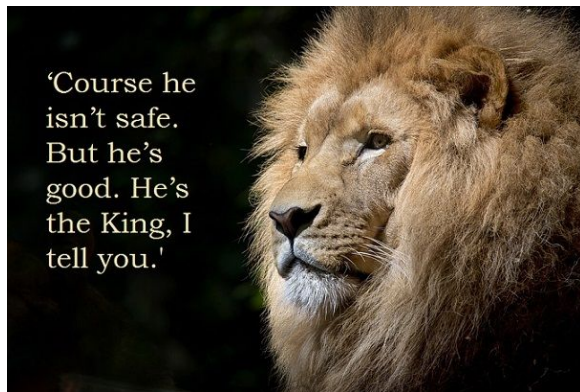


What Really Matters, Pt. 5
Trust in the LORD with All Your Heart
Proverbs 3: 1-8

**First Presbyterian Church
Baton Rouge, Louisiana**

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In this early summer series, we've been considering what matters most in life. This morning we just read one of the most famous verses from Proverbs, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths" (Prov. 3: 5-6). We want to explore what it means to trust in God.



'Course he
isn't safe.
But he's
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Let's start with some C.S. Lewis and his first story about the world of Narnia and the great lion Aslan, who is a figure for Christ. In the story, four British school children have walked through a magical wardrobe to find themselves in the wondrous realm of Narnia, where all the animals can talk. As the story goes, one of the children has been tempted and captured

by the evil White Witch. In their search for their brother, the other three are befriended by Mr. and Mrs. Beaver. The Beavers tell them about Aslan, the great lion who rules over Narnia, though he is seldom seen. They believe that Aslan is on the move, working to break the power of the White Witch. At the very sound of Aslan's name, the children all feel a mysterious thrill in their hearts. They ask the Beavers to tell them about Aslan.

She says, "Aslan is a lion- *the* Lion, the great Lion."

"Ooh" said Susan. "I'd thought he was a man. Is he-quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion"...

"Safe?" said Mr. Beaver ... "Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's *good*. He's the King, I tell you."¹

In this little scene, we get a great insight about both our attraction to Christ and our fear of him. Proverbs urges us to trust the LORD with all our heart. And we want to know what will happen if we do that. Is Jesus quite safe? Can I trust in

him without having to change a whole lot? Can I meet him and be sure I will stay comfortable? Does God promise me a safe zone and a happy place?

“Safe?” said Mr. Beaver. “Who said anything about safe? Course he isn’t safe. Be he’s *good*. He’s the King I tell you.” Jesus is good. All the time. But he’s not safe. He’s the Lord. He may well require us to pass through things that are difficult, daunting, sorrowful, dangerous, and heart-breaking. In John 6, we read how, after hearing Jesus’ words many walked away from him. He’s not safe.

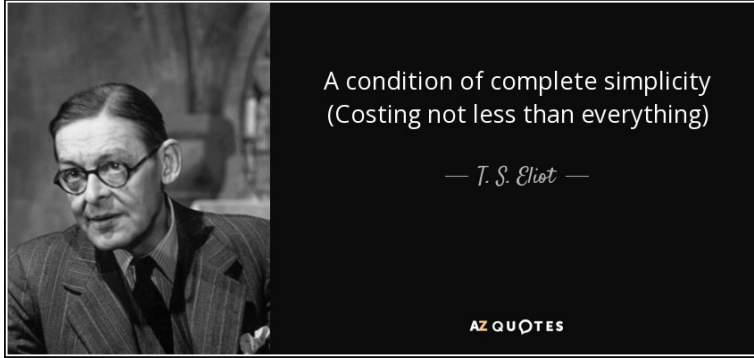
But the witness of Jesus’ many followers through the centuries is that he is *good*. He can be trusted. But not to make life easy. It’s never easy. Rather, trusted to lead us in a life that is everlasting. Filled with forgiveness and purpose, joy and significance. Because Jesus is the Lord who gave his life to save his people. He is the God of the nail-scarred hands. He is the King who wears a crown of thorns. As a man, Jesus has not just walked a bit of life in our shoes. Jesus blazed a path through life into death and forsakenness and come out the other side in resurrection. He is the God committed to making all things new. He asks us to trust him. To turn towards him and commit our way to him. To bow towards him, acknowledging that he is God and we are not. To rely on him.



We’re brought to the place David reached in Psalm 16:

I say to the LORD, “You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you. “You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore. (Ps. 16: 2, 11).

Our God asks us to risk believing that in his presence in fullness of joy and in his right hand are pleasures forevermore. In short, to trust him. In that same incident in John 6, while many walked away, Jesus asked his closest disciples, “Do you also want to go away?” They replied, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (Jn. 6: 68). We’d go somewhere easier if we could, but only you have everlasting life. We’d prefer an easier, safer God, but you are the Son of the only true God. There’s no other place to go, so we will trust you.



Trust in the LORD, and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him. It's so simple. Look away from yourself to Christ. It just costs you: your whole life! T.S. Eliot described discipleship as "A condition of complete

simplicity/(Costing not less than everything)."² Whitney, our pastor for missions, is an excellent recruiter. He loves to bring others into serving. We joke with him that his pitch line is, "Look, just say Yes. We only want a decade from you, so go ahead and join us." We only want a decade. Jesus only wants a lifetime. The word translated "trust" in our passage literally means to fall down before someone, to put yourself entirely at their disposal, to release your life into their care. It's very simple. We yield our lives to Jesus. We trust him with everything. We let him guide our paths. Simple, but costing not less than all.

I'd like to highlight two key aspects of the deep simplicity of trusting God found in Psalm 50. The LORD himself just tells us what he wants:

Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving,
and perform your vows to the Most High,
and call upon me in the day of trouble;
I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me." (Ps. 50: 14-15)

Give thanks. Call upon me in the day of trouble. This connects directly to our Proverbs passage. 1) In all your ways acknowledge him: thanksgiving is the essential way we acknowledge God. We recognize the source and we show gratitude. 2) Trusting in the LORD with all our hearts connects to calling upon him in the day of trouble. When the chips are down, we turn to someone we trust. The more dire the moment, the more we need the ones we trust completely. The LORD wants to be that kind of trusted guide and friend to us.

"Thank me and call upon me" says our God. That's the essence of trusting God. Give him the credit for being our constant source of life and everything. Turn to him to do for you what you cannot do for yourself. Especially when you get to the end of your strength, show God you trust him by asking him to help. A promise follows: I will deliver you. You will glorify me. You will see me act and your life

will fulfill its purpose. Just thank me and ask me for help as the God to whom you have committed your life.

One of the most potent passages for showing this kind of trust is found in Psalm 31:

Into your hand I commit my spirit...
I trust in you, O LORD;
I say, "You are my God."
My times are in your hand;
Rescue me from the hand of my enemies! (Ps. 31: 5, 14-15).

Into your hand I commit my spirit. My times are in your hand. This is a releasing of our lives, our worries, our situations, our very souls into the care of the Triune God. These are ideal words

- Before a surgery: into your hand I commit my spirit.
- Before a day so big you don't know how you can meet its demands: My times are in your hand.
- Before you meet someone with whom there is a sticky issue: I trust in you, O LORD.

Jesus himself prayed these words from the cross, shortly before he went into the dark night of death, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit" (Lk. 23:46). This prayer represents both faithfulness and need. I'm yours. Only you can solve this.

The word there means to place close right beside, to entrust or commit in a very near, personal way. Here, I give this to you. I give *me* to you. Peter echoed Jesus' words when he told his suffering readers, "Let those who suffer according to God's will *entrust* their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good" (1 Peter 4: 19). Sometimes, that's all that we can do. I can't change the suffering in these circumstances. But I can entrust, I can commit, my soul to a faithful Creator. Here, Father, I give this to you. And while I have breath, I will keep on doing what good I can. I won't lean on my own understanding. I will follow your will as it's given in your Word.

This kind of trusting release does not eliminate suffering from our lives. It doesn't mean there won't be messy relationships and thick situations. But God promises that when we release into trusting him, he will provide us with guidance and deliverance. This kind of surrendered trust opens our eyes to things God is doing that we would never otherwise have seen.



I want to tell you about a dear friend and colleague in ministry in another state. He and his wife are the real deal as Christians. When he speaks about the sacredness of life, he has lived it out. They've raised six children, three natural and three adopted. Two of their children were rescued from a war ravaged country in Africa. He knows what it's like to help children assimilate out

of chaos into peace. He knows too what it's like to raise black children in a predominately white community. You'd think that this story should have a gloriously happy ending. You can just imagine the story such children would tell, "Orphaned by civil war, our American parents brought us to a land full of love and plenty. Now we see grace and mercy everywhere. We know love." And yes, they have said words just like that.

But the wounds of deep trauma do not heal neatly. It doesn't wrap up like a movie. There have been seasons of joy and seasons of horrifying struggle. For the last two years the now 20-something daughter has fought mental illness. There've been times when she turned on her parents, making horrible accusations. Not long ago, she had a psychotic break. All their prayer was that she would simply agree to be hospitalized. A number of us prayed for them. My friend sent our pastors' group this message:

Thank you all for your prayers...We have been strengthened by them and are overwhelmed with the goodness of our friendships and the tangible expression of God's grace through you to us!

A week ago, I was guest preaching. During the third worship service the team led us in a song called "Hope is Alive"....honestly I was not paying attention and was thinking about my sermon...and then the Spirit hit me. I stopped and listened to the song and the Lord spoke to me clearly - "*Her name is Hope!*" I began to weep....as my daughter's middle name is **Hope**. I cried to the Lord, "You named her...you named her Hope...!" As I was driving home, I called my wife to tell her what happened, and as I told her she began to cry. She then told me that at our home church that morning (1,000 miles away) they sang a song entitled "Hope Has a Name." During that song the Lord spoke to my wife and said "*I've got her!*" We both cried. My wife asked me, "What do we do with that?" I shared with her that my sermon that morning was about the man born blind in John 9. He started as a beggar and ends as a believer. I told her we

have been begging (and not seeing) and now it is time to believe the Lord's word to us and we will see.

Last week they started new meds. My wife had a good visit on Saturday. On her way to the hospital my simple prayer was "Lord let her see Hope!" And I meant it both ways, both our daughter and the quality. As she left the hospital, she texted me; "I just saw Hope!" And she meant it both ways. Fast forward...our daughter comes home this Friday! We had a long conversation with the Social Worker yesterday about what that means. The medications, outpatient care and a ton of other things. It is overwhelming, but we know that we are not alone and we have Hope! Both our girl and our faith. The long, life-time journey for our daughter (and us) begins anew on Friday. Your love, support and prayers continue to be a gift to us!

There's no quick fix. There's no promised end to sorrow in this world. And sometimes it gets so hard all we can do is cry out in desperation. We can be tempted to curse God in despair. To walk away alone and dismayed. But the Spirit calls us to more. We cry out, as Jesus did, in deep trust:

Father, into your hand I commit my spirit...
I trust in you, O LORD;
I say, "You are my God."
My times are in your hand;
rescue me.

And then we see a world of wonders open before us. Light shines in the darkness. Hope rises from despair. The unseen Hand of God moves and we know he is with us. Beloved, it is a condition of complete simplicity costing not less than everything. Our God is not safe, but he is good. And he is faithful. Trust in the LORD with all your heart. Lean not on your own understanding, In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

¹ C.S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, Chp. 8, "What Happened After Dinner"

² T.S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*, "Little Gidding," ll. 253-4.