

1 John 4:9-19

“God Work, Our Hands” Part 3

“Love, Our Impetus for Everything”

The question I have contemplated for our final installment in our sermon series, “God’s Work, Our Hands” is, “why did the people get behind Nehemiah’s vision?”. What motivated them? What compelled them to give generously to the work of rebuilding the wall? In the face of opposition, even internal conflict, and a grueling work schedule the people did the work. Certainly, Nehemiah was a great leader, but many great leaders have failed. Moses was a great leader, but he failed to enter the Promise Land. David was a great leader, but he failed miserably as a family man. I am convinced it wasn’t simply Nehemiah’s leadership. It was love. Love of God and love of one another. Church, for the disciple love is our impetus for everything. Love, obedience to God and unmerited concern for one another. It must be because only love conquers all. It conquers fear, doubt, opposition, conflict, sin, etc.

**1 Cor 13:7** “<sup>7</sup> Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.”

Love was the culprit. It was their energy. It was the reason for their success. And so, on this first Sunday of Advent and the last Sunday in our generosity campaign we will talk about love and hopefully it will be clear on how the two are connected. There is much here in the way of love, but I will share just three observations.

**First observation, love is God’s enterprise,** and it is why God is so generous. It is why God always gives and he gives first. And what God has given us above all else is love and this love has

changed everything for us. I often here in objection to the love of God the following: If there is a God why want he do something about all the evil in the world? And my response is he has. And John makes it very clear as to exactly how God has done so. **V9-12** “God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. <sup>10</sup>This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins. <sup>11</sup>Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other. <sup>12</sup>No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love is brought to full expression in us.” Do we see what God’s love has done? What God’s love has given us and the call his love has placed on us to give as he has so abundantly given to us, love. Church, love is God’s enterprise, and it is why he is so generous. As his people should we not be like wise?

**John 3:16** “<sup>16</sup>“For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.”

**Romans 5:8** “<sup>8</sup>But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.”

**Luke 6:38** “<sup>38</sup>Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full—pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back.”

**Second observation, God gives his very best. God’s love will not allow God to cut corners. V13-16** “<sup>13</sup>And God has given us his Spirit as proof that we live in him and he in us. <sup>14</sup>Furthermore, we have seen with our own eyes and now testify that the Father

sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. <sup>15</sup> All who declare that Jesus is the Son of God have God living in them, and they live in God. <sup>16</sup> We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love.” Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We have been given all three. God’s very best. There was a big fight in a church. John, the son of a faithful member who have gone on to glory was dog mad at the property committee because they had decided to get rid of his mother’s old recliner he had donated to the church after her passing. So, to keep the peace, code for appeasing this member, it was decided by the leadership that it would not be tossed in the dump, where it truly belonged. Instead, the church would facilitate its relocation to his summer cottage, considering his attachment to said chair, understandably. So, at the next meeting of the property committee chair informed John that they would relocate the chair to his summer cottage during a time that was convenient for him. Certainly, this would bring the peace, they thought. John, surprisingly, objected, stating forcibly he didn’t want it. Well, the property committee chair, out of frustration, before she could catch herself blurted out, “if you don’t want it why do you think God wants it?”. John stormed out of the meeting, and they threw the chair away, rightfully so. Here’s the point. Don’t bring your old recliners here. If you want God to have a recliner buy God a new one. God gives us his very best. Should we not do the same? He has loved us with an everlasting love. Should we not love the same?

**Matt 3:16-17** “<sup>16</sup> After his baptism, as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on him. <sup>17</sup> And a voice from

heaven said, “This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy.”

**Jer 31:3** “Long ago the Lord said to Israel: “I have loved you, my people, with an everlasting love. With unfailing love I have drawn you to myself.”

**John 13:34-35** “<sup>34</sup> So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other.<sup>35</sup> Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.”

**Final observation, we cannot not love until we first believe we are loved by God. V19,** “<sup>19</sup> We love because He first loved us.”

The question in life isn't whether God loves us, but rather do we love God? Those who love God give what God has so freely given to them. And they do so in like measure, abundantly. Maybe the opportunity for us is to fully understand how loved we are by God and by Jesus. Nehemiah knew he was loved by God and in turn he gave that same love to his people and his people gave that love to him and that love propelled them to great heights! Church, this love can do the same for us, but not until we believe we are loved by God with an everlasting love. That love being Jesus the Christ. So, with what measure will each of us give in 2024? For that matter, the remainder of this year? I guess it will be determined by how much we believe we are loved by God, by Jesus Christ. Love, it is our impetus for everything, and it will be what sustains us in our present and what propels us into our future. In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.