

Good morning... I am so happy to be here with you today.

Happy Father's Day to all the Dads and Grandpa's out there.

My name is Kelly Tibbitts, I am the director of Kid's Harbor and I am excited to share a message with all of you today.

If you have been with us these last few weeks, you know we are in the middle of a series called "Fix your thoughts".

Jeff Oakes reminded us a few weeks ago that we can think of that phrase in a couple of different ways- we can try to change or repair our thoughts, or we can see the phrase as a call to focus our eyes on something important.

I think another way of looking at that phrase; fix your thoughts, to see it as a call to remember.

Sharing a message on Father's Day reminded me of the week Fred and I became parents. Our oldest daughter Elizabeth was born in a big snowstorm, and when it came time to leave the hospital and head home and it was snowing. Fred's driving style changed that day. He was now a dad. We drove slowly and carefully so we could get our precious baby home.

As I look back on that time, I realized that in a span of two days, the focus of our lives changed. We went from being two people to a family. The next years were spent with a new focus. Things that had never seemed dangerous before we had children, like driving on a highway in snow, now seemed very dangerous. Our thoughts were now fixed on someone beside ourselves. Our focus changed. What our hearts wanted changed. The love for our children would shape our own thoughts and dreams. We wanted our children to be safe, healthy and happy. And we wanted, and still want, them to grow into the people God created them to be. To love God with all they are, and to realize God loves and knows them.

Today I am sharing with all of you one of my favorite passages of scripture. I can't think of any passage that has impacted me more than Deuteronomy 6. Jesus quotes this verse in the gospels of Mark and Matthew. It is from the Old Testament, the book of Deuteronomy – Elise read it to us in Hebrew.

Shema-“hear or listen” tell us we are called to listen and obey

Yisrael- Israel –All of us together- Church was never meant to be done alone- The Shema is such an important passage, because it reminds us to fix our thoughts on The Most Important Thing. God has instructed us to Love Him – with every part of our heart and our minds and our souls and our bodies. To love Him with all of who we are.

I came to love Deuteronomy about 8 years ago when I did began a 2 year Bible Study called the Deuteronomy Project.

I would meet weekly with some friends to discuss each chapter of this book. It was a labor of love, written by Richard Couser, a lawyer from NH. He spent over 15 years studying and researching the book of Deuteronomy. He read over 50 books to help him bring the book of Deuteronomy to life. He took all his knowledge and made this book. When the manuscript was completed, he died and his wife published it.

What made the book come to life for me was how he placed each chapter of Deuteronomy in a narrative talk between Hal, a retired preacher and Chris; a new believer. They would meet each week to discuss one of the 34 chapters.

When we finished the study, I felt like I had begun to understand the heart of God in a way I never had before. I saw, through scripture, that God loved me and the rules of scripture were there to lead me to life that is best.

Deuteronomy is a covenant expressing the relationship of God and this special group of people that he was creating as nation that He would bless and through them the world would be blessed. The literal translation of its Greek name mean "second law" Deuteronomy summarizes, expands upon and sometimes abbreviates the three proceeding books ~Exodus Leviticus and Numbers. It is the most quoted Old Testament book in the New Testament, and is often quoted by Jesus. Last week, Jed's dad shared with us how Jesus himself quoted from Deuteronomy.

What Jesus will call The Great Commandment starts in Chapter 6.

Perhaps like me you learned the Lord's Prayer as a child. It was memorized and meant to be repeated. The Shema- was just like that- meant to be repeated in the home, memorized and understood.

This morning I want to start by looking at Chapter 6, verses 4-7.

4 "Listen, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. **5** And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength. **6** And you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands that I am giving you today. **7** Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are on the road, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up.

Today, I want us to look at one question- what does it mean to Love God with our heart, soul, and strength? I want to think about that question and then give some practical steps to carry out this command of loving God at home and on the road, as we rise and when we go to bed.

When I think about Deuteronomy 6, I think about the call on my life to love God with all of who I am. I need to think about God and His love for us and our love for him. Not just

when we are at church but also when we're home and we are on the roads of our life.

What does that look like today? Last week I spent a day reading "Love Does" by Bob Goff. It is a great book to read as you start to consider how to Love God and Love people.

We can be people like a man named Randy was for Bob Goff. Bob is a lawyer who has done amazing things especially in Uganda and India helping children who have been trafficked or are languishing in jail without any hope of a court date to prove their innocence. He someone who takes very seriously God's desire for us to love each other.

The story I want to share with you today occurs at a pivotal time in Bob's life.

There was one story I thought I would share as we celebrate dads this weekend. It is a day we can all decide to all be spiritual parents or mentors in the lives of the people around us. There are people around us who need us be spiritual aunts and uncles, friends...

Bob was about to make a very bad decision. Randy was a pivotal person—he was Bob's young life leader. Bob wanted to leave high school and find a part-time job so he could support himself while he spent days climbing massive granite cliffs in Yosemite. Bob went to the home of his friend Randy to say good-bye. On the porch of Randy's house, they talked about Bob's plan to move to Yosemite. Randy listened, then looked strangely at Bob and told him to hold on a minute—then went in his home for a few minutes. When he emerged, he had a tattered backpack and told Bob – I'm with you.

Bob tried unsuccessfully to get a job in Yosemite. No one wanted to hire him. It did not look like the plan to live at Yosemite was going to work out. Randy kept saying to Bob "whatever you decide to do- I am with you"

He never told him "I told you so- or -you should've stayed home, and stayed in school" he just kept saying "whatever you decide, know that either way I'm with you".

After few days, they returned back home. Bob had decided to finish high school. He brought Randy home and when they went into Randy's house; Bob realized Randy had just gotten married, and had left his new bride to travel with Bob.

They were setting up a new home the morning Bob stood in the doorway. When Bob shared his desire to run away from life, Randy had stopped, counted the cost, and did what needed to be done. Walking though a tough time with Bob was how Randy loved God at that moment. He walked alongside Bob and left his home. He loved Bob, because Bob was made in the image of God.

Randy could have stayed home and just given Bob advice. But nothing he said would have meant as much as throwing on a backpack and helping Bob do the hard work he needed to do. As Bob wrestled with the next step of his life Randy reminded him "I am with you".

Many times in our life we will have the opportunity to do what Randy did. To love God and love our neighbor.

Deuteronomy calls us to remember, to hear, and to listen. We know God's voice is a still, small voice and the noise of life can drown it out.

God's voice requires us to discern...is this God? Intuition? or someone's opinion from the past? The more time we spend with Christ, I think the easier it becomes to hear him speak softly to us.

What does love God mean?

How do we love a God we can't see, hear or touch?

I think we love God by knowing Him. We learn He who He is-The Bible tells us He is our Father, Creator of the Universe- yet He calls us friend. I think we love God as we learn to be still, and desire to be with Him, not for what He does, but for who He is.

I found as I prepare for today I began to struggle. I shared this before ~I've been at Harbor for three years and loving deeply is hard for me. I'm afraid of pain. I have a guarded heart from years of living in unhealthy situations as a child of an alcoholic and in my first 20 years, many people I loved died.

But God has called me to step outside of my fear and love with my heart, soul and strength.

Our souls are the part of us that connect with God, in a way we can't understand with finite minds

Last Christmas, a Hymn I was singing impacted my life. The song was "O Holy Night" and the phrase was "our soul felt its worth".

Long lay the world in sin and error pining
Till he appeared and the soul felt its worth.

That became my prayer for people I love who were in pain last Christmas. I would pray over and over- Lord may their soul find it's worth...

So much pain occurs when we do not know the worth of our soul. We look to find value or worth based on physical things like money, power, knowledge and beauty.

But the truth is - We can only find our true worth in one place; in God.

That is why God says not to give our first and best to anything else or anyone else.

If you've been at Harbor for anytime now you have heard this preached over and over, because it is true-nothing else will satisfy.

We know there is a peace that passes understanding when we recognize who we are. We are the beloved children, and dear friends of the most high God.

I think a hard struggle is that we believe everything I am saying while we are sitting here. It is easy to Love God while we worship together and pray together. There is peace and the Holy Spirit is present. We can remind each other of truth.

But we have to leave here and do life outside these walls. Life is hard and in the midst of doing life, we can forget how to love God.

We get caught up trying to do things in our own strength.

I have preparing for this message by reading and praying and studying. But last Saturday night, a week ago I realized I had taken my eyes off of God and fixed my thoughts on things that were not true.

I found myself up at midnight last Saturday night, full of anger, malice and rage. Things God says to get rid of

Eph 4:31, 32

Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. **32** Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.

Instead of having a heart full of gratitude, I began to complain. A silly misunderstanding led to a night where I stopped living like Christ was in me. I had managed to get myself into a very selfish place. It had been a really long time since I had been angry like that, and I had forgotten what to do with my heart that was full of pain.

My days and weeks had become too busy. I kept putting off time to love God and be loved by him. By Saturday my life had felt like it was too much.

Unfortunately my first response was not to go to God and ask him to heal me and remind me of His love. My first response was to be defensive and blame others for how I was feeling.

As I got ready to leave for church the next morning, I was trying to forgive and repent. I wrote a sentence of apology in a note to my husband- but was I not feeling God's love surround me.

As I walked into Harbor I felt God's joy and peace and love fill me and heal me. I wish I could tell you why it was so, but I can't. It helps that my job is to lead Kid's Harbor. Being around kids who love God and Love you can do a lot to heal a broken heart.

So on Sunday, I was literally overwhelmed by the love of God. He gave me joy for my pain, His peace returned. I was reminded what I was supposed to remember ~to love God with my heart soul mind and strength.

I remembered to rest in his love. Love that does not depend on my goodness. I was reminded I was created to Love God to worship Him- delight in Him. I need time to Love God and rest in His love.

In Mark 12:28 – 31 Jesus is asked a question.

One of the teachers of religious law... asked, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"

29Jesus replied, "The most important commandment is this: 'Listen, O Israel! The LORD our God is the one and only LORD. **30**And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.'
31The second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' No other commandment is greater than these."

These books contained about 613 Laws that God had given. Laws designed by loving father to show us the best way to live and be in relationship with the God who made us and loves us. He was creating for himself a nation that would help the whole world see who God is, by the way they lived. That is still our call...to be a people who reflect God's love to the world around us.

We can't do it without the Power of God in us. This week reminded all of us of that. When we see the horrific murder in Charleston, where a man was able to sit in a Bible study with a room of believers- hear the truth and feel their love and then murder them. I do not know if you have seen what I saw yesterday, the incredible love of God shown by mothers and sisters and husbands, family of those who lost their lives.

I could hear how they Love God as they told this man who killed their beloved, I forgive you- we forgive you.

They did not pretend – they told the truth- every fiber of their body and soul are in pain- they will not hug or see or hold their loved ones again. They do not deny the pain They said “you took the lives of the most amazing people I have ever know, but I forgive you” ...and my family forgives you and we are asking you to repent, and confess and come to Christ.

Without Christ, the soul of this man had no worth- and he did not see the worth of the souls of those he had just prayed and studied scripture with.

This is the most beautiful example of why God has called us to Love him first. They could not have forgiven in their own strength, it is Christ in them...shining a light the whole world can see. One man wanted to start a race war and a group of believers chose to forgive and love through the power of God on them, they loved God this week with all of who they are.

They saw the image of God in a man so full of sin he took the life of people who had invited him in and said to him
We enjoy you- may God have mercy on you.

How do we love with God with all of our heart? I think it starts with the understanding that He loves us. When we stand one day face to face with him- then we will love him with all of who we are. On earth as we walk with Him, our heart grows in the ability to love.

We love because He first loved us. Not because we deserve it- While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 5:8 New International Version (NIV)

8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us

We love because the spirit of Christ is in us. This is the Secret Paul speaks of in the book of Colossians- Christ is in us. We love when we worship, or pray or sing.

I love God when I turn my thought to Him when I wake up and when I go to sleep. I am learning how to know him, to remember what he has taught me.

I talk to Him and now and then, I hear His still, small voice.

At Harbor we help people find their way back to God, so we can learn to Love deep.

I think we will learn to love deeply when fix our thoughts- and look to God to helps us grow and realize that Christ is transforming us to Love God with our soul, mind and

.

In Deuteronomy 6, we are instructed to talk about God everywhere- at home... on the road... as we go to bed, and as we get up.

In our homes, we can think about God and pray and read His word as we wake, as we get ready to sleep. Some of us keep a Bible near the bed, others have a Bible app on the phone and make that the first and last thing they look at each day. I have found that the first moments I wake up are a time I can give my heart and plans for the day to God, Often He puts a song in my heart that remind me of His love for me.

On the road is where we do life. Very little of our time in this day and age is spent walking on the road. Hours of each day are often spent driving. Driving and walking are different words, but I still think the truth of Deuteronomy is true. Amazing conversations can occur in the car as we all stare straight ahead. It is the best place to develop an authentic faith in our children because it is easier for us to be authentic while we are driving.

And if you have days like I did on Saturday and you need to let your children know that you were wrong and you're sorry and that you need Christ's help to continue to be who he made you to be, the car is very easy place to have that conversation.

Of all the things I am thankful for about God calling my family to Harbor, one of the most impactful has been the time in the car to and from Harbor on Saturday nights. On the way home we would often talk about the message- we would be intentional about having Dinner together on sat nights after church. The rides to and from Harbor have been a time for me to have intentional conversations about faith with my girls.

So my encouragement today to take seriously the moments when you're walking or riding side-by-side. Be intentional to use those opportunities to share your faith.

And I am not speaking only to parents and their children.

One of my best friends came to faith in Christ we were driving together on a Highway. She started asking me questions and my spirit became overwhelmed. I'm not sure if you've ever felt a burning desire to share the gospel. The conversation in the car that night led to a moment when she became a follower of Christ.

Be intentional about the moments we share on the road with others. Allow God to use those moments so you can share your love of God and his great love for us.

Deuteronomy 6 is filled with so much truth, it remind us to live our lives with grateful hearts. If there was more time, I would love to talk about each word in Chapter 6. So I encourage you today to read it on your own, Take a Bible form the back if you do not have one. Jed's dad taught us last week that Jesus knew the truth of Deuteronomy and used it to defeat Satan. But for today, in the moments we have left together, I want to finish with some thoughts on How to allow the Love of God to transform our hearts and bring us to a place where we can love Him.

Perhaps you are sitting there today wondering how can we fix our thoughts on God's truth and have it impact our hearts and influence our lives?

The book of Deuteronomy records the final words of Moses as he stands looking at the promise land he will not enter. Joshua will lead the people to the Promised Land. Moses has one last chance to tell the people what he thinks they should remember, what they should fix their thoughts on.

No matter what your father was like, I want you to leave today knowing God is a loving Father.
He is good.

If you have ever been around a toddler you know a favorite first word is "why?"

If today, you want to ask God- your Father- " why should I obey?", He is not like a human Father who might say- "because I said so.

In Chapter 6, Verse 24- He answers the question ...why obey ?

" And the Lord our God commanded us to obey all these decrees and to fear him so he can continue to bless us and preserve our lives, as he has done to this day.

God is for you. He desires to bless us and keep us close to Him. He wants to bring us His peace and His joy so we can be His people. His hands and feet to a lost world. Without Christ in us, we can't do anything....but with Him in us, we can do all things. We can Love and we can hear, we can listen we can obey.

Chapter 6 of Deuteronomy has been so pivotal because it helps me and my family to look to God is the only source of our joy and peace.

It is Christ in me that brings freedom from the bondage of sin.
You and I are sinners in need of a Savior. Christ is that savior.

He paid the price for every sin, for every thought, every word, for every deed we've ever done that was contrary to His perfect will.

So as we close, we see the Great commandment Jesus gave comes from Deuteronomy 6.

Jesus called us to Love God with all of our heart, soul and strength.

Hear, Listen, Obey and Love. My hope today is that you will leave knowing that God desires to know you. He wants to Love you and be loved by you.

Will you pray with me?

Lord, our God, you commanded us to obey all these decrees you can continue to bless us and preserve our lives.

Help us to have the faith to Love you and be loved by you.