God’s love is particularly hard to see, and thus can be most easily doubted, when we walk through dark and difficult times. I don’t have time to document the long history of this struggle in Scripture, but let me simply point to a few notable examples.

Given that love is not self-seeking, but that it seeks the best for another, I think it makes it easy for us to doubt God’s love for us and overflows us into the lives of others.

The last example I would point to is found in Hebrews 12, just a few verses after our text from two weeks ago. The author of Hebrews is encouraging these believers to endure the struggles and difficulties before them without becoming discouraged and quitting. He then says, “…You have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: “My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, 6because the Lord disciplines those he loves and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.” Stated plainly, pain makes it easy for us to doubt God’s love for us and if you’ve ever been a kid, you can relate. Think about it.

From the time we’re born, our parents, more than anyone else, tell us that they love us. Or they should. And they show us that they love us. And we feel loved. But then periodically they do that discipline thing, and we don’t feel any love at all. And they know it because they start saying things like, “I’m doing this because I love you, which is incontrovertible evidence that they know that what they’re doing doesn’t feel or look or seem like love at all. They allow us to walk through difficult situations that they could fix if they chose to. They put us in difficult situations that they don’t have to. And all of a sudden it’s a little harder to trust in their love.

But then what happens is that we grow up and turn into adults and we finally understand what we couldn’t as children, that our parents disciplined us because they loved us and because they wanted what was best for us. Here’s the problem. Once we grow up and become adults, we start to think that we know everything and that we can see everything and we forget that as it relates to God’s eternal plans and purposes, we’re still children. God’s love doesn’t mean that he leads us on an easy path. God’s love doesn’t preclude the use of pain as an agent of change in our lives. God’s love doesn’t magically undo the brokenness we experience as human beings who live in a world that has been ravaged by sin.

If, as adults, we can look back at the discipline we endured from our earthly parents, as imperfect as they might have been, and conclude that their discipline was evidence of their love, how much more should we trust in God’s love even during the darkest and most painful struggles of our lives. How much more should we submit, the author of Hebrews says, to the Father of our spirits and live! How much more can we trust in the love of our heavenly Father? Paul ponders this very question: “35What can separate us from the love of God in Christ? Can trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?...37No,” he says, “in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Sometimes we have to be reminded of the truth: God is love. God’s love is perfect. God’s love is steadfast. God’s love never wavers. God’s love can be trusted more than the love of any human being, no matter who they are. God expressed his love to us by sending Jesus to save us from our sins. God expressed his love by sending his Holy Spirit to live in us and walk with us every moment of every day. God’s love can be trusted.
Introduction

Good morning. I pray all of you are doing well. I just want to remind you that if you have missed any of the previous week’s services, you can go to wcag.org and click the button that says, watch online, and see the list of services on the website that comes up. This morning I want to look at 1John 4:13-17 and talk about trusting in God’s love for us.

1 John 4:13-16: The Evidence of Belief

13 We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. 14 And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. 15 If anyone confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he remains in God, 16 and so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.

John begins verse 13 in this way: by this do we know that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and as such to live lives of love since God is love. As it turns out, separate who God is and as such to live lives of love since God is love. Trusting in that love, which is something altogether different. Verse 17 then concludes, “Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.” The net result of all of these things is that God’s children demonstrate God’s essence, although imperfectly, by the way they live their lives: to remain in God and have God remain in us is for us to remain in love and as such to live lives of love since God is love. We can’t, as it turns out, separate who God is from what He does in our lives. We cannot remain in God and have God remain in us and yet not love because God is love. Like Father, like sons and daughters. So what do we take away from this passage of Scripture?

Conclusion

One, God does not want us to be insecure in our walk with Him. These truths are meant to give us confidence that God lives in us and that we live in Him. Insecurity in our walk with God is no more than our failure to trust in God’s presence, or it leads to the futile attempt to try to be good enough to feel secure in God’s presence. Instead, John makes it clear that our confidence with God is our faith in his work for us through Christ, which is a gift, and then the Holy Spirit coming to live in us, which which is another gift. In other words, we shouldn’t be insecure in our walk with God, but neither should we feel secure for the wrong reasons.

Two, we should consider how well we are doing at living in love. It may sound like I’m talking out of both sides of my mouth here by saying that our confidence in walking with the Lord is based on his work and not ours, but then saying that it’s important for us to consider how we’re living especially in terms of love. The difference is simply that one of these is the cause of our salvation and the other is the result of our salvation. We are saved because of the work of Christ—the cause, but are then changed by the work of Christ so that we live differently—the result of our salvation. And since living in love is the result of abiding in God, our life of love is a good metric for our abiding in God.

So, how is your life of love? Are you known by your love for others? Does God’s love naturally flow out of you? Do you do what you do because of love? Can the love God has shown us be seen in your life, even if imperfectly? Or is our love marked by worldly, selfish love, which expresses itself by loving only those who love us, and argu- ing only our brothers and sisters (Matthew 5:46-47). If our love falls short, the answer is not to try