

## Who do you trust?

*Fear: The Invisible Enemy*

Proverbs 3:5-6

Sermon 08

**Who do you trust?** Have you ever been told to trust the Lord? I know I have. And I've told that to others as well. It's easy to toss around phrases like "Trust God," but let's ask another vital question: *Why should we?*

Well, our choices boil down to either *fear* or *faith*. As we've worked through during this series, we all have fears. Most of us fear in many areas.

We're in the midst of a Pandemic, a crisis like our world has not seen in our lifetimes. When crisis comes we have two choices. We either fear the crisis or trust God. We either believe the crisis is bigger than God or that God is bigger than the crisis.

The 17<sup>th</sup> century poet and pastor, John Donne (**picture**) was a man who was well-acquainted with crises. During his pastorate of London's largest church, three waves of bubonic plague swept through the city. The last one alone killed 40,000 people. John Donne himself became ill and through this experience he wisely concluded that life will always involve circumstances that incite fear. If not illness, then financial hardship, if not poverty, then rejection, if not loneliness then failure. In such a world, Donne realized that he had a clear choice: to fear God or to fear everything else, to trust God or to trust nothing. He discovered that it only made sense to trust in God and he was right. It's why Proverbs 3:5-6 urges us, "*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.*"

Some of you may be thinking, "Scott, do you know what I've been through? Do you really expect me to trust God?" But in the end, you only have three options. In the end, it's up to you. You must choose...

***You could choose to trust Fate.*** This choice may help you live with less stress in daily life, but it has its limitations. It doesn't provide you with much hope in the dark times. For instance, fate doesn't guarantee that the pain will end someday. Fate does not personally care about you. Fate is just fate.

***You could choose to only trust yourself.*** In my opinion, this is the worst of the three options. We human beings are notoriously unreliable. We can't even control the weather, much less our past/present/future. Trusting yourself too much can lead to mental unwell-ness.

***You could choose to trust God.*** If God is who the Bible says He is. If God is a benevolent, omniscient, omnipotent being who is in total control and will one day wipe all evil from the face of the universe and restore humanity to harmony, peace, and joy, then this is definitely the choice to go for.

From my personal experience, those who are the best at trusting God tend to be the most content, forgiving, kind, generous, and loving. Those who don't choose to trust God, tend to be anxious, cynical, bitter, mean, and unhappy. Not all the time, just a lot of the time. Though they don't always show it in public, hang out with them long enough and it eventually pops out. How do I know? Too often I'm more of the second type than I am the first.

Life is hard enough on its own. Personally, I'd prefer not to add to my own suffering and that of others with more anxiety, cynicism, bitterness, and unkindness. It's why we must learn to trust God. You may have heard this story before. It brings the point home.

A man named Jack was walking along a steep cliff one day, when he accidentally got too close to the edge and fell. On the way down he grabbed a branch, which temporarily stopped his fall. He looked down and to his horror saw that the canyon fell straight down for more than a thousand feet. He couldn't hang onto the branch forever, and there was no way for him to climb up the steep wall of the cliff. So Jack began yelling for help, hoping that someone passing by would hear him and lower a rope or something.

"HELP! HELP! Is anyone up there? HELP!"

He yelled for a long time, but no one heard him. He was about to give up when he heard a voice, "Jack, Jack. Can you hear me?"

"Yes, yes! I can hear you. I'm down here!"

"I can see you, Jack. Are you all right?"

"Yes, but who are you, and where are you?"

"I am the Lord, Jack. I'm everywhere."

"The Lord? You mean, GOD?"

"That's Me."

"God, please help me! I promise if, you'll get me down from here, I'll stop sinning. I'll be a really good person. I'll serve You for the rest of my life."

"Easy on the promises, Jack. Let's get you off from there; then we can talk. Now, here's what I want you to do. Listen very carefully."

"I'll do anything, God. Just tell me what to do."

“Okay. Let go of the branch.”

“What?”

“I said, let go of the branch. Just trust Me. Let go.”

There was a long silence. Finally Jack yelled, “HELP! HELP! IS ANYONE ELSE UP THERE?” We’re coming to the end of our series, *Fear: The Invisible Enemy*. The answer to fear is faith – faith in God. There is no one else. There is no place else to go. Today we want to work through why we can trust God. Before we do that we want to unpack something very important of what this does not mean.

### 1. Trusting God does not mean...

*You believe everything will go the way you want it to and it does.* If that were true, those who follow God should be the most enviable people on Earth. Everything would go their way. Obviously, it doesn’t, and they aren’t.

Believers in some parts of the world are murdered for their beliefs. Others lose their jobs or livelihoods for their faith. Still others are mocked and belittled. Yet still some erroneously think that trusting God entitles them to a problem-free life. If they have problems, they think they either don’t have enough faith or God is “not holding up His end of the bargain.” The Bible vehemently contradicts that idea.

Jesus said “*In this world, you will have trouble,*” (John 16:33). Most of the godly characters in the Bible suffered tremendously. God did perform many miracles, but didn’t miraculously protect His people from everything.

Joseph was wrongly accused of rape and spent years languishing in a prison for nothing. Ruth lost her husband and became a poor peasant in a foreign land far from home. All but one of Jesus’ closest friends were tortured and murdered for proclaiming the truth about Him. John, the one who survived was banished to an isolated island in his old age. Suffering and pain is something everyone must face, whether you trust in God or not. Then, trusting God does not mean...

*God will explain everything that is going on in your life.* God didn’t answer Job when he asked “Why me?” God doesn’t owe you an explanation when life is painful and confusing. When bad things happen — really, really bad things — many of us are tempted to ask why? Some of us get an answer. Most of us never do. I’m not suggesting that you stop asking entirely, because maybe your specific situation is one of those that will get an answer. But I am saying that if you don’t get an explanation, don’t be surprised.

*Trusting God does mean that no matter what happens, you will turn to Him instead of away from Him.* Even if people laugh at you and say that you believe in a capricious and demanding “flying spaghetti monster” Even if, in your darker moments, you sometimes feel like God is a capricious and demanding “heartless monster.” Even if life hurts terribly and nothing you asked God for worked out the way you hoped it would...even in spite of those things, trusting God means you continue to turn to Him, and away from the naysayers. You keep praying, even when those prayers seem to have absolutely zero effect. You keep saying, like Job, “*The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord*” (Job 1:21). So why can we trust God?

### 2. We can trust God because He is sovereign.

When we say that God is sovereign, it means that God is in complete control of all things and rules over all things. Everything that happens, from the frenetic movement of the smallest molecules to the massive planets orbiting the Sun to the tiniest details of our lives – it’s all under God’s good and sovereign control. This is one of the primary reasons we can trust in God. Ephesians 1:11, “*In Him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will.*”

God is sovereign over nature, kings, history, angels, and demons. God has ordained everything that happens, past, present and future. God is not responsible for sin and takes no pleasure in human suffering. But somehow even the sins of man and our sufferings are in His sovereign plan. We can fully trust God because absolutely everything in the universe is under His sovereign, good, joyful rule.

A dad was holding his three-year-old securely in his arms as he stood in the shallow end of the pool. As the dad walked slowly toward the deep end, he gently chanted, “Deeper and deeper and deeper.” As the water rose higher on the child, his face reflected more and more panic, and he clung all the more tightly to his dad, whose feet easily touched the bottom. If the little boy had been able to analyze his situation, he’d have realized that there was no reason to panic. The water’s depth in any part of the pool was over his head. Even in the shallowest part, if his dad had not held him up, he would have drowned. His safety anywhere in that pool depended on his dad. So he should have been able to trust him in the deeper water just as easily as in the shallow.

In various situations, we may feel that we’re in over our head. A terrible tragedy hits us out of no where. We lose our job, someone dies, someone wrongs us, and we feel as if we’re going to be swamped. But, the truth is, we’ve always been held up by the grace of our Heavenly Father. If He let us go, we’d drown even in the shallow end. In deeper waters,

we're still in His strong arms. God is never out of His depth. We can trust Him even when the waters seem deeper than we've ever been before. God is sovereign over all the details of your life. You can trust Him to work it all together for good!

**3. We can trust God because He is wise.** The God who is sovereign acts through His wisdom and He's all-wise. 16<sup>th</sup> century Reformer, Martin Luther (**picture**), said to Erasmus (**picture**), "*Your thoughts of God are too human.*"

The Church today is still guilty of this. I know that I am. Our spiritual strength is linked to our knowledge of God.

Human wisdom is so limited. We make smart choices and are considered wise. We gain experience and are able to discern what's good through experience and act in ways considered wise.

But God, on the other hand, never had to be taught, never had to experience, never had to read and study. God is eternally all-wise. And God is not only all-wise; He is wise in all that He does. Nothing is done by God apart from the wisdom of God. Romans 16:7, "*to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ!*" Doesn't that blow your mind? God has always existed, and He does what He wills, and He does it all with absolute wisdom. His wisdom means that He always knows what is best. Always!

The hymn "God Moves in a Mysterious Way" by William Cowper (**picture**) captures the wisdom of God. In it Cowper declares the wisdom of God's ways, even through trouble. We won't fully understand His ways and unbelief screams lies into our ears about the character and wisdom of God. But in due time His great will shall be made known to us. But Cowper didn't write that hymn because he had an easy life. He suffered with depression, great doubt and suicide attempts. But his words live on through that hymn.

*God moves in a mysterious way  
His wonders to perform  
He plants His footsteps in the sea  
And rides upon the storm  
Deep in unsearchable mines  
Of never-failing skill  
He treasures up His bright designs  
And works His sovereign will.*

*And ye fearful saints, fresh courage take  
The clouds you so much dread  
Are big with mercy and shall break  
In blessings, yeah, and in blessings, yeah  
And in blessings on your head  
Blind unbelief is sure to err  
And scan His work in vain  
For God is His own interpreter  
And He will make it plain.*

God doesn't do anything in His sovereign will that isn't both wise and loving, which leads us to another attribute of God—His love.

**4. We can trust God because He is love.** 1 John 4:7-8 says, "*Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because **God is love.***" The concept of love is one of the most permeating themes in our world. The Beatles (**picture**) sang about it. Their message to a hurt and frightened world was, "*love is all you need.*"

According to Amazon.com, there are at least 32,507 books currently in print with the word "love" in the title (over 145,000 that deal with the subject of love) and over 11,000 popular music albums with "love" in the title. If you Google the word "love," you'd discover at least 121,000,000 web-sites that use the word "love" as one of their key words. It's undeniable, how important love is to our culture.

Yet, with all this information available, love is a very confusing subject. As we watch TV, check the internet, or scan magazines at the checkout, it's clear that our society has a very poor understanding of love. With humanity so confused about love, who is to say what love is?

The answer is—God! One of the simplest and yet most profound definitions of love is in 1 John 4:8. John, who by the way was known as the apostle of love, wrote, "*God is love.*" Those three little words ought to fill our hearts with hope.

If they're true, it makes all the difference in the world! But we need to understand this rightly. "God is love" does not mean that "love is God." In other words, love does not define God; rather, God defines love.

God's love is seen at the incarnation. God's love is demonstrated as He sent His Son to die on the cross, not just because He loves us, but to save us. God's love for us is one that wants to save us and give us life.

Jesus, driven by His infinite love, came into this world to become our Savior! "*For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life*" (John 3:16). Because of God's love (and only because of God's love), our lives can be rescued for all eternity.

God's love for us surpasses all human knowledge. God's love is so vast He must reveal to us the breadth, length, height, and depth of Christ's love, so we can comprehend it. Because of His infinite love, God uses His sovereign power and infinite wisdom to bless us. Everything He does for us He does in love. We can't usually see that love when we're going through hard times. That's why we need to trust God. Though we may not always feel Christ's love when things come crashing down around us, our feelings are not necessarily the truth. The truth is God's word that says His love for us in Christ can never be broken and nothing can separate us from that love.

**4. We can trust God because He is good.** Jesus declared, "*No one is good—except God alone*" (Luke 18:19). To say that God is good means that God always acts in accordance to what is right, true, and good. Goodness is part of God's nature and He can't contradict His nature. God is the standard of all that is good. The fact that God is good means that He has no evil in Him, His intentions and motivations are always good, He always does what is right, and the outcome of His plan is always good.

James 4:17 says, "*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.*" Where do good and perfect things come from? They don't come from below or within or around. They come from above. They come from God who is above and the source of all that is good. The word "*every*" is emphatic. Everything good and perfect is from God. Nothing that is *not* good and perfect is from God.

"Every good *gift*" focuses on the act of giving. The gifts of God are good and the very act of giving by God is good.

But we know from experience that not every act of giving is good. It happens during Christmas. You may give someone a gift as an expression of your love. Or you may give someone a gift because they got you one, or will be offended if you don't.

God's gifts are both good and perfect. "*Perfect*" refers to spiritual maturity, not sinless perfection. It's the picture of a fully developed person who has passed from adolescence to adulthood. The trials of life are designed by a good God to nurture our faith to maturity. That's because God is good.

Lloyd C. Douglas (**picture**), author of *The Robe* and other novels, lived in a boarding house during college. A retired music teacher lived on the first row, with whom he had a daily ritual. Douglas would ask, "*What's the good news today?*" That old music teacher would take his tuning fork and strike the side of his wheelchair and said, "*That's Middle C. It was Middle C yesterday, and it will be Middle C a thousand years from now. The soprano upstairs sings off-key, and the piano across the hall is out of tune. But this is Middle C.*" The goodness of God never changes.

**5. We can trust God because He's our Father.** A.W. Tozer, (**picture**), begins his book, *The Knowledge of the Holy* by stating, "*What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.*" Why? Because no one can rise above their view of God.

Since God is our Father we have nothing to fear. It's like this, "Hey Devil, you want to mess with me? You feeling lucky punk?" There's this cool section in the Bible that comes close to that kind of feeling. At the end of Romans 8, Paul asks...*If God is for us, who can ever be against us?*

Do you remember Clint Eastwood's Dirty Harry (**picture**). One writer suggest that Romans 8 is the Apostle Paul's *Dirty Harry* moment. If God is your father, who can be against you? Paul blazes away in this Romans 8 passage. *Vs. 33 Who dares accuse us? Vs. 34 Who then will condemn us? No one! Vs. 35 Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Death, life, angels, demons, our fears, our worries – not even the powers of hell. Vs. 39 No power in the sky above or in the earth below—nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

If God is my father, I've got nothing to fear. He is unshakable, all powerful. Nothing can touch the real me. I'm already safe and I'm already living my eternal life with Him in His kingdom of heaven. Which means that I don't even have to dread death itself. His Son conquered death. If you don't fear death, what really is there to fear?

Because if I don't dread death, I certainly don't need to dread little things, like a low bank account or a virus. I don't dread any circumstances. I don't need to worry. My Father knows what I need and will provide it from His riches. Is He your father? If you're His child, He'll take care of you.

**Conclusion:** Why do we trust God? We trust Him because He's **sovereign, wise, good, love and our Father**. This knowledge should lead to faith in God. We replace fear with faith. God has showed who He is so that we will trust Him. Will you trust Him? And when we trust Him, others will see it.

Andy Cook (**picture**) the Pastor of Shirley Hills Baptist Church in Warner Robins, Georgia, shares this story:

*Frank's worst day came far too suddenly. Never had a community seen a man so passionately devoted to his wife. She was the light of his life, the diamond of his existence. He was a hopeless romantic, and their marriage was on display for their church and their community. She died without warning, a broken blood vessel taking her life before she could say good-bye.*

*Frank lost weight, he lost interest in his work, and he lost his laughter. But Frank never - never - lost his faith in God. He knew that somehow he had to put one foot in front of the other. It was as if the only thing he had to lean on was his faith.*

*Frank had built a foundation on a rock, as Jesus would put it, and when the storms came, his foundation held secure. Slowly, over the course of many months, the laughter reappeared. Slowly, he regained interest in his work and in his hobbies. For a while, he couldn't even sing the hymns of faith in church. When he tried, he simply cried. So he just stood there silently, letting his fellow believers sing the songs of faith for him.*

*Then one day he, too, sang the songs. One day, he picked up a grandchild and saw a familiar light in her eyes. One night, he laid down to sleep and realized that he had honestly enjoyed life that day, all day long.*

*What Frank couldn't see that night was what the rest of the community had seen for months - the way his daughter and her family watched him, the image he had created for his grandchildren, a few of them already in the first days of their marriages. For two years they had all watched this man recover from the worst day of his life. They had seen the pages of his Bible become more worn, more tattered, more stained with tears. They had seen him pray so earnestly in a church pew, and they knew his praying wasn't reserved for hours inside churches. They had seen the way he encouraged others, the way he was ready to help the slightest need, the way he poured himself into service. And they had also seen the way God had lifted him up from the worst day of his life and restored to him the joy of his walk, the laughter of his soul.*

*If we were to drop in on Frank's church next Sunday, you'd see many people who've drawn strength from his quiet leadership. They can't help but be drawn to his joy, a super-sized, mega-sized joy that can't be contained. We could find many members of his family in that church, singing the songs of faith together. And if we could somehow see the future, we'd see the day when crisis arrives again, when family and friends all around this man will face the worst day of their lives.*

*In that day, however, they'll be able to draw on something more than the Bible's message. They'll remember what faith looks like after devastation strikes, because they've seen it lived out in one man's life.*

My friend would that be you? Who are you trusting in? Who else can you trust? Faith in God takes out fear. Do you have it? You can. You can trust the Father. Will you?