

Songs for the Soul - Trust Teaching & Scripture

Pastor Michael Stadtmueller: [00:00:00] Bottom of the front page right now, and you can take notes there, and we'll have questions at the end of this time again after we read the scripture. But I wanna start by just talking about this week's overall theme, which is trust.

Trust is one of those main areas of Psalms. Again, we've divided this into six groups, and I'll remind you that six is a little bit arbitrary how they do that, but some scholars have determined that this is not a bad way to divide up buckets of different Psalms, and I've kinda went ahead and went with that. Okay?

So I wanna start though by thinking about the word trust in our world. So let's talk about systems of trust for a moment. Uh, I'll give you an example, and then... or yeah, let's look... I'll give you an example, and then I'd like you to ask yourself about some others.

You trust your calendar schedule because you might make it, whether you write that down on a calendar at your house, [00:01:00] or whether you're one who's gone digital. Trust is one of those things that, that we do, and this one's kind of easier for us, for many, because they can have it for themselves. They know they made their own calendar.

All right. So think for a second about some other things that you might have trust in. Is there some that we can name out loud? What do you have trust in? Systems.

Bible Study Participant: Definitely prayer.

Pastor Michael Stadtmueller: Prayer. Okay. That's one. So we pray, and, and hopefully when we're trusting that this is going to be heard, if nothing else. Yes.

What else?

Bible Study Participant: My church.

Pastor Michael Stadtmueller: Your church itself-

Bible Study Participant: Mm-hmm.

Pastor Michael Stadtmueller: -is a place of trust.

I'll just name a few more. Um, how about doctors, nurses, medical community? You go there, even if you had some moment where it's not perfect, where they haven't been able to get exactly, you're putting your trust [00:02:00] in the doctors, in the nurses.

When you have something where you're really hurting, you call nine one one, and you trust that somebody's gonna answer, and if you need an ambulance, you trust that it's already on its way almost as quickly as you've called.

We trust weather forecasts.

I'm gonna name it- ... because even, because it's a good one to talk about. Because if you didn't trust it at all, you would never listen at all. So you know what level of trust you have, and I think some of the best weathermen or women, uh, are really good at kind of reminding you of what they're using to name what they're looking at.

So I see we're a little tight here, but if we could make another table right here and get a couple breakoffs, or you can fill in, 'cause I'd love to have everybody at a table for the discussion.

Bible Study Participant: I, I trust [00:03:00] that, uh, um, the vast majority of our fellow citizens are law-abiding.

Pastor Michael Stadtmueller: Yeah. You trust it.

Bible Study Participant: Stop signs.

Pastor Michael Stadtmueller: Yeah.

Bible Study Participant: You know, obey the speed limit.

Pastor Michael Stadtmueller: So there's a trust in community.

Bible Study Participant: Yeah.

Pastor Michael Stadtmueller: And that is built up over time, and community becomes something... And, and there there's rings of community too, isn't there?

So let me kinda go inward. You have your individual, your kind of focus on the inside group that you let in, into that area of your life.

And then you might have, uh, a family. And I'll remind you, sometimes it's chosen family. Uh, it's not only, you know, blood, but some sort of this, this one that, uh, is, if not actual family, treated like that.

And then neighbors, community. How you're gonna do those, it's really up to you.

But here's the thing. Think through these same groups that I've just named. What happens when those groups get tested?

What [00:04:00] happens when the diagnosis comes that is really challenging you? I want a second opinion.

What happens when you have a job change, and all of a sudden, all these things that you knew how to do, all these parishioners that you knew their names, you're in a new place, and all that free will that you built up over 23 years in Fort Collins, I don't know who I'm talking about now- is gone.

What about a catastrophic weather event? We can laugh when the weather's a little off, but there are those stories that we have where... Seguin, Texas, I was down there when they were expecting three inches of rain. We got 20.

Bible Study Participant: Ooh.

Pastor Michael Stadtmueller: What happens when a relationship fractures on one of those inside rings?

Trust often becomes visible when stability disappears, and [00:05:00] that's kind of the, the thing that doesn't sort of make sense is it's a little counterintuitive. Why would trust become more visible when stability disappears?

Well, ancient Israel knew it well. You think of the stories that would bring uncertainty that are shared in scripture. They are the moments where they realized they needed to consider where they could place their trust.

War, political upheaval, exile, occupation, drought, loss, corruption of leadership. All of these things are written about in scripture over and over again. They test trust.

Psalms of trust then are a little bit like something I've shared in other weeks. Uh, I've, I've brought up to you, I've shared in sermons.

Whenever you hear the words in scripture, "Do not fear," there is something to be afraid of. Because nobody says when you're holding a baby, "You [00:06:00] know, don't worry. Don't, don't fear what's behind you unless there's something scary behind you." They would never say that unless there was something scary.

So we say trust because there is a need to know that it's hard right now, and we're calling them to trust. And usually it's the Psalms. It's in the, in God or the people of God or in community to look where you can look for hope. And of course, we lift up that trust in Jesus Christ as we've taken the Psalms into our understanding.

So yes, do not fear. We know there's something to fear. Trust, we know there's something that is making you distrustful. Trust in God is said not because life felt secure, but because often it didn't feel secure.

So what is a Psalm? A trust Psalm, excuse me. Trust Psalms express confidence in God's presence and faithfulness in the [00:07:00] midst of uncertainty. It's during uncertainty that a trust Psalm is lifted up.

The thing I think about, the, the real world experience that relates to a trust Psalm, you're six years old. Can you guys... How many can remember six years old, at least some memory? You got something in there? If you don't, you know the other side of this, of this moment.

There is a crowd of people, and they're all adults. You are now at butt level, and it's crowded. How are you gonna navigate this group because you don't even know where you're going. Mom says to you, "Take my hand. I gotcha." Mom may not use the words, "Put your trust in my hand," but for most of us, we've already had that built up.

Sorry for those of you who didn't have that trust built up in your, in your immediate family. I know that can be a really hard reality for some.

But our mom says, [00:08:00] "Hold my hand. It's gonna get crowded, and I'll lead you, and you trust." Trust Psalms are like that. Faith spoken from a difficult place. It's that moment when somebody's hand is reaching out to you and you grab it because you know you need it.

Uh, Claus Westermann wrote a lot about the Psalms, and he said, "Trust Psalms often stand very close to lament Psalms because they know suffering." I think that's really important here because the relationship to suffering is right on the other side.

Um, trust Psalms, they know fear, but they arrive at-- or a person knows fear, but they arrive at confidence. They, they don't have certainty, but they have confidence. They have a hope.

I'm gonna show you the difference between lament and trust Psalms, and I just want you to listen to these different voices. Uh, I think it's kinda powerful to see how [00:09:00] closely they are related and yet very different at the same time.

So where a lament Psalm speaks to pain honestly, "My God, my God, I am wounded. You have forsaken me." Trust Psalms speak confidence honestly.

Let me show you in a different way. When lament Psalms focus on distress, trust Psalms focus on God's presence amidst distress.

Where the lament Psalm says, "Where are you, God?" Trust Psalms say, "God is here." It's like the hand that's reaching out. Trust that that hand is there.

And where a lament Psalm contains complaint, a trust Psalm contains confidence.

Do you see, first of all, how they go hand in hand? What I wouldn't want you to do is, [00:10:00] is end this by going, "Trust Psalms are better." Do you, you see what I mean though? Because we need to sometime lament.

I know some people came from the grief group today. We wanna honor our lament. We wanna honor our pain, our suffering, and we wanna point to where the community believes we can find hope, and that's that centering of faith.

So another one, often lament Psalms ask for intervention. "Help me, God. Help me." Trust Psalms often express assurance. God will come.

Lament Psalms move towards trust sometimes. We talked about that some weeks where they almost leave you in that barren moment, and that's less comfortable. But some moments end where we still feel scared, where trust Psalms begin or settle into trust.

And finally, where lament Psalms have, have a language of [00:11:00] protest, trust Psalms have a language of confidence. They're moving from protest into a sense of, instead of tearing down, trying to rebuild their faith in God, they s- they're telling others, "This is the God I believe in."

It's important to rember- remember and recognize then that lament Psalms and trust Psalms often go hand in hand.

Even a lot of those lament Psalms that we've looked in had a last line that was moving towards trust. A lot of the trust Psalms that are kinda considered trust Psalms oftentimes start by allowing you to hear what is scary, what is hard. It's in there, and, and that's where the buckets don't exactly ma- match up always perfectly.

So I think I have listed on your page common characteristics of trust Psalms. I just wanna give those to you. They often include a description of the danger. Letting you know why there's danger. An [00:12:00] affirmation of God's presence, images of protection or stability, and then a declaration of confidence.

I'm gonna give you some examples, though, that you can hear where a trust Psalm is just from the very beginning.

Bible Study Participant: Can you go over that sentence one more time?

Pastor Michael Stadtmueller: That last one?

Bible Study Participant: Yeah.

Pastor Michael Stadtmueller: A declaration of confidence. Is that the one or all of those?

Bible Study Participant: Go through it all.

Pastor Michael Stadtmueller: Yeah, I'll go through those one more time. The trust Psalms often include, number one, a description of danger; number two, an affirmation of God's presence; number three, images of protection or stability. The Lord is my shepherd; hint, hint. Number four, a declaration of confidence.

Yes, I, um, please do that if I move too fast, especially in some of these. [00:13:00] I, I'm just covering a lot today.

So Psalm 23 is an example of a trust Psalm. There's a reason we share these at funerals. What's the first line of Psalm 23?

Bible Study Participant: The Lord is my shepherd.

Pastor Michael Stadtmueller: The Lord is my shepherd. It's not that lament yet. It's placing your trust.

I always think it's important to remind ourselves that some of us at the funeral are in the lament area, right? We're not quite ready for it. We may be saying to our heart, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Why do we move already to the trust Psalm? Because that's what the community can do. We start by naming together trust and where we look to hope, even if we don't yet feel it. And the people of God long ago, that's what they did.

Psalm 27, "The Lord is my light and my salvation. Whom shall I fear?"

Psalm 46, a favorite of Martin [00:14:00] Luther's, "God is our refuge and strength."

Each one of those, the Lord is. The Lord is. God is. There's the trust in an image that's shared before you.

And so when I share those things, I'll often include, it wasn't necessarily in order. Uh, those things are just there though in the trust Psalms.

So again, the thing to notice in that, danger is still present. Psalm 23 doesn't say, "You don't have to worry about any valleys." It says, "Though I walk through the valley of the dark shadow of death."

It doesn't say, "Yeah, it's not a big deal." Is that helpful? You know the person says it when you're going through a really hard thing, says, "You know what? It's not a big deal." Oh, what are you talking about? It sure is.

That's important though, because our faith does not remove valleys. [00:15:00] Trust simply changes how we walk through them.

And if you think about it, there's a popular, I'll call it, uh, a pop faith that says as long as you believe in Jesus, you'll never have problems.

That's the prosperity gospel. If you just believe enough, and you know what? If you're having problems, it's probably 'cause you're not believing enough. And that's a real dangerous faith, but it's out there. And, you know, we need to recognize that. Uh, also be gentle with those who are sharing that because sometimes their faith is very fragile.

Um, ancient Israel though, here's the reality, they rarely experienced long periods of security. People were displaced, and the songs arose not in the times where everything was right, but when things were scary. Israel's faith did not emerge from [00:16:00] control. It emerged from a dependence upon a God who was there when they were not in control.

And as I just said with the other Psalms, it also reminds us sometimes we get caught in our head with theology, and I just wanna have the right answers. And the Psalms are this beautiful answer from the people of God long ago that expressed some feelings that sometimes we don't think belong in church, or we don't know what to do with.

Trust Psalms, I would say again, we do think they belong in church overall, but there's a vulnerability in there, and sometimes we don't wanna honor the vulnerability. There's usually a lament in there. They remind, reminded Israel that governments fail, kings fail, human strengths fail, but God remains. I don't think that's so different from us.

So, in review, [00:17:00] trust is not certainty, and that's that modern faith view sometimes. If you have a faith that sounds like it's moving towards certainty, even if your own faith feels so powerfully secure, remind yourself that our faith can be knocked down. We do need one another.

And faith is not the absence of fear. It's learning where to stand when fear arrives. It's knowing whose hand you can grab.

Added one thing for my, my week last week, a reminder, the word discipleship. The root of that word is discipline, right? Discipleship and discipline have the same word in it. Why is that? Because the disciples were called to look at how they could act, how they could live out their faith.

And one of those things is how can you learn to trust? So there [00:18:00] is this ongoing piece, and this is what the community can focus on more than almost anything else, is learning to trust in all different things.

I think the reality is a lot of us are really good at trusting in certain things that we've lived through, but we're all aware that people have experienced things that we never have. So what would happen if we're in that moment?

What did Jesus say on the cross that was a quote of a trust Psalm, Psalm 31? Anybody guess? "Into your hands I commit my spirit." It's almost like saying, "I know you've got me now, God. I'm trusting."

Couple more insights from Walter Brueggemann, and I think this is an important part of trust.

I mentioned that some of you feel pretty trusting in God. But Walter Brueggemann, great theologian, he said, "Faith always moves from our orientation [00:19:00] to a disorientation, a tearing down, to a new orientation." His point is this, that it... Yes, you have faith, but we have experiences in life that in order to strengthen our faith, we're probably not better off putting more bricks on the same foundation.

It's almost helpful for us, allowing ourselves to trust that when our foundation is moved, God is still with us and we can rebuild.

And that's part of the reason we as a church journey through some of the things and rituals that we do, like funerals. We try to help people do that again.

Incidentally, it's also why I have a great respect for that atheist that becomes a person of faith, because they have torn down their own faith, and somehow they were able to build that up, especially somebody who actively said, "I don't believe in God," and [00:20:00] then got to a point where they were able to rebuild something.

In this matter then, trust Psalms, they emerge when life... not when life settles and- but in uncertainty, and then trust becomes that practice, that discipline.

Now we're gonna read Psalm 121 together, so you can open your Bibles. If you don't have one, there's some up here. But Psalm 121.

And again, for this group, I'm gonna go ahead and read that out loud to you, okay? And then I, I'm gonna invite discussion.

But I'll remind you, the first question that I like to ask is what did you notice in the Psalm? So don't, don't... you don't have to think too deeply. That's not a deep theological question. It's more of how did it move you, or what stuck out to you.

We're kind of calling upon the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, to help us by you being honest with yourself and just listening for your own things that you notice this time around.

I'm [00:21:00] gonna read it out loud. If it's helpful for you to read along, great. If it's more helpful for you simply to listen to my voice, you are welcome to do that. And here we go.

Psalm 121.

I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where will my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and Earth.

He will not let your foot be moved. He who keeps you will not slumber. He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

The Lord is your keeper. The Lord is your shade at your right hand. The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.

The Lord will keep you from all evil. He will keep your life. The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time on and forevermore