

Sept 28 – Trust in God

Psalm 13

When you saw the title for today's sermon I wouldn't be surprised if you thought, "But trusting in God is what we have been talking about for the last couple of weeks." As we talked about learning to trust one another and to trust the faith community we were also talking about how this builds for you a foundation where you can trust God. We need this foundation because there are times when you have to let go of the hand beside of you and leave the community behind you and still trust. Psalm 13 talks about these moments. Here some of those words again: "How long will you forget me, Lord? Forever? How long will I be left to my own wits, agony filling my heart? Daily?"

We have experienced those times when we feel forgotten by God, we feel God has abandoned us, we feel that we are on our own and life is very scary. These have been called the dark nights of the soul. At times like these, friends can't help us or fix the problem, but they give us strength by just walking beside us and holding our hand. The community of faith wants to reach out, and they do, but the help doesn't touch our deepest hurts. Psalm 13 talks about such times. When we experience them we can still trust in God, a God who seems to have forgotten us and left us alone. For the Psalmist ends his lament with words of trust. So, how do we do this?

It begins by walking each day by faith, when things are going well, when we have that hand to hold, and that community to support us. This is why we were talking about trust in each other and in our community. It begins to help us to understand that God is reliable even in those dark times when we do not feel as intently the presence of God.

The words from Jaie's special get at this idea. There are times when you stand as one, think you have lost your way, and you fear there is no way out. If you trust in God, in the end you will feel the strength of God's love.

Today let us hear the words of affirmation of the Psalmist for this is our hope when we are going through dark times.

“I have trusted in your faithful love.” Even when the Psalmist was having those dark moments thinking God didn’t care or God had turned God’s back on him he still trusted because he had experienced God’s faithful love so many times in his life that he could believe that it was present at that time, even if he didn’t feel it at the moment. This trust in the love of God when life is tough is key to our faith. We have all known people who remain faithful and trusting even in the most difficult of times and we have known those who turn from faith feeling disappointed in God. We have known people who look at the darkness with hope versus those with fear. We have known people who say and believe, “no matter what – God is with me” and we have seen people turn from faith and the church angry because God let this happen. The difference is one group believes and trusts in the faithful love of God and nothing going on in their lives can shake it. Others have doubts about that love and so when struggles happen it proves to them that God cannot be trusted.

We find this trust by learning, as I said, to trust others and to trust our faith community and by being trustworthy and reliable to others in their time of need. When we don’t understand why things are happening to us or ones we love, we trust because God has been faithful in the past. When we get angry with God yet we trust because we feel the love of God through individuals and the community of faith. It is this love that keeps us going. I see this so often as a pastor. People are going through incredibly crushing times. There is no way they are emotionally or even spiritually able to deal with it all or process it all. They just lean on the prayers and love of those around them. They trust and are not disappointed. I have also seen the opposite, where people feel that it is just them and God. When things don’t work out the way they had hoped they decide God has let them down. So trust in God’s faithful love.

But even more the psalmist goes on to say, “My heart will rejoice in your salvation.” He is looking to the future with positive hope. Because he trusts in God’s love he knows that God will be with him and that ultimately this time of darkness will be passed. This is not a word saying that everything will work out fine or even that God is causing this to happen so that other good things will occur but a statement of possibility. For the Psalmist right now it feels as if God doesn’t care but he also trusts and so

knows that these dark moments are not what is real. It is God's love that is real. And he knows he will again experience those feelings of God's love and presence in a full way.

He concludes, "I will sing because God has been good to me. Even in the darkest moments he will praise God now because God has been and will continue to be good to him. This is the amazing thing about faith. He begins by talking about feeling abandoned and rejected by God. He feels all alone and yet, because of the trust he has built up with God through the love and support of friends and community he will sing praises to the God whose face is hidden because he knows that ultimately tomorrow will be a better day.

I have seen this type of faith and had my faith strengthened because of it. Let me share just one example. Her daughter and only child had always said, "Mom, when you cannot live alone anymore you are going to come live with me." Their plans were set and as she was approaching her 90th birthday she planned to sell the house and move. It was going to be hard to leave the community that she had been in since she was a little girl but living with her daughter would be a fine compensation. She needed to move because her eyesight was going. Then she got a phone call. Her son-in-law called to say that her daughter had been in a car accident and killed. All of her dreams and her secure future were gone. Though the son-in-law was gracious and said she was still welcomed she knew he needed to find his own way forward. The grandchildren were all busy raising kids and working. In the midst of this intense time of sorrow and doubt as to her future she wrote to my mom. This woman and my grandmother had been neighbors for years and were very close. Her words were about trust in God, she had confidence that she would figure out the future and knew that life could still be good. Some weeks later a member of the church and a neighbor went to visit with a plan. She was to stay in her house with the neighbor volunteering to take her to doctors and to do all of her cooking. They all felt it would be for a month or two. It has turned into a ten plus year commitment. Now the neighbor writes for her and adds her p.s. of what a joy it is to be with her friend and how much she has learned from her. Both sing for joy. Both have learned to trust in God in a difficult time. Now as she is preparing to die this neighbor has become the beloved daughter she lost. She remained in the community that had

nurtured her. And she has been an example to all of what it means to trust in God even when life is challenging.

This last level of trust is the hardest but it comes through trusting each other and our community. Through them we learn how God is faithful, God is working with us towards new beginnings and so we can sing God's praises. Let us all help one another to have this faith.