

Someday
Feast of Tabernacles
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I don't know what you do when you get up in the morning but I have a to-do list that I look at. I think most of us have that. Also I think most of us have a "someday" list and the length of that someday list often has to do with how big a procrastinator we are.

I made a list of someday things. You may relate to these, you may not, you may have your own. If you're a homeowner, you're going to fix something someday. Maybe you're going to clean out the garage. Maybe you're going to paint that spare bedroom; fix that toilet ... someday. You're going to do those things someday. If you're the scholarly type, maybe someday you're going to back to school, finish your degree, maybe get a post-graduate degree, something like that. We've always said that someday we're going to take one of those trips that we've never taken.

Someday, you may think, you're going to read the Bible cover to cover. And to go along with that, someday you may tell yourself that you're going to fast more often, right? Any my wife has her someday list but she doesn't know it's a someday list. She'll say something to me like "You need to trim that shrubbery out in front of the house." And I'll say, "Yes, dear. That's on my to-do list." But what she's hearing is that someday I'll get around to doing that.

The point in all that is that someday usually means some improvement, better times. I signed a card the other day that said that we're praying for a better, brighter tomorrow for you. The implication there is "someday." With that someday thought in mind, I'd like to begin my message today with a song. I'm going to recite the lyrics. This song is from a Disney animated musical many years ago called The Hunchback of Notre Dame. It has some words and thoughts that relate to us and what we're doing. It's kind of a picture of the Millennium, the hope of looking forward to that. The title of the song is – "Someday" which is the title of my sermon.

If you're familiar with that story, the main characters are Quasimodo and Esmeralda. Esmeralda is the young Gypsy that has been accused of witchcraft and she's being held prisoner in the cathedral. And it's not looking very good for her so she's hoping for a better day and that's what this song was composed for.

Here are the words of the song:

Someday

Someday when we are wiser
When the world's older
When we have learned
I pray someday we may yet learn to live and let live
Someday life will be fairer
Need will be rarer
Greed will not pay
Some say that's just a dream that we'll never feel
Make it real someday
Someday fear won't divide us
Liars won't guide us
Messiahs will stay
God speed this bright millennium on its way
Let it come
Someday
There are some days dark and bitter
Seems we haven't got a prayer
But a prayer for someday better is the one thing we all share
Someday when we are wiser
When the world's older
When we have learned
Someday mankind will be kinder
Justice blinder
Someday our fight will be won then that bright afternoon
Till then
On days when the sun is gone we'll hang on
Wish upon the moon
Change will come
One day
Someday
Soon.

Those are touching sentiments. They relate to what we're doing here now. We're thinking about the future. We're thinking about someday. Someday the Millennium will be here. We hope for that. We hope for someday when we see God's government actually implemented on the earth. The plan that we've already heard about is going to be implemented. The plan of God the Father and Jesus Christ carrying it out for Him.

Things of God are pretty much non-existent in the world. I think it's kind of interesting that all these things we see accumulating around us, man going his own way, all those things are actually evident of people in the world. Here's a few excerpts from a recent news article from people who write about such things as these.

Here's one from the Washington Post. This out of a local paper from a little town in Washington. This article is about research done by sociologists, psychologists, neurologists, all that.

What Science Says About America's Race Problem : In some ways, it's super simple. People learn to be whatever their society and cultures teach them.

Everybody does what everybody else does. We used to call that the herd mentality.

This is not the product of some deep-seated, evil heart that is cultivated. It comes from the environment. It's in the air all around us.

That's kind of interesting that they would see that. Here's another quote. The columnist is Kathleen Parker, also writing for the Washington Post. It's about the shooting of Steve Scalise by the gunman who was out hunting Republicans. Just a short note from her commentary:

In reference to the psychological trauma of such events, there seems to be a malevolent spirit, seems to have permeated the very air we breathe.

Again, it's in the air. The other day we had the shooting in Las Vegas. I happened to see a headline in USA Today in the airport as we were coming here. The headline was "An Act of Pure Evil." That's what they called it. This is so bad that people are seeing it and writing about it.

This one is from Starbucks founder Howard Schultz to a forum of his employees.

The events surrounding a white nationalist rally in Charlotte, Virginia last week that put the moral fiber of the county in question. ...profoundly concerned about the lack of character, morality and humanity displayed at the rally. The moral fiber, the values in what we as a country have stood for is literally hanging in the abyss.

And this was even before the NFL flack. He was actually referring to the decline of the moral fiber in the country for the last 30, 20, even 10 years. There seems to be no bottom really to the decadence we see played out almost daily.

I was doing some shopping recently in town and wanted a cup of coffee and stopped in a coffee shop. I was waited on by a transgender person. It kind of startled me at first because there were two people in front of me in one person. Just a sign of the times but those are the signs that we sigh and cry about.

Someone said recently that we seem to be defining our decadence and our depravity down and that's true. Where is the end of all this? I won't belabor the details of all that, but did you notice the helplessness in those comments by those journalists? They just

said that somehow it seems to be in the air. In other words, it's beyond our control. Pure evil. That's already been mentioned.

We've said that for years. All of our problems, all of our issues, all the things we see going on around us are spiritual in nature. Paul explained that really well in Ephesians 2. We know that chapter is talking about the role of the Father and Jesus Christ as head of the church. And Paul is speaking to the church.

Ephesians 2:1. *And you [the church, the ecclesia] He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins,
2) in which you once walked [that's just a verb that refers to moral behavior, the way we conduct ourselves] according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, ... (NKJV)*

We know also in Colossians 1:13 as a reference scripture, Satan is called the power of darkness.

*2b) ... as the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience,
3) among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, ... (NKJV)*

The children of wrath is a reference to the judgment to come. We were lumped in with the rest of the world is what Paul is saying. Actually, that defines the state of the world right now, that man cannot deliver himself. He's presently held in that darkness by Satan the devil. So we, as God's people are looking for the end of that someday.

It would be really good, even though we have to consider the destruction of man's current rule on the earth through the trumpets and bowl plagues talked about in Revelation, but past that we look for that much brighter future. It's going to begin in the Millennium when Satan is put away – someday.

At that point, the remnant of mankind will be at a spiritual as well as a physical crossroads and will need all the help that God is going to give them. So how is that going to play out in the Millennium? I thought of three phases in the process of how these changes are going to take place in the Millennium. You might think of it differently, but I consider these phases or stages, however you want to term that, the same ones we went through when we were called. It pretty much works the same all the time, doesn't it? Again, it's not by some magic transformation, not by God waiving a magic wand, it doesn't work that way. It didn't work for us, it's never worked that way in history, it's not going to work that way in the future. God doesn't change and He just doesn't work that way. But a change within man has to take place.

God the Father never changes. It refers to that in Malachi 3:6. He's the same always. And we see in Hebrews 13:8 Jesus Christ never changes. Neither one of them ever

change. That should be bedrock to our faith. There's no change in them. We're the problem. And further, in John 10:30 it says "I and my Father are one." Christ said that. And their purpose has never changed. They never disagreed. They are in perfect harmony. Impossible with human beings. There are always some differences. Think of marriage. I like to think of the Father and the Son as two distinct beings with no differences. Again, that is impossible with human beings. Two distinct beings with no differences. I know that sounds kind of oxymoronic but that's the way I like to look at that because they work the same, they always have, they always will. We're the ones that have to change. Man is the one who has to change.

It needs to take place on the human level and it has to work the same for all mankind that survives into the Millennium. So here are these three phases that I thought of and my approach to this.

- 1. Mankind will need a change of heart.**
- 2. Mankind will need to learn about and know the true God.**
- 3. Man's nature will change.**

The lifetime process that we've been called into has to be the same, no differences. And I know each one of those is a sermon in itself. In fact I've given a sermon on one or two of those in the past but I'm going to briefly cover them.

First we need to answer the question: What's going to initiate or lay the groundwork for those phases to occur? Let's turn over to our favorite millennial chapter. Isaiah 11.

Isaiah 11:9. *They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full [means overflowing] of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. (NKJV)*

That whole proceeding context leading up to that is describing conditions on the earth that have changed due to the abundance of God's knowledge. That's the knowledge of the true God's ways and how and through whom God is going to accomplish that. And I like the words there where it says *full and overflowing as the waters cover the sea*. You could say in the Millennium that the earth is going to be awash with God's knowledge where now it's awash with Satan's influence. That's why we see all the things that we see. We see evil in every shape and form that there is.

I spent five years in the Navy and most of that, outside of a short stint on a Naval airbase, I spent my time on destroyers. One time at sea I discovered why destroyers are called tin cans. We ran into a typhoon. I think we had refueled at Midway and we were on our way to Guam or the Philippines or one of those, but we had to ride out a typhoon. If you've seen the movie "Perfect Storm" you get some idea of what a really nasty storm at sea looks like. Anyhow you'd be down in the bottom of one of those swells and the tin cans would go out of sight. I've seen water come over the stacks on a destroyer. And we met up with a group of destroyers that was escorting a carrier.

That's mostly what destroyers do, you run a destroyer screen around a carrier – if someone launches a torpedo at it, the destroyer takes it. Tactically, that's just math – a couple of hundred sailors versus the five or six thousand on that carrier. So that's what we were doing, but I've seen that carrier on top of a wave come out of the water enough that you could see the screws. The screws were turning in air. That's what I relate to when it says *as the waters cover the sea*. I've seen the waters cover a lot of things at sea.

That knowledge is going to be led by Jesus Christ carried out by teachers. Teachers that are going to teach that knowledge of God and His ways and the effect of that abundance will be that phase one – mankind will have a change of heart. That knowledge is going to enable, through God's holy spirit, will initiate a change and that's going to be a gradual change as that knowledge increases. The same way it did with us. We know that's prophesied to happen in the future. Again, the first part of Isaiah 11 verse 9.

Isaiah 11:9. *They [referring to mankind] shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, ... (NKJV)*

That's going to take a massive change of heart because if you look at man's history in general, it's a monumental mess. And that's being kind; that's being generous. Man has only devised more deadly and efficient ways to destroy his fellowman. And he does that militarily, he does that politically. We see it all the time. That's all going to change someday.

There's a wonderful prophecy in Isaiah 2, versus 2 through 4. I'd like to read this from the New Living Translation.

Isaiah 2:2. *In the last days, the mountain of the Lord's house will be the highest of all - the most important place on earth. It will be raised above the other hills, and people from all over the world will stream there to worship.*

3) People from many nations will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of Jacob's God. There he will teach us his ways, and we will walk in his paths." For the Lord's teaching will go out from Zion; his word will go out from Jerusalem.

4) The Lord will mediate between nations and will settle international disputes. They will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will no longer fight against nation, nor train for war anymore. (NLT)

No more politics, no more military. And if you read that whole chapter, it talks about God's judgment upon the nation. Our nation, our environment, everything, seems to be on a path of self-destruction. We know that, we see it all the time. That's all driven from man's heart, from what's going inside of him. If we look at our society with its anything-

goes philosophy and their whole approach to life, there doesn't seem to be any bottom to how far or how low we will go. It's like Sodom and Gomorrah; it's just one big mess.

So this one major change is going to have to happen before those other phases can occur. And it should already be occurring in our lives, that change of heart. And it is a gradual, ongoing thing. It's growth, spiritual growth.

God says He's going to change man from the inside out. And remember the future tense of Ezekiel – it was never carried out at that time. They were in captivity. But the context there in chapter 10, is just the imagery of God leaving Israel in disgust. He just let them go into captivity and it's basically God's judgment against Israel's leadership and, by extrapolation, all leaders that are leading the people into idolatry and all the things that are against God.

In Ezekiel 11, versus 19 through 21 from the American Standard Version. And we have to remember that we give up on people, but God never does. Isn't that amazing? God never gives up – we do, sure we do. But He says here He's going to gather up the Israelites and bring them back, effect a change in them, and he goes on to say that in verse 19.

Ezekiel 11:19. *And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit ... (ASV)*

God's holy spirit replacing the carnal spirit that leads to all these problems influenced by Satan, of course.

19b) ... within you; and I will take the stony heart [that just means a hard, calloused, unfeeling heart] out of their flesh, ... (ASV)

And that word "flesh" there could be symbolic of all flesh, symbolic of all mankind.

19 continued) ... and will give them a heart of flesh; (ASV)

They will have a heart with the hard layer removed and they'll begin to feel things. They'll actually begin to practice God's way, God's love, which we'll talk about later.

20) that they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: ... (ASV)

They're going to learn to obey God's laws.

20b) ... and they shall be my people, and I will be their God. (ASV)

But remember in verse 21, not everyone will accept that. Some people will resist that.

21) *But as for them whose heart walketh after the heart of their detestable things and their abominations, I will bring their way upon their own heads, saith the Lord Jehovah. (ASV)*

There are consequences. Always has been, and will be in the future. We know the word “heart” is talking about the base of man, his thinking process, it motivates us to do everything that we do, whether it’s good or bad, most of the time. But just this one example that it gives here, man’s heart is always set basically apart from God, apart from God’s holy spirit and we slip sometimes too if you’re really honest with yourself. The heart is set to do evil. Even though we don’t want to do that. I was talking with someone earlier this morning about Paul in Romans 7 where it says he couldn’t do what he wanted to do; it was a constant battle every day and the only saving thing was that he could turn to Jesus Christ to help him.

God is using this example as these leaders following their own way, disobeying God and leading the people into idolatry and all the things they were doing wrong.

So after that initial change of heart takes place, then mankind will be receptive to the next phase that I mentioned. This all has to do with their spiritual development. Number two was that mankind will have to learn about and know the true God. You may be thinking, “Didn’t that have to come first?” Well, that’s not how it worked for us if you can remember how it worked for you. God the Father drew us to Christ through His spirit. His spirit was working with us and we slowly came out of the world. It was the mental change that took place within us and led us to Christ, a gradual transformation.

Just as a reference scripture, John 6:44.

John 6:44. *No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. (NKJV)*

And the next verse goes with that:

45) *It is written in the prophets, 'and they shall all be taught by God.' Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father [the effect of that holy spirit, that knowledge] comes to Me. (NKJV)*

In other words, the world in general just doesn’t know the true God, they just don’t. They don’t know who Jesus Christ is, they don’t know who God is. When we look at the world’s religions today, that variety, who people think God is, it’s a world of confusion. Of course, Satan is in the mix again, as always.

I was on my way to golf one morning – I’m retired, that’s what I do – I was listening to a radio talk show and I don’t do that very often because I don’t want to get my mind all messed up with a constant dose of that stuff, but he was talking about his personal questions about believing in God. And he said he got calls from people that had the

same question in mind. How does God work? What does He want? Why does He allow all the suffering in the world? The usual questions, some of which we probably had. Then he mentioned how people view God. People view God as some way-off being, shapeless or some form, maybe anthropomorphic which means kind of human like. Actually we know it's the other way around, we're in God's image, not the other way around.

We recently went to a funeral of a doctor that we knew. We attended the service in a Lutheran church, a huge stadium-style church, everything focused down towards the stage, all the symbols and everything on the wall. I had no idea what they meant. But all those trappings of everything of what people think God is, they think that's what God wants, they think that's how they relate to God so they use all that stuff. When we left there, I was kind of impressed with all the people there, about 800 or 1,000 people at that service.

People in general do not know God. The most popular, the most prevalent belief is that if Christ is a loving, merciful, forgiving God, and that God of the Old Testament is just a harsh guy, maybe a long beard, or they think there's three gods in one, and it goes on and on. People don't understand God, who He is, what He wants.

Over in 2 Timothy 3 beginning in verse 1. Again I'd like to use the New Living Translation because it makes it a little clearer in our modern English.

2 Timothy 3:1. *You should know this, Timothy, that in the last days there will be very difficult times. (NLT)*

That's kind of an understatement. And Paul goes on to give a picture here of what an ungodly society that doesn't have a clue about the true God, what they look like, their values and morals, everything.

2) For people will love only themselves and their money. They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God, ... (NLT)

Saying that you don't have to obey God, just believe, that's all you need to do. That is scoffing at God.

2b) ... disobedient to their parents, and ungrateful. They will consider nothing sacred. (NLT)

Unless it's perverted, then it's okay.

3) They will be unloving and unforgiving; ... (NLT)

That's what a stony heart looks like. That's what a carnal heart looks like, self-centered, doesn't care about anyone else, just themselves.

3b) ... they will slander others and have no self-control. They will be cruel and hate what is good.

4) They will betray their friends, be reckless, be puffed up with pride, and love pleasure rather than God. (NLT)

Very narcissistic. The one there, “betray their friends” kind of reminds me of Mathew 24 where it talks about the love of many will wax cold and betray one another. It affects all of us.

5) They will act religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly. Stay away from people like that! (NLT)

Don't be like that he is saying. A picture, again, of a world that doesn't know God and couldn't be further away from Him.

Another example from Paul in Acts 17. It doesn't matter how smart people are, doesn't matter what their IQ is, it doesn't matter – that's what Paul is talking about here as far as knowing God. It doesn't matter. You can be the smartest person in the entire world. I think I heard one time who the smartest person in the world was, the only thing I knew for sure is that it wasn't me. I can't remember the guy's name who was supposed to have the highest IQ in the world.

I don't mean to be offensive with this but most of the time I find that if people don't say anything, their IQ goes up. But here in Acts 17, Paul is talking to the philosophers, the educated, the really smart people in Athens.

Acts 17:22. *Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus [Mars Hill] and said, "Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious;*

23) for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: To The Unknown God. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you: (NKJV)

Paul wasn't being sarcastic. He just knew the state of these individuals' minds; the state of the world.

24) God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. (NKJV)

He is not a dumb idol like these people were worshipping. They figured they had to have something to look to, to pray to, to do all kinds of rituals and all that. Paul pointed them to the creator God who made the world and everything in it.

26) And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times ... (NKJV)

In other words, when nations would rise and when they would fall.

26b) ... and the boundaries of their dwellings,
27) so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; (NKJV)

But He is unreachable on a carnal, physical, human level.

28) for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.'
29) Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising.
30) Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, (NKJV)

That's the very futuristic outlook that Paul had. He knew it was going to happen someday.

31) because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead." (NKJV)

That's a clear reference to Jesus Christ when He returns and they didn't get that at all. So the world at large doesn't know God. They don't know who He is, what He wants or what He's going to do. They have no clue. But God tells us what He's going to do, and when the world will finally really know Him. Hebrews 8. In the context he's talking about the two covenants, the one old, physical, and the one new, spiritual. You'll probably recognize this major prophecy in the Old Testament. In any case, this is Paul speaking.

Hebrews 8:8. Because finding fault with them, [the recipients of the first covenant] He says: "Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the House of Israel and with the House of Judah—
9) Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in my covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord. (NKJV)

God left them and gave them into captivity because of their idolatry and disobedience; their gross disobedience.

10) For this is the covenant that I will make with the House of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws in their mind [change the heart and mind]

and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God and they shall be my people.

11) None of them shall teach his neighbor, and non his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. (NKJV)

And that's through the abundance of God's knowledge when mankind finally understands who God is. That's how He works, what He wants.

12) For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more." (NKJV)

Mankind is finally going to know, his mind and heart is going to change, he's going to be led to repentance just like we were and he will come to the knowledge of the true God and there's going to be massive repentance. That will be gradual over a period of time, not all at once. You can check later but that is word-for-word in Jeremiah 31: 31-34.

One more scripture about why it is going to be vitally important to know the true God. It's found in John 17, something we read every Passover. It's going to be absolutely vital to know the true God, who He is, what He wants, what He expects from us. What He's going to do.

John 17:1. *Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You,*

2) as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. (NKJV)

That's inclusive of the eventual opportunity for eternal life for all man. That opportunity is going to be expanded to all mankind.

3) And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. (NKJV)

So man will have that opportunity for salvation. He's going to be able to enter that process and there's only one route: through the Father, through Jesus Christ. It says that over in Ephesians 4.

Ephesians 4:4. *There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling;*

5) one Lord, one faith, one baptism;

6) one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. (NKJV)

So after all of that, after mankind's heart and mind are changed and they come to the knowledge of the true God, then he's ready for a life of overcoming. That's the third phase.

That life and the process that we're in is becoming like God, to take on the very nature of God as expressed and modeled by His Son, Jesus Christ. When Philip asked Him in John 14:9 to show them the Father and Christ said, "If you've seen me, you've seen the Father." So there's a theme. Again, they're one, the same, there is no difference in their nature.

What do I mean by "God's nature?" What am I referring to when I say that? Well, there are many attributes and characteristics to God's nature. We can see and understand some of those from scripture but there's much that we cannot assume to understand. In Isaiah 40:28 it says that some of his ways are past understanding, they're unsearchable. We just can't know. But there are some things we can know and there's one part of God's nature that is abundantly clear and that's found in 1 John. The context there is testing the spirit, knowing truth from error. We can only do that with God's holy spirit.

1 John 4:6. We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. ... (NKJV)

Different spirit, different wave length.

6b) ... By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

7) Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. (NKJV)

Verse 8 is what I'm getting to. Here's part of God's nature, the part we can really know.

8) He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. (NKJV)

The very essence of God's nature is love. One commentator right said, "Love does not define God; God defines love." The word for that in the Greek is not love as we relate to the term, it's agape. John uses that 28 times in verses 1-21.

But we have a hard time relating to the different words for love in the Greek. But we pretty much hijacked that term. Culturally we associate it with a 3-letter word in one way or another, right? Sometimes we use the term so loosely that I might say that I love golf but what I really mean is I like golf.

I don't know if you've ever looked into this, but the early translators had a hard time with this because that word is not used all that much in classical Greek. They had to invent things, like for the King James Version, they had to invent the word "charity." They used charity for love. That's about the best they could come up with for love. The New

Testament writers used agape to explain a God-planned love. That's what they were trying to do. It's translated "love" in the English 116 times in the New Testament – agape. Agape the noun form; agapao is the verb form – the action of it.

One of the reasons we have a hard time as human beings, we still have our carnality, is because it is a completely selfless love. John 3:16: *God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.* That's really hard for us to relate to. It is very much unlike our selfish love which, with few exceptions, is driven by our emotions. There's always something in it for us.

We've been called into this process and we have the model of Jesus Christ and we want to be like Jesus Christ but it's expressed in this word as God's nature. That's what we're striving for. That's what we're aspiring to. We're engaged in that process. There's no magic wand. Not now, never was, and won't be in the Millennium. Still in 1 John 4, go down to verse 12.

12) No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. (NKJV)

It's talking about that growth process that is being developed in us and it's going to work the same way in the Millennium. I like John 4:12 from the Amplified. It says it a little bit better:

12) No one has seen God at any time. But if we love one another, God abides [lives and remains in us, operates, works in us] in us, and His love [that love which is essentially his and part of his nature imparted by His holy spirit] is completed and perfected in us. (AMP)

How does that perfecting process work now with us? One example I'll use to demonstrate is in Matthew 5, the Beatitudes sermon by Christ on the mountain.

Matthew 5:43. *You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'*

44) But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, (MKJV)

The word for love here is agapao. That's what ~~is~~ it acts like. That's what it looks like. That's what it looks like when it's applied the way God wants it applied. Love your enemies.

45) that you may be sons of your Father in heaven [be like Him]; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. (NJKV)

Christ is telling us there that agape, God's love, is impartial. It shows that aspect of God's nature that we are to emulate and that Jesus Christ was the model.

46) For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? (NKJV)

What's the difference between you and anyone else? Using tax collectors as an example here. Not saying it's wrong to love those who love you. And actually there is a Greek word for family love. But He's showing a comparison here between human love and agape, God-plane love on that higher level.

47) And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so?

48) Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect. (NKJV)

There's that word "perfect" again. It means that you are spiritually complete, mature spiritually. Closer to being like God, taking on God's nature.

We have to stop here and think about that for just a minute. God expects us to love our enemy and we're learning to do that because it's a learning process, right? If we're in that process and continue in it, we become more like God who is perfect. We aspire to that completeness. It's a process that we take on God's nature and be more like Him. That's what we're called to do.

That's the high standard God sets for us. God doesn't lower the bar for us to accommodate our emotions, our problems or our concepts of what love is. He doesn't do that. There's that scripture that says to become perfect like your Father in heaven is perfect.

People get really syrupy sometimes talking about what they think God's love is. Some churches try to work it up with music which to me emotionally makes it worse. But in most cases, agape love requires us to reach way beyond, outside of ourselves. We must strive for that spiritual plane, that God-plane love. Some of us think we don't hate anyone, we don't have any enemies. We just keep our emotions out of our relationships and our dealings with other people and all that. No one has ever hurt or offended us. Always has absolute princes and princesses for bosses all of our work life. All the sales people, the government employees and everybody we dealt with, they've always treated us with the utmost respect and dignity. All the brethren we've ever known have been kind, considerate and gone out of the way to serve and help us, never gossiped about us. And you've got to think about all those wonderful, considerate, caring ministers who never abused anyone and treated everyone the same. You know, I'm trying to be funny.

In learning to love one another, we have scriptures that tell us to do that. I gave a whole sermon recently about loving one another. Do you know how many times that is repeated in the New Testament? Because we come in all sizes, shapes, ethnicities, clear across the demographic spectrum – that agape love operates in spite of differences. That love keeps the prejudice and all the judging out of those relationships. And someday, if we continue in this perfecting process, we'll be capable of that kind of love on that plane.

Here's kind of a two-part scenario of how this might work because looking forward to when we really will have that ability and we can keep all of our human stuff out of it. We had a local baptism. We met at a Best Western and they had a really nice pool. I talked to the management and they agreed to let us use their pool to baptize this individual. On the lobby side of the pool there were floor to ceiling windows so we had a potential of having an audience. This individual struggled but he finally came to the point of baptism and I think he invited his entire family, maybe two or three or four generations. And a whole bunch of church people showed up because we were rooting for this guy and so I suggested that when we go in there, if everyone lines up in front of those windows, no one would be able to see in ... we don't care but we don't want anyone tapping on the window.

I think in kind of a similar scenario, we're all crowded around in the Millennium, the Great White Throne Judgment, all these billions of people come up and here's these crowds of spirit beings. We're all there. And we can't be carnal because we're going to know everything at that point. I was talking about that with someone this morning. We only know a little bit now, but then we're going to know everything. We're going to help these people no matter who they are and no matter what they've done. At that point as spirit beings, our perfection will be complete. Mankind is going to learn that from us at that stage. That's kind of a scary thought. Why do I say that's a scary thought? Let's turn over the 1 Corinthians 13 and I'll show you what I mean. And we're growing and changing. We'll get better. We mellow out as we get older.

Paul to the Corinthians. And remember he's addressing people here who had all kinds of problems. The word here is agape throughout.

1 Corinthians 13:1. Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not [agape], I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.

2) And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, ... (NKJV)

I do all this religious, nice-sounding stuff.

2b) ... so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. (NKJV)

I'm not learning anything.

3) *And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, ... (NKJV)*

A lot of people do that. That's how they are religious. It makes them feel better. It's emotional. Not that that's a bad thing if we have an opportunity to do that. My wife gets after me sometimes when I give money to panhandlers and whatever. It just bothers me to see folks doing that.

3b) ... and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

4) [Agape] suffers long and is kind; [agape] does not envy; [agape] does not parade itself, is not puffed up;

5) does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil;

6) does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth;

7) bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

8) [Agape] never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish [man's knowledge] away. (NKJV)

I'd like to continue in verse 9-11 from the New Living.

9) Now our knowledge is partial ... (NLT)

And I'm referring to the perfecting process of learning agape because this is what Paul is addressing here.

9b) ... Now our knowledge is partial and incomplete. (NLT)

Paul saw that. He saw it in himself.

10) And even the gift of prophecy reveals only part of the whole picture. (NLT)

We only see little bits and pieces.

10b) ... But when that which is perfect comes, these partial things will become useless. (NLT)

We won't need them anymore.

11) When I was a child, I spoke and thought and reasoned as a child but when I grew up I put away childish things. (NLT)

He's just comparing levels of maturity there. Physical level pointing to the spiritual level of maturity.

12) Now as physical beings we see things imperfectly like puzzling reflections in a mirror, but then as spirit beings we will see everything with perfect clarity. All that I know now is partial and incomplete but then I will know everything completely just as God now knows me completely.

And He does. He knows our hearts all the way through.

13) Three things will last forever ,faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is agape love.

One time in a sermon I asked folks to substitute their names for agape in going through part of this. So I'm going to substitute my name for agape.

Jack is patient and kind. Jack is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. Jack does not demand his own way. Jack is not irritable and he keeps no record of being wrong. Jack does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Jack never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, endures every circumstances.

To me that sounds really bad; it's just ugly because it's not me. And I know God knows that's not me. But if you put Jesus Christ's name in there, it comes out perfectly.

The point I'm trying to make is that we are not there yet. That is what Paul is saying there. And neither will those newbies in the Millennium be there. Once and for all the world is going to have a chance to learn what that agape love is. They are going to have a changed heart, they're going to know God and they're going to want to be like Him. Just image that.

Now what if we go through and we substitute a learning mankind into those verses. We can do that. We can plug them in. We're not losing the meaning here. And this is what we hope for. I don't know whether you've noticed or not but there are 15 attributes, characteristics, in 1 Corinthians 13 of His love, His nature. It's all there. So let's try that.

Man in learning agape is patient and kind. Man in learning agape is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. Man in learning agape does not demand his own way. Man in learning agape is not irritable and he keeps no record of being wrong. Man in learning agape does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Man in learning agape never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, endures every circumstances.

That's a changed world that is unimaginable today. Unimaginable. All mankind for the first time will have a changed heart and mind, are going to be receptive to God and for the first time will really know the true God and for the first time they're going to learn agape love, a God-plane love and that's what they are to strive for.

That's what we are doing here. That world and that time is what we look forward to someday.

In closing, I'd like to borrow some words from that song that I used in the introduction.

Someday when we're wise, when we have learned to live and let live, life will be fair, need will be rare, greed will not pay, fear won't divide us, liars won't guide us. God speed this bright Millennium on its way. Let it come. Someday mankind will be kinder, justice blinder. Someday our fight will be won, then change will come, one day, someday soon.