

Christmas Eve Morning Service 2017

Scripture:

1st Chronicles 17:1-14

John 3:16-17

“Love.”

To love God means to obey Him and to submit to Him.

To love God means to embrace His will.

To love God means to be devoted to Him.

True love of God is all about submission --- devotion ----- and obedience.

As our bulletin cover says --- 1 John 4:10 --- “Herein is love --- not that we loved God --- but that He loved us.”

“Herein is love --- not that we loved God --- but that He loved us.”

Biblical Love isn't first and foremost about us loving God --- it is about God loving us.

God's action is primary ----- our re-action ---- our response is always secondary.

“Herein is love --- not that we loved God --- but that He loved us.”

In 1 Chronicles today we have the great story of God's promise to David.

In the NIV the heading for this section is “God's promise to David.” ----- in Eugene Peterson's --- The Message it's ----- “David Submits.”

The two together capture the movement of this passage ----- God's promise and David submits --- that's precisely what's happening here --- and in that order.

But that is certainly not how it looks at the beginning.

David is sitting in his palace ---- feet up --- cold drink in hand ----- entourage all around him ---- when he suddenly thinks that he must do something for God --- he must build something for God.

God has led the Israelites safely and securely --- faithfully ---- things are going well for them --- and so David feels as though he must do something.

And so as David reclines in his beautiful home --- a palace even as verse 1 says --- and thinks to himself --- “Well I certainly have been blessed with a beautiful home here --- a palace ---- and yet God doesn’t have any home --- we keep shipping Him about in a make shift cloth tent.”

And so David decides that he will do something for God --- build something for God --- a temple --- a permanent home --- He will build a palace for God.

And at first Nathan ----- his pastor --- says this to him --- “Whatever you have in mind --- do it.”

In verse 2 that’s exactly what Nathan says to David ---- “Whatever you have in mind do it.”

“Do what you want.”

“Do whatever you want.” ----Nathan advises David.

So at first David’s feelings are encouraged ---- but then God weighs in on things.

Verse 3 --- “But that night the word of God came to Nathan saying...”

And the message is ----- “Don’t do it.”

In verse 4 God says --- “Tell David “You are not the one to build me a house.” ----- clear, concise --- and diametrically opposed to what David wanted to do ----- “Tell David “You are not the one to build me a house.”

And not only is David not to build the Lord a house but ----- the Lord will build David a house.

Verse 10 ends with --- “I declare to you that the Lord will build a house for you.”

David --- all delighted in the Lord --- all pumped up flying high ----- is about to do something that he feels is the right thing to do ----- he's just bubbling forth with praise and adoration --- and God says --- STOP! ----- Stop --- don't do it ----- "Don't build me a home." ----- "I will build you a home."

Talk about a great reversal ---- David wants to do something for God ---- his most trusted confidant --- Nathan --- says "yes do it ---- go ahead --- do whatever you want..."

And then God pulls the emergency break --- and brings it all to a halt.

After telling David he will not build a house God says this ---- the second half of verse 10 ----- from 1 Chronicles 17 -----

"I declare to you that the Lord will build a house for you: When your days are over and you go to be with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, one of your own sons, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for me, and I will establish his throne forever."

You won't do it David ---- but your son will ----- God says.

And of course this is exactly what happens when David dies his son Solomon becomes King and it is Solomon who builds the first temple for God --- the first home for God.

David wanted to do something for God --- but in the end David's great love for God is demonstrated not in what He did ----- but in what he didn't do --- his ability to refrain.

David's ability to settle down --- refrain --- and not do what he wanted to do --- his ability to be obedient is how David demonstrates his great love for God.

He wanted to build for God ----- God didn't want Him to build.

He wanted to express Himself and do something for God --- something grand and huge and obvious for all to see.

But God had other things in mind.

God wanted David to submit --- obey ---- and embrace His will --- quietly off to the side at the end of his life.

“Whatever you have in mind --- do it.” --- Nathan first says to David.

But then God pipes in.

Very often in life we want to do something for God that we want ----- too often in life --- like David we want to something for God that we want to do instead of listening to God and doing what He wants us to do.

The Old Testament is --- in one sense --- one great arm wrestle between the people God doing what they want to do --- and God showing them that a life of faith isn't about doing what you want to do but about following God's lead.

Almost every single time God speaks the first reaction of the people is to say “No.”

On first calling Moses --- Isaiah and Jeremiah all say no.

When Jonah is first called he runs in the other direction.

The first reactions to Jesus were --- No – and then No ---and then it was No.

People loved it when Jesus healed --- when He made them feel better --- but when He challenged them --- when He actually started to teach them --- they hated it ---- in fact enough of them hated enough that they --- potted to kill Him --- and as we all know they “succeeded.”

Human beings have a very hard time listening to God's direction --- we all think that we don't we all think that we're pretty good at listening to God --- but our track record shows otherwise.

We want to do what we want to do ---- and so we do it --- and further --- like David we figure that if what we want to do is for ----- it must be good.

Not necessarily ---- just because we are doing something for God doesn't mean it is pleasing to God.

Sometimes God's love isn't about us doing anything other than submit --- obey --- and embrace God's directives and God's will.

Violent political leaders the world over truly believe that what they are doing they are doing for God.

Doing something for God isn't enough ---- the real question is does God want it done?

Thankfully we not only see the misguided David --- "I want to do this." ---- we also see the humble obedient ----- dependent David.

When God says --- don't do it David --- don't do it ----- David stops.

David is a very rare man

Sometimes we show our love for God by simply submitting --- obeying and devoting ourselves to Him ----- and not doing something for Him.

When it comes to God sometimes silence is the best teacher.

We don't always have to be doing something for God --- sometimes listening to Him is the better choice --- think of Mary and Martha.

Martha is distracted by always wanting to do something for the Lord ---- Mary sits and listens to the Lord --- Martha gets angry ---- Jesus says be more like Mary would you Martha.

Look it up for yourselves in Luke 10 the last few verses.

There are seasons in our lives.

There are seasons in our faith journeys.

What we are called to do one decade --- or for 4 or 5 years may not at all be what we are called to do the next decade or the next 4 to 5 years.

God will have a beautiful home dedicated to Him.

A temple for God will be built.

But just not now.

David will not build it.

His son Solomon will.

There are seasons in our faith journeys.

There are seasons in the lives of communities of faith.

David thought it was his generation who do something for God --- build a temple --- build a home for the Ark of the Covenant ---- but it wasn't --- that was for his son to do --- and not him.

We demonstrate and live out our love for God not by doing what we want --- --- but by doing what He wants --- and when He wants it.

And sometimes what He ---- God ---- asks of us isn't to do something --- but to submit --- obey --- be dependant ---- and embrace His will in humble devotion.

David wanted to do.

David wanted to act.

David wanted to build ----- something grand and massive and obvious for all to see.

But God said --- no --- sit down David ---- sit down ----- not now ----- not you --- settle down ---- and listen.

Out of you will come something great and beautiful ----- but that is for later on --- that is for another season.

And the great house --- the great dynasty that God promised David --- wasn't just a stone temple.

The Temple that Solomon built --- the very first temple in Jerusalem wasn't at all what God was talking about with David in 1 Chronicles 17 today.

The house of David --- the dynasty of David --- the Temple of David that God was talking about was of course Jesus Christ Himself.

The Hebrew word used here for house has as much to do with dynasty --- family line ---- as it does with physical edifice --- stone building.

When God says to David I will build you a home --- he is speaking about --- ---"I will build a dynasty ---- a family line through you." --- and that is precisely what God did --- there is a direct line from David to Jesus Christ.

As usual God is speaking about something far more grand than just some limited human expression that will only be destroyed by other humans.

God is talking about an everlasting covenant ---- God is talking about a family line that goes way beyond just the next generation --- He's talking about a line that will include the Christ.

"Herein is love --- not that we loved God --- but that He loved us."

David is remembered not because of a few songs he wrote or sang --- David is remembered not because of what he did ---- killed a man and took his wife for himself ----David is remembered because of what God did through Him.

God's great love story of Jesus coming ----- the baby in the manger --- one from the tree of Jesse --- one from the house of David --- the line of David -- - begins right here in 1 Chronicles.

Love at its core isn't just about a human expression or gift --- love is all about divine action --- a divine directive.

"Herein is love --- not that we loved God --- but that He loved us."

Any serious expression of love is about God.

Sappy greeting card love is weak and watered down compared to divine love
----- God's love in Jesus Christ.

God's covenantal love is what real love is all about.

“For God so loved the world that He sent His Son into the world that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have life eternal.”

“God loves --- God acts --- we submit --- we believe.”

David got all caught up in the excitement of all that God had done and was still doing --- He got all caught up in wanting to express himself and do something for God.

And God said no ----- submit --- obey --- sit back down --- call off the building project --- hang up the harp --- put away the pen.

Embrace my will --- devote yourself to my way.

“This is what the Lord says” ----- this is from verse 4 in our passage today --
-- “This is what the Lord says ---- you are not the one to build me a house to dwell in.”

David could have been heartbroken.

But I want to build you a house Lord --- I want to do what I want to do.

“But I want to.”

“Whatever you have in mind ---- do it.” ----- that's the first response David has to his plan to do something for God.

“Whatever you have in mind ---- do it.” --- Nathan first says to David.

But then God speaks --- “This is what the Lord says ---- you are not the one to build me a house to dwell in.”

Loving God ----- expressing our love for God isn't about us doing what we want.

David could have whined and replied to God --- "But this is what I want to do." -----"Let me do what I want to do God."----- but He doesn't.

He submits.

Loving God isn't about doing what we want for God.

Loving God is about doing what God wants us to do.

When David did what He wanted he messed things up.

When he wanted another woman for himself --- Bathsheba --- it didn't end well --- God wasn't pleased.

When David did what God wanted ----- things were far better --- God was pleased.

When we do what we want ---- things don't end well.

When we do what God wants ---- things are far better --- God is pleased.

God is the prime mover.

We are the responders --- we are secondary.

The problem is we tend to like to do things they way we like them done --- the way we want them done --- in the timeline we want them done.

We like to be the prime movers --- but we're not and never will be.

God in Christ is the prime mover.

God's love is the prime movement ---- we are bit players.

We like to be front and centre ----- what we really need to do is move aside and let God take front and centre.

God loves us so much that He sent His Son ----- and then the second half of John 3:16 --- the next verse --- John 17 ----- “For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world --- but to save the world through him.”

John 3:17 ---- “For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world --- but to save the world through him.”

That’s the love of God in action --- saving us --- not condemning us but saving us.

“For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world --- but to save the world through him.”

God didn’t condemn David for a selfish idea ---- building a temple ---- God simply saved him from making a mistake --- doing something out of turn --- doing something out of season.

What David wanted to do wasn’t for David to do.

What David was focused on was for another time --- not now.

David was living in a different season than he thought he was.

God had something else in mind just now for David ----- for Israel.

God’s love always knows better than our love.

David would have loved to build a temple ---- David wanted to build a temple.

David loved God and wanted to do something for God.

But David’s love for God needed guidance and direction.

David needed guidance and direction.

The Temple wasn’t for him to build.

“This is what the Lord says ---- you are not the one to build me a house to dwell in.” ---- verse 4 from 1 Chronicles today.

What David wanted to do --- and what God wanted David to do ---- were not the same thing.

We don't love God by doing what we want to do ---- we love God by doing what God wants us to do.

David did as God directed him to do ---- not what he himself wanted to do.

Moses did as God directed him to do --- and even though he wanted to enter into the Promised Land --- he --- Moses never did.

Our lives are not about us doing what we want to do.

As Christians ---- as people of faith ---- as followers of Jesus Christ --- our lives are about doing what God wants us to do.

That's how we show that we understand Biblical love --- by doing what God wants us to do --- not by doing what we want to do.

If you want to show God that you love him --- don't do what you want to do with your life --- submit your life to His will.

Obey Him.

Submit to Him.

Devote yourself to Him.

Think of Noah ---- just about everyone thought He was off his rocker --- lost his mind.

Building this massive boat for what.

For God.

Noah didn't do what He wanted to do --- he did what God wanted him to do.

We show our great love for God by doing what He wants us to do --- not by doing what we want to do.

God so loved the world ----- and He sent His Son to save the world.

It's all taken care of --- God loves us and God saves us.

The season of panic --- the season of what is going to happen next ---- ended when Jesus was born --- crucified – and rose again from the dead.

We don't live in the unknown anymore.

We live in the known --- we are saved --- the fight has been fought God wins --- we're safe --- evil loses in the end.

The only unknown is when --- the only unknown is when this beautiful life altering reality will be ushered in on a permanent basis --- when Christ returns.

When Jesus will return is the only unknown.

What will happen and why is a known.

He will come and He will call home those who know and believe Him --- that is a known.

When exactly this will happen --- well that is unknown.

That's the story of God's great and unending love for us.

We don't have to do something to earn God's love --- we don't have to do something to keep God's love ----- we simply have to believe --- trust ---- and submit to Him.

God's love comes to us ----- just as the Christ child came to us ----- not because of anything we have done but because of God.

When we think of love this Christmas season may we think less about a feeling we have and more about the action of God.

Love ----- Biblical love ---- has nothing to do with a feeling we have ---- or an emotion we express ---- Biblical love has to do with God acting.

“Herein is love --- not that we loved God --- but that He loved us.”

“For God so loved the world that he gave His only son.”

And if we want to love God ---- in return we submit --- we devote --- and we depend on Him to lead us.

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

This Christmas may our love be less about a feeling we have or an emotion we experience.

This Christmas may love be far more about God and what He has done.

“Herein is love --- not that we loved God --- but that He loved us.”

Amen.