

**“Ambassadors”**  
**By Chris Ulrich**  
**Sunday, October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2017**

Amen, you may be seated. A lot going on up here; I saw Kirk running over there with Malcolm’s son, with the tambourines. I saw a can of Altoids on the floor, I saw Pat strumming on the guitar, so there was just a lot of activity. But, I appreciate that it's great to be in the house of God and to see everybody today.

I'm going to ask you to turn with me, really quickly, to the Book of John, chapter one, verses one through twelve.

**John 1:1-12** *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:*

Mike Alford, if you could come, and lead us in a word of prayer, please.

**Mike:** Bow your heads. Lord Jesus, we just praise Your holy name, Lord God. We thank You for Your love, Lord God, and showing Your light to us, Lord God. No, we're not that light, but we are, like John, to help manifest that light, Lord God, to others around us, Lord God, that we hold in our life, we've accepted it, Lord God, and we're Your sons and Your daughters, Lord God. Lord, we want to be faithful, Lord Jesus, and hear, "Well done," at the end of this life, Lord God. We want to help other people who don't have that light, who don't know the light, that they can, hopefully, they can be saved, too. We just pray that You would bless the message today, and bless and anoint Brother Chris, as he delivers the message, Lord God. And help him to deliver the message that You would have for him, in the name of Jesus, Amen.

Thank you, Mike. I have to say that I really appreciated the music this morning. And there was a song—not the one that we just heard—but prior to that, that we're kind of doing, it's kind of a new song, "Your Presence Is Heaven to Me." Now, what I like about things like that is, every now and then, I mean, we do traditional songs, but we'll have newer ones. And, I'm not part of the music ministry at all, I just appreciate it. I don't know how the committee gets together, or, Andy, somebody comes up to him, this is, "Oh, I got this song," or, "I heard this song," or read about it. And, then they just start practicing it, but it blesses all of us. I guess one way I would describe it is, it was cheerful, and that's important. And, I appreciate the simplicity of this passage we just read. Remembering it, for the first time I read it after being born again. And it was more than just enlightening, it was as though God spoke to me personally. There were things that were enlightening, and there were things that I knew that, that my life had changed for the better. One of the highlights from last week's sermon that Parrish preached was him saying, there's still a newness that we get in God, that's as though we were born again yesterday. And that's coming from a man who's been many years in the faith. Many of us can relate to that, because there is a certain

freshness, behold all things are new, old things are passed away (2 Corinthians 5:17). And, each day God gives his blessings and his mercies are renewed. And it's not as though we look at each day with dread or fear. I get that there's problems, I get that we all face different dilemmas, and situations, and whatever they might be. Sometimes they might be tragedy, but we still have the power of God; we still have the power of God to get us through each day. And, God will give us that newness of life if we are willing to receive it, for however long we're saved. And part one of the message today is receiving God's love.

## **Part 1: Receiving God's Love**

So, what does it mean to receive God's love? The paradox to that is that it may not always feel like God's love, but that doesn't mean it's not real, that doesn't mean it's not right. And, it's not something we can just explain away in a few quick sentences. Somebody asks you to tell us a little bit about God's love, I would imagine that there are hundreds of thousands of millions of different answers from different people. Because, it could mean different things to us at different points of life, too. It could mean receiving a healing touch. It could mean that the bills are paid. It could mean that we have a relationship that's been mended. It could be the wisdom that God blesses us with. Or it could be something that God's correcting us with, that He's showing us that we need to go a different way. Or it could be just savoring the breath of life.

But, on the other end of the scale, what does it mean to reject God's love? I don't think we have to look very far, or look very hard, to see what it looks like to reject God's love, because we're surrounded by it in this world, and I would even go so far as to say that we're inundated in it. I would even go so far as to say that, sometimes it feels like, going through this life as a Christian, that you're just being chased. I'm talking about just, relentlessly. It's just an ongoing thing. You don't know what's going to happen next. You don't know what law is going to be enacted next. You don't know what persecution, or what people's reaction to our stances in God is going to be next, and it is like being chased, but there's victory. We all have power in God. And, there is the ability to take a stand. And, we don't have to be defeated by those who reject God's love. In verse twelve of the passage that we just read, it talks about God gives us, His sons and daughters, the power over the world. And that power will sustain us, even when that evil is so prevalent. Even when it seems like it is an overwhelming force, God gives us that power.

Now I'm going to go out on a limb with this next question to everyone, but: Is there anybody here that comes to church regularly even though the person or the people that invited you out was an absolute jerk? I appreciate that. Now, my next statement was don't raise your hand, especially if the person who invited you out is here. So, if that was the case, I have to say this much: Then the anointing of that person or that group of people must have been pretty incredible, because, otherwise, why would you come out to some place just voluntarily? So, the truth is, I knew that was a little bit of a loaded question. But I hope you know where I was going with this. Truthfully, most of us came out as a result of somebody that was friendly, by somebody that did take time, that did listen. Maybe we weren't able to put our finger on it exactly, maybe we weren't able to understand completely what their motive was, or what we were getting into. But, I would say, and one of the people that invited me out, Kirk Orelup, is he? yeah, Kirk's back there. It was actually a group of five people; I was in the military at the time just walking around, and at the time I know that I was seeking God and I was seeking for some answers. And really, I didn't know where to go, what church to get involved with. I remember actually just looking in the phone book. I just was sort of at a loss. But, I remember coming across these guys and they were friendly, I mean, really nothing out of the ordinary. I remember Kirk specifically mentioning hacky-sack, which was something that was pretty common back at that time. And, I thought, "Oh yeah, I've played that a little bit," but it piqued my interest. It got me seeing that these people were trustworthy. When I came out and I met the

rest of the church I saw there was no doubt about it. There is no doubt about it that these people were friendly. And that's part two of the message today, is about we need to be friendly.

## **Part 2: We Need to Be Friendly**

And, I know that I usually give the title a little bit later on in the message, but, today, I want to give it right now, unless Pete already put it up there. But the title of this sermon today is, "Ambassadors." Because, that's what we are in the family of God, which also happens to be the theme of the month, that this is the family of God. These are the things that the family of God does. And, after we receive the love of God, God has a mission for us. We become his representatives. We become an example of the believers. I'd like to ask if you could turn with me to the Book of Proverbs, chapter eighteen, verse twenty-four. It's a common verse. It's a very quick, easy read. Many of us have heard this first before. But it simply says:

***Proverbs 18:24*** *A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.*

This isn't complicated, and it isn't some mystery that someone who has friends is a friendly person. And, it's going to take friendliness to get people interested in coming to church, as well. We're not off the hook. God has something for us, and God has a responsibility for us, and God has a mission for us. But, if God has given us that love, which was our first part today, we should be able to overcome the different obstacles that we face in life, to at least have that, we should be able to at least have that.

I remember a few years back, God spoke to me about my demeanor and approachability. And I didn't take it as a blasting rebuke, or, something that God just came down, furiously, and said, "You're absolutely not doing this!" But, it was one of those gentle reminders that God gives us, but it was still a reminder, and, it was something that made me check myself. There's times when God does that, where there are rebukes. I mean, we look at our own personal life and we look at what the Bible talks about, as for as, furious rebukes and, times when God really needs to get our attention, does that happen at times? Absolutely, it does. Is that always the case? Absolutely not. But, I look at that wisdom from God seriously. I'd like to ask Alex, Alex Rasimov, he's going to come up and read from the Book of James, chapter three, verses thirteen through eighteen, please:

***James 3:13-18*** *Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.*

Thanks, Alex. But, the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality—which is something we're going to touch on later, that partiality—and without hypocrisy. God speaks to us, and, whether the world, or different people don't agree with that, that's fine. We're going to run into that disagreement. We're going to encounter people in life that aren't seeking God, whatsoever. We're going to come across people that are unreasonable and evil people, like even the Bible talks about, that's okay. Because, we're all going, ultimately, to be judged individually; we're not going to be judged as a collective group, not going to be

judged by a certain race, by a certain ethnicity, by our gender, or whatever other category wants to be thrown out there these days.

So, I've got a quick story here. Recently, I was at El Famous Burrito, which is a Mexican restaurant right down the street over here. Just ordered a meal and kind of standing out, over by the horchata machine which, in case anybody, doesn't know what a very delicious, sort of, milk-like drink. So, anyway, I was kind of standing there looking around, watching the football games, the soccer games, different people, people running around, kind of keeping an eye on my order, and I kind of looked back and God spoke to me again and said, "Check your demeanor. Check your friendliness. Check your approachability." And, I have to say it was one of those things where I didn't take it as a blasting rebuke. The voice of God speaks to us just like we talked about, like we just read in verse seventeen. The wisdom from above is first pure, peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated. It's not like every time God speaks to us that it's a blast, or it's a rebuke, or it's a correction. And, even if it is, there's times where God just says, "Hey, check this. Keep an eye on what you're doing, look around, look through other people's eyes and see what they see in you. Are they seeing somebody that's friendly? Are they seeing somebody that's approachable? Do you look like somebody that they want to go up and talk to, or you look like you are trying to look tough, and trying to get down, and just trying to, you know, act like you own the joint?" I hope not. But that's the way society has gotten. That's unfortunate, but that's true. Because there's so many walls, and I think it was Donna that had mentioned it in her testimony, about people build up all these walls of protection, and there is a degree of need for that, because we have to protect that which is precious to us. But, we also have to understand we can't always have our guard up. We can't always be just ready for a fight with everybody that just approaches us, or walks down the street. So, I'd love to tell you that what happened after that was people started coming running up to me, and wanting to give their life to Jesus Christ, and know more about the truth. But, that's not what happened. I got my order, sat down for a three-taco dinner, got up, walked out, went home. But, I'll tell you this much: So, what's the actual lesson in that short story? That we're ambassadors for God no matter where we're at, and that friendly is what the whole family of God does. We have to have that friendliness.

So, I have a question for everybody; I'm not really looking for a response, but just kind of think about this: Does anybody here think that God respects us? That might sound like a little bit of a weird question. I'm going to ask Jubal, if he would come up, he's going to read from the Book of Genesis, Chapter four, verses one through seven. Because those of us that believe that God is our creator and we are the created, we might feel like the God doesn't have to respect us at all. Part three is about being respectful.

### **Part 3 Being Respectful**

**Genesis 4:1-7** *And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD. And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.*

Thanks, Jubal. So, I have to admit that as I was preparing this, and starting to look over some definitions, that, it dawned on me that for God to respect his own creation, just that whole idea to me is mind boggling. It sort of pushes the limits of what we define as the love of God, past any boundaries that we can even think. So, I'm going to give a couple of quick definitions. The Strong's Concordance definition

of respect, in this passage, in Genesis four, is to gaze at, or about, inspect, consider, have compassion or regard. The thesaurus definition: Admiration, reverence, esteem. It's a little different from the concordance, but not by that much. Now, we also read in Romans, two, eleven:

**Romans 2:11** *For there is no respect of persons with God.*

So, which is it? Does God respect us or not? God is no respecter of persons in the fact that God shows no partiality or favoritism, as was mentioned in James, chapter three, verse seventeen, without partiality. So, yes, God does have respect for us when we do what's right, just like what Abel did. And again, I have to say that as I was reading this—and I've read through this a lot of times in my life. Because we hear so much, God has no respect of persons. God has no respect of persons. God is no respecter of persons. You think after a while, "Oh, God doesn't respect us."—but when I was thinking, "Okay, this point, this part of the sermon is about being respectful." Well, it says in verse four: And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering. Because, I had to reread that, because, I thought, "No, He just had respect for the offering." It said He had respect unto Abel. To me, that sort of sets me back in a good way. Because, it makes me thank God that much more. It makes me understand that the boundaries of God's love are just absolutely limitless, and that's a good thing. Because, it makes us realize, we're not going to know everything, and we're not going to understand everything in this life, including the very first point, receiving God's love. We're going to receive as much as we can, and what's that going to look like to different people? Different things at different times. It's going to mean different things to people that are serious about the Gospel at different times in their life, and it's going to have a greater impact, but it's never completely disannulled. It's never to where it has no effect at all, or it means nothing; it always will mean something. And, the fact that God respects us if we do what's right, I've got to say I just love that. I mean, I don't know how else to really describe it, or I don't really have much more to go into about that. And God doesn't play favorites. Because the Word also says in Revelation, Whosoever will, let him come and drink of the water of life freely (Revelation 22:17). So, let's bring this respect thing, right now to see how it translates into action. How are we showing people respect in general? One thing I believe will firmly will never go wrong if we show respect to people, and being respectful is what the family of God does. I believe we should be respectful to each other, and that's an ongoing way, as well. But I'm especially talking about being respectful to people who were in positions in life that maybe aren't really expecting it. The truth is, it's easy to respect somebody who's in high authority, or that's signing our check, or if it's somebody that can get rid of us at the drop of a hat, or whatever the case might be. And, there is nothing wrong with being respectful towards our employers. Or there is nothing wrong with being respectful to different people in society. But I'm talking about, and I'm going to name some positions. Because a lot of times, these are places in society that they are a little bit more front and center. That they are a little bit more vulnerable to the wrath of people. And we're talking about waiters and waitresses, I'm talking about people that bag groceries, I'm talking about people who were at the checkout counter at the airport, I'm talking about cab drivers. And, you know, I'm not trying to name, and I hope I'm not embarrassing anybody. But I will just say that there are certain, but there are certain sectors of society they are just going to face the brunt of people a lot more often. I mean somebody that sits in a place that... Now I have been in those positions. I mean the position that I'm currently in, I'm not, but I still get it occasionally. But I'm talking about, how are we respectful toward them? How are we respectful to somebody that's a cashier? And I get that—I'm not making excuses for bad service, either. I mean, if you are going out checking out of the grocery store and they don't say anything, absolutely, at all, I think there's something wrong with that. And, I'm not here to try bring up every experience that we've all ever had., "Oh, I got one, too. I got one that's worse than that. They showed me so much disrespect." Okay, okay, too much focus in society on how everybody is mistreated, everybody's drafted in a low draft pick, or everybody's get wronged, or everybody's body shamed. And after a while, it's like, did anybody say anything good,

absolutely at all, to you about this? I mean, I read this sometimes, it's like this person got body shamed and I'm like, "You posted it online; 3000 people commented on it, and maybe three people had a negative thing to say about it, and you're going to focus on the three, what about all the others?" "Oh, you look good." "Oh, you look great," "Nice dress," or whatever the case might be, and it's just sort of exasperating after a while. But, we're talking about being respectful. Because, on this side we're going to be respectful, but we can't always tell what everybody else is going to do, because it's a free for all. It's an absolute free for all. But, God will always bless us for treating people with respect.

We're in my last part today. So, every day we live, and whether we like it or not, we make judgments. We make judgments about small matters: What time we're going to get up, what time what we're going to have for dinner, whether we're going to do yard work today or tomorrow. We make judgments about weightier matters, such as: Should we buy this house? about getting married? Marriage? about people, and they're deciding, in this congregation, right now, what college they'd like to go to, or whether they want to go in the military. Or, if they're already there, they're deciding what classes to take, or what kind of orders they like to get. And then there are judgments that we face that, they are the highest court that we could think of: Things like getting baptized, or what we think we should say to somebody who is terminally ill, or faced with a crisis. And, our fourth and last point today is about being non-judgmental.

## Part 4: Being Non-Judgmental

I'm going to read from the book of John, chapter twelve, verses forty-six through forty-eight. I'm going to let everybody turn there, if you've got your Bible today. And, I have to say this was another one—and sometimes I think when you take a little bit closer of an evaluation of the Word of God. And God highlights some things to us that maybe we didn't get earlier on, something to rejoice about, that's something to be thankful for, and that something to guide us in our path in life. These are the words of Christ, He said:

**John 12:46-48** *I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness. And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.*

We're talking about, what are our stances when it comes to judgment? Now, do we just take a pass and tell them we have no opinion at all? What do we tell people when we're pressed for an answer about what happened? What do we do when we're at a funeral, and we know that somebody wasn't born again, and they ask us, "Where do you think they went?" I know a lot of us have heard this. But, I'm going to share it again, because I feel like it's worth reiterating. Early on, in the years that I became a Christian, I remember our founding pastor sharing, if you are in that predicament, or if you are in that situation, just tell them that they are in the hands of a just God, and I've used that. It didn't come up the next day, I mean, it came up twelve or thirteen years later. God puts those things in our toolbox. We are able to retrieve that years and years later. I've got an analogy I want to make here. Somebody and I were talking about this recently. I think it was Parrish and myself. But, have you ever been out on the highway, and there is construction, and they've got those humongous machines that, I think, are called road graders? Andy, do you know what I am talking about, they flatten out the tar. I mean, you can see that there's a guy riding on them, and he goes really slow and it levels out all the asphalt. Well, I thought, "That machine has no other purpose than to flatten asphalt. You can't use it as a hammer, you can't use it as duct tape, you can't use it as a thumb tack." I mean, just think, that machine, I don't know what they cost, but, let's

just say twenty-five million dollars. So, think about it. That's a tool that's used for a very specific person purpose, and it's not used for just everything under the sun. And that's the case a lot of times for the things that God puts in our toolbox, maybe we won't use it immediately. Maybe, it's something that we hear now, or that we had years ago, that we end up using fifteen years later, twenty years later, where did that come from? The Holy Ghost brings those things into our remembrance. But, Jesus said He came to judge no man, because He's not here to judge the world, but to save the world. But He also knew that part of his mission was to warn people about the wrath to come, and that eventually we're all going to be judged by God. So, what this play, it matters, and I kind of weighed it up, and I'm kind of going to be closing here in a few minutes, about some of the situations that we hear about, some of the issues that we hear about in our society, and some of them are ugly. How many of you heard of this Hollywood producer, Harvey Weinstein. Okay, some of you haven't, some of you have. He is now being accused by several women of some lewd behavior; It's traced back for decades. And he's quite a powerful figure in the film industry. And it's one of those things where, I don't agree with Harvey Weinstein's politics. I'll just tell you that right off. A lot of the people who have accused him are really on the same side of that fence, but I'm just going to share it like this. I don't, and I don't think anybody in this room is an agreement—for those of you that don't know it's sexual allegations and rape and groping, and just so on and so forth—I don't think anybody in this room agrees with that kind of behavior, I certainly wouldn't think as far as Christians go, absolutely not. But, what if it comes down to what if somebody asks us about it? What's our judgment, what or what we have to say. I don't agree with what he's being accused of; I don't know all the details enough to make a judgment. And I know that's kind of an extreme case, but there are things like that—and I'm going to share one last thing, and I am going to be closing in a moment. There was a man many, many years ago, and by the name of Alton Coleman that was from this area, and had committed some extremely violent murders over the course of time, and was on death row in Ohio. I don't remember all the details, but somehow Pastor Paine and others in the ministry—Kirk, do you know the details of that? Do you know the details of how the communication between Alton Coleman and our ministry originated? Okay, I thought I'd ask, because I knew you were—Pete does? Let me just give you the microphone, here.

**Pete:** There was a lady in our church, at the time, she's passed now, but he grew up in the neighborhood that she lived in. She knew him, and she was communicating with him while he was on death row. And when she mentioned to our pastor that he was interested in making sure that he didn't live the next life the way he lived this one. They made arrangements, so they went to the prison and baptized him.

**Editor's note:** I have since been corrected on that. We didn't baptize him, but his accomplice Debbie Brown, was baptized.

Thank you, Pete. So, that's something that, if we were to decide, if Pastor Paine decided, "No, absolutely not, he has no chance, he stands no chance." And, yet, we don't absolutely know, we are going to err on the side of mercy. Mercy rejoices against judgment. You look at Apostle Paul, you look at the marvelous works and the writings that he did. He was a murderer. And, I guarantee you, I mean, that's then, and sometimes it feels like, "Oh, that's so long ago; it's not really connected to the modern day." Yes, it is. Because the behavior of people is never going to change. The behavior of people, the way God has created us, is always going to be the same, whether it's good, or whether it's evil. And, the truth is, God is going to be able to give us the ability to speak when important matters arise. Because we're all going to give an account. We're all going to be judged by the things that we do and the things that we say, and what about those matters that are a little bit more closer to home that maybe involves family, or maybe involves something we were done wrong in, where is our judgment, then? I'm not saying that we can't have a righteous judgment, but I'm talking about when Christ said, "I judge him not," He's talking about an eternal judgment that that person couldn't escape, that there's no hope, there's absolutely no

hope, whatsoever. But, we have to make sure that we always, always trust God. Trust God for his judgment, lean on Him, lean on the Holy Spirit for the understanding, and the direction, and the words. The Bible teaches us that death and life are in the power of the tongue. Are you speaking life today? Thank you, and God bless.