

"A Balance of Trust"
July 8, 2018

Psalm 62, 125, 146

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Hayward United Methodist Church

Call to Worship Psalm 125:1-2

Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever.

As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the LORD surrounds his people, from this time on and forevermore.

Prayer of Invocation

Come Holy Spirit fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in us the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit, and we shall be created and you shall renew the face of the earth.

O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit, did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy your consolations, through Christ the Lord, Amen.

The Word Psalm 146 (NRSV)

Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD, O my soul! I will praise the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God all my life long. Do not put your trust in princes, in mortals, in whom there is no help. When their breath departs, they return to the earth; on that very day their plans perish.

Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD their God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them; who keeps faith forever; who executes justice for the oppressed; who gives food to the hungry.

The LORD sets the prisoners free; the LORD opens the eyes of the blind. The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down; the LORD loves the righteous. The LORD watches over the strangers; he upholds the orphan and the widow, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.

Living in the Word

"In God we trust" was adopted as the official motto of the United States in 1956 as an alternative or replacement to the unofficial motto of E pluribus unum (one from many), adopted when the Great Seal of the United States was created and adopted in 1782.

In God we trust has appeared sporadically on U.S. coins since 1864 and on paper currency since 1957. The phrase appears to have originated in the Star-Spangled Banner, written during the War of 1812. The fourth stanza includes the phrase, "And this be our motto: 'In God is our Trust.'"

Aspirations for the motto arose surrounding the turmoil and heightened religious sentiment that existed during the Civil War. The Reverend M. R. Watkinson, as part of a campaign initiated by eleven northern Protestant Christian denominations in a letter dated November 13, 1861, petitioned the Treasury Department to add a statement recognizing "Almighty God in some form in our coins."

At least part of the motivation was to declare that God was on the Union side of the Civil War. According to Brian Burrell, the actual wording of the motto was inspired by a Union Civil War unit's company motto.

In 1956, the nation was going through the height of the cold war. Partly in reaction to these factors, the 84th Congress passed a joint resolution to replace the existing motto with "In God we trust".

The change was partly motivated by a desire to differentiate between communism, which promotes atheism, and Western capitalistic democracies, which were at least nominally Christian. The law was signed by President Eisenhower on July 30, 1956, and the motto was progressively added to paper money over a period from 1957 to 1966.

Our motivations are not always pure when we throw God's name around. We have used God's trust for our own purposes, or at least to put emphasis in our agendas.

Don't misunderstand me. I appreciate that my money says "In God We Trust" because it reminds me when I take time and remember to notice it, that my trust is in God, not always in the US economy.

God's trust in us works in a very different way. I invite you to turn to the screen or in your hymnals# 787 and join me in sharing Psalm 62. Even though we are all created unique, and given different circumstances and differing gifts to share, Psalm 62, verse 9 says *'Those of low estate...[and]those of high estate... in the balances they go up.'* We are all the same in the sight of God. Vs 11-12 remind us that God is strong; Power belongs to God. God keeps God's promises of covenant. Regardless of the circumstances, we can trust God.

The hymn 'Trust and Obey' was inspired in 1886 when the composer of the music, Daniel B. Towner, was the music leader during one of Dwight L. Moody's famous revivals. Towner provided the following account:

"Mr. Moody was conducting a series of meetings in Brockton, Massachusetts, and I had the pleasure of singing for him there. One night a young man rose in a testimony meeting and said, 'I am not quite sure—but I am going to trust, and I am going to obey.' I just jotted that sentence down, and sent it with a little story to the Rev. J. H. Sammis, a Presbyterian minister. He wrote the hymn, and the tune was born."

Some struggle with the word 'obey.' Yet God asks for obedience because God wants us to be blessed. We have to be careful as humans how we judge what obedience to God is for others and concentrate on how we can be obedient to God. The words in verse three remind us *"we never can prove the delights of his love until all on the altar we lay; for the favor he shows, for the joy he bestows, are for them who will trust and obey...there is no other way to be happy in Jesus."*

As humans we are always seeking happiness, as Christians, we find that through our trust and obedience to who Christ is. Join me in singing this hymn # 467 in the hymnal, Trust and Obey.

We used Psalm 125, verses one and two this morning for our 'Call to Worship,' to remind us that trust is solid like a rock and God surrounds us like the mountains surround Jerusalem. Ironically, Jerusalem is situated on the southern spur of a plateau in the Judean Mountains. In other words it is surrounded by mountains, but on a plateau, with open space within the circle of mountains.

Just so, God gives us space to be ourselves and to make our choices and mistakes, but continues to surround us with love and support. Trust in God is to live within our space and find the blessings even in the hard times.

At Seminary, one day the teacher brought in his guitar and taught us a song of trust: "Jesus is a Rock & He Rolls My Blues Away." Just that simple song has stuck in my head and my heart and comes back to visit me when I need it. Once again, since we were young enough to learn our ABCs through music, God has used that tool of song to help us learn and retain what is important, especially the simple truth that "Jesus Loves Me!"

Psalm 146 reminds us not to put our whole trust in each other, as we all fail even those we love at some point. We will fade, our word will fade. We mean them when we say them, but sometimes life gets in the way and we just can't measure up. Often we put those we trust on pedestals and when the earth shakes in some way in our lives, those on the pedestals sometimes topple off.

Broken trust is hard to repair. Most of us know this from personal experience, but when we can realize that as humans we all make mistakes, it is easier to forgive and rebuild that trust. God has no illusions about who we are. God has given us free will to make our own choices and knows that we won't always get it right.

Yet God keeps faith in us forever. As we fade, the Lord: sets free, opens eyes, lifts up, loves, watches over, upholds and reigns forever. Aren't you glad you can trust all of that?

As I shared earlier, Sir Robert Grant, who wrote 'O Worship the King' was a very powerful and influential person in his time and place. Yet he alludes to us all as 'Frail Children of dust and feeble as frail.' Those words are most used to describe a person's physical ability. Physically we are getting older, but most of us don't quite think of ourselves as feeble and frail.

Of course, he doesn't mean physically, but spiritually we are feeble and frail. Well there he may have a point! I offer you this question to ponder this week? Is your faith and trust in God feeble or frail? What would it take to make you stronger?

Diane Ball wrote 'In His Time' in the 1970s. Diane was driving a long distance on her way to be the speaker at a meeting and she was late. The melody and words came to her as she traveled that night. We never know what our inspirations from God can lead to. For Diane, what began as a God giving her some peace in a rushed time became an inspiration to many. Nearly forty years later, January 2010 there was a Earthquake in Haiti:

Beginning with scripture Paul Pennington, founder of 'Hope for Orphans', shares this from Acts 16:25-30: "*About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody's chains came loose.*

The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!" The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

Pennington writes: "Two weeks ago, I spent 5 days at a Christian-led orphanage in Haiti. Almost everyone I met there knew someone who had died in the quake. The orphanage director, a pastor, lost his entire house and belongings, but he led the children in praise to the Lord who had saved their lives.

Almost every day I was there the aftershocks continued. The children were all sleeping outside each night afraid to go back into the building. Our team of medical and orphan advocates brought all that we could including a few tents.

A group of the middle school aged girls enjoyed one of the tents and eagerly took care of some of the very small children each night. I noticed from my first day there, that despite having almost nothing, no biological family present and still living with the terror of the earthquake, they still sang in the morning and they sang as they went to bed."

Pennington continues: "On the afternoon of the aftershock that measured 5.9, I was sitting on a 3rd story balcony. The whole building began to sway. The children began to scream, the doctors scrambled and we all ran out into the yard.

This was a very personal reminder that our lives are but a vapor and no one has anything but each breath God gives us. About an hour later, I was walking by the middle school aged girls tent and I heard some of the most

wonderful singing I have ever heard. They were singing in Creole. I leaned into the tent with my iPhone and began to record.

At first, I was taken aback by the smell of the urine that was no doubt evidence of the number of babies sleeping there each night. But, as the girls sang, I was quickly immersed in worship that can only be described as pure.

After a few more moments, I was able to recognize the tune they were singing....It was *'In His Time.'* Incredible. Then I realized in the midst of that praise so soon after the 5.9 aftershock, that I didn't smell the urine any more. Instead I was aware that the Lord was in that place.

Last week I had the opportunity to speak to the staff of Family Life about my trip. I played for them my recording of the Haitian orphan girls singing *'In His Time.'* The neat thing is that one of our staff actually knows the author of *'In His Time,'* Diane Ball. My friend told her about these girls singing her song and she began to cry. When earthquakes come into our lives, we should pray that the Lord will give us the grace to sing like Paul and Silas and these wonderful Haitian orphan girls."

I lift up my eyes to the hills— from where will my help come?

My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.

He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber.

He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

The LORD is your keeper; the LORD is your shade at your right hand.

The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.

The LORD will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life.

The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in from this time on and forevermore. Psalm 121

If middle high girls and women who have lost everything can find blessings in the midst of their traumatic lives, sure we can trust God to care for us. Please sing with me 'In His time.' #2203 in The Faith We Sing.