Have you ever been so in love with a person that you have found yourself saying “I love you so much, I would die for you”? This statement is made in love songs, books and films and will continue to be uttered. Whether consciously or unconsciously this can lead us back to the example of love that Jesus demonstrated on the cross.

Where God showed us that there was a love available to all people and it was deep. The good shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep.

In the Gospel passage it talks about the threat of the wolf, who tries to snatch the sheep and make them scatter. The wolf in this passage could lead us to think of the things that distract us and try to take us away from God.

That move our focus from a loving God, to a place of forgetting just how loved we are. To a place of despair.

It is unfortunate that when dark spells creep into our lives, we may well forget we have a mark of love imprinted on our hearts. A mark that says God loves us so much he came in human form washed away all sins and died for us. So the guilt of sin would no longer distance us from God.

The freedom of sins can be a slightly fearful place to be. It could lead us to ponder whether it means we can do what we want and not worry of the consequences. But I think we all know this is not what being a follower of Christ means. When Christ is in our hearts we may begin to love differently, selflessly and praying for good for people.

Whilst we try to juggle living our lives and being followers of Christ. Sometimes things will creep into our lives that can move us to a place of distrusting God.

Fear, disappointment, anger, pain and suffering. Its difficult in these times of pain and suffering to remember we are beloved children of God. But in those places God wants to meet us and hold us in our time of need.

There are things we can do to try and remind ourselves that we are loved by God. I recently had a situation where the external noise led me to forget that I was loved by God. The wolf had led me away and despair crept in.

I knew I needed to take action so I began to read a book about prayer. It led me to a place of stillness and in the stillness I found myself able to confront the fears and concerns I was carrying. I did this by using the Jesus prayer and silence. Whenever a negative thought would creep into my head I would say “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, have mercy on me a sinner”. It pulled me away from the wolf and back into the loving arms of God.

We could also start in the morning when we wake up, and in the evening before we go to bed reaffirming our identity. It does not take a lot of time but our first and last thoughts for the day could be to remind ourselves who we are. That we are beloved children of God. Taking us back to our baptism where we hear that Christ has claimed us, we are his sheep. We are loved by a God who laid down his life for the sheep.

Something I would like to encourage us all to do, is to think about the tangible places where we sense God’s love. What I would really love at the end of the service is to hear people sharing stories of where they experienced God’s love this week, because it will be different for each of us. But when we share these stories it can bring us all a bit closer to God’s love and gain new understandings.

The Gospel passage also says “I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold I must bring them also and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock.”

This is extraordinary and it likely is a reminder that God’s love was not something just for one group of people, that God’s love was embracing all people. No longer were there to be groups of people set apart by the love of God. God’s love was stretched out to all, so we could become one body together.

Being one body led me to think about relationships. There are times in our relationships where love can go wrong. Questions can pop into our minds about how people really feel about us and whether they really do love us or not. There can be breakdowns in communication, which can lead to conflict and hurt feelings.

The famous poet Edgar Allan Poe says “years of love have been forgot in the hatred of a minute.” Human love is that fragile. But we may find some comfort in knowing that God’s love is not like this.

We may have moments of feeling disappointment in relationships but our relationship with God and God’s love is much bigger and can hold this.

But I do hope we can be encouraged by God’s love to remember that love can be fragile and we need to walk delicately with those we love. Love them boldly even when our egos may be hurt by cruel words or misunderstandings.

We can try and eliminate bad feelings because we can have confidence that in any situation we are loved boldly by God and this love is enough to cover any disappointment we may face in relationships.

The Gospel ends saying that the love from God is laid out for us. Its not forceful or with power. It is a gift that we are offered. This gift can help us in how we feel about ourselves but also about how we love others. To love without expectations and to not allow our egos to take the driving seat in our relationships. Our egos will be there but it does not need to be in control.

So, God is the shepherd and lays down his life for us. We can keep this in our hearts and minds. If we feel perhaps unloved in this world, we can have reassurance that engrained into us, we are loved by God, when we feel the wolves are trying to tempt us away into despair we can remind ourselves that God has the power and wants to remind us just how loved we are.

We are reminded that this love is given out for all people, not just a select few. God’s all powerful and encompassing love is more inclusive than we can comprehend. We can use this knowledge to help encourage us to go out and love all people, even those with whom we may disagree or dislike.

Finally, that this love is freely given. We do not need to earn it, we do not need to worry if another person has more. We are all equally loved and encouraged to share this transformative love in the world.

So I started this sermon saying have we felt a love so deep that you have thought or said “I love you so much I would die for you?”. If you have never said or felt this way don’t worry.

But I want to remind us all that God loves us so much that he would die for us. So whenever we feel alone or unloved in this world, we can know that God feels this way about us. We are loved so deeply that God would die for us.

So how can we use this love in the world today? Perhaps we could start a love revolution to be warriors of love. Going out and making it our ambition to love others and let all people know that they are worthy of love. To share the love and protection that we encounter from the good shepherd. Amen

John 10:11-18

**11**‘I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. **12**The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. **13**The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. **14**I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, **15**just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. **16**I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. **17**For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. **18**No one takes[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%2010&version=NRSVA#fen-NRSVA-26489a)] it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.’

Acts 4: 5-12

**5**The next day their rulers, elders, and scribes assembled in Jerusalem, **6**with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John,[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%204&version=NRSVA#fen-NRSVA-27018b)] and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. **7**When they had made the prisoners[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%204&version=NRSVA#fen-NRSVA-27019c)] stand in their midst, they inquired, ‘By what power or by what name did you do this?’ **8**Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, ‘Rulers of the people and elders, **9**if we are questioned today because of a good deed done to someone who was sick and are asked how this man has been healed, **10**let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that this man is standing before you in good health by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth,[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%204&version=NRSVA#fen-NRSVA-27022d)] whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead. **11**This Jesus[[e](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%204&version=NRSVA#fen-NRSVA-27023e)] is “the stone that was rejected by you, the builders; it has become the cornerstone.”[[f](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%204&version=NRSVA#fen-NRSVA-27023f)] **12**There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved.’