

## **Foundation of Trust**

Reflections: Part 4 “Foundation of Trust”

Rev. Cameron D St. Michael – November 26, 2023

Last Sunday Before Advent

**Readings:** Isaiah 26:1-8; Luke 6:37-49

**Reflection:** Psalm 28

**Greeting:** Give thanks to the Lord because he is good, because his faithful love endures forever. The people who do what is right are truly happy! Remember me, Lord, with your grace and favor!

**Prayer:** God, help us remember your steadfast love in all that we do. May your wisdom guide us and lead us all the days of our lives. Help us to continue to grow in your grace and your mercy. Bless us this day as we come before you in prayer. Help us to walk in your light and to trust in your ways. May we help each other in this journey called life so that we may remind each other of the promise we share in Christ our Lord. Let your truth strengthen us and may your love and faithfulness give us comfort in all distress. By your Spirit, let us be one with each other as we are one with you. Help us to build on our foundation of faith we find in our Risen Savior, and it is in the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

**Reflection:** Psalm 28

*To you, O LORD, I call; my rock, do not refuse to hear me, for if you are silent to me, I shall be like those who go down to the Pit. Hear the voice of my supplication, as I cry to you for help, as I lift up my hands toward your most holy sanctuary. Do not drag me away with the wicked, with those who are workers of evil, who speak peace with their neighbors while mischief is in their hearts. Repay them according to their work and according to the evil of their deeds; repay them according to the work of their hands; render them their due reward. Because they do not regard the works of the LORD or the work of his hands, he will break them down and build them up no more. Blessed be the LORD, for he has heard the sound of my pleadings. The LORD is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts; so I am helped, and my heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to him. The LORD is the strength of his people; he is the saving refuge of his anointed. O save your people and bless your heritage; be their shepherd and carry them forever. (Psalm 28 NRSV\*)*

We read the words of Psalm 28, and we hear of putting our trust in God. That we should turn to the Lord with our concerns because he is always there to help us. That we can have faith that God is listening when we call out. How have you shown gratitude for God’s presence in your life? What are you holding onto that you can entrust to Christ? What have you been hesitant to

bring before the Lord? Who will you lift up in prayer this week? Who will you reach out to to share the Holy Spirit? How may we bring hope to a troubled world? How may we share the light of Christ with all those who are in need?

**Prayer:** Lord, we turn to you because of your steadfast love. We know that even when we struggle you are with us. May your Holy Spirit guide us in truth and light. Help us to share the peace and love of Christ each and every day. As we come before you this day, we bring to you the joys and concerns of our lives that we have shared aloud together. We also turn to you in prayer with the unspoken worries and celebrations of our hearts. Help us that we walk in your ways and seek the path of righteousness. May you be with us to strengthen us in our gladness and our sorrow. We pray that you will help us to grow in love through our laughter and our tears. As we learn more about you, Lord, may we grow closer to you. May your steadfast love and faithfulness guide us all the days of our lives, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Now let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

### **Sermon:**

Our scripture readings for today comes from the New Revised Standard Version Bible. Our first reading for today comes from Isaiah chapter 26, verses 1 through 8.

*On that day this song will be sung in the land of Judah: We have a strong city; he sets up walls and bulwarks as a safeguard. Open the gates, so that the righteous nation that maintains faithfulness may enter in. Those of steadfast mind you keep in peace, in peace because they trust in you. Trust in the LORD forever, for in the LORD GOD you have an everlasting rock. For he has brought low the inhabitants of the height; the lofty city he lays low. He lays it low to the ground, casts it to the dust. The foot tramples it, the feet of the poor, the steps of the needy. The way of the righteous is level; straight is the path of the righteous that you clear. In the path of your judgments, O Lord, we have placed hope; your name and your renown are the soul's desire. (Isaiah 26:1-8 NRSV\*)*

Our next reading for today comes from Luke chapter 6, verses 37 through 49.

*“Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap, for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.” He also told them a parable: “Can a blind person guide a blind person? Will not both fall into a pit? A disciple is not above the teacher, but every disciple who is fully qualified will be like the teacher. Why do you see the speck in your neighbor's eye but do not notice the log in your own eye? Or how can you say to your neighbor, ‘Friend, let me take out the speck in your eye,’ when you yourself do not see the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor's eye. “No good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit; for each tree is known by its own fruit. For people do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they pick grapes from a bramble bush. The good person out of the good treasure of the heart produces good, and the evil person out of evil treasure produces evil,*

*for it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks. "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I tell you? I will show you what someone is like who comes to me, hears my words, and acts on them. That one is like a man building a house who dug deeply and laid the foundation on rock; when a flood arose, the river burst against that house but could not shake it because it had been well built. But the one who hears and does not act is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the river burst against it, it quickly collapsed, and great was the ruin of that house." (Luke 6:37-49 NRSV\*)*

This is the word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

For this last message before Advent, I wanted to reflect on trust. Having a foundation of trust is central to our theology, it is central to our faith, and it's central to our sense of community. And I wanted to touch on it because I think that it will help us as we move into our Advent and Christmas series, where we look at the feelings that we have around Christmas. I wanted to touch on it because the trust that we have is something that is so central to different aspects of our faith life that I think it is worth a mention. For me, a big part of it is learning how to trust. Be it for the first time or having to learn how to trust has been broken. Because sometimes we don't know how to repair a broken trust. And when that happens, our trust in anything gets more difficult. One issue is that when we struggle to trust it impacts every facet of our lives. It can cause us to have problems in our faith life with our relationship to God. A lack of trust can harm our relationship with friends and family. It can cause us to struggle in communal situations. It can cause us to struggle almost anywhere. In my life, faith was one of the places that really helped me to learn how to trust, even when I had trouble trusting myself. This might come as a surprise, but it wasn't immediately that I simply put all my trust in God and let go. I was not that trusting. I learned to rebuild trust with the initial idea that there was something there I could believe in. I met people who could be open and honest with me and it gave me the feeling that I could try to trust people. I wasn't quite ready to sing the song we hear from Isaiah, but I did have the example of someone who heard the words of Christ and acted on them. I was able to trust because I saw how their lives had been changed. That I could trust in that moment that they could genuinely believe in me because they had a strong foundation of trust in their lives. Because they had the strength to risk themselves and a willingness to put trust in others. Because they were the ones who were like a man building a house who loud laid the foundation on rock. Because they heard the words and didn't just hear them, but they lived them. They didn't set out to judge a neighbor but set out to love a neighbor.

I tell you all of this because I want you to fully understand that having that level of trust placed with me made a difference. That somebody saw me and thought "this is somebody that God loves and this is somebody I can love." That this set me on the path that put me where I am today. Because I wanted to be someone that could hear those words, that I could trust them, that I could have a foundation that would allow me to be vulnerable and trust others. Because the foundation that we have in Christ is not one that says you will never be hurt. It is

not one that says you will never have anyone do any wrong to you. That God will keep you from ever having your feelings hurt. We find peace because we have trust in God, and it is a peace we can share. That we have a trust here is justice in the world. Even if it can be hard to see sometimes. That we can trust that helping those in need is the right thing to do and it is worthwhile. We can trust that it is better to love a neighbor than to judge a neighbor. Because Christ has accepted us with all of our flaws. Who are we to point the finger at another? And we can do that, not because we are superior in any way. Not because we cannot be hurt. Not because we have some secret knowledge. What it comes down to for me is that I heard that I could love God and I could love my neighbor and that that could be enough. I decided I wanted to be a part of that. I wanted to know how God could change me to let me love. I wanted to be able to be someone who would produce good fruit. At the core of my theology is loving God and loving neighbor. Because I trust that if my foundation is the words of Christ, that if I do those things, everything else falls into place. If I love God and I love my neighbor everything else that God needs me to do will be so much easier. And because I can trust that God is there for me, I can let myself trust others. I can trust that when somebody says that they have a need, that the best response is to be helpful and loving. I can trust that I can help people, even if I don't know what will happen next. That I don't have to plan out every step of everything I ever do. Because if I can love God, and I can love my neighbor, I can trust that God will get me to where I need to be.

And he hasn't failed me yet. Because here I am today before you. I know that there is a great trust you have placed in me, and I am thankful for that. I pray every day that I can live up to that trust. And I do it by making sure that the first thing I want to do is to love my neighbor and to love God. That I want to share the peace of Christ. I want to share forgiveness. I want to share the cross because it means hope. All of this came to mind for me because I wanted to think about having that foundation in God's love. That our faith is that God will be there to love us so we can love others. And I wanted it to be there for the way that we think about Advent when we prepare our hearts for the joy of Christmas for that celebration. And in the coming weeks we will look at hope, peace, joy, and love. That we will look at the celebration that is Christmas Day. The way we reflect on the old year passing and the new year to come. That we think about the feelings that come with the gift that keeps on giving that we have in Christ. But I wanted to make sure we thought about our foundation in faith that we build all of that upon. I wanted to make sure we thought about how it all begins with trust. That trust may not begin with turning to God. It often begins with you being hearers and doers of what Christ taught, making you the first exposure to Christ others have. So, as we finish our reflections, I want to encourage all of us to think about how solid our foundation is. And if we need to shore it up, then we strengthen it by joining each other by sharing in our faith. That we join each other and help one another. That we grow together in love and in peace and that we help strengthen each other so that we may all have a foundation of trust because we know that as we love God we may love each other and trust that Christ will always be with us. Amen.

**Prayer of Confession and Pardon:** God, you are with us even when we turn away from you. Guide us back into your loving arms. Judge us not by the perfection of our actions but show us mercy and love. We have strayed like lost sheep from your ways, failing both in what we have done and what we have failed to do. Bring us back into your fold that you may guide us and lead us in all things. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy upon us and forgive us. May we walk in your love and trust your ways. Amen.

Almighty God have mercy upon you. May the Lord forgive all your sins and lift you up in love through Jesus Christ our Lord, and by the Holy Spirit keep you in life eternal. Amen.

**Offering:** If you are so moved to make an offering, you may send it to the church treasurer, or you may send it to the PO Box listed below. We are still the church, and the church still needs your support to keep doing all the important work that we do.

### **Lord's Prayer**

**Dismissal with Blessing:** May we go forth reflecting God's love in our lives as we go forth in the peace of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

## **Our Next Series – Christmas Feelings**

Our Advent and Christmas series is called “Christmas Feelings.” We will be looking at the feelings we have from Advent, Christmas, New Year’s Day, and Epiphany. Each week takes on a different feeling and how we carry them with us as we look forward to another year with Christ. Let’s celebrate our Christmas feelings!

12/3: Hope of Advent	12/10: Peace of Advent	12/17: Joy of Advent
12/24: Love of Advent	12/24: Celebration of Christmas	
12:31: Old and New Year	1/7: Gift of Christmas	

## **Prayer List**

Rev Angie Lee	Bishop Frank Beard	Our Conference	Eric Veach
Ed & Verna Titus	Henry Catey	Jake Kiser	Cindy Cisney
Tricia Adkins	Don Stewart	Ronnie Winstead	Lauren Stewart
Tom Finley	Laura Carlen	Rosie Chancellor	Chuck Hogan
Alice Sherwood	Richard Durham	Kathy Hanks	Emily Blade
Tim Schnauz	Donna Carlen	Ernie Peters	Jess Shoot
Stanley Kiser	Corine Howard	Don Gilmore	Shirley Jester
Connie Brown	Marsha Overton	Linda Carlen	Michael Nichols
Paul Cox	Taylor Waldorf	Harriet Tucker	Marlene Kincaid
Cara Dillier	Peggy Farley	Darrell Quick	Mandy Schumacher
Ann McMorris	Madonna Goechnor	Marci Cutts Smith	Jaydelyn Brassad
Pat Hayden Titus	Calvin St. Michael	Gary & Mary Winterrowd	Leo Smith
Sue & Bob Smyser	Larry Thompson	Evelyn Sue Icenogle	Greg Williams

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