

Sermon Quinquagesima 2021

February 14, 2021

Luke 18:31-43

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. This morning we meditate on the Gospel Lesson previously read.

Trust is a hard thing to build and an easy thing to destroy, isn't it? Think about how you've had times where you worked and worked to build trust with someone, and something happened—you maybe did something, or you maybe didn't mean to do something, but that trust fell apart. The person felt they could no longer trust you. Their perception was perhaps right, or perhaps it didn't put the best construction on the circumstances. But that trust was hard to maintain.

As we look at things in a less personal perspective, we see a society around us that is distrusting. I think, in particular, about the political circumstances. As I often point out, there is great division in our country politically. Those who are on the left don't trust those who are on the right and the things they say. Likewise, those who are on the right don't trust those on the left and the things they say. And those in middle probably don't trust either.

I have really been enjoying the writing of a blog by a reporter on the internet. I remember reading this reporter years ago as he discussed the Financial Crisis that we endured beginning in 2008. In particular, I remember appreciating his objectivity. Interestingly, his writing now is making that point that reporting has lost all objectivity. If you read a news story it's commonly filled with adjectives that make the biases of the reporter totally clear. And this reporter's point is that this is true on the left and on the right. If you read right leaning stories, their bias is to those on the right. If you read left leaning stories, their bias is to those on the left. And in the midst of it, the reporting has become so untrustworthy. You can see this in how things were reported with regard to the pandemic, you can see it with how they were reported with Trump as president and now with Biden in that same role. And what's the consequence? The reporter says it: the Media have ruined themselves. There's no trust. People don't know where to get the truth. They don't trust that they are getting the truth, and they don't know what to believe. So, people who are right leaning trust right leaning sources—whether reports or people—and those who are left-leaning trust left-leaning source, and neither trust the other. There's not trust. Trust is a hard thing to build and an easy thing to break.

Or look at a marriage. A marriage can have a trust that is founded on years or even decades of goodwill. But then, something can happen that can tear that trust down. It

can be a small lie. It can be a big one. It could be accusations that come from the outside—even ones that are untrue. And what happens to the trust? It's suddenly shaky. Trust is a hard thing to build and an easy thing to break.

And what we see is that there is all manner of reason for it to be broken in our sin-fallen world. We see all kinds of things that lead us to be untrusting. And often rightly so. We see how broken and sinful people are. As we look at those in power, for example, we see how absolute power corrupts absolutely. We see how people will constantly manipulate circumstances to their own ends. Or even in things that don't represent the brokenness of man, we see how the world just lets us down. We might have plans for something and the weather makes a drastic shift—the blizzard comes through and closes the airport so that we can't make a trip to the beach. Or we might be looking forward to time with our spouse after we retire only to have illness take them from us before we're able to realize that. And things become untrustworthy.

In fact, as we wrestle with all of this, it becomes very easy for us to focus our blame in one particular direction, doesn't it? And what to what direction am I referring? I mean to God. It becomes easy in the midst of this to blame God and assume that He is the One who is not trustworthy. But look at how this happens. I remember when my mom died, I had a friend who was particularly struck by it. He questioned God at that point. Interestingly, I was strengthened in my faith by the whole thing, but he wasn't. It really gave him reason to doubt.

But this is nothing new is it? After all, look at what Adam does in the fall. When he partakes of the fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil who does he blame? On the surface, it looks like he blames his wife. And he is throwing her under the bus a bit. But who does he ultimately blame? God. He blames God for the woman that God gave him.

That's often what we do isn't it? When things don't go the way we want or the way we expect, we blame God. If we don't get to enjoy the comforts or the occasions or pleasures we'd like, we blame God. And we assume He's untrustworthy. Or in a perhaps more sober way, we look to things like suffering and pain, and we do the same. How could God let people suffer if He really loves them? How could God let horrible things happen to people: rape; murder; genocide? Those are awful things, and so we assume that their existence gives us reason to find God untrustworthy. Trust is hard to earn and easy to lose.

I remember when I was in seminary, though, a small way how God would show Himself faithful. Often when I would start worrying about financing schooling and

support, someone would come out of nowhere and give us money unsolicited. Sometimes it would be somewhat smaller amounts in comparison to the costs at hand, a kind and thoughtful twenty dollars for a dinner, or a gift card for a date night. Other times it would be in sums significantly larger. God was showing His trustworthiness to us. He was showing that He would care and provide for us.

But even as I say that, as I point to God's trustworthiness, is that where we ultimately should find it, in those signs like that? Sure, they're comforting, but how do we ultimately know that God is trustworthy? Hopefully, you'll know the answer. God reveals His full trustworthiness in Jesus. Trust is hard to build and easy to break, but Christ God proves it's never broken by Him. Or to put it into the context of our lesson for today: Jesus is worthy of our faith because He is the Son of David who fulfills the promises of God.

I say that, this is in the context of our lesson because look at what happens there. Here Jesus is walking on His way, and the blind man hears He's coming and what does he cry out? **"Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me."** Now, we don't realize it, but those are loaded words: "Son of David!" How so? They fulfill the promise of the Old Testament. I've referenced it a couple of times recently, but you might recall that a few weeks ago, we had that promise. We see a glimpse of it in the Old Testament Lesson for today, where David was anointed as the King, but the promise was made in that passage from 2 Samuel 7 that was the Old Testament Lesson the Sunday after Christmas. In that passage, David was going to build the temple for the Lord. But the Lord said to David, "You aren't going to build me a house, I'm going to build you one." In other words, "David, you're not going to build the temple, but I'm going to build the line of an eternal king from you." And that line finds its end in Jesus.

Look how you see it in the Gospels. You know our reading is from Luke today, look there where you see it. When Gabriel comes to Mary, **"Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David."** Or look at what Zechariah sings in his song, **"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David."** Or just the fact that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the City of David, where Samuel went in today's lesson to anoint the future king. And that's just in Luke. You see it in the other gospels too.

There in this is the fulfillment from God who carries out what He promises to carry out. And that's just with regard to the promise of being the Son of David. Look at what

Jesus says in the lesson, **“See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise.”** Everything written about the Son of man will be accomplished. It will be finished, just like Jesus said was on the cross; brought to it’s end, its fulfillment—the God who promises things showing His trustworthiness.

And you see that this God is trustworthy not just because He does what He says He will do, but because of what He shows as He does it. Think about it, what do you see about God in Christ? We say this all the time, but what does that cross show you? It shows you the love of this God. It shows you that God is trustworthy because what He does, He does out of love. Would God give His own Son for the world if He didn’t so love the world that He would seek to give that Son that none would perish but have eternal life? Of course not. Or would He baptize you and make you His own, would He speak faith and forgiveness into your ears, would He feed you with the very body and blood of Jesus if He didn’t love YOU? Of course not. So, you see it, Christians. You see this trustworthiness. You see how those actions bring faith to you, the arms of our Lord outstretched in love, not just in word, but in deed, for you.

Yes, trust is hard to build and easy to break, so hold on to that Lord in trust. In fact, as one last thought, I love what we see in the Gospel lesson. Hear the faith in the interaction between Jesus and the blind man. The people had tried to silence the man, but what happened? He cried out all the more! **“But he cried out all the more, ‘Son of David, have mercy on me!’”** When you’re inclined to doubt, cry out all the more to the Lord. Look at the result: **“And Jesus stopped and commanded him to be brought to him. And when he came near, he asked him, ‘What do you want me to do for you?’ He said, ‘Lord, let me recover my sight.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Recover your sight; your faith has made you well.’”** Now, to be clear, I’m not going to stand up here and tell you that if you just call on Jesus enough that He’ll make all your pains go away, heal all your traumas of body and soul, or making you aching joints better—at least not right now. But He will eternally. That said even now, your faith will make you well. It will save you—you see that’s the literal Greek there: “your faith has saved you.” And that is the promise. Trust is hard to build and easy to destroy, but Christ is trustworthy and faith in Him will save you. It will bring healing to you body and soul eternally, and bring you the promise of it now, sustaining and strengthening you to go on in this broken world. Amen.