

# Sermon Note: Perfect in Love

## Third Sunday after Pentecost

### Introduction

As we have journeyed through our series on Seeking God, we've marveled at God's awe-inspiring presence and celebrated God's boundless creativity. This week, we look at another profound aspect of God's nature: God's perfect love. Psalm 138 is a hymn of thanksgiving, highlighting God's unwavering love and faithfulness. As we consider these verses, we may be reminded that God's love is not only vast and encompassing but also deeply personal and transformative. It is a love that meets us where we are, sustains us through our trials, and propels us toward a future filled with hope and purpose.

### Illustration Video

[https://youtu.be/Ufc-4wYrwD8?si=Ia\\_GOUFrIWkBMvug](https://youtu.be/Ufc-4wYrwD8?si=Ia_GOUFrIWkBMvug)

In Pixar's *Finding Nemo*, a father relentlessly pursues his only son, facing danger and adventure.

### Video Discussion Questions

1. **Perseverance in Love:** How does Marlin's relentless search for Nemo illustrate the nature of love and determination? How does this reflect the way God's love pursues and supports us?
2. **Supportive Friendship:** How does Dory's support and companionship help Marlin on his journey? How can we see God's love reflected in the supportive relationships we have in our own lives?
3. **Reunion and Joy:** What emotions are evident when Marlin and Nemo are reunited? How can this moment of reunion be compared to our moments of spiritual reconnection and realization of God's presence?

### Psalm 138 (CEB)

<sup>1</sup>I give thanks to you with all my heart, Lord.

I sing your praise before all other gods.

<sup>2</sup>I bow toward your holy temple

and thank your name

for your loyal love and faithfulness

because you have made your name and word

greater than everything else.

<sup>3</sup>On the day I cried out, you answered me.

You encouraged me with inner strength.

<sup>4</sup>Let all the earth's rulers give thanks to you, Lord,

when they hear what you say.

<sup>5</sup>Let them sing about the Lord's ways

because the Lord's glory is so great!

<sup>6</sup>Even though the Lord is high,

he can still see the lowly,

but God keeps his distance from the arrogant.

<sup>7</sup>Whenever I am in deep trouble,  
you make me live again;  
you send your power against my enemies' wrath;  
you save me with your strong hand.

<sup>8</sup>The Lord will do all this for my sake.  
Your faithful love lasts forever, Lord!  
Don't let go of what your hands  
have made.

### **Scripture Discussion Questions**

1. What has the psalmist chosen to focus upon in gratitude? Make a list of some of the things for which the psalmist is grateful. Consider making this list with a trusted friend or family member.
2. This psalm is traditionally attributed to King David. Can you think of any challenges a ruler at that time might have had? How about a leader of today?
3. The guiding rhythm of the song or story being sung (i.e. this Psalm) is God's steadfast love. Think back on your own life. As you observe the highs and lows, where can you notice a rhythm of steadfast love behind it all? What did that love look like in your life and why did (or didn't) this come to mind today?
4. The psalmist seems to have a last moment of hesitation or doubt in the last line. Why do you think this last line was added instead of just closing with the theme of steadfast love? Does this line challenge in any way your understanding of what it means to worship God well? If so, how? If not, why not?
5. The psalmist sets as a goal of thanking God with his whole heart. Assuming this is possible, can you write down (or think of) one way that you will intentionally open your whole heart this week (e.g., a moment of service at your church, time singing or playing an instrument, visiting someone lonely, a sunset walk, knitting a gift)? Are you willing to set aside time to do this?

### **Add'l (Optional) Discussion Questions**

1. Describe the most memorable gift you've ever received. Who gave it to you? What was the setting? What made it special? Same questions, but what was the most memorable gift you've ever given?
2. When have you given someone else a small or simple gift that you know made their day?
3. Can you remember a gift that you might have gotten for a recent holiday or personal celebration? (Like, last Christmas, your most recent birthday, etc.) Why do you think some received gifts are memorable and some are not?
4. Do you think people who have great wealth and material possessions are more or less grateful than the average population? Why?
5. What gifts seem like the hardest to give in today's world? Are any of those gifts also the most appreciated when they are received?
6. Did someone in your life ever require you to write a thank-you note for a gift received, even if you didn't love the gift? Do you find it difficult or easy to find the right words in this scenario? What do you say?
7. How can expressions of thanks become contagious?

## **Weekly Action**

This week, take a moment each day to reflect on how you have experienced God's love in your life. Write down these instances in a physical or digital journal, focusing on moments of gratitude, strength, and guidance. At the end of the week, re-read your entries and say a prayer of thanksgiving for the many ways God's perfect love has touched and transformed your life. Consider sharing these experiences with a friend or family member and encourage one another in your respective faith journeys.

## **Prayer**

God, the source of our soul-strength, we thank you today for [say at least one thing for which you are grateful]. Gather our gratitude, Oh God; may the rhythm of your steadfast love be more and more apparent to us each day. You are the God who loves us ridiculously, consistently, and fervently. Let that steadfast love move us to love others. Amen.