

Part 1 | Trust that God is Always Good

By Chaplain Paul Taylor

I'm honored to be with you this morning. The last time I filled this pulpit was in 2018. At that time, Pastor Barry wasn't at this church...and it appears he's not here this time either!

How many of you would agree that we are living in crazy times? How many of us would like to exchange crazy - for joy, peace and hope?

SLIDE 1: The title of my message is: TRUST THAT GOD IS ALWAYS GOOD

I would like to start by telling you a childhood story that introduced this change into my life.

I had a particularly tough time when I was 5 years old. Born and raised in Wichita, I first discovered my need for God when I battled the fear (terror actually) of walking home from kindergarten all by myself. I had to face the fear of being trapped on a narrow sidewalk, walking between barking dogs on one side and the busy traffic of Kellogg Street on the other. In my terror, I was often tempted to run away from the dogs and into the traffic.

SLIDE 2: Dad would drive me to school and I would cry all the way there. Then my teacher had to pry me off of my dad's legs as I shrieked for him not to leave me. I was terrified because I knew what was waiting for me on the walk home. My Dad saw my torment and fear and wanted me to know, that trusting God could set me free from the fears that taken control of my life.

One Saturday morning, I was sobbing and begging him not to send me back to school on Monday. My dad tried to reason with me with zero success, finally sat me down in the kitchen and taught me to memorize my first bible promise.

Proverbs 3:5-6 (ESV) 5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. 6 In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

That morning became my introduction to the reality of God, learning that I could trust him with my deepest fears. This has come in very handy since I have spent the last 48 years working in all forms of crisis, in all its beauty and ugliness.

It took my Dad about a half hour to teach me to memorize the verses, but I would spend the rest of my life learning I could trust God with all my heart, in all my crises moments. My earthly father began the lesson, that my Heavenly Father took to a masters level. I am still holding on to, and reminding myself of these verses to this very day.

I would find out later that fear had done a number in my Dad's life, and he simply wanted me to discover that simple truth - that putting my trust in God would bring me to a place of durable peace and calm.

For years after that (even before I could read) when my parents knew I was afraid, they would write these verses on a piece of paper and tuck it into my lunch box or shirt pocket. So whenever fear started to grip me, I would pull out the paper, hold it in hand, and recite the verses over and over until the fear left.

SLIDE 4 Only later did I discover WHY I could trust God, and WHY I was able to overcome my fears.

The simple reason is because I learned that GOD is always GOD, and God is always good. I would like to spend the remainder of our time giving you the benefit of what I have learned since that morning in my kitchen in 1957.

I eventually discovered that trusting in GOD is the basic building block to BECOMING a Christian, and the abundant life of BEING a Christian. The simple act of believing and trusting in Him gives us hope, then, God fills us with joy and peace. But it starts with **trusting him with all of our heart.**

- **SLIDE 5 Romans 15:13 (NIV 1984) 13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit**

**SLIDE 6 Point #1: TRUST IN THE LORD WITH ALL YOUR HEART
...How do we do that?**

It starts with taking God at his word - that He alone is God and he alone is good, especially when junky things happen in my life.

Partial trust, and partial distrust creates a scenario where I am constantly bouncing between God in charge, me in charge, God knows best, I know best....

- **SLIDE 7 James 1:5-8 (NIV 1984) 5** If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. **6** But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. **7** That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; **8** he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does. (distrust makes us seasick!)

On the other hand, what would life look like if we were convinced that God was so great, that he would turn the hardest things in my life for good, as I put my love and trust in Him?

- **SLIDE 8 Romans 8:28 (ESV) 28** And we know that for those who love God - all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

So as we trust the Lord with **ALL OUR HEART**, this gives us a solid anchor point as we wait for his wisdom to unfold in every single difficult or impossible situation that we face.

If a ship at sea is going to survive a storm close to land, and not be blown into a coral reef or rocky shore, the ship must have an anchor and a strong point to anchor to as they wait out the storm.

So too, as Christians, if we are to survive the economic, political, cultural, financial, or relational storms in our lives, and not be shipwrecked by all the bad news and the fear it produces, we must be anchored to something secure. Think of your life as the boat, trust is your chain, and your anchor is the unchanging love and goodness of God.

SLIDE 9 TRUST THAT GOD IS INHERENTLY GOOD

God is not good just because he does good things. God's CHARACTER AND NATURE only does good. This is why God can be FULLY trusted.

- **Luke 18:19 (NIV 1984) 19** "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good—except God alone

SLIDE 10 TRUST THAT GOD WILL NOT CHANGE or LIE

God's part: God cannot, will not, lie or change his nature or character.

- **Numbers 23:19 (NLT) 19** God is not a man, so he does not lie. He is not human, so he does not change his mind. Has he ever spoken and failed to act? Has he ever promised and not carried it through?

When God promises: he WILL fulfill that promise. Our part - is to trust to wait, and not give up on him.

SLIDE 11 TRUST THAT GOD IS WITH YOU AND FOR YOU

- **Deuteronomy 31:8 (NIV 1984) 8 The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.”**

What would life be like if you were convinced that God is always for you? Would never leave or abandon you, even on your best and your worst days?

What we focus on, we begin to see all around us. My wife and I bought a a red truck to pull our camper.... suddenly we see red Ford pickups everywhere.

By the same token, as we focus on the truth that God with us, we will see His goodness everywhere. If focus on injustice, we will see injustice everywhere. If we focus on God going before us, God with us, and that he will never leave us or forsake us, then then our fear and discouragement fades away.

SLIDE 12 God never over-promises nor can we OVER-TRUST HIM in any situation.

- **Hebrews 13:5-6 (NKJV) For He Himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” 6 So we may boldly say: “The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?”**
- **Romans 10:11 (NIV 1984) 11 As the Scripture says, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame.”**

SLIDE 13 POINT #2 DON'T LEAN TO YOUR OWN UNDERSTANDING...

Now this is the part that gets us into trouble over and over. Another way of saying this is “don't automatically default to your own wisdom and interpretation of life, and elevate your beliefs above God's wisdom.”

- **SLIDE 14 Isaiah 55:8-9 (NIV 1984) 8 “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD. 9 “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.**

Is it possible that the creator of all things has greater wisdom and knowledge than we do? Is it possible that he knows our needs, our situation, issues, and the right solution better than we do? Then why do we persistently believe that we know better than God what will make us happy?

Does anyone here know how to build or repair a car? How many of you understand how an engine works, with its valves, pistons, rings, compression, plugs, alternator, computers, transmission, differential, drive shaft etc..?

It's helpful to have that information but not essential in order to DRIVE your car. You simply need to know the basics of how to operate your car and to obey the rules of the road. You get in the car, and TRUST that you will be able to drive safely to your destination. But if you don't trust your car, you won't make the trip, or you will have a worry-filled journey.

So too...We don't have to understand everything about God, Church history, theology, doctrine, hermeneutics, or eschatology in order to believe and trust that God is always, always good, fully worthy of our trust.

SLIDE 15 We do need to learn how God designed us to live this life. The more we obey his commands, the better life goes for us. Does it seem fair that the God who created this world, gets to decide the rules? He designed the best ways for us to relate to Him and to each other. When we obey his commands, life cooperates with us, instead of fighting us every step of the way.

• **1 John 5:1-4 (NIV 1984)** 2 This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. 3 This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, 4 for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.

Our biggest challenge in life is to believe that God is good despite the apparent evidence to the contrary. We are challenged by God to still believe the truth that He is good when this world seems out of his control!

SLIDE 16 We have a good God and a real enemy. Your enemy is not your spouse, or your boss. It's Satan, the grand deceiver. Satan wants us to believe his BIG LIE! You can't trust anyone, not even God. He wants us to believe that we are alone, we are

not loved, and the world is crumbling around us. He says, 'God doesn't care about your pain, and he is not as powerful as he says he is.'

- **Luke 12:6-7 (NIV 1984) 6 Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies ? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. 7 Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.**

SLIDE 17 SATAN'S BIG LIE is repeated over and over: *If you want to be happy in this life, it's all up to you!*

- **John 8:44(NIV 1984)** He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

But like a child who believes he knows better, who becomes offended by his parents telling him to do, we can also become angry with God and refuse to obey Him. So too when God's children disobey, God doesn't remove them from his family, because he remains faithful. **But BECAUSE he is good, he will discipline us - not for punishments sake - but for OUR OWN GOOD.**

SLIDE 18 The temptation to distrust God is always with us, but we must resist it. Satan hopes the battle will cause us to despair - maybe we will abandon our trust in God and no longer believe that his heart is good towards us.

- **1 Peter 5:8-9 (ESV) 8** Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. **9** Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.

SLIDE 19 POINT #3 IN ALL YOUR WAYS ACKNOWLEDGE HIM, AND HE WILL MAKE YOUR PATHS STRAIGHT

SLIDE 20 What does mean to acknowledge God in all your ways, and he will make your paths straight?

- **Ways:** wherever this life takes you, **Acknowledge:** remember your God is present in the here and now, so acknowledge your need for him, **Straight paths:** because God is with me, life is more pleasant, because I am not alone. Furthermore, God's wisdom guides me.

SLIDE 20 I have found that to the degree that I trust, love and obey God, is the degree to which I enjoy my life, even when it's hard. You and I can trust God and his wisdom, even when we don't understand or agree with everything that is happening to us.

- **Jeremiah 29:11-13** (NIV 1984) 1 For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. 12 Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. 13 You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

In 2018, I RE-discovered the POWER of Trusting when I became super sick with a serious lung infection. I honestly had moments where I wondered if this was how I was going to die.

At the very same time, I was battling the worst injustices, disappointments, and some great personal losses I had ever experienced in my life.

I have been a follower of Christ since 1973. But in spite of that, a few years before becoming sick, I had slowly become embittered toward God. I believed I didn't deserve to be treated this way, and God was letting me drown in my misery.

YES, Jesus loved me - BUT during this season of pain, I couldn't feel truth of his love like I once did. **The battle was because I was pitting my wisdom against God's, and His trustworthiness was on the line.** I was convinced I had done all the right things, but the bad outcomes caused me to become offended at God.

At the crescendo of my illness - I remember the very moment - when I finally stopped fighting God - and let go of my right to be right, my bitterness, my deep disappointments, my questions, and the injustices that deserved to be made right - and fell exhausted into His arms. I fully put my trust back in God even when none of what was happening to me made sense.

I finally understood the lament of Job where He held God responsible for all his misery. But like Job, I also accepted the truth that God's wisdom was superior to my own, even if I didn't get the answers or outcome I wanted. I let go of my offenses toward God by faith and put my trust back in him. In return, God loved me like I've never been loved before.

After this experience, I changed. I finally realized that Jesus owed me nothing. So when He gave me anything, I was extremely grateful for everything. Nothing was too small, nothing was too big to be appreciated.

It's as if I was once blind, but now I could see...suddenly I could see the goodness of God all around me, every single day of my life! This was because my offenses toward God had been forgiven and wiped away! In its place was so much kindness being poured out - that I started writing them down day after day.

I am still doing this four years later. I write down anywhere from 3-10 entries a day. As of this morning, I have **532 entries four months into 2022**. Most years I will have well over 2000 entries. Can any of us remember and point to over 2000 good things God has done in our lives last year? I certainly I couldn't, but now I can!

On January 1st of the New Year, Barb and I re-read the thousands of expressions of God's goodness and wisdom from the past year. We celebrate what we've forgotten, and thank Him all over again!

One final byproduct of TRUSTING GOD, I find that I am less and less afraid of the future. This is because I am being reminded everyday that the Father's love, provision and wisdom in my life won't change, even as the world around me gets crazy. God is faithful. I can trust Him with all of my heart, no matter what happens, because he will turn it for my good.

What would it look like if In all our ways we acknowledged Him and he directed our paths? Little prayers like, God help me, give us safety on this trip, Jesus I don't know what to do, Father God my heart is broken, Lord I am so angry right now, God where does the money come from, please heal me, forgive me Jesus, ...and made the decision to believe by faith that God is good and good hearted toward me? Then we can believe his future plans for me are for my good, in spite of what I see, think and feel.

Let's Pray