

Christ's Gift of Trust

Luke 24: 36-43

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When I start working with a text to write the sermon, I love to search for the undertones within a passage. I try to imagine with what emotional emphasis the speaker would have said things.

In today's passage, Jesus is getting a little testy. I tried to read the passage with a sweet and compassionate tone, but that did not work for me. Jesus instead comes across much more frustrated and annoyed with the disciples: "Listen guys, what is wrong with you? Why can't you accept the fact that what I have promised you, what God has promised us, would happen, has happened? I am here. I am not a ghost. I have the wounds to prove it. Why do you keep being afraid of me? Why, after all that has happened, is this still a surprise to you? Give me something to eat! Maybe that will change your minds."

I know we don't like the impatient, even angry Jesus. We want our Jesus to be kind, understanding and sweet. But today, we get to meet the frustrated Jesus. It is clearly a scene from Holy Scripture where Jesus invites his disciples to trust in him, but they are not ready to do so. Their friend suffered a brutal death on the cross. They saw him die. And then by the third day, he starts showing up, being true to his promises, but the disciples are not ready to believe.

Why?

Because resurrection takes time to sink in. We are so used to the limitations of death, the pain and scarcity of good life in this world, and the absolute certainty that all things must end, that new life – even when it's standing right there in front of you – is hard to take in, accept, and believe. It is hard to trust a new reality, even it is right in front of you, when the world says it can't be.

When Jesus invites his disciples to believe in him and, with that, to trust him, he was not asking them to agree to a newly formulated doctrine of his community. He was asking them to trust and believe

him, and to trust their experience. He asked them to trust God because God has been faithful. God has raised Jesus up from the dead just as he said God would. God can be trusted, life can be trusted. The church calls this deep trust in God, faith.

Trust is an essential ingredient to a happy, abundant life. Without it, life would be so much harder and darker.

Needless to say I read a lot about trust this past week. One article by author Martha Beck made some interesting observations: Beck says we all are born with a nifty little pre-installed internal gizmo she calls a trust-o-meter that allows us a no-fail means of recognizing the really dependable people out there. Most of our trust considerations have to do with people – our families, colleagues, the companies we work for, the place we volunteer at, the stores we shop at, the people who prepare our food. We spent a lifetime figuring out who we can trust and who we can't. Trust is something that can grow and develop when practiced, but it can also very easily be destroyed by someone or something we decided to trust.

Beck says that trust starts with us. She quotes Goethe who said, "As soon as you trust yourself, you will know how to live." And continues, "To discern between people who might save your life and those who might ruin it, you must be reliable, honest – in a word, trustworthy – toward yourself. And we do this far less often than most people realize."

Have you ever been in a situation that was highly uncomfortable, and you wondered how you got into it? You might not have trusted your gut that said, "Don't or stop!" Babies don't have a choice in this. They have to trust whoever walks by. Otherwise life would be really short. But as we get older and mature, trusting one's self lays the foundation for a healthy life's journey. Blind trust, just as blind faith, are highly undesirable companions for that journey. Beck attached a Trust Test to the article which is an interesting exercise. I took it and it said that my trust-o-meter is pretty well calibrated. (I will attach the article to the sermon so you can see for yourself.) (1)

Much of our secular life is spent on developing and building trust – either within ourselves and/or with the people and world around us. Some people have an easier time trusting, others a harder time.

It depends on a great number of factors - personality, upbringing, experiences, culture, open- and willingness to let go of the tight control of our lives or the narrowness of our expectations.

And as we move into our spiritual life and the realm of faith, things might even get a bit more complicated. How do we trust God? What kind of faith do we need to have to make that happen? Faith in Western Christianity is understood as holding on to a certain set of beliefs that are deemed to be true and right. This is part of the understanding of faith but far from the whole meaning.

Authentic, genuine faith has to do more with the heart than with the head. Faith, the kind that Jesus wants us to have, is all about trust. This faith has to do with radical trust in God. The question is: Where is this God? Where do we find this God?

We find this God in the stories of creation where we are told that everything is made in God's image. We find this God in Holy Scriptures in the stories of faithful yet ordinary people whom God called to do extraordinary things. We find this God in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, who shares our humanity and who has shown us how to overcome even the darkest moments possible. We find this God in the lives of people who have been stirred by the Holy Spirit and have given their lives wholeheartedly to the service and worship of this God. We find this God in ourselves at that moment when heaven opens and we understand...

What would life look like if we would trust God with everything? I imagine that our lives and our world would be calmer, less frantic, more thoughtful, kinder and happier. I imagine that trust in God vs. trust in people and things would give us real happiness and security and peace that are missing from many lives today. Lack of trust causes fear and anxiety. To have faith means we would be able to let go of anxiety and fear, and to give ourselves over to God, trusting God's love and care for us.

"Do not worry about your life," Jesus tells us, "what you will eat or what you will drink... Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?" (Matthew 6:25, 26)

Looking at the post Easter texts, one might think that the disciples are a little dim in the head. Why aren't they getting it? Because they are just starting to trust. Slowly but surely they are beginning to

see the signs of God's amazing love as Jesus enters their fear-filled hearts. Before trust, they were filled with anxiety and trembling and fear. They had lost sight of the purpose for which Jesus lived and died – to be the signs of God's love to the world. They felt abandoned and overwhelmed.

But when they finally start trusting in the experiences of Jesus in their midst, everything changes. Their vision, their hope, and their faith are restored. Their fear is gone, and these trembling disciples are transformed into courageous witnesses, who testify to the resurrection of Jesus with incredible boldness, even in the face of opposition and death.

They do not fear the powers that are in charge, but instead trust in the power of God in Christ. They are not deterred by hardship or persecution, by beatings or imprisonment. Their eyes are fixed on God and Christ's ministry. They move forward in faith, despite the obstacles. It is inspiring to see this transformation in them.

This kind of transformational trust, transformational faith does not just happen. It might start as a surprise, a moment in time that opens us up to the incredible love of God, but then it takes time, patience, and practice to pursue it. Developing and deepening that kind of trust is what we do for the rest of our lives, also known as growing in faith.

Trust is an essential ingredient of life. Without trust, no human being can live. Henry Nouwen compares trust to Trapeze artists. "Trapeze artists offer a beautiful image of this. Flyers have to trust their catchers Much of our lives is flying. It is beautiful to fly in the air free as a bird, but when God isn't there to catch us, all our flying comes to nothing. Let's trust the Great Catcher." (2)

Amen.

Sources:

- (1) Read more: <http://www.oprah.com/oprahs-lifeclass/Martha-Becks-No-Fail-Way-to-Figure-Out-Who-to-Trust#ixzz478UCqJfq>
- (2) Henri J.M. Nouwen, in *Bread for the Journey*