

9 Pentecost C

Genesis 15:1-6

Psalms 33:12-22

Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16

Luke 12:32-40

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

Today is all about trust. God is asking us to trust that in every way we are safe, provided for, in every way we belong, in every moment here and now, and even in the moments after we leave this life, we are still safe, provided for and belong.

This message is the core of the Bible; over and over again it's authors speak into our lives to remind us, especially in the moments of our deepest worry, that nothing can take these gifts of God away. Nothing. Not age, not violence, not poverty or wealth, not war or illness, not family strife or oppression and that's because these promises come from one who is trustworthy.

Did you ever break a promise? You promised to take out the trash but you didn't. You said you'd call your friend, but then you got distracted. You were going to return that tool you borrowed from the neighbour, but now it's been so long... You promised your parents you'd be home at midnight, or your spouse that _____. You promised yourself you'd quit smoking, drinking or you'd start saving. Sometimes we keep our promises, but often we don't. Just think about that for a moment. It doesn't feel great to be on either side of the equation of a promise if it isn't fulfilled. It becomes nearly impossible for us to trust others and at times ourselves.

And if that's the case, how can we possibly trust God? We've got a lot of baggage from our own lives that make it difficult to trust, never mind the litany of things we've asked of God or the times it seemed like God was nowhere to be seen. How do we trust a God whom we cannot see and who we read about in a 2000-year-old book?

Now we're wading into deep water. I say that because I know we've all had those experiences of unanswered prayers and I'll be honest I don't have a make-it-better answer. We've all sat and watched the news of another day of gun violence. We've all have had that moment when we really needed God to show up. And sometimes it feels like God doesn't. Sometimes we wonder if God is even listening or watching. And these times make it really hard to trust the very one whom we'd like to trust in!

But if faith were as transactional as “you-pray-god-answers” there’d be a whole lot more people in here praying! If God just jumped down into every moment of violence there would be a whole lot more believers! If God showed up at our beck and call then, well, you can just imagine. But God isn’t into any sort of transactional bartering of $A+B=C$. No, God is into relationships.

And so, when life is hard, God doesn’t fix it for us because we’ve been good, or given a lot, or helped an old lady across the street. Neither does God *not* fix it for us because we *haven’t* done such things. When life is hard, God is there with us. In the hospital room, in the midnight hours of worry, when we’re uncertain how to move forward, when we’ve received a diagnosis, when there isn’t enough money, when we lose our job, or any other difficulty we face – God is here.

I’ve prayed that myself in times of trouble. In my darkest times when I’ve been sick to death, worrying about what would or wouldn’t happen next, when I’ve been at an impasse of what tomorrow would bring, when I haven’t had the courage or knowhow to make things different, when I’ve felt no presence of God with me – I’ve stopped and said “I can’t feel you right now God, but I’ll trust you’re here.”

And I’m not proposing that this is the answer every time, but what I think it points toward is that in those dark moments, in the quiet desperation we sometimes feel, God is with us through small everyday things. Perhaps it’s the cup of tea from a listening friend, a companion in the waiting room, an embrace of compassion. When God doesn’t show up in spectacular ways, God is already there in ordinary ways.

Faith then, is trusting that those small things have something to do with God. Faith is hoping in what isn’t yet. It’s looking to the future and trusting that somehow God will untangle the mess alongside of us. It’s realizing that we don’t have complete vision or understanding, but that God does.

Abram (who is sometimes also called Abraham) and Sarah are great examples of this. You know when you hear about someone having a child when they are in their 40’s, 50’s or even 60’s? No matter how badly they wanted that baby we often think they’re crazy! Well, Abram and Sarah were so old, they were (and I love how the author of Hebrews says it!) they were “as good as dead” by the time they had their own child. All those years of waiting, trusting, God was with them and they were given more than just a child, but descendants that number like the stars.

In Jesus’ time, he taught a new model of economy and relationships. This directly countered the way of Rome which was characterized by family

lineage, nationality, wealth, land ownership, and through enforced peace in the land. People were afraid that they couldn't keep up with the demands of life and Rome too. Taxes to be paid, landlords wanted money, work was hard to find – there was a lot to be concerned about. It wasn't really all that different than today. Such things however, could never jeopardize the love of God. That's because we are not valued by God in the same way the world values, there is no need to be afraid that you will not measure up. That liberating message teaches us then to live in *relationship* with others, rather than by transactions.

There are times in life that we have much to give to one another. We can offer love and support, a helping hand, a shoulder to cry on, a home cooked meal, a card of encouragement, a drill to get the job done. These are good things to do. And if we are truly in relationship with those around us, if we truly want to strengthen communities, our own families and even our church, then must admit there are also times that we need to allow ourselves to be vulnerable. Times we are the ones who need love and support, times we need a helping hand, a shoulder, a home cooked meal, a card of encouragement, a drill to get the job done.

In relationship with one another in this way, we live in communion, as if we are sharing of a holy meal with our neighbours and friends. We build relationships with one another just as God does with us. We learn to trust God that in all things God is with us. As in Luke's story, we learn that it's not that God is undecided about being good to us or waiting for us to be better, but "it has pleased Abba to give you the kin-dom." We already have a place, belonging, acceptance - all the gifts that any parent would wish for and work to provide for their family. In other words, it's a done deal. Amen.