*This document is an AI transcription of an audio recording and may contain errors; refer to the audio recording for accuracy.*

Good morning. Is there children's church today? Okay, kids can go to children's church. I don't know why I thought there wouldn't be, but anyway. It's good to have everyone back. Alright, it's been really quiet this week. I had no school. Alright, let's start with some prayer. Heavenly Father, thank You for Your love and Your protection and for bringing us all through this difficult weather, for bringing Your children and Your family all back together again to love You and to worship You. Please help us to understand now these truths from Your Scripture. Help us to learn and grow and become more like the people You want us to be. We pray in Jesus' name, Amen. Well, today's sermon, as you saw the front, actually it was last Sunday, but we're reusing it because you weren't here. Neither was I. It's called "Wallet Worship." And probably some people see that and they say "Wallet Worship" and they see the wallet there and they're like, "Oh, here comes the sermon I'm giving." And it's not. It's not. Because really, honestly, you guys are some of the most generous giving people and I have never felt like I needed to preach on giving to you. We're a really good giving church, so that's not what this is about. So don't run screaming away. My sermon is actually kind of the opposite of that. My sermon is "Beware Wallet Worship." Beware Wallet Worship. Wallet Worship is anything that you do for God that doesn't come from your heart. For example, some people give money out of duty rather than out of love. And that's an example of wallet worship. It's things that we think that are expected of us, that are our duty, that maybe we're trying to earn something from God. These things don't come from the heart. And the sermon today is "Beware That. Beware." And I want to say that this sermon isn't because I look out there and I see specific examples of this, because this is something in the heart. This is something I can't look at you and know whether or not it's something you struggle with because I can see two people who both are living the same generous lives, but one person is doing it out of love for God and one person is doing it out of a sense of duty. And I can't tell the difference just from observation. I mean, maybe the one doing it out of duty is a lot more depressed about it and the person doing it out of love is out of joy. But really, like I said, it's a matter of the heart. So I'm not saying this because I see specific examples. This is just what was on my heart, and hopefully you can examine your own heart. Well, it's New Year. It's resolution time and all that. And maybe some of us have made our Christian New Year's resolutions like, "Give more money. Read the Bible more." And these are great, but I want to suggest the even better Christian New Year's resolution is love God more. Fall in love with Him more and stir up your passion for Him by remembering all of the wonderful things He's done for you. Build up that love and then out of that will easily come all of that other stuff you wanted to do like reading your Bible in prayer. Never fall victim to the lie that God, like some kind of earthly manager, is only interested in the bottom line. That He's only interested in your performance. That's not the case. He is interested in relationship. This is what Jesus is talking about in Matthew 23, verses 23 and 24. "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin and have neglected the weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done without leaving the others undone. Blind guides who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel." See, these Pharisees were meticulous about observing the little things, but then they ended up ignoring the great big stuff. They made sure that they paid one tenth of all of their spices, but they forgot about justice and mercy. Why? Why did this happen? Why did they overlook these big things? Because it's easier to measure the little stuff. When someone questions your faith, your Christianity, your devotion, whatever, it's real easy to point to the little things you do, like how much you put in the plate, or whether you come to church every Sunday, or whether you're in that Bible study. It's easy to point to those little things and say, "I do this and this and this. I've checked off these boxes." See, I'm a great Christian. It's much more difficult to say, "This is how much I love God." We can't see your heart. We can't measure the love in your heart for God. So it becomes easy to focus on just doing the duties, doing the chores, and forgetting that it's from the heart. I see a great example of this when it comes time to clean your house. Companies come in over and you say, "Okay, they're coming in through the doorway, so we've got to clean up all those shoes, and they're going to be in the living room, so we've got to straighten that up. They might stop by the kitchen. We'll straighten up the kitchen." But upstairs, the bedrooms and stuff, the kids are just going to be in the basement, and we're not going to care about the bedrooms or the basement. The stuff that people aren't going to see, you just let it go. And that kind of happens in our Christian lives. We spend so much time and effort doing this stuff. I remember in school, I heard a story about Benjamin Franklin, and he used to take a big log over his shoulder. Well, first he would wait until all the big, important people were out on the street for that day, and he'd put a big log over his shoulder and walk down the street. And so people would say, "Oh, look at that hardworking Ben Franklin." And he was deliberately just doing absolutely nothing in front of other people so that they would say, "Oh, look at the hardworking guy." And he wasn't accomplishing anything, he was just being showy. And sometimes this is how we attend to our Christian duties. We come to church, come to Bible study, whatever, and really our heart's just not in it. And we sometimes say, "Man, I wish I could skip church today, or skip this Bible study, or something." And that's because it's not coming from the heart, it's coming from our sense of duty. And if you skip devotions and that stuff in private, the only person that's going to know is God, and it's so easy to think, "Oh, he'll forgive me. He loves, he forgives." And it's easy to let that slide. Samuel tells us in the book of 1 Samuel, chapter 15, 22, "Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams." God wants your heart. He is love, and He created you to be in loving relationship with Him. Not a job, a relationship. My mom just lent me a copy of a book by Andrew Murray, and I forget the name, but I can get it to you if you're interested. But the very first devotion on the first page is Andrew Murray. He's talking about how it is of utmost importance for the Christian to spend time with God every morning, just as it's important for you to eat every day. You must spend time with God every day. We don't have it within us to truly be the people God wants us to be, unless that heart is there, unless that relationship is established. It's something that just has to be constantly renewed day by day. The things we do as Christians should flow out of that relationship. That's how Christianity is different from other religions. Other religions are, "Do this and this." You spend two years knocking on people's doors and handing out tracts, and you'll earn heaven, or you'll earn nirvana, or you'll earn whatever else. And all those other religions are earning your forgiveness, earning your salvation. And Christianity, our message is, Jesus earned everything for us on the cross, and all He wants in return is relationship. The point was not heaven. The point was restored relationship to our God. God created us to be in relationship, in love with Him. I've said this before, and I'm quoting someone, and I wish I could tell you who it was, but I think it's John Piper. If you can imagine heaven without God, then you don't understand Christianity. If your idea of heaven is great and wonderful, but if God's not there, or if it'll still be fine without God, then you haven't gotten Christianity yet. Because the greatest, best part of Christianity is we get to be with God. And yes, we get to be with Him in heaven, but He also can come and live in our hearts starting today. John 4.23 says, "The hour is coming, and now is, when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth. For the Father is seeking such to worship Him." Worship Him in spirit and truth. Contrast that to Matthew 7.22, when Jesus says, "Many will say to me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, and cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And I will declare to them, 'I never knew You, depart from Me, You who practice lawlessness.'" There's the people who worship in spirit and truth, who love God and have that relationship with Him and are welcomed into heaven. And then there are the people who did all kinds of stuff for God, prophesied, cast out demons. I'm sure that they tithed and did all the other stuff too, but Jesus said, "I never knew You, and now I'm sending You away, because it's about the relationship." So, my conclusion today is, as you're straightening up your outside, as you take this time of year when you reflect about when you plan to make changes, to grow and become a better person, don't just straighten up the outside, straighten up the inside. Work on loving God, falling in love with Him. Work on developing that relationship with Him. And just watch all that other stuff fall into place, all of the devotions and prayer and all that stuff will just fall right into place when you love God. And just on a little side note, don't do New Year's resolutions, because if you mess them up, you have to wait until the next New Year. Just do resolutions, because if you mess up a resolution, you can just start right over again. So make it your resolution this year, this day, every day, to fall in love more and more with God. Let's take some time for open worship, and I encourage you in this time to just repent of stuff you've been doing to make God happy, to earn His happiness, and start remembering that He sent His Son to die for you when you were still a sinner and when you weren't doing anything to earn His happiness. That's when He sent Jesus to die for you. He gives His love freely. So stop trying to work and earn for His love, and just accept it and believe in it and start to fall in love with Him today. Heavenly Father, forgive me for just checking in with You once or twice each day and then going on about my life without You. Please help me to walk with You every moment of every day. Help me to remember that this is a relationship between a father and his children. Help me to remember all the good and wonderful things that You have done for me, that You do for me, that I have not earned, but that You have just freely lavished upon me. Please help me to remember You. Help me to put You first in my thoughts in every situation. Help us all to love You more and more. We pray in Jesus' name, Amen.