

Lord, make these words Your Word, that our hearts may become Your heart. Amen.

We are launching a preaching series this month,
addressing the four “C’verbs” in our new mission statement.
Our overall mission is **Carrying** God’s contagious love into the world.
We will do that by: **Conducting** God’s power into human life;
Cultivating Christ-centered lives; and
Catalyzing transformation of the world and our communities, one person at a time.

So today let’s talk about being carriers of God’s contagious love into the world.
Originally it read, “Carrying God’s crazy love into the world.”

The word “crazy” can be pejorative and we didn’t want to trigger negatives.

But let’s just play with it for a moment – because God’s love is kind of crazy.

It is “crazy” to love billions of people all at once.

It is “crazy” to sacrifice everything for the one you love.

It is “crazy” to forgive even when people aren’t sorry and will hurt you again.

It is “crazy” to love when you aren’t loved back, at least not as much as you love.

Just think about the human capacity for greed and harm, and listen again (*repeat*)

I tried to come up with an example...

Imagine a father whose daughter has everything she could ever want.

But she wants a car. She’s 14, and can’t have a car. So she steals one. And crashes it.

Her father forgives her, and when she’s old enough and gets a license,

he buys her a car. She crashes it. He tells her to wait till she’s older,

but one day she takes his, and crashes it. He makes her take drivers ed again –
and buys her a car. Does that make sense? That’s crazy love.

Not a great example, but kind of gets at why one would say God’s love is crazy.

Because no matter how far we stray or how much damage we do to ourselves
and to others and to this planet we call home, God loves us and gives us
another chance. We can never run out of chances with God.

How do we know? By the way God acted with Abraham, and David, even when
they screwed up. By what God said through the prophets of old.

We know by the way Jesus was with his followers, continually loving them
despite their faithlessness and ineptitude. And by the stories Jesus told
about how God operates, how things run in the “kingdom of God.”

The workers who get paid the same no matter how long their work. The shepherd who won't stop looking till he finds and restores the lost sheep to the fold. Most of all, the father who accepts and restores sonship to the son who took his inheritance and left him for dead, only to return starving and humbled. God is Love. God's nature is love. God cannot but love, even the most unlovable.

We are made in God's image, my friends. That means we too are wired to love. Our lives and experiences, wounds and traumas can interfere with that wiring, but it's there. At our best, we are people of love.

But can we love the world? Can we love everybody? Even people who hurt us? Isn't that self-destructive? Crazy?

If we were called to love on our own strength, yes. Our own love is finite.

And because it is finite, we tend to limit who we love.

But God does not ask us to love on our own strength. What did John write?

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God.

Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.

Love comes from God. We are called to carry it into this hurting world, like aqueducts carry water to thirsty and parched places.

like vines carry nutrients to extremities to produce juicy, luscious fruit.

We are not called to carry judgment; we are not called to carry condemnation; we are not called to carry our cultural values, our morality, our rules.

We are called to carry God's love, to be love bearers, and when we do that intentionally and do it together, God's love can transform people around us.

I remember when my church in Stamford started to carry love to the men and women living in the shelters in the south end of town.

We started by providing a monthly meal at the Men's Shelter, and as I prayed with the guys I got the idea for a monthly healing service. So we started that, down the street, in the building that housed the women's shelter. People came.

But there were other people drinking out on the street in front of the chapel.

One day, Joyce said, "What are we going to do for *them*?" "I don't know," I said.

"What are we going to do for them?" "We'll bring them sandwiches," she said.

So she made twelve bag lunches and got some folks and took them down and

gave them out while I was setting up for the service. And then she said, "Who wants a prayer?" Every hand went up. So she prayed for each one. And the next time she went, she had a cold, so she asked them to pray for her too. They all did.

And the next time, she had given out the bags and was praying, and a big, kind of scary looking guy came running toward them bellowing, "I want one of them!" Joyce was like, "We gave out all the lunches..." but he said, "No, I want a prayer!" And they prayed. It was church right there on the sidewalk. It was contagious love.

Something amazing happens when we carry God's love together – because God's love is contagious. Like a virus, it gains strength as it spreads. We are called to be the kind of good virus that gets injected into diseased cells, to overwhelm disease and activate healing. We are immunotherapy in the cancers of this world, targeting evil and blasting it with love.

"Go and make disciples of all nations," Jesus commanded – and many thought that meant persuading people to be Christians. But how did Jesus make disciples? By demonstrating love and power. By loving the unlovable, teaching the unteachable, healing the unhealable, forgiving the unforgivable. He made disciples by conducting the power of God into human life, inviting his followers to cultivate Christ-centered lives, catalyzing transformation, one person at a time.

Making disciples of the world means loving the world, carrying God's contagious love into the world. That's how we make God visible.

No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

That is my prayer for us, my sisters, my brothers, my uncles and aunts – that we make God's love complete as we allow Jesus to take up residence in us, and through us spread his love around the world.

So I guess that means we are hosts to this good virus, letting it root in us and heal our operating system, and move through us to others.

We start every day by getting in touch with God's love, God's power. Then we let it flow through us. Amen?

So let's pray for more love, more power.

Song – [More Love, More Power](#)

John 15:1-2, 8-12

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine-grower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."

1 John 4:7-12, 19

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

We love because he first loved us.