

124: ¹ If it had not been the LORD who was on our side— let Israel now say—

² if it had not been the LORD who was on our side when people rose up against us, ³ then they would have swallowed us up alive, when their anger was kindled against us; ⁴ then the flood would have swept us away, the torrent would have gone over us; ⁵ then over us would have gone the raging waters.

⁶ Blessed be the LORD, who has not given us as prey to their teeth! ⁷ We have escaped like a bird from the snare of the fowlers; the snare is broken, and we have escaped!

⁸ Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth.

Today's sermon is going to be so short that many of you will (WRONGFULLY) assume that a certain NFL team must be playing at 1:00 a.m. No – the message of today's scripture: "T is for TRUST" has been building for a month now. It's not been a big surprise when the past four sermons have read like a Sue Grafton mystery book series: T is for ... R is for ... U is for ... and S is for

Let me review, and you can (hopefully, if you've not already done so) easily fill in the blanks in the sermon notes from memory.

Skipping over the first two:

3. The Tree Planted by the Waters urges us to develop a habit of keeping relationship with Jesus.
4. When we lift our eyes unto the hills, we were reminded that God's Reliability is based on fact and not mere feeling. That way we can remember into the future when times are tough. **WALKING BY FAITH, NOT BY SIGHT, IS BASED ON THIS – REMEMBERING HOW FAITHFUL GOD HAS BEEN HELPS US HANG ON TO THAT TRUST WHEN IT DOESN'T FEEL LIKE ANYTHING GOOD IS HAPPENING IN THIS MOMENT.**
5. When we look UP into the heavens, as well as look at every part of nature (as Psalm 19 directs) we realize that all of creation's purpose is to praise. God. Like all nature, you and I do that best by being who God created us to be.
6. How we see things is perhaps the most important part of our faith.
7. One thing that we know from our faith history, and from our daily living, is that God is strong.

It's all about TRUST. **God is TRUSTWORTHY. And that means GOD IS WORTHY OF OUR TRUST.**

Or –as today’s Psalm starts out: **1 If it had not been the LORD who was on our side— let [the people] now say—2 if it had not been the LORD who was on our side**

The Psalmist is reminding the people to remember.

Keeping a journal is one way that a Christian can keep track of the many ways that God has been trustworthy... to remember just how much God is worthy of our trust, because of God’s Track Record.

Trustworthiness is a funny thing. We might need to be reminded CONSCIOUSLY of how trustworthy somebody is. But, SUBCONSCIOUSLY, we are always keeping a scorecard.

Some people always make lots of promises, and mean to keep them. However, there always seems to be some often quite good reason why they don’t keep their promise. **We have a tendency to evaluate ourselves differently than we evaluate others.** If we don’t keep our promises very well, but we always have a good excuse, we tend to only remember the fact that we had a good excuse. However, when we evaluate other people, we usually grow weary of the excuses – regardless of how good they are – when they are the standard modus operandi. After a while, it doesn’t matter much how good the excuse is, all we remember is that this person simply is not trustworthy. Has lots of good excuses, but cannot be depended upon.

Likewise – and I found this surprising when I was first taught the principle – but have found it indeed to be quite true: **Trust can be uncontrollably created by the making and keeping of agreements.** The size of the agreement kept is not nearly so important as the frequency and dependability of keeping the promise made. When someone continually keeps their word, we simply cannot help ourselves: they gain credibility in our eyes; they become trustworthy.

The only exception I know to this – and this is a very strange exception – is when it comes to God.

Some person that we might not even particularly like – they make and keep agreements – and we can't help but trust them.

With God – not so much. At least not in reality, even though we SAY we trust God.

I think the problem might be that the lesson of the first sermon in this series might not always be followed. Which is WHY, in fact, Psalm 1 – the TREE by the WATERS – in which you were each ENCOURAGED TO DEVELOP A HABIT OF RELATIONSHIP BUILDING – was made the first sermon of the series.

Here's the bottom line question, I think (or at least one way that it can be worded): **How real is my trust? Is my trust a lucky rabbit's foot or is my trust something that I am willing to bet my life on?**

Let me try to explain it like this. I came across an interesting observation about people who sit in the pews of every church. What do you say?

“Each of us makes one of two choices in life. We either become EMOTIONALLY ATTACHED to our money, OR we become EMOTIONALLY ATTACHED to the God who gives us our money. Although we often hope to do both, in our hearts we know that cannot happen.”

How real is my trust? Is my trust a lucky rabbit's foot or is my trust something that I am willing to bet my life on?

TRUST is probably one of the most basic EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENTS that there is for us.

Whom do you trust? What do you really trust? And to what do you just give lip service?

This is not the time in which making excuses helps our Christian growth. I'm inviting all of us to look deeply inside and quietly ask the question: **How real is my trust? Is my trust a lucky rabbit's foot or is my trust something that I am willing to bet my life on?**

Jesus told his disciples that **God is worthy of their trust, and that if they don't give that trust to God, then their rabbit's foot is not much good except as a key ring.**

Well, those weren't His exact words. But this is what Jesus DID say:

⁷“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ⁸For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. ⁹Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? ¹¹If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him! ... ²¹“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²²On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ ²³And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, ... (from Matthew chapter 7)

Whom do you trust? What do you really trust? And to what do you just give lip service?

My sisters and brothers, there comes a time in each person's faith journey, when they need to take off their **bibs** and put on an **apron**. OK, OK, I'll put it into Jesus' actual words:

¹⁵“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰Thus **YOU WILL RECOGNIZE THEM BY THEIR FRUITS. (also from Matthew chapter 7)**

Trusting in God means that people can see it by your fruit. You can't do it anonymously, or undercover.

Yesterday, I attended the funeral of the Rev'd John Bowyer – a faithful disciple of Jesus, who bore much fruit in his life. I was struck by the paraments that appeared on the pulpit and the Communion Table. Both said the same thing: **TRUST IN THE**

LORD. But the one on the pulpit had an artistic flair to the words. The top cross bar in the T in Trust was elongated toward the pulpit. The bottom horizontal line of the L in Lord was elongated well past the “ORD” and pointed out to the other end – directly toward the casket where lay the remains of this faithful servant, who truly DID trust in the Lord.

His life was based on trust. It connected him from the pulpit to the grave. It made his journey on those final years so different from those whose trust is only a rabbit’s foot. In that moment I realized a very important TRUTH:

It’s not about rewards. But it IS about consequences. If we do not REALLY TRUST through our lives, then the consequence is that the rough times have no experiential basis of trust.

If you don’t practice trusting now voluntarily, then when you really need to trust in God, you’ve got nothing to go on, but empty shells of words.

You end up empty handed, except for empty pious platitudes that don’t mean anything to you because you never tried them out. **It’s not about rewards. But it IS about consequences.**

Please – don’t make excuses nor explanations. Ask yourself, quietly, prayerfully. What does your life/ your fruit say about your actual practice of trusting God?

When was the last time you undertook a task which you know would not succeed without help from God? Or, in other words, how often is it when you promise to do something for God that the only person you depend on for its completion is yourself? That's self-dependency- NOT TRUST. That's hero (self) worship. What happens when you realize you need God because you can't do it on your own ... and you have NO EXPERIENCE?

Do you have an emotional relationship with your stuff, or with the One Who gives you all your stuff?

Last Sunday, this Sunday, you were each given a MENU of the Lay Ministries of this Church. It's not all of them. Just some of them.

I'm wondering if I were to ask people to stand – and I'm not going to – but if I were to ask people to stand who are NOT giving to God as much of their service as they are able, how many people would need to stand?

Are there some people here today who aren't doing **ANY** of these ministries, let alone as many as a **trusting disciple and friend of Jesus** could be doing?

There is not a single person in this sanctuary today who is unable to do at least one of these ministries.

Step out in TRUST. God is worthy of your Trust.

On the first Sunday of this sermon series, you were each invited to come forward and to receive a leaf from the tree. It was, in the words of Revelation 21, a leaf for healing. That leaf was meant to be your reminder and companion as you developed a habit of enhanced relationship with Jesus.

Today, it's time to take off the bib and put on an apron. I ask you to take the fruit (that's taped in your bulletin) out of the bulletin. Write on that fruit something that you are going to do, TRUSTING JESUS TO EMPOWER YOU TO DO IT.

Write down something

- some ministry from this wonderful menu
- some response to God's gift to you
- something that will show your fruit
- **along with your name to make it a real commitment.**

If you don't have a pencil, there should be one in your pew. If you don't have one, raise your hand and an usher will bring a pencil to you.

Write down your trusting commitment, and bring it forward and put YOUR GIFT / YOUR FRUIT on the tree. Members of the worship committee will meet you at the front of the church, and put a fruit hanger on your fruit and help you to hang it on the

tree. If you have a difficult time coming forward, let your neighbor carry your fruit, or raise your hand and an usher will bring it to the tree for you.

As a wise young preacher, in their very first sermon almost 20 years ago said: you don't have to do it, but you really ought to want to.

I know that there is at least one person in this Church that God has been calling to ordained ministry. If today is the day that you want to make a step forward in that exploration, it's alright to write that down, too.

Remember! **God NEVER calls you to do anything that God does not EMPOWER you to do. You can trust God in that, too!**

We'll wait for you to come.

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN.