

Lenten Midweek 3 – 2024
Repentance and Trust
Jeremiah 17:1-13
Colossians 1:15-23

I've never seen the show, but I know the title of the program because of its ubiquity. Naked and Afraid; most of us would be extremely uncomfortable being in our birthday suit in Times Square. It isn't just modesty, although that is definitely a part of it. The great artists never depict Adam and Eve exiting Eden with their heads held high, their chins up, their shoulders back, and their chests out. Shame, vulnerability, and discomfort at being exposed led Adam and Eve to cover themselves. We cover our bodies. Is there a similar action in regard to our heart, our soul, our inner man? Are there things on the inside that we attempt to cover up? Chances are close to 100% that there're some things that the person next to you does not want you to know about them. What would it take for an individual to truly provide "full disclosure?"

How many of y'all believe that you trust God? You know that He sees you. Exactly as you are, the Lord sees you. No one can hide from God. Some delude themselves; quite well actually, in thinking that they can hide from God what they are, how they think, what animates their heart. How many of y'all struggle with trust? With your fellow man, I mean. You've been burned before and trust does not come easy to you. Someone has mishandled you, violated your innocence and the walls went up. Naked and *unafraid*; trust in God can be described as feeling confident that He will forgive, that His love and mercy is not dependent on your spiritual ledger being faultless. People lie, spiritually. Those who lie the most, those who attempt to spin their sin with excuses or some justifiable rationale for their misdeeds are those who are untrusting. A works righteous religion begets lies in its adherents. Trust comes from knowing that you are naked before God and the works righteous are continually dressing themselves up in their spiritual pretense.

A sinful woman, fully dressed, comes in spiritually naked before the Lord. She is weeping. She anoints His feet with ointment. She anoints His feet with her tears. She lets down her hair and wipes Jesus' feet, kissing them with a gratitude that is a pure expression of faith (Luke 7:36-50). She trusts Him. She is a sinner. She knows it. She knows that He knows it. She also knows that she is forgiven; by Him; at great cost, forgiven, by Him. She trusts much for she has been forgiven much. Simon the Pharisee, who was hosting this dinner, didn't express gratitude or faith and any similar gesture to the Lord who was under his roof. This Pharisee didn't need much forgiving. That's how Jesus summed up Simon the Pharisee's rather cold inaction. The one who has been forgiven little loves little. Here is tonight's corollary: The one who has been forgiven little trusts little. The sinful woman; think of other Christians, the vast multitude of other Christians, who have adopted her disposition with their Savior. Here is that intimate and grateful disposition: This loving Savior knows me. He has taken my sin upon Himself. How much more thoroughly could anyone know me than the One who has borne my sin? And still He loves me?

Do you trust the Lord God Almighty? Do you trust the Ruler of the Universe, the King of the cross? Do you trust the Messiah who bore your sin? About you Jesus said this: I know my sheep and they know me. I call them by name and they follow me (John 10). He knows you

fully. He has seen to it that you know Him. By the power of His Word, His voice, you follow Him. One of the ways you follow Him, emulate Him, reflect Him is trust. In the movie *The Passion of the Christ*, the first five minutes are priceless. Jesus is in the Garden of Gethsemane and He is deeply distressed. The Lord knows what the next handful of hours holds. Jesus is praying. Satan is depicted as coming to Him, sowing seeds of doubt, tempting the Lord to despair, tempting Jesus to abandon His course. A foul preacher of lies, Satan says this:

“Do you really believe that one man can bear the full burden of sin?” Jesus is depicted as knowing that He is under attack and He prays to His Father: “Shelter me. I trust in you. In you I take refuge.” It is a fictional scene but it captures the active trust which Jesus employs in difficulty. The devil continues his verbal assault: “No one man can carry this burden, I tell you. It’s far too heavy. Saving their souls is too costly.” The words from Satan are depicted as a serpent, slithering toward Jesus to bring its poison to Him. Jesus sees the snake for what it is. He stands and crushes its head beneath His heel. That is trust.

Satan preaches his misanthropic garbage at us today. That is precisely why the book of Proverbs tells us this: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths” (Proverbs 3:5-6). Repentance, true and blessed and full and glorious repentance, has trust as a prerequisite. The truth, which has come upon you, leads to you to be honest about yourself and your sin. Faith, knowing what God has done to redeem you from sin and death, leads to trust. Trust, when in full flower, confesses fully, and does not hide, but gives voice to every aspect about who and what we are. Naked and unafraid; the Lord has made it known that He will never forsake us, that His love endures forever, that our sin is paid for and His righteousness is our bridal garment.

“Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord. He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit” (Jeremiah 17:7-8). Christ crucified is that tree. You are in Him. In that movie scene, Jesus gives voice to His trust and you and I know that His resolve was true. “Father, you can do all things. Let this chalice pass from me. But let your will be done, not mine.” The movie uses clouds to cover the moon as an indicator of the Father’s intention for the Son to drink the cup of suffering completely. That is exactly what Jesus did. His trust did not waver. In the face of great calamity, in the face of human injustice, beneath the weight of the world’s iniquity, Jesus trusted His Father and followed where the Father would lead. The Son of God, on the cross, was truly naked and unafraid, suffering and unafraid, commending Himself to His Father and unafraid. That trust is in you. I know my sheep and they know me. I call them by name and they follow me.

Christ is the head of the body, His church (Colossians 1:18). All aspects of His glorious life are in you. In some measure, His trust is in us all. The Lord Christ gave Himself into death, trusting that He was in His Father’s hands. He allowed death to take Him knowing that He was in His Father’s hands. Easter was the Father’s plan. Resurrection was the Father’s plan. Jesus’ trust was anchored in love, in obedience, in faithfulness. Trust was anchored in Easter. May that trust grow and manifest itself in us for the benefit of others. May that trust put our fears to rest and lead us confidently out into our vocation. May that trust shelter us, strengthen us in difficulty. May that trust be to the praise of God’s glorious grace.

