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Phil has worn many caps in his time and I am not aware of them all. He could probably tell you a lot more. I'm aware of the the pastor hat that he's worn and the scholar cap that he's had on from time to time.

And then more recently he's been the district superintendent of the Canada East District of the Evangelical Missionary Church of Canada. And then just this past summer in July our denomination elected Phil to be the president of our denomination, the Evangelical Missionary Church of Canada. And I kind of thought when that happened that we would be saying goodbye and he'd be going out west because that's where all the presidents seem to hang out in Calgary.

Now maybe he hangs out there but he doesn't hang his hat there. He's still down in the east and we're very glad for that. But it's not those things which is bringing him to the pulpit this morning.

It's his other hat, the one where he has been gifted by God as a preacher of the Word of God. And I'm going to invite you to open your hearts and minds to what the Holy Spirit has to say to us this morning through the preacher, Reverend Teldesco. It truly is a pleasure to be here.

I was here I guess a couple of years ago, Ken. And so I thank you for the invitation to come again. It was about this time because I guess it's anniversary about this time and I see that you do have the Thanksgiving decorations which is wonderful, reminding us of how good our God is.

Our God is indeed good. Now our God gives us many, many good gifts, amen? One of the good gifts that he gives us is good pastors, amen? Now you guys can say amen, it's quite alright. I know we're Canadian, but I'm gonna ask the pastors, the pastoral couples, I know that that we have a couple of pastors' wives who are outside, but we'll do that in in faith and in spirit.

But I'm gonna ask the pastors, if you would stand. And Clearing, I see you're here, so if you would stand as well. And I'm gonna ask you to do something good today.

I'm gonna ask you to give them a good gift. Will you do that? A gift of encouragement. You want to encourage them? Let's express our appreciation to them.

Now just remain standing. Hey, don't sit down yet, Alan. Not quite yet.

I'm gonna ask you all to stand as well, alright? If you would stand, alright? And those of you who are closest to the pastors, just reach out and lay your hands on them. The rest of you, just reach out your hands towards them. Will you do that? Maybe you've never done this before, but you understand this too is biblical, that it is allowed to do this, that we, in fact, as God's people

have the right to pray a blessing on others.

So we're gonna pray a blessing on the pastoral leaders, not because they're the only ones who serve, but because we know how important pastoral leadership is. So join me in this. Father, thank you for the privilege of blessing others in your name.

Thank you, O Lord, for these pastoral couples. Thank you, O Lord, for Pastor Ken in his senior leadership. Thank you for Dan.

Thank you for Alan. Thank you, Father, for the many have represented. Father, we've already heard in the reports of days gone by how the pastor has been so critical to the work that has happened here.

And so, Lord, it's the privilege of this people to bless their pastors this day. It's the privilege, O Lord, of knowing that when we bless others, that we ourselves experience the blessing of God as well, for it flows through us, and you are no one's debtor. So, Lord, we thank you for each of them, and we rejoice in them.

And, Lord, we do say with Pastor Ken, Lord, the best days are yet ahead because you are the God who continues to do all things new. And so we thank you, Father, for the privilege of doing this for these good leaders this day. And, Lord, they represent many other leaders.

And, Lord, we know that we're also asking that everyone who is a minister, everyone who is a servant as part of the Elgin work, Lord, that you'll just be pleased to bless them mightily for the greater cause of Jesus Christ. Amen. Amen.

Thank you so much for doing that. Pastors, I sure hope that you're encouraged. This is one of my privileges to be able to bless those who I know give so much.

We were in Pastors Retreat this past week. H.B. London, who is known as a pastor to pastors, was with us. He's with Focus on the Family.

I see you've got the Focus on the Family bulletin there. Good stuff. Important stuff.

And it is so critical that we support our pastors who are in the front line for Jesus in an unusual way. And if the enemy is going to attack God's servants, you know where he's gonna try. He's gonna try and do it with these leaders.

So when you look at them, don't just think of what they can do for you, and they do much, but think also of what you can do in supporting and lifting up their hands in the service of Jesus. So thank you again. And let me say I appreciate each of you as pastors.

I've had such a terrific opportunity to share with you in different contexts. You know these men are so different. We know that our God is not a cookie-cutter God, and that God takes great pleasure in making things new over and over and over again.

And so I'm so glad that He didn't make two of me. Amen. It'd be terrible to wake up in the morning not know whether it was me or Alan standing there in the mirror.

One of the things that you all are involved in that sometimes it's hard for you to connect with because we don't necessarily see it as something that we are involved in is in fact a ministry of extension that we have beyond our particular responsibilities here in our own Jerusalem. And I want to say thank you at this point because I am involved as your representative in a Judea and Samaria ministry. It was about a year and a half ago that I had a young man come to me and say, I want to plant a church with you because I hear you believe in the Great Commission.

And I sent him back to his own denomination, to his own home congregation, because I believed that he needed to make sure that they weren't ready to move into Brampton and support him in this ministry. February the 1st this year, Simon Young started a Chinese ministry in Brampton. One of the things that we were able to do during the pastor's retreat was to get a little update on what's happening and to hear how since that ministry has begun there have been two new members to the family of God added, ten new individuals who've come to Jesus through that ministry.

And I think that you need to appreciate as a congregation part of our larger family that you in fact contribute to that ministry because you support me, you are part of this larger family. And it's important for us to appreciate and to celebrate when we see these things, understanding that yes, there are those personal connections, but there are also those larger connections that connect us together. As Ken indicated, it's been my privilege as well to now seek to give leadership and connect us right across the country.

Of all things, the BC pastors, British Columbia pastors, decided that they would invite me to their pastor's retreat, wonderful, but then to speak five times. Now pastors know that that is a big job, but by the grace of God we undertook the task. And some of you will know Doug and Ruby Gray.

Who knows Doug and Ruby Gray? Some of you know Doug and Ruby Gray, now retired, who have served in the district in pastoral ministry for quite a number of years. Their son, Derwin, is now pastor of Hillside Church in BC. After the retreat, the Tuesday after the retreat, he wrote an email saying, I want you to know that based on the invitation to dream dreams about what God is calling us to in reaching this land, that we went to our elders and we have decided to launch an ethnic ministry.

Praise God, praise God. And understand that that too is your ministry, that I am representing you in enlarging the vision of what God is calling us to across this land. Now we know that in this country we do feel as though we are under assault, as though we are in a less Christian land.

And that may be because we know that in 1900 evangelical believers, born-again believers, were about one quarter of the population, one in four. Now we're down to about one in ten.

Bad news, bad news.

In the last little while we have seen an increase, and there is a measurable increase, so we're now about 11%. This has happened just in the last five years. And that means something, you know.

That means that the Church of Jesus Christ is still alive, that we are making a difference, that we are seeing God raising up a new generation of leaders and people who are saying, we're willing to pay the price to make a difference in this country. Now I want you to know, I want you to know that the Lord Jesus, when he was talking about the kingdom, talked about the kingdom being like yeast in the dough. Yeast in the dough.

And that's what we are, friends, and we have the privilege of influencing our culture and seeing social transformation. I want to talk to you out of Ephesians chapter 4. Ephesians chapter 4. What I have to say I trust will be of worth to you, but I trust that it will be that whether or not you remember a single thing that I say, that you will get hold of the text, because this is the eternal Word of God. This is the unchanging Word of God.

This is where the promises of God are. This is where the commands of our God and the calls to obedience of our God are. This is God's Word.

Thank you for the brother who led us in the reading of the Scripture this morning. I want you to appreciate that what has been read is a Great Commission text. We look at it and we don't necessarily see that.

We want to talk about the love of God, the love of God that has called you and me into the family. Just listen to how the Apostle begins in verse 14 again. Ephesians chapter 3, "...for this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family, his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name." For this reason.

What reason? Well, we know that any text has a context, and so as we look through chapter 3, beginning at verse 1, we see in fact, going back to verse 1, "...for this reason I call the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of the Gentiles." Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you Gentiles. Any Gentiles here today? Some of you know that you're Gentiles, right? Unless you're Jewish, you're Gentile. That means you and me, most of us.

And what this means is that God has given a gift. And what is the gift? Please note what the gift is. It runs right through this, but we'll just single out verse 6, "...this mystery is that through the gospel," the good news, "...the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and shares together in the promise in Christ Jesus." And the Apostle is saying, this is why I'm on my knees.

This amazing truth that God's love is big enough to include even the Gentiles. Appreciate how big a challenge it was for the Apostle Paul. Remember who he was.

He was a Pharisee of the Pharisees. He was a Hebrew of the Hebrews. He was one who believed that God's chosen people were Israel and Israel alone, and that God had no place for the Gentiles except down there.

And so, friends, this brings the Apostle Paul to his knees, that God the Father has a family that embraces you and me. And so then he invites the Ephesian Christians, who are both Jew and Gentile, to appreciate this. Look at these words again.

Verse 16, "...I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power together with all the saints to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge." We've already heard some testimonies of how some came to discover the love of Christ in this very place. Wonderful news.

But Paul is praying a prayer that I believe we can pray for one another, even here, that we would in a new way today, before we walk out the doors of this building, just appreciate how large the love of God is. Do you see what he says? Do you see it? He says, how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ. Grasp it.

Get hold of it. This is life changing. This is what brings the Apostle Paul to his knees.

Understanding that God has a love that is so big. Amazing love. How can it be that thou, my God, shouldst die for me? We sing about the love.

It is true. It is true. I came to Jesus 40 years ago.

I know you can't believe it. I don't look that old, but I came to Jesus 40 years ago. Don't laugh.

I'm still in denial. I'm having trouble with that, Ken. I'm having a terrible time with that.

You'll have to pray for me on that one. But friends, 40 years ago, as a young teen, I came to Jesus, and that changed my life. And I can tell you, I have served him for 40 years, and he has never let me down.

I've let him down, but he has never let me down. I have seen the story of God's love change people's lives over and over and over and over again. And one of my privileges is going around to churches just like Elgin and hearing celebration stories.

I was at the 10th anniversary of River Crossings Church not too long ago. This is our biker church. They dress a little bit different.

They also have a few other things that maybe mom and dad might not like to see on you. But these are people who've come out of a biker culture, who have experienced the love of God and discovered that God even loves me after all the stuff that I've done. One of the most remarkable testimonies that still sticks with me after hearing it now almost three years ago is

about the words of a fellow who had loaned his hot tub to the church so they could do their baptismal service on the front lawn of the school.

And he pulls up in his pickup right in the middle of the picnic celebration, the barbecue celebration, after the service. And he says, I've come to get my hot tub before anybody wrecks it. And Pastor Roy had baptized 12 individuals who'd been saved out of the biker culture.

And this fellow, as he's loading his hot tub on the back of the pickup, sees somebody he knows and he says, what's that guy doing here? I can't believe he'd be here at church. And Roy says, oh, he's one of the guys to baptize today. I can't believe it.

Last time I saw him, he had his knee on my chest and a gun in my mouth. God changes people's lives. His love is transforming.

His love is transforming. Just a couple of weeks ago, I was at the 16th anniversary of Triumph Evangelical Missionary Church. And understand, friends, this isn't just somebody else.

These are people that you have in some way invested in through your prayers, through your support, through perhaps even some direct ministry of your pastoral leaders or some others. But you have an investment in these folks. And we heard about a very well-to-do doctor who had become addicted to gambling and how God had broken in and rescued him.

Nothing else was working to deliver him from gambling, but Christ did and put his whole family together, father and mother and the two children. Friends, this is the love of God. Let's understand what this is about.

Think about what God is calling Elgin to in the next 98 years, in these very days, with regard to the Stratford area, to extend that love of God. So let's just for a few minutes talk about the love of God using the four words that the Apostle uses here. How wide and long and high and deep is the love of God.

It is wide enough to embrace all people everywhere from every tribe and language and nation. That's how big it is. It is big enough for everybody.

And this just blew the Apostle Paul out of the water, because as far as he was concerned, there's no place in God's economy for Gentiles, but God has a place for every person of every language, tribe, and nation. God loves the world. Now, we know that God is doing something extraordinary worldwide, that even as we are here, every second there are two new believers born into the kingdom.

Do we hear that? Two new believers born into the kingdom. That means in one minute there are a hundred and twenty, right? That's right? You guys who do all this math right up here? Well, it's great to see you guys. I can actually see you right in the eye.

That's great. All right, so by the time I'm done by three o'clock this afternoon, how many new

believers? Didn't you tell me I could go? No, you didn't. Oh, that was somebody else.

I was hoping. What he actually told me is, you all are leaving at noon. I can stay as long as I want.

But friends, do we understand what God wants to do? And I'm tired in Canada of feeling as though I'm being passed by with what God is doing worldwide. Isn't the news of God's love so great and so good that we want everyone else to have it? Amen? I know we're Canadians, but please say amen. Amen.

What would you say at a hockey game? I know that's a bad thing to refer to right now. But what would you do? It's celebrated, right? It lets people know. But that's how great is the love of God.

It is wide enough to embrace all people and praise God. He is doing it. There is 11% growth in the church worldwide.

11% growth. In Canada, it's about 1.2. That's all. We need to catch up to where the rest of the world is.

And by the grace of God, I want to be part of that. Don't you? You can say amen. Yeah, great.

It is also long. It is long. Now, I'm not going to suggest that exegetically what I'm doing is exactly how to be preached, Dan.

But this is just useful to think about the dimensions. It is so long that God does not forget. In Exodus chapter 2, 400 years after he made a promise to Abraham, God heard the cry of his people in Egypt.

And what did he do? He remembered his covenant, his promise to Abraham and to Isaac and to Jacob. And what did he do? He heard them and he delivered them and he sent them Moses. Indeed, we go back to Genesis chapter 3, verse 15, and we discover there that even at the very time that our first parents fell away from God, that God made a promise that would be fulfilled in Jesus.

That's how long the love of God is. In fact, it's even longer than that. Look at Ephesians chapter 1, verse 4. I want you to understand how long the love of God is.

Look at it. Ephesians 1, verse 4. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love, he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ in accordance with his pleasure and will.

Now sometimes we decide to get stuck on the theological question about predestination and choice and so on. Don't get stuck there. If you're going to get stuck anywhere, get stuck on the fact that God's love is so long.

How long is the love of God? It goes from eternity past to eternity to come. When we read

about the heavenly scene in Revelation chapter 13, we discover that there is only one who bears the marks of death and violence of this world in the life to come, and that is our Savior who was slain before the foundation of the world. The love of God is long enough to even reach the prodigal, and I suspect that in each of our families we have those prodigals.

Praise God that he honors our prayers. Praise God that there is no one who is beyond the reach of God's long arm of love. It is also high enough to reach the high and the mighty.

Now sometimes as believers we think that those who are well-off and those who have it all together as this world is concerned don't need God. We know that the producer of the movie The Passion was Mel Gibson, right? You knew that. And he's good-looking, right? Oh yeah? That's why you're laughing.

He's rich, right? He's famous. He has everything that this world says is important. But what he discovered was that he was empty inside, and what he needed was Jesus Christ.

And as his tribute to his Savior, he produced The Passion despite all the opposition and criticism that came his way. Now we can give many, many examples. I think of David Chan, who's recently gone to the Lord, a leader in our Sudbury Chinese congregation.

Well-respected, well-established, wealthy. And David came to Christ because someone knocked on his door and said, let me just tell you about Jesus. And he invited him in and he says, tell me about this Savior.

I need this Jesus. I need to know his love. It is high enough to reach even to those who are the high and mighty.

It is deep enough to reach into the depths of suffering and despair. One of the classic stories is, of course, Corrie Ten Boom, who during the Second World War was imprisoned by the Nazis. She and her family had protected Jews who were fleeing from the awful Nazi program of elimination.

And in that prison she, of course, lost her beloved sister Betsy. She went around the world, as you know, sharing her story. And she wrote a book called The Hiding Place and another book called Tramp for the Lord.

And she tells about her experience in one large meeting in the United States, where up after the service, up to the front came a former guard in the very prison that she was in. In fact, one of the cruelest guards. And in that moment, in that moment, Corrie had her testimony, her preaching about the love of God being able even to forgive the worst of things tested, because she felt the bitterness well up within her.

And in that moment, God broke through. God's love is deep enough to even break into the depths of our suffering and despair. I remember a lady by the name of—I won't tell you her name, I'll just call her Laura—who started coming to the Elmira Church, not a believer, not from

a Christian background, and she kept coming back week after week after week.

We went to visit her. Why did you come? Why did you come? Because there is such hope and encouragement in this word. There is the love of Christ that I'm beginning to experience.

I had no idea all that she had experienced until one day I received a letter this thick, just full of all the abuse that she had experienced. But it was God in His love who was lifting her up out of the depths of her despair. Friends, do we appreciate how wide and long and high and deep is the love of God? And that the four points of the cross, the four points of the cross remind us how long, how high, how wide and deep is the love of God.

Do we get it? The Apostle says, I pray that you get it, that you get it. Now we know that the Ephesian church did get it. Now how are we doing for time, Ken? When am I supposed to finish? Am I okay? I got thirty more seconds before the shepherd's cook.

But before I finish, I just want to share this about the Ephesian church. We know how the Ephesian church began. We've got the letter that Paul wrote, but we also have what happens in Acts 19, where Paul went in to preach.

And we also know about this church some years later. We read about this church in Revelation chapter 2. And there the Apostle, or the, not the Apostle, but the risen Christ says this to the Ephesian church. And listen to these words from Revelation chapter 2. To the Ephesian church he writes, he says, Persevered and have endured hardships for my name and have not grown weary.

Yet I hold this against you, you have forsaken your first love. What an indictment from our Lord. Remember the height from which you have fallen, repent and do the things you did at first.

If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place. Friends, the only reason that you are celebrating your 98th anniversary is because you have responded repeatedly to the call of the risen Christ to repent, to keep adjusting course in order to be a light of witness in this community. And God give you many, many more years and more glorious years in that role.

But I want you to understand that there is a wonderful lesson here in the Ephesian church because Paul is praying that they would just get how precious this love is. And we know that they did because they proceeded to plant daughter churches. They planted six churches that we know by name.

There are the other churches that we find in Revelation chapter 2 and 3. Smyrna and Pergamum and Thyatira, Sardis and Philadelphia and Laodicea, and in fact a seventh one that we know because we have the letter that was written to Colossae. And so friends, this is what God calls us to do because you'll hear again that repentance means, and do the things you did at first. What did they do at first? Out of their heart of love, out of their gratitude for what God had done, they continued to share the love of God.

Do the things you did at first. How was this church started 98 years ago? We know how. It was just the sharing of that good news of the love of Christ.

How will this church continue and flourish? It is by sharing that good news and every opportunity. Thank God for what you have undertaken in faith in planting in a very direct way the work in Mitchell. Praise God for that.

Praise God for the vision to share and to care for those who are extending ministry into Judea and Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the earth. Praise God for those who are faithful in multiplying the ministry here in every way. This is what God has called us to.

If we appreciate the love of God, what else can we do but to repent and do those things you did at first? By the way, repent is a dirty word. No, it's a good word. What does it mean? Change course.

Really good. You know, I had to repent a lot on the way coming here. You know that? In fact, my car comes with a steering wheel, and I had to change course an awful lot to get here, you see.

And if I didn't, you know where I'd be? In a ditch. Hey, this is perfect. You see, repentance is a good word.

All that repentance means is you had just course to get back on track. And so God's invitation in his love is just make sure that you're on track, and you won't have to do any radical turns, 180 degree turns, if you make the little corrections you need to do along the way. So let me ask you, is God inviting you to repent even today? To make some course adjustment? You see, what has God called us to? To invite people in, yes, but to be salt and light in our communities, to share a word for Jesus, to just share what God's been doing in our lives.

And what will God promise to do? He will promise to do his work of building his church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. Let's go on back to the chapter, Ephesians chapter 3, and will you just read with me those words that we have, beginning halfway through verse 17. And if you would, and you may not have the same version open before you, that's all right.

I think God will be able to keep it straight. But if you would read out in a loud voice with me, beginning with, and I pray that you being rooted and established in love. Will you do that? Do you have your Bible? You have your Bible, it's Ephesians chapter 3. It was page 823, is that right? In the pew, what's that? 28, 828 in your pew Bible.

Because you see, you can forget everything I said, but don't forget what God's word has said. And together, let's read that. This is 3, 17b, and we'll read right down to the end of 19.

And together, and I pray that you being rooted and established in love, may have power together with all the saints to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Friends, there's nothing greater than the love of God. There's nothing greater

than the love of God.

Have you experienced it? Will you be renewed in it today and appreciate that God gave His best for us? And then this wonderful doxology, and doxology simply means an expression of praise now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine according to His power that is at work within us. To Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.