evaluation, all judgements, all categories and you just live in love as Christ loved us and gave His life for us. It really is that simple. Now the enemy comes along, the accuser and says 'aw, no way. If you love like that then you're participating in their sin. If you love like that well then the world is going to (excuse the French) going to hell in a hand basket. If you love like that, well, if you love Osama Bin Laden then you're condoning what he did in America and if you love the Liberals then you're condoning what they did in America and if you love the gay people then you're condoning their lifestyle ...' Name whatever category of people you like to hate you want and the enemy will say 'if you don't get down on them, take a stand against them and get harsh against them, withhold love from them, well then you're participating in their evil'. So people feel guilty for loving too much. Love isn't about what you condone or don't condone, to love somebody isn't to condone everything they do. Probably you love yourself but I betting you don't condone everything you do. Am I right? And your best friend, you don't condone everything they do. You see the sun doesn't decide whether it condones the person's behaviour or not when it decides to shine, its not about them its about the sun. So also its not about whether you agree or disagree or anything like that its about who you are because of what Jesus has done for you and your call in life is to love like Jesus Christ loves. To love doesn't mean you condone everything in a person's life and to love doesn't mean that you let a person do whatever they want to do; like you're supposed to be sort of a doormat, its not loving to let someone abuse you. You're supposed to love your neighbour as yourself which means you ascribe unsurpassable worth to your neighbour and also subscribe unsurpassable worth to yourself and sometimes in doing that love has to confront and say 'no, stop it' but to live in love does mean that we agree with God with regard to every person we're thinking about or looking at or engaging with, that they have unsurpassable worth because our Creator said so and He's the only one who knows. It means that we seek to conform every thought and every attitude to their unsurpassable worth and to express love in

how we think and how we speak and how we engage with them. To live in love means we take this tree of the knowledge of good and evil, this judgement and we just put it aside, this tool that the accuser uses to get us to think that somehow we're fixing the world, you see this is just the oldest trick in the book, the accuser says 'you fix the world by withholding love from certain people and if you love then you're helping break the world'. In fact if you follow it through you fix the world by not just withholding love but by despising and disdain certain kinds of people, that's what makes you righteous. You fix the world, if you follow it through, by hating certain kinds of people, and you fix the world, if you follow it through, by killing certain kinds of people and that's still with us to this day. People who feel righteous because they think that certain kinds of people should be hated and certain kinds of people should be killed and it's all in the name of God and justice or whatever. It is the oldest and most deeply entrenched, most demonic lie in the book; all of the bloodshed in world history is based on that lie; we the righteous if we just kill enough people and hate enough people, we're going to fix the world and the world will be like us – won't that be wonderful? And it goes on and on and on and on; a bloody, macabre merry-go-round of senselessness, and it is evidence of how deeply embedded the accuser is in our brain that we can't wake up to how futile all that is. To live in love means you take that 'I can fix the world with my superior wisdom and my superior righteousness' and you let go of it all and you give it to God. Paul says in Romans 12 (what an important passage) he says love your enemy, feed them when they're hungry, give them something to drink when they're thirsty, and leave all vengeance, all retaliation to God. God will run the world – He's pretty good at it. God will fix the world. God will do justice, we can trust God for that.

A lot of the breaking in the world is caused by people who are broken trying to fix it, and we're called to simply serve the world, love the world and everybody in the world; to manifest the love that God has towards us, towards every person out there. To live in love means we commit to agreeing with God that every person has unsurpassable worth. It means we let go of the judgement mechanism and it means we live in service towards others and live to agree with God and express that in how we think and how we speak about them. Do we dare to love like that? Because in all of us there is a part of our brain that is going 'what about?... we need to fix the world' but what we don't see is that all that is a form of idolatry – where we're giving ourselves a sense of life because we're righteous enough to be able to have the ideas that fix the world, we're righteous enough to be not like those people who are further breaking the world, we're giving ourselves life by putting ourselves in the position of God and judging the world. Do we dare to confront the accuser and choose to bless our enemies rather than curse them, and choose to believe as Paul says love does in Romans 8:13, to believe the best and hope the best for every person out there... to believe that in fact they are doing the best that they can? Do we dare to live in love as Christ has loved us and given His life for us? Do we dare to have the attitude that Jesus had? Remember we are supposed to imitate Jesus; Ephesians 5:1 – imitate, mimic. When He was dying on the cross He prayed 'Father forgive them they know not what they do' that is to be our attitude towards all people. He's talking about the people who are hanging the nails in His wrists and ankles, is that our attitude; 'Father forgive them, they don't know what they do'? Can we leave it to God to decide to what degree a person is or is not responsible for what they do? Our job since we don't know that is to let go of that tree of the knowledge of good and evil and simply do what God tells us to and that is to love and to serve. When we can get to that point, when we can get to that point of collapsing the judgement mechanism, letting go of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, living in love as Christ has loved us and gave His life for us... that is the definition of the Kingdom. God is now reigning over your life. You are the dome over which God reigns; the King dome of God. This is the definition of freedom, the definition of beauty, this is the definition of peace, this is the definition of joy... you'll never know how burdensome it is to play God until you stop playing, and while it's so freeing to be able to just love; to not have the responsibility to evaluate and critique and to gossip in your brain about everyone you see and have the responsibility to be the moral guardian of society and all the rest...when you leave that to God and His love it is so freeing. Something inside of you erupts – this is what you were created for ... it erupts, there is this joy. You start to see the world differently and see God differently.

One of the things that begins to happen which is beautiful when you get free of the accuser and you just let it go, one of the things that begins to happen is you begin to experience God in ways that you would never otherwise have experienced God. When you begin to extend to others the grace that God gives to you it will deepen infinitely your appreciation for God's grace. If God can be working in the life of my worst enemy and I choose to love him and agree with God about their worth I will discover that that deepens my sense of His love for me because the truth is I'm no different from that person. Once you've collapsed that judgement mechanism you see that. You see why Jesus said that in order to help us get rid of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and get free from the accuser. He says reverse it, just reverse it. Whatever sin you see in another person, however heinous society may judge it, and maybe society needs to lock them up, that's fine, but whatever you see consider to be a little tiny dust particle in comparison to your own sin which, whatever it

is, is a tree trunk. You see He is just reversing the whole thing. Walk around like Paul says being 'the worst of sinners'. With that attitude, it frees you to just love – you don't need to be evaluation or fixing or anything. Now we all need people in our life who can speak into our life and we speak into their life, that's what Kingdom community is all about; that's what the one another's of the New Testament are all about, but for all other people our job is simply to be Jesus towards them and love them as Christ has loved us, and it is so freeing. When you take off the judgements it is like a cork unleashing a geyser and it just flows out of you and now you're dancing in the Kingdom like we're supposed to dance. Now you can begin to see what Jesus was talking about in Matthew 25.

Here's a thing; religion always sides with the accusers, against the accused. Jesus always sides with the accused against the accusers. Which side are you going to be on? That's what He says, when He says whatever judgement you give, just know that's the judgement you're going to get. You play the accusing game or you play the side with the accused game. What does Calvary mean? God dying on a cross, what does it mean if it doesn't mean 'hey I'm on the side of the accused? - Those who are under the foot of the enemy, the accuser – I'm there'. You see all the people He mentions in Matthew 25 were part of the society of the judged in the first century; the homeless, the poor, the sick, those who were maybe justly put into prison – folks in the first century would see all those folks as getting what they're due. They did something, God's judging them and that's what frees us from having responsibility for taking care of them. What Jesus is saying is this 'you know what? You've got to know that I'm particularly on the side of the accused, and whatever you do to them, the least of these, the ones that society most frowns on, the ones that religion most judges – the outsider, I'm there and I take it personally. What you do to them, you are doing to me. There's your marching order – you do that you're in the Kingdom, don't do it – you're not in the Kingdom'. The world becomes at this moment a stage of clever disguises. Where you can see the outrageous grace of God in the face and in the breath of the drunk who comes up and is trying to bum a dollar of you or a cigarette, and so for every other person on the planet, if you have eyes to see. You see there is a beauty there. Jesus said that if you love those who love you, you know your friends and family, there is no reward in that, every pagan does that – that's just normal human behaviour, but if you love the unlovable and love your enemies (and everyone's thinking the Romans who are oppressing these people violently – national enemies) if you love your enemies, well there's great reward in that because now you're like your Father in heaven who causes the sun to shine on the good and the evil. Part of the reward is the way it expands our heart and mind and enables us to dance in the outrageous, scandalous love of the triune God. It changes you; the way you view God, the way you view yourself, the way you view others, and you silence the accuser in your brain.

To live in love like this means we've got to be going back to the source of life over and over again, because you can't give what you don't have. If you're running on empty, you can't help but live in the world of judgement, eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you'll be sucking life of from people left and right and you won't even know it – the sound of suction is judgement. Oh I like that – the sound of our suction; our idolatrous suction of life is judgement. The minute we start doing that we're into the evaluation game, critiquing, assessing, approving or disapproving. We've got to go back to the source of life experientially and be drinking regularly and receiving from God the worth and significance and value and security and the love that He wants to give us for free because He's the only one who can satisfy the soul. As we get full of that we begin to percolate over. Then to live and love like this means that we commit, regardless of how we feel in our brain, regardless of all the practical thinking in our brain, because a lot of that is simply accuser talk ... we commit to loving others like Christ loved us, no ifs, no ands, no buts. However it feels – it means you don't pay attention to the voice in your mind that says that it is wrong to love like this – you're not righteous if you love like this, that's demonic because it's implying that you're righteous if you don't love like this and that goes directly against the central mandate of the Kingdom. Commit to loving like this, practice it as you're driving in the car, practice it as you're mowing the lawn, just be blessing people left and right, whoever you see, whatever they're doing, whether you condone their behaviour or don't condone their behaviour ... who cares what you think? If they invite you into their life – fine, it may be helpful to express a thought or two and them to you, but otherwise get rid of all that, you don't need an opinion about anything, just bless them and just love them. Practice that throughout the day – commit to loving like Christ loves you.

The third thing, and this brings in the particular emphasis of this series. The third thing is ... ask God to change your representation of the least of these. You can have all the information in the world but if the way you're actually representing people in your head is loathsome and disgusting and putrid or whatever, you will invariably have that emotion. All of our emotions are associated with our representation. You can try and try to love all you want, and feel differently about people but as a matter of fact in won't change unless you change the way you actually represent the enemy that you're called to love. Ask God to show you what He sees. A particular dramatic instance of this in my own life, and I shared this some time ago but its worth



sharing again was that there was a guy – and some of you may remember this, it must have been ten/twelve years ago – a guy whose little boy died and as they did the autopsy they discovered that this boy, who was three years old, had been abused, viciously abused every day of his life since he was born: In unthinkable ways. I mean the injuries were mind boggling – nightmarish. This kid was born into a demonic nightmare from which he could not escape. The guy who did this was a friend of the mother and they reported this on the news and as I was watching this on the news I was filled with such sorrow for the boy but rage towards this man – when things happen to kids it just pushes my buttons in a way that nothing else does... and there's a history to that. Some of that undoubtedly would be righteous, because you should be enraged in one sense when this happens but what was going on in my heart and my head was not godly. If you could have put a megaphone to my brain somehow and heard what was going on you would probably have heard something like 'I hope that guy burns in hell... forever... and I want to watch it'. It was ugly ...eugh. So that night I'm praying and as I'm praying ... and this is imaginative prayer, God gave a picture to me of a little boy in a closet – his face has been beaten, he was crying, but he was mainly afraid of the dark, and he wanted to get out. I was aware that the father or the man was on the other side of this door, and I could see this boy in this closet crying hysterically – he couldn't catch his breath – that kind of crying. My heart is immediately going to this kid, undoubtedly it has something to do with, very much like the kid I talked about last week – me – thrown out of the house in the cold and not being able to get, begging to get back in, and this kid is begging to get out, so I'm identified with this kid. I'm there, I'm feeling it from the inside and then I feel this impulse to pray for this little boy locked in this closet, scared and in pain, but I'm confused because I'm assuming that this boy was the boy who got killed today; that the picture was of the life that this little boy went through and my heart was breaking for this little boy and I was assuming it was the boy I had just heard about on the news. So I kind of asked the Lord; 'Lord do you want me to pray for this boy who is already dead? Are we supposed to pray for dead people? I don't think we're supposed to do that' and the word I got back so clearly was this. "That's not the boy who was killed. That's the man who killed him". You see everyone's got a prequel – we don't know what we don't know. What a beautiful spin the Lord did on me to catch me in my accuser thinking.

I don't know if this was a word of knowledge giving me an accurate history of this guy's life or whether it was just a way of representing something so that it evoked compassion in me rather than judgement, but what I know is that nobody who is raised in a normal family with a normal brain wakes up one day and says 'hey, I think I'll get my jollies from torturing a little kid'. At some point this guy, I had to assume, was just a normal little boy who wanted to impress Dad by hitting a home run. What happened to this guy that turned him into this kind of a monster? I have no idea, but that's the point ... I have no idea. So my attitude is supposed to be, God I trust You because you have the whole story, my job is to pray 'Father forgive him, he knows not what he does'. The extent to which he is morally responsible for what he did, God will decide, but if I go there and pretend like I'm God it will evoke judgement from me rather than compassion and my job description is to have compassion rather than judgement. Though society has to lock this guy up and put him away, yes indeed, you see Kingdom thinking and Kingdom behaviour isn't to be defined by the society at large but rather by defined by our Lord Jesus Christ who tells us to live in love as we have been loved. Christ loved me when I was a reprobate sinner and I am called to love this man regardless of what he has done... so to pray for him and to bless him. The world all feels righteous for hating this guy, there's nothing unique in that, there's no reward in that, but when we love the unlovable now there's a reward, because it expands our heart and we see things, and we see God and we see ourselves in a different way – we're dancing in the outrageous, scandalous love of the triune God.

Who are your enemies? Just think for a moment about this. We have national enemies; some of us do if you've been incorporated in a certain way there are certain people that you instinctively feel righteous in hating. Who are your national enemies? Who are your political enemies? If you've been raised in a political environment you may have been indoctrinated to instinctively identify certain people as ungodly and evil and as dangerous to society, or whatever. Who are your cultural enemies? The people or classes that you have maybe been indoctrinated, incorporated to just loathe because they are the ones who are destroying this great country of ours; its not your sin of course that's doing the damage, its their sin! And who are your personal enemies? People maybe in the office or people who are in your neighbourhood or who are in your own family, or people in your past that maybe have done things that cause you now to just loathe them, even feel righteous not extending the love of Christ towards them ... maybe even feel righteous hating them. People you really have trouble forgiving. Who are your enemies?

Now as I call the worship team up I want us to go into a three minute exercise and I would like us to stay still for the duration of this three minute exercise. I want you right now to think about – and Holy Spirit would you help us with this? – think about who an enemy in your life is. Just pick out one if you have more than one, an enemy – someone that you at least have trouble loving and maybe you actually despise them, and represent

them in your mind somehow – however that looks. Get a picture of them. Then be aware now of how you feel about this person, don't try to hide that, go ahead and have the feeling that you have – its never cool to pretend with God – just have it. Now I want you to invite Jesus to come and stand alongside you, also looking at this enemy – can you do that? Holy Spirit help us to represent this in our mind. Jesus is in fact standing next to you looking at this enemy, so represent it. Now tell Jesus how you feel about this enemy – be honest – but as a disciple of Him and He is Lord, I want you to submit to Him and say 'Lord I want to see what You see. You say this person was worth You dying for, You say this person has unsurpassable worth – I don't see it, I don't see it. You say this person is a potential masterpiece. I don't see it. You say this person is made in Your image. I don't see it. You say I'm supposed to love this person, but I don't see how.' There is beautiful submission there and now ask the Lord to show you; to change the way you actually think about this enemy.

Holy Spirit do Your creative work right now. It's going to be different for every person. Can you see the light of God's love on this person? Maybe the Lord will show you this person as a little child, something about the way they were raised. However He does it, it will evoke compassion in you rather than judgement. Let the Lord remind you that He loved you when you were in a worse position than this enemy is. So love your enemies. Notice if there's any accuser thinking in your head saying 'it's wrong to love like this, it's bad to love like this, its harmful to love like this' and just ask the Lord to help you shut that off. Silence... because you're a person who listens to the Lord and not to the accuser.

Father, help us to bring every thought captive to the love of Jesus Christ, for the least of these, towards our worst enemies, free us from all remnants of the accuser in our brain and to love in the scandalous, beautiful way that You loved us. Now Lord as we continue to go into this time of worship, and take up this offering we do it with an acknowledgement that everything we have comes from You. Guide us and lead us in how we steward it. Focus our minds on You as we sing about Your Spirit and we yield to Your Spirit. Be present here, help us represent you; the One we're singing to. Change our hearts, form us and make us into Your image in this time of our worship of You in Jesus name we pray. Amen.