

10-15-23

Sermon: Trusting God's Promise

Scripture: Psalm 46:1-11, CTW: John 14:1-6

Hymns: 612, 614, 617

Theme: God wants to show us the reality that we can experience together. Relationship is where and how we can realize the truth and power and practicality of God's promises to us. Relationship is where we can move beyond "Why are you doing this to me?" In the face of the brokenness that surrounds us, in spite of our pain and suffering and problems, we can know God's heart.

I. Introduction: God Says "Trust Me" to all of Us.

It is so easy, and so natural, to become overwhelmed by our pain and circumstances. They are real and powerful, and they threaten us. In the midst of it all, God says "Trust Me!

Perhaps even more powerful than our outward circumstances are the fears and secrets that pollute our minds and hearts and the storms that rage deep inside us. We can try to bury our pain, but when we avoid dealing with it and healing from it, it's almost as if that pain haunts us.

It can strike in a moment's notice, threatening to pull us down as if we were sinking in a rowboat with the drain plug pulled out.

A. “Why are you doing this to me?” Have you ever asked God that question?

Those words come quickly, because it certainly can't be our fault...at least that's how we think.

Maybe we have faced some hardships in our lives that have led us to a similar response: “Why are you doing this to me?” Maybe that has become our default, too. Let's dig a little deeper together and explore how Jesus responds to us and how we might find answers to this question in our own hearts.

II. Have You Ever Felt Like You Were Going Under?

Have you ever been riding a bike and looked ahead to see a pothole or rock in the middle of the road or trail? The natural thing is to look at it, but the longer you look at it, the more likely you are to steer right toward it.

Even if the intent of your focus is to avoid something in the way, focusing on it causes you to head directly toward it.

A. The same thing happens to us.

We don't want to deal with things ourselves, we would rather look to God and blame him. But this way of dealing with things is to **not** deal with things. Have you been there?

The struggles and shame and hurts that we just keep stuffing down and trying to avoid don't just disappear. They have a way of finding their way to the surface and forcing their way out. They're like water, you might say.

And it also points to the different perspectives between mankind and Jesus. Mankind wants to blame Jesus: "Why are you doing this to me? . . . You told me you would be there for me."

But Jesus's response to us is: "This isn't Me. . . . my beloved child, this is happening inside you. You're letting it consume you, and you don't have to."

Isn't that just like us? We stuff our pain and problems down inside us to try to avoid them, hoping they'll just go away on their own. Or we blame God and reject His offers of healing. It isn't really a fair response, is it?

B. It's an understandable response, for sure. Who wants the painful path? And when we experience deep hurt, we want nothing else than to get away from it. But it's simply an unwritten law of humanity that the only way out of grief is through it. Yes, it hurts, but with that hurt comes healing.

So how do we get there? How do we see and experience more than just responding: "Why are You doing this to me?"

III. Jesus Says Look at Me! Keep Your Eyes on Me!

“Look at Me.” Jesus says it to us and He also assures us:

“Just take a deep breath and listen to My voice.”

“Just keep your eyes on Me.” “I’m not going anywhere.”

A. All fine and good in theory, right, but it is something very real when we find ourselves in the midst of trouble. Listen to these words of encouragement found in the Bible:

And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age. **(Matthew 28:20).**

I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world. **(John 16:33)**

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. **(John 14:27)**

We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. **(Hebrews 12:2)**

And of course we have the powerful words of the sons of Korah found in **(Psalm 46:1-3)**, our scripture passage for today:

“God is our refuge and strength,
an ever-present help in trouble.

Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth give way
and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,
though its waters roar and foam
and the mountains quake with their surging.”

B. These are powerful promises. These are words that can sustain us. God is calling to us in these Scriptures as plainly as Jesus is calling to Mack in the movie. And His words to us convey the same message: “Just take a deep breath and listen to My voice.” Do you do that?

IV. We Must Learn to Think Beyond the Boat

This reminds us of an experience that the disciples had in a boat on a lake. We can find it in **Matthew 14**, but you probably know the story well.

Right after Jesus miraculously fed the five thousand, He sent His disciples ahead to cross to the other side of the lake while He took time to be alone and pray. While the disciples were in the boat, the wind and waves rose, and the disciples became afraid.

So Jesus came to them, walking on the water. And guess what? They were more afraid! But as Jesus drew near, He encouraged them not to fear. Peter still wasn't convinced, so he asked Jesus to tell him to come to Him on the water. Jesus said, "Come."

A. Jesus Simply Says "Come!"

Whether Peter somehow knew that the safest place he could be was with Jesus or he was just trying to escape his fear by facing it head-on, to Peter's credit, he went. Peter climbed over the side of the boat and took a step on the water toward Jesus. Things started off just fine. There was Peter, standing on top of the stormy water—unbelievable!

But then he started looking at the wind and the chaos around him, and he began to sink. Peter's fear overtook him after all, and as the water closed in around him, Peter cried out for Jesus to save him. Matthew's Gospel account of these events says, "Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him" (**Matthew 14:31**).

When Peter started to sink, Jesus was right there to help him. He didn't tell Peter to help himself or that he should have been better prepared for this storm. Jesus immediately reached out and helped him. And when Jesus and Peter got back in the boat, Jesus calmed the wind and waves.

One thing worth noting in this event is that the disciples' storm was external. Maybe that's where you find yourself—not suffering grief and tragedy, but surrounded by storms that legitimately seem to be whipping up around you from the outside.

B. Either way, our response and pathway to hope and calm and safety is the same: Look at Jesus.

He is our true source of peace and help, safety and healing. That was true for the disciples. It was true for Peter. And it's true for us.

C. When we recalibrate our focus away from the blame of “Why are you doing this to me?” to the trust of “Look at Me,” we find that God has even more in store.

God is always calling us to Himself. Relationship lies at His essence as a Trinity, and relationship with Him is the heart of how we are meant to live this life.

How often do we want to cling to our boat? It feels safe. It keeps us afloat, and it seems like the only means we have of surviving. Maybe that's true if all that we have is our own ability and our own limitations—but it's only true without God in the picture.

Or more accurately, if we, like Peter, fail to keep our focus on God and His bigger picture, we will never trust God to show

us. I am reminded here of John Ortberg's book, titled "If you want to walk on Water, you have to get out of the Boat!"

God wants to show us the reality that we can experience together.

Relationship is where and how we can realize the truth and power and practicality of God's promises to us. Relationship is where we can move beyond "Why are you doing this to me?" In the face of the brokenness that surrounds us, in spite of our pain and suffering and problems, we can know God's heart.

We can move in rhythm to its beat. We can focus our eyes on Him and take our cues from His Word.

And as we do, we find that He gives us what we need to calm and to heal, but also to move forward and beyond to new heights and depths.

Are you in the midst of a storm? Are you sinking in your own murky waters of pain and shame?

Have you heard Jesus saying, "Come"?

Jesus is saying to you, "keep your eyes on me"?

What step is God asking you to take to bring you closer to Him? Let me encourage you to shift your focus to Him today and see fully what He is telling you to do. **Amen? Let us pray:**