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Thank you very much. Good morning. I am going to be bringing the message to you this morning, but I am gonna start with quiet time. However, I'd like to set your hearts on a particular topic during this quiet time. And so, Aaron, can we get my slides up there? We're using a new method for slides, so please be patient while we get it running. There it is. And then just go to the first verse. Zephaniah 3 17, "The Lord your God in your midst, the mighty one will save. He will rejoice over you with gladness. He will quiet you with His love. He will rejoice over you with singing." This morning I really like you all to understand your Heavenly Father's father heart towards you. Father's not just a nickname that he picked up, it's his identity. And in Christ we are his children and he loves us like precious dear children, like a new father looks upon his little baby boy. That's how our Heavenly Father looks on us. So I hope that during this quiet time that you will really accept and believe our Father's love for you. [Music] (air whooshing) (exhales) (air whooshing) (air whooshing) (air whooshing) (air whooshing) (air whooshing) (air whooshing) (air whooshing) (air whooshing) (air whooshing) (air whooshing) (air whooshing) - Heavenly Father, thank you for the opportunity to come together today, to fellowship with our brothers and sisters in Christ and to hear from you, to be ministered to in our spirits by your spirit. God, I ask now that you guide my speech and guard the hearts, my brothers and sisters, so that everything that is conveyed here is your truth and your will. (air whooshing) I pray that anything that I say that is from you, God, would leap within their spirits, so that they know that it is from you, in Jesus' name. Well, yesterday, my allergies decided that it was allergy season. So if you see me run around the corner there, it's 'cause I don't wanna blow my nose in front of you, but also, I still haven't gotten down the whole knack of timing my messages perfectly. So if I run a little bit long and there's a good chance that I will, and you gotta be somewhere, then that's fine. I understand people have got their schedules and you gotta keep 'em. You just go be where you need to be and no hard feelings. That's one of the things you learn working with youth is that sometimes they got places to be and they'll just walk out in the middle of your message. It's fine, I'm totally used to it. So the core of what I'd like to speak to you about today is understanding your father's love for you. I know the last thing you guys need is more teaching on the prodigal son. (audience laughing) But Luke 15 tells us that our heavenly father, while we are still a long ways off, runs to us and throws his arms around us and kisses us again and again. And in Christ, this is your father's heart for you. And in Christ, none of the things that you've ever done that would ever separate you from that love have any effect anymore. Because a lot of us, when we think about fathers, we think of this angry, stern gaze and that gaze was turned to the cross when we are in Christ. And so he can look at us with all the caring love of a heavenly father and he really is a heavenly father. And understanding this love unlocks your ability to understand who you are, your identity in Christ is rooted in this love. That not because of who you are or what you've done, it's simply because God chose to love you. He didn't need to love you, but he chose. He said, "I choose you." And gospel, gospel means good news and that is some really good news, don't you think? We were so hopelessly lost and that's a message that's, that a lot of people, even a lot of people in churches don't get sometimes is that our sin had completely disqualified us from life, from salvation. A lot of people like to look at sin as the way we look at crimes. You got your petty theft and your misdemeanors and your felonies and that if you get to heaven without committing any felonies that you'll be fine. But this is not how it works. Our life is more like an Olympic race, Olympics time, time for an Olympics metaphor analogy. If you're a runner in an Olympic race and you get down there and they fired the gun and you start running and then you shove this guy and you trip this guy and you throw a snake at that guy and then you cut halfway across the field and pop out just in front of the finish line, you'll be disqualified from the race because that's cheating. But if you're just half a second off the line, you'll be disqualified from the race because there's cheated and not cheated. There's innocent and guilt. And so we were all in that boat and some people are still out there trying to run the rest of the race fine even though they cheated back there thinking that this, I'll impress the judges with the rest of my race and they'll overlook my cheating and it doesn't happen. But the creator of heaven and earth loved us so much that he came down and entered the race and he won the gold medal. And when we come to him in faith, he takes his medal off and puts it around our neck and then go present it himself to the judge for the punishment for our cheating. (crickets chirping) And he knew it ahead of time too. Psalm 139 tells us that before any of our days had come to pass, they were all written in his book. As the great orchestrator of time and space, before he even placed one star, he looked down and he saw every horrible thing that we would ever do and he looked at the price he would have to pay and he still said, "Let's go for it." 'Cause this is his father heart and this is something that's lost a lot. People still, my friend Anthony back in Colorado, he calls it the orphan spirit. It's that idea that you still have to perform to earn the approval of your parents and we don't have to do that. We can't earn God's approval. He just chose to love us and we have to accept that. First John 3.1, "Behold what manner of love the father has bestowed on us that we should be called the children of God." We frail humans get distracted. We forget about this amazing, awesome, indescribable love but we have jobs and relationships and bills and American Idol and the Bachelorette season finale and tonight and there's all kinds of stuff that gets in the way and these things aren't bad things but they can cause us to get distracted and they can cause us to forget that there is nothing more important than understanding God's love for you because once you understand it and once you feel it, then you can love him back and once you love him back, you will replace all of your priorities and your interests with his priorities and interests and you will begin to love the people he loves which is the people in this room and the people out there in that community and that is why just understanding his love for you is so important because it opens up your heart. Accepting his love into your heart allows your heart to flow out to him and by extension to all the people and all the things that he loves. I mean, all of us, I'm sure, have someone that we love. How many of you found some new hobby or interest that through the person that you love that you weren't interested in before but because you fell in love with someone, you fell in love with the things they fell in love with? Does anybody like that? I tell my parents are like that. My mom did not care at all for football before she married my dad but now, go Colts. If we forget God's love for us, we forget to love God and if we don't love God, then we become lamps under bowls and salt without saltiness. I was reading online that, I'm not gonna talk about that. I'm gonna skip to Ephesians 5.1. I think the next verse, there we go. Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. That's what little kids do, isn't it? They sit around and they watch their parents and they do what their parents do and those of you who have raised kids know that they didn't turn into the kids that you told them to be. They turned into the people that you were. I mean, it's such a common phrase in our culture. He is so like his father and that's how it works. No one ever says he is so like the person his father wanted him to be. I know none of you good Quakers have seen the movie Jaws, but remember that scene where Roy Schneider was at the dinner table and he was all upset 'cause the shark is eating all the people and he's sitting there and he's kind of going like this and his little boy is next to him and so the little boy goes like this and then he kind of crosses his arms and the little boy crosses his arms. That's what children do who love their parents and that's how we learn to become like our parents and so this is why we need to fall in love with God because we need to be imitators of God and I know it might seem difficult to say, well, imitators of God, well, imitate Jesus because he did the perfect job of imitating his father and he said that he only did what he saw his father doing. I forgot to look that verse up, but Jesus only did what he saw his father doing. He was the perfect imitator of God and if we imitate Jesus, we will be imitating our heavenly father. If you love him and you become obsessed with him, you'll become a fan, you know? And in this town, it's real easy to recognize a Colts fan. They're not, it's not difficult to spot them at all. They're hooting and hollering, they're wearing blues and during game time, you know where to find them and if you find yourself coming into church and just barely getting out of bed and the songs drag on and the speaker drags on and you just can't wait to get to what's next, then you need to work on your heart. You're not a fan because a fan says, oh, I wish it would last longer, you know? And when people come into our church, if we're not fans of God, they're gonna see that. They're gonna see if you're checking your watch and hallelujah. They're gonna notice, my life has been improving lately because I've been starting each day by as soon as my alarm goes off, I sit up in bed and I start preaching to myself the love of my heavenly father. I say, he rejoices over you with singing and I love that verse. I don't know if you'd ever seen that verse before but he rejoices over you with singing. That is so intimate, I love that and I tell myself that verse in the morning, I say, my heavenly father came down to earth and died for me because I was hopeless and he came and he, and I just preached to myself and when the smile starts getting on my face from the realization and understanding of the love that I actually have, that's when I know I'm ready to get out of bed. In Psalms, David, he said, bless the Lord, oh my soul. And he wasn't just being poetic, he was preaching to himself. He was saying, bless the Lord, oh my soul, do it. And he knew that our hearts and our minds are forgetful and frail and that the problems out there, they sink in and they poison us and he knows that you have to force the truth in and displace all of the lies and the filth and the junk that this world soaks into your heart. And I'm not saying that my life has become perfect. I'm not saying that bad stuff doesn't happen, but I'm saying that I've begun to judge my circumstances by who God is rather than who God is by my circumstances. I'm gonna pause so you can think about that. So many times we see bad things happen to us and then we say, well, then God must be or God must feel, that's wrong. We must start the day by saying God is, God feels, God loves me. And then when the rains come down and the floodwaters rise, we can remember that foundation of God's love that we're standing on. And if you remember that story about the rains came down and the floods came up, it's also a song. The person who built on the sand and the person who built on the rock, both of them had rains and both of them had floods. Just 'cause you're built on the rock doesn't mean you won't have rains and floods, but don't judge God by those circumstances. Let those circumstances crash again against your foundation of God's love. So, Carmel Friends Church, we are in transition. That's why I'm up here speaking to you and not Pastor Craig. There has been a lot of talk lately about where do we go from here? Who's gonna be the next pastor? Do we, are we gonna have a next pastor? Do we stick with Western yearly meeting? Do we, how do we bring more people in? How do we bring more money in? Lots of worries, lots of concerns. And there's also a lot of talk and a lot of ideas about how to address these problems. But the very best thing that we can do is find out God's will for our situation, our loving Heavenly Father's will. And I'll give you an example of why. Peter the fisherman, disciple of Jesus, after Jesus had died and risen, he was out on a boat with his friends fishing and they were professional fishermen. Peter the professional fisherman was out with his professional fishing buddies attempting to do their job that they've done all their life. And they were doing everything right. They knew exactly what they were doing. They were casting the nets in all the right places. They were out at the right time of day. They were doing it right and they were catching nothing. And the moment that they stopped and obeyed one command from Jesus, they had more fish than they knew what to do with. And so there's a lot of good ideas and talented people here, but I want to encourage us to make sure that we're first and foremost seeking God in his will because our best laid plans cannot begin to compare. And Jesus told him, he just said, "Throw your nets on the other side of the boat." That's the difference of just a few feet. I mean, that's the most nonsensical thing that you could tell a fisherman, you're fishing on the wrong side of the boat. But I hope you get this. All of the best laid plans, if they're not gods are worthless. He loves the people in this room. He loves the people in this community. And he wants us off this planet. There's a lot of, and just hearing him out to shooting in Colorado, I'm sure you've all heard of that. There's all this heartache and all this tragedy. And God loves it, says, "These children, he wants to collect us and pull us out of there." But he knows that as soon as he does that, that anyone who's not been adopted into his family yet is gonna get left behind. And so it's breaking his heart, but he's holding back and he's waiting until we can bring in the people, all the people he wants to become part of this family. If we love God, then the other people in this room and the people in this community should be our priority. If Carmel Friends is a country club, it won't survive. If we insist on having it my way, holding the pickles, holding the lettuce, holding the drum set, whatever. If we say this is how I want it and we refuse to let go of our wants and needs and to give in to God's plans, then we don't have a future. God has plans. But our only choices are to join them or reject them. We can't change them. If you've been going to your church 30 plus years or all your life the way I have, we've had plenty of time to become the mature ones in the church. And I know there's always room for more maturing, but compared to someone who's a new believer, we should be ready to go. We should be ready to be the big brothers and big sisters. And I have a really good friend. His name is Cedric and he's the oldest of six. And every time I would go over to his house, he would be there playing with his little brothers and sisters. He would be entertaining them, changing their diapers, keeping them busy while mom made dinner. And those of us who are mature Christians or who should be mature Christians, this is how we need to concede the way we want things to instead saying what do the less mature people need? What can we do to help those who are weaker in the faith or who aren't even in the faith yet to bring them into this family? How can we be not just brothers and sisters, but big brothers and big sisters? Anyone who walks in that door back there, God has brought here to be our family member and we don't get to choose our family members. Amen? Yeah. 'Cause everybody has black sheep in the family. But whoever God wants to bring in, that's who we gotta make family. That's who we have to love like a brother and sister and maybe concede towards doing things a little differently if it helps them grow in their faith and if it helps them become closer to God. (audience member whistles) What verse are we on? Go to the next. Matthew 16, 18, this is Jesus talking. He says, "I will build my church." And the next slide is from Acts 2 47. "And the Lord added to their church daily those who were being saved." Jesus promises that He will build His church. He will add to His church. We don't need to worry about Jesus keeping His promise, do we? No, we don't. He will add to His church, but we need to be a church that He can add to. That's why my message today is called New Wine Skin. Go to the next verse, I think. "Nor did they put new wine into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break and the wine is spilled and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins and both are preserved." This isn't kind of, for me, it was in a weird place in the Bible that he was just talking, the Pharisees are asking Jesus, "Our disciples fast and John's disciples fast, why don't your disciples fast?" And he's like, "Well, first of all, because I'm here and fasting is like a sad, mournful thing and you're not gonna be sad and mournful while I'm here with you." But then he gets into these metaphors about sewing unshrunk garments onto an old garment and then the thing about the wineskins. And when I read that, I was like, "I don't see what that has to do with fasting." And so I flipped open my study Bible and it said that Jesus was bringing in the new covenant. He was bringing in something new and the Pharisees were part of the old covenant. And what Jesus was telling them was, "My new way of doing things isn't gonna fit into your old framework of how you do things." And so Jesus was, I'm not saying I know what God wants to do with this church. I know he wants it to be effective and to reach out and to demonstrate his love to every single person we come in contact with, but the details and the specifics, I don't know. It could very well be that he has something new that he wants to do and we need to become the new wineskins that he can put his new wine into. You gotta love God. You gotta understand his love. If you understand his love and you love him, then it's easy to let go of the things you hold on to. It's easy to clear off the throne of your life with all the little idols and all the little things that are so much more important than him. And it's easy just to let him be in charge of everything. We have a good past. Quakers in general and also this church, we have a lot of history to be proud of. And I'm not saying that we need to forget that. But it's like Paul the Apostle says in Philippians 3.13, "Brethren, I do not account myself to have apprehended, "but one thing I do, forgetting those things "which are behind and reaching forward "to those things which are ahead." A lot of people use that verse to say, "Oh, I'm supposed to forget my old sinful past "and look forward to my new holy future." But what he was actually saying there was, "I'm supposed to forget the successes of the past "and live my life as if the end is approaching "and I haven't done anything yet." So it's okay to be proud of what we've accomplished and who we are and what we've done, but hold those successes loosely because at any moment God may say, "Okay, time to do something different." And we just need to be obedient and faithful and say, "Yes, Father, I love you "and I'll do whatever you ask." So in conclusion, we need to love God. We need to become fans of God. We need to become obsessed with God. We need to moan and groan and itch and ache until we are not content to set our hand to any activity unless we are confident that it is what the Lord is calling us to. And if you love God, that's really easy to do. And when you love God, people will see and people will notice that you're a fan. And you guys know, you've been around fans and you've felt just how addictive and attractive it is to be around a fan of something. That's probably how a lot of you became Colts fans because you were around fans and they got you excited and you got excited and we need to become fans of God and love is the key to doing that. Next verse. Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels that have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. Next. This is three slides. ( And though I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge and though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor and though I give my body to be burned but have not love, it profits me nothing. All of our best laid plans without love are worthless and meaningless. And once we've built up this love for God, then pray, seek God's face. He's a father who loves you. He wants to work with you. He wants to reveal his will to you. He's not keeping it secret. You all have been around those micromanaging types who don't want to let you in on what they're doing because they don't want to give up control and they want to look really awesome when they accomplish it mostly by themselves. God's not like that. He has plans but he wants you on board. He wants you to be a part. In 10,000 years, we're still gonna be hanging out together. Does that blow your mind like it blows my mind? 10,000 years from now, we're still gonna be a family, brothers and sisters. Let's not look back on this time and be ashamed about what we didn't give up for God. Let's not look back and say we could have done more. Let us throw our hearts full force at the feet of God and see what happens. - Amen. I think that's everything I need to say today. So I'm gonna invite the worship team back up and just in closing, I also wanna say that if you're here and there's something in your life that's keeping you from experiencing the love of God, please, please, please do not go home without getting prayed for. Come to me or come to one of these folks and get prayed for if there's something not right 'cause your heavenly Father loves you. He really, really loves you. He moved heaven and earth to make a way just to be with you. That's wonderful. Let's pray. Wonderful, amazing, gracious heavenly Father. Thank you for your love. Help us to understand your love. Help us to experience even just a drop of the unfathomable ocean of your love towards us. Let it move us and change us and mold us and break us and turn us into something, turn us into a force that cannot be stopped. Help us to burn for you, most holy God. As we go throughout this week, God, I pray that you find little times to remind us. Help us to stop and remember your amazing love for us. Help us, help that love to grow in our hearts so that we can then radiate it back out into you and back out into the world to the people we meet. Be with us as we go through this week, God. In Jesus' name, amen.