

Sept 14 – Trust in Each Other

Galatians 5:22 – 6:2

Trust, it is one of those words we use frequently, and often casually. The dictionary definition of this word is: the reliance on the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something. Using that definition, think about in whom or what you trust. Sadly, the list is often very short. We live in a time where trust is often in short supply. Gone are the days when a contract was agreed upon by a handshake that was based on the fact that both parties trusted the other. Those contracts were often binding to the point of causing the ruin of one as he kept his word. Now contracts run into multiple pages and you have to read all the fine print and even then we find out that at times the contract is not followed. Now when we hear someone say trust me, instead of reassuring us it often causes us to be suspicious. When a child or grandchild flings at us, “You don’t trust me?” we often, if we are honest, are thinking, “you are right!”

This is, sadly, the way of the world, We then come to church and use that same word “trust” and expect people to make an immediate switch in their brains to a whole different understanding. We tell people to trust in God but instead of being reassuring it often makes them suspicious. I, as most pastors, am guilty in not telling you how to trust or why you can trust in God. We assume that because we are talking about God and we know God is reliable that telling you to trust ends our job. But trusting God is a learned behavior. We have to learn that God is reliable. Then, when times are really tough we can fully trust. Over the next three weeks I want us to look at how we develop that faith and trust. It begins with learning to trust fellow Christians. It moves on to trusting the community of faith. Then we have the tools to trust in God. Jaie, our choir director, is also a composer. She has three songs that are going to help us in our journey to a deeper trust. You heard the first one today. We are going to finish the sermon by hearing it again.

Before we think that learning to trust is a modern day issue it isn’t. It is as old as the Bible and the Apostle Paul understands this dynamic. In the part of the letter I read from Galatians, Paul lists the fruits of the spirit. We know what they are, kindness, goodness, patience and such. These are things that we do to build trust with others. When people live out the fruits of the spirit they are seen as reliable and trustworthy. This is why Paul tells us to live

by the Spirit. Paul also admits that sometimes we fail and when this happens those of faith are to help to restore them with a spirit of gentleness. He ends by saying that we are to carry each other's burdens. All of this is part of the great synergy of building trust. You find those individuals of faith that you admire and you reach out to them. You respect their spirit filled kindness and gentleness. You learn trust by being supported by them, being forgiven by them and forgiving them at times. In carrying one another's burdens you find strength to deal with life's issues and yes, trust.

But let's get down to the practical. Again, trust is a learned behavior and since we live in such a suspicious time we have to take specific actions if we are going to have the trust in God that we need. To help us understand how we build trust in each other I am going to use the words of Jaie's piece.

First, "Everybody needs somebody to walk with them." We sometimes do not value this piece of friendship. But all of us have appreciated those people who will come beside us and just walk with us, literally or figuratively. They don't try to fix anything. They are just present in our lives. They are modeling Christian behaviors as they walk with us. Through them we learn, through example, how to love and forgive. They hug us when we hurt and laugh with us when we rejoice. We all need those trusted people who are present in our lives in a reliable way. It is the way most people first begin to build trust and because those people are also people of faith it is a way for us, through them, to experience the presence of Christ.

I remember in seminary taking a class on pastoral care. We were talking about being with a family at the end of life. We were all wondering what to say or to do. The professor said, "Mostly, the family just wants you to be there. You are the visible reminder that God is with them at this difficult time." At the time I thought, "This is silly. I am to do something, not just sit there." Yet, I have found that often just being present, walking with them through the valley of death, is what they want and need.

It goes on to say that "Everybody needs somebody to show them how to love." This again is modeling Christ-like behavior. Love in the Christian context is living out those virtues of kindness, patience, forgiveness and joy. As we see others living this way we want to follow their example. Haven't we all had those times when someone treats us in a particularly

gracious way? The result is our wishing to do that for others. Jaie's words are: "And I've seen the darkest night. I'm grateful for my friends who pulled me through until the darkness turned to light!" This supporting love is so important. We have been experiencing this on a daily basis as we struggle with all the ups and downs related to Gwen our tiny, tiny granddaughter. The love of friends when things have been especially tense has helped us. We knew they were going to be with us no matter what and have celebrated when, to date; those moments have all turned to light.

The song goes on: "Everybody needs somebody to pray for them." We get this. One of the reasons we have Joys and Concerns is that we understand the power of prayer. I can't tell you how many times I have heard people say, when they or a loved one is going through a tough time, "I feel the prayers." Knowing that people are praying for us and with us keeps us going. It gives us strength and support. I realize how important this is. I have a friend from college who does not go to church any more though he was raised in the church. Our emails are usually funny stories that we have come across that we share. This spring I got an email with the title, "pray for me." He was going in for some very delicate surgery and he needed that person who would pray for him. Later, after a successful surgery I got a thanks for the prayers but this incident reminds me that we, of faith, who take praying and being prayed for, for granted are a witness to others who will turn to us in their dark times. So be the kind of reliable friend that others will turn to for prayer when life is challenging.

It goes on: "Everybody needs somebody who cares." I am not going to say much about this because it is going to be the focus of my sermon next week. One of the strengths of Christian community, that makes us so trustworthy, is that we are a people who care. All of us can attest to that love and support because we have received it when we have needed it most.

Finally it ends that "Everybody needs somebody to talk with them." For me, this is a reminder that we all need to be encouraged to recall that we are not alone. Think about those times when you have turned to a friend because you have a big decision to make. You start talking about it. Often the friend says nothing but in speaking out loud to another about the situation you come to some decision. Just speaking about something to one who listens often gives us great strength and clarity.

Trust begins in the knowing that someone will walk beside us and model Christian love. But even more we need that person who will sit with us, listen to us, share with us and help us in our struggles. Ultimately deep abiding trust in God begins by learning to trust those around you. It grows in our becoming trustworthy for others. It is in relationships that trust is born.

In closing let me share one story. He married a church-going woman. He had never had much time for church in his years of work, traveling the world for his job. Things changed when he met Maryellen. They were both single after her losing her husband and he through divorce. They started dating and fell in love. He proposed to her and she said yes, but under one condition, you go to church with me. He didn't like the idea much and he admitted later that he thought he would be able to change her mind. He hadn't reckoned with Maryellen. When he first came to church with her after their wedding he looked like a caged bull. But he came and as the church went about doing the things a church does - loving him, reaching out to him, he began to soften. He was still very mistrustful but as he began to make friends in the church he began to change. Then tragedy struck. First his father, who had been living with them passed away. They were very close and as I worked with Vern to plan his father's service we developed a friendship. He even went so far as to say that it was nice to have someone like me helping through this service. A worst tragedy was in store. His daughter was in a car accident and his granddaughter was killed. Vern was devastated but instead of getting angry he turned to the church. He said, "I know you understand." We had become trustworthy and reliable. And the church did all those other things we do so well at the time of a death to help him get through it and to help his family heal. He remained faithful until his own death.

So trust each other by being trustworthy. It is the foundation stone for all of us as we come to experience and rely on God who is always trustworthy.