

Empire Church of the Brethren

Sunday Service Sermons

04 January 2026

Necessities

Text: "So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love".

When I think of necessities I hear a child say, "I need that".

A child does not know what they need because they confuse need with want.

Maturity is knowing the difference.

Michelangelo and Raphael were great Italian Renaissance painters.

The story is told that Michelangelo, eight years older than Raphael, came into Raphael's studio and examined one of Raphael's early drawings.

Picking up a piece of chalk, Michelangelo scrawled across the painting the Latin word *Amplius*, which means "greater" or "larger".

To the older master's trained eye, Raphael's painting demonstrated too little vision.

Michelangelo insisted that Raphael think bigger and paint better.

Surely this is what almighty God thinks of most of our plans and efforts.

The God who thinks big wants us to live greater, nobler lives.

If we are to live 2026 magnificently and gloriously, there are some things we can't do without.

Paul lists three of them.

We can't do without faith.

In his book "The Gift of Love", R. L. Middleton tells about an experience that A. J. Cronin, a British physician turned author, had in the venerable city of Vienna shortly after World War I.

Cronin had looked forward to revisiting the city he had known and loved.

But when he finally reached Vienna, he was deeply distressed as he saw how the city had been destroyed by the Germans.

Walking amid the ruins of the once beautiful city, he grew furious as he witnessed the ravages of war.

As the cold night fell, he sought shelter in a small, dimly lit church.

Sitting down to wait out the winter rain storm, he turned to see an old man coming into the sanctuary.

Clad only in an old suit but standing painfully erect the old man walked down the aisle carrying a little girl in his arms.

When the old man put down the cold, poorly dressed little girl, Cronin saw that she was paralyzed.

But as the old man supported her, she knelt at the altar, clinging to the rail.

After a few minutes of prayer, the little girl placed a candle on the small stand adjacent to the altar.

Then the old man picked her up and started up the aisle with his precious burden.

Cronin followed them out of the church and watched as the man gently placed the girl on a dilapidated wagon and pulled a potato sack over her twisted limbs.

Unable to hold his silence, Cronin asked the old man if the war had maimed the child.

He answered that she was crippled by the same bomb that had killed her mother and father.

When Cronin asked if they came to the church often, the old man replied that they came daily to pray.

Then he added, "We come to show the good God that we're not angry with him." That shows you the necessity of faith better than any other example could?

Faith is something we can't do without if we are to make 2026 rich and meaningful for us and others.

We can't do without hope.

The late Dr. G. Campbell Morgan tells about a man whose shop was among the buildings destroyed in the Chicago fire of 1871.

The next morning, arriving at what had once been his place of business, the man set up a table in the midst of the charred debris.

Above the table he placed a sign that read, "Everything lost except wife, children, and hope, Business will be resumed as usual tomorrow morning."

Hope is something we can't do without in 2026.

Life will test us and try us.

If we lose hope, we will never survive.

George Frederic Watts, a nineteenth-century British painter, has poignantly pictured hope in one of his works.

The scene is of a woman sitting on a globe of the world playing her harp, with every string, except one, broken.

One could easily title the picture Despair.

But Watts titled the picture Hope, because he knew that as long as one string remained, there was still hope of making music from it.

Christian hope is a two-pronged thing; not only does hope give us victory in life's current crises, but it also give us assurance of rest and peace with God when this life is over.

The hope written of in the Bible is a confident expectation; hope is an assurance that is absolute.

Paul writes in *Romans 5:2*, "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

We live in hope that tomorrow will be better, that life will be sweeter, that we shall become better.

Hope is as natural to believers as the beating of our hearts.

It is within us because God has put it there.

It is something we can't do without in 2026.

Finally, let us consider the last of Paul's essentials of life.

We can't do without love.

The largest art museum in the world is the Louvre,

Among its fine thousand paintings are two that are particularly relevant to the necessity of love.

In the first painting, an indignant, angry father is ordering his son out of the house.

The father's finger is raised in anger against the wicked son.

The weeping mother and sisters and brothers cower in the background.

In the second picture, the same members of the family are shown, but the scene has changed drastically.

The father lies lifeless on his bed.

His family kneels by the side of his bed.

The wife's face is buried in her hands.

The door to the little cottage is open.

The rebellious son stands with his hand on the door latch and his foot on the doorstep.

Grief is written across his face.

He has come home, but it is too late, too late for the boy to confess to his father that he is sorry and wants forgiveness; too late for the father to speak the words of forgiveness and reconciling love the boy longs to hear.

For both it is too late.

They have learned in an agonizing way that love is one thing we can't do without.

Love's healing touch is desperately needed in our homes, businesses, schools, churches, and the government.

Therefore, we need to let God fill our hearts with his love.

Then we need to share that love with others.

Love is life's most precious gift; in this new year we can't do without it.

As we begin this new year, more than anything God wants to write *Amplius* across our lives.

He wants to make them bigger and better.

He who put the stars in the heavens and raised the rocky mountains above the flat plains can do it, will do it, if we will let him do so in and through our lives.