

Sermon for: Trinity Lutheran Church; Wednesday, March 13, 2024

Lenten Midweek "Journey to the Cross" 2024series

Sermon Text: John 19:29-30

Sermon Title/Theme: "Guided to TRUST"

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Whom can you trust? Surveys indicate that telemarketers, car salesmen, journalists, and politicians are perceived as the least trustworthy. Nurses, doctors, teachers, and policemen are perceived among the most trustworthy. However, even those professions have examples of where trust has been broken. Because trust is more tentative in our time, we are hesitant to trust anybody any more. So it is no wonder that some have problems trusting what the Bible says and what Jesus says about His salvation for us through the cross. There is a perfect connection between the truth of the Bible and the fact that we can trust its message for our salvation and life's direction. This evening we are guided to the truth of the cross and guided to TRUST Jesus.

We acknowledge and confess the truth of our sin. That we have disobeyed God is something we cannot dispute. Perhaps, we'd like to respond to God, "Trust me, I'll try to do better!" However the trust we have broken in our human relationships is minor to our broken trust with God. We confess that we do not "fear, love, and trust in God above all things" as the explanation to the First Commandment demands.

The other truth is that someone needs to pay for the sins we have committed. There is a penalty for our sin, and the penalty is death. The Bible makes it clear, "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). The only sufficient payment for sin was the sacrifice of the sinless Son of

God. For the truth of God's true and trustworthy answer to sin we turn to the pages of the Bible. Can we trust the Bible? St. Paul assures us, "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). We trust what the Bible says so we can trust what Jesus says in the Bible, "I have come that they may have life and have it abundantly," (John 10:10). The truth is that for us to have an abundant and eternal life, Jesus had to sacrifice His life.

Biblical scholars have noted that there are over 8,000 promises in the pages of Scripture. Each promise has been perfectly fulfilled! We have no reason not to trust the Lord and His Word.

We trust the truth of Jesus' journey to the cross. Pilate quizzed Jesus who had been brought before Him by the hostile Jewish leaders. In the course of the dialog, Pilate asked Jesus, "What is truth?" Jesus had answered the question earlier in His ministry as He declared, "I am the way, the Truth, and the Life, no one comes to the Father except through me," (John 14:6).

Unfortunately, Pilate and the others who condemned Jesus did not trust Jesus' proclamation and denied the truth. Some who witnessed the crucifixion laughed and ridiculed him, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. If he is the King of Israel, let him come down from the cross and we will believe in him," (Matthew 27:43). Little did they know that in this very act of his crucifixion, Jesus was being the King of Israel and the King of all. He was delivering us all from the wrath of God. His was fulfilling the role as the Son of God. The Bible shares the truth of Jesus' payment for sin.

It's hard to trust people when they do not follow through with what they said they would do.

But even through the people at the cross thought that Jesus was a failure who did not live up to his promises, Jesus was actually following through with what God had promised through Him.

When Jesus said the words, "It is finished" from the cross (John 19:30), he was announcing that he had completed the plan of salvation appointed to him by the Father, to save all people from sin, death, and the devil, through his sinless life and "his innocent suffering and death." In the explanation to the second article of the Apostles' Creed, Martin Luther shares the benefits for each of us: "that I may be his own and live under him in his kingdom and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness," and then he concluded, "this is most certainly true."

The young man had come to the pastor's study seeking relief from a burden of guilt. In an effort to assure the young man of God's readiness to forgive, the pastor had repeated many of the Savior's promises. Among the promises were Jesus words, "Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," (Matthew 11:18).

Frustrated and unable to find comfort in any of the quoted passages, the young man expressed his frustration, "I just can't believe." To which the pastor was quick to reply, "Whom can't you believe?" The words of the pastor seemed to strike home. Suddenly it dawned on the penitent young sinner that it was Christ whom he was refusing to believe. It wasn't important whether the young man believed the pastor or his Christian parents or any other voices of the church or elsewhere, he may have chosen not to trust. He could trust Jesus!

In the hour of trial, in the day of temptation, on a sickbed, or when the angel of death is hovering around us, we will want to know, above all else, what Jesus says. It is He and He alone who is worthy of our ultimate trust. He alone is the one who went to the cross and from the cross spoke, "It is finished."

We are guided to the cross to trust. The cross is a symbol, a sign, that we can trust the Lord with all our heart, soul, and mind. The cross reminds us that we do not understand fully, but God does, and he knows what is best for us in the person of Jesus Christ and Him crucified. After attempts to trust his Jewish heritage, his excellent education, and all other human criteria, the Apostle Paul was led to Jesus. "We preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews and folly to the Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God," (1 Corinthians 1:23-24). We put our trust in what we already know to be powerful and true: our God in Christ on the cross.

A cross is dominant in the architecture of Trinity's sanctuary. As you look at the cross before you, keep an easy reminder of its shape. In our English alphabet the "T" can remind us of a cross. Think of the "T" for trust. When you see the cross before you, remember that you can "trust" Jesus for your salvation, for on the cross Jesus paid for all your sins. You can trust Him not to leave you. You can trust Him to give you the peace that the world cannot give.

With the trust in Truth, even in an untrusting world, how should we live? We can live as trusting children. The young toddler is thrown up and down, in the arms of a father, laughing and giggling because the child knows the father will always catch him. The 8 year-old will seek a parent's hand to hold on while walking on a slippery sidewalk or across a busy street, knowing

the parent will be a sturdy source and will guide the child to safety. Our Heavenly Father always catches us. Our Heavenly Father is always the perfect guide, who reaches down His hand to hold ours.

If we, in faith, look closely at the hands that catch us and hold us, we see that the hands have scars. They are the hands of Jesus which were nailed to the cross. Be guided to the truth of the cross and be guided to put your trust in Him. Amen.