

Written Copy For: Trust the LORD Alone-Psalm 146

5th Sunday in Easter

Sunday, May 10th, 2020

Text: Psalm 146

³ Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation. ⁴ When his breath departs, he returns to the earth; on that very day his plans perish. ⁵ Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God, ⁶ who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, who keeps faith forever; ⁷ who executes justice for the oppressed, who gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets the prisoners free; ⁸ the LORD opens the eyes of the blind. The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down; the LORD loves the righteous. ⁹ The LORD watches over the sojourners; he upholds the widow and the fatherless, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin. ¹⁰ The LORD will reign forever, your God, O Zion, to all generations. Praise the LORD!

Exegetical Statement

A corporate call to praise the LORD as well as a personal affirmation for each of us to praise the LORD with our lives, our very being, all that we do and say and confess. We are not to put our trust in influential people, rulers, talking heads on TV, supposed experts. Our trust belongs only in the LORD. We listen and contemplate all the human voices as possible gifts from God, yet from human beings that lack His knowledge and His take on eternity. They are here today and gone tomorrow while the LORD reigns forever. When our trust is in the LORD, He promises to bless us with His peace. He is the maker of all things and the one who continues to sustain our life and this creation. He preserves our bodily life and our life of faith, promising to do so as we live as temporary residents in this fallen and dying world until the day He returns for us. He protects the oppressed from being overwhelmed and drawn away from Him by the forces that oppress the Church. He feeds those who are physically and spiritually hungry, frees the prisoners of guilt and bondage to sin, opens the eyes of the physically and spiritually blind, and raises up those who are bowed down in depression, hurt, and fear. He protects and blesses those made righteous by faith but brings the wicked who refuse His gift of grace to ruin. He reigns now as Jesus Christ, our Savior King and will continue to do so throughout eternity. Therefore: give praise to the LORD!

Focus Statement:

God gives us the gifts of science and experts in health. God grants us good government to keep peace and order and to protect us. But what they provide is all a gift from Him. He is the one who gives sight to the blind, feeds the hungry, protects and provides for the disenfranchised. He will execute justice on the Last Day. His Son our Savior came and showed that He is the God who does all these things in both our physical and spiritual lives. No matter what happens in our life now He has set us free from all that would eternally condemn us. By faith He has made us resurrection people: new lives now, eternal life to come

Function Statement:

Why it's important to know:

As we hear all the voices from both sides: The Openers and the Closers, we pick a side and put our trust in one of their spokespersons. We vilify, make fun of, and refuse to consider what the other side has to say, regarding them as enemies. We leave God out of the picture, designating Him for spiritual things alone and not seeing that His involvement and our call to include Him in all parts of our life.

What the hearer should do as a result:

We listen to those "experts" that God has given us, realizing they are humans w/o God's knowledge, foresight, or power to change the world. We put our trust in Christ alone who has shown us how much He is for us and what He can do for our temporal and eternal lives. We deal with others not by classifying them in any category but loving them, trying to understand their side, and forgiving them for any offense as Christ as forgiven us. As Resurrection people we know our end, and have been commissioned as His chosen priests to first and foremost share the Gospel and praise our LORD with our lives

Subject Sentence: Trust the LORD for Physical and Spiritual Salvation

Introduction: Closers and Openers

How much time do you spend reading, listening to, watching the news reports on COVID-19? While I have given cursory glances to the news reports, and some of the things I find posted on Facebook, by and large I have not been glued to Pandemic Coverage in the media. But as the Elders and I began to prayerfully consider how and when we should approach returning to public worship, I dedicated more time to the subject. I studied the Executive Orders the Governor has put out. I read through news articles from different sources. But perhaps the most useful and wise guidance came from our Circuit Visitor and from President Maier and the Michigan District. Otherwise what I found was a plethora of information from various sources that seemed to contradict each other another. Plenty of “Talking Heads”: government officials, doctors and health experts, scientists, and even others in our society who, because of their fame, have their own personal soap box. They often contradicted each other. Who could you trust?

In all this I found one article that helped me to understand the diverse opinions and suggested plans for moving forward. It explained in a general sense how leaders and the public have been split into two camps. There are those it called “The Openers” and those it called “The Closers”. Now the article itself warned of the dangers of stereotyping and drawing generalizations in an overly complex subject. But that is what we like to do as we try to handle by ourselves problems whose scope are beyond us. We align ourselves with one group and put our trust in what they promote. We put our trust in what their “Talking Heads” say. To make it easier on ourselves we might try to pigeonhole these groups into other stereotypes that are longstanding and divisive among us such as: Republican vs. Democrat, and Conservative vs. Liberal. For many people these already have the designation in their own mind of good vs. evil. Now we all have a right to our opinion, but when we think of others and try to pigeonhole them into our stereotypes we run into trouble. With that in mind here is a brief generalized summary of each group.

Who are the “Openers”? Generally they are those who support opening back up the economy and restoring our freedom from Shelter at Home sooner than later. Some in this camp do not believe there is a serious danger of infection for most of the people. They cite the small percentage of those who have died from contracting the Virus. They also cite how other health risks abound with a higher mortality rate, yet we do not allow them to control our lives and economy. They see an even greater danger to our future by keeping the economy closed, and people isolated, that perhaps we are adversely affecting the future of our children and grandchildren. This group has its “Talking Heads”, one of which who claimed to be an immunologist who pointed out that our immune system is built to work by encountering germs and then building resistance to them. By healthy people locking themselves away in isolation, we are actually weakening the body’s ability to fight off

disease in the future. And there are those who believe this is a conspiracy by some in government to take power away from the people and turn us from a Republic into some sort of dictatorship.

So who are the “Closers”? They believe that the only way we are going to survive this Pandemic is to continue in some form of Shelter at Home isolation for the foreseeable future. As with the Openers there is a wide divergence of opinion as to what this means. For some it means that the steps that have already been taken to reopen the economy by our Governor are going too far too fast. While people are still infected and people are still dying, we are setting ourselves up for another spike in infection that, as history has shown, can be worse than the first. Others agree to a moderate reopening and returning but as to what that looks like in real time is unknown. Some are comfortable with a limited and slow return with the use of face masks and 6 foot distancing. But others question the true ability of these things to protect, especially the most vulnerable. Until there is a vaccine to protect us from getting sick by the Virus, or a treatment that will shut down its effects on the body once you contract it, any venturing out into the public can be seen as taking your life into your own hands. This is especially true for those in the high-risk categories for which contracting COVID-19 means death. And the fact that people of all age groups have passed due to complications from COVID-19 supports limiting the loosening of restrictions. Better we suffer the effects of isolation than suffer our own death or the death of a loved one, or the death of those most vulnerable whose body can't fight it off.

What many people have done is to place themselves into one of these camps. They listen to that camp's “Talking Heads” and put their trust in their opinions and ideas. At the same time they refuse to even hear the other side. The other side is the enemy and must be suppressed at all costs. This is certainly true for those who are outside the faith. But unfortunately, I have seen the evidence in the Facebook posts of those within the Church, in fact within our own congregation. The result is even those who confess faith in Christ and His call to “**forgive one another as I have forgiven you**” find it hard to be loving and civil to others in the world, and even their fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. This is where for me, our Psalm of the day was speaking loud and clear.

Psalm 146:3 “Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation.” The Hebrew word translated as “princes” is more generally used as an adjective to describe “noble ones”. Who are these noble ones in our day and age? The experts, the government officials, the “Talking Heads” we look up to and trust to tell us the truth. And many of them are gifts from God to keep us safe, keep the peace, to be the means through which He provides healing. They can be His gift to help us understand this Virus and how we should react to fight it. But whether these “Talking Heads” acknowledge it or not, their knowledge, wisdom, and ability to lead are all gifts from God. As **James 1:17** tells us “**Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights**

with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.” But none of these talking heads are God. **Psalm 146:4** **“When his breath departs, he returns to the earth; on that very day his plans perish.”** Each one of them are a broken sinful human being. Their wisdom and logic have been affected by sin, just as yours and mine has. Many do not share our world view that there is a Creating and Sustaining God. In their eyes the answer for this Pandemic must come from the minds and hands of fellow human beings. That is where they place their trust and hope. And if that was our only answer, we might as well throw in the towel now. As God’s gift to us they may deserve our ear. But do they really deserve the trust we have given them?

Trust in the LORD Alone

Our LORD God is the one who has earned and deserves our trust regarding our earthly existence. **Psalm 146:6a** tells us He is the only One **“who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them,”** He knows far more about our world and what makes it tick than any scientist does. He knows more about COVID-19 than we ever will. He knows how to love and care for all people. As **Psalm 146:7-9b** testifies He is the only One **“⁷ who executes justice for the oppressed, who gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets the prisoners free; ⁸ the LORD opens the eyes of the blind. The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down; the LORD loves the righteous. ⁹ The LORD watches over the sojourners; he upholds the widow and the fatherless,”** And in the Gospels we see Christ fulfilling all these during His days on earth. He fed over 5,000 hungry souls at one time, He opened the eyes of men born blind, He came to the rescue of men being oppressed by the Pharisees because they considered them to be unworthy of God’s kingdom, He comforted and healed all He came in contact with. And now that He is at the right hand of the Father, He continues to do these things for us, His chosen people

But He performed even greater acts of healing. He brought relief from spiritual oppression, spiritual blindness, spiritual starvation. He came and lifted up those who have been humbled and bowed down by their sins, knowing that they could never do enough to be right with God. He came to save us from enemies even greater than the Virus: the enemies called sin, death, and the devil. Enemies that threatened us with a fate far worse than COVID-19, eternal separation from God and suffering in the Lake of Fire. He saved all of us from this by taking our place, suffering our spiritual sickness and disease. He did it by dying your death on the cross. And then rising again so that you might know these enemies no longer have any control over you. And while you do have a death awaiting you in your future, whether it be what is termed natural causes, or complications from COVID-19, that death is not the last word. The last word is Eternal Life with Him and all who believe. In Jesus, The Son of Man who is also the Son of God, there is salvation from sin, death, and the

devil. Something that no other human being can save us from. He more than deserves our undivided trust. He is the One we put our faith in.

And He is the One who keeps that faith living and active within us As **Psalm 146:6b** testifies He is the One “**who keeps faith forever**” His Spirit, given in your baptism, keeps faith alive through the Means of Grace: through His Word and through the Sacrament. He does in a supernatural way, yet uses very natural and earthly means: His spoken and written word, the water of Baptism, the bread and wine of the Lord’s Supper. But in His hands, these earthly elements do what is impossible for any other human being to do: grant faith and renew it. He has called you to faith. Your trust should be in Him alone and all the “Talking Heads” should not supersede Him.

Living as His Chosen Race and Royal Priesthood

The gifts that He gives to each of us in our baptism have changed us forever. We should see our lives differently than the non-believing world does. Peter says **1 Peter 2:9** “**But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.**” We have been recreated, born again to be His holy nation, a people for His own possession. We have become His precious children. He chose us to be His royal priests. And as such what are we to do? We give to Him our gift of praise and worship in response to all that we receive from Him by grace. We see our fellow man with the eyes that our LORD and Savior has for them. They are people who often put their trust in the wrong place. They need to hear that same message that changed our life. They need to hear us proclaim “**the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.**” The need to hear the Gospel. That is a more life mission for us as His Royal Priesthood then arguing and demeaning others. That closes doors for the Gospel. Through the working of the Spirit in our lives of witness we are to watch for Him to open doors through which we can share the Gospel, and in doing so the One who has earned the trust of the whole world.

Conclusion

The world has divided into camps seeking to conquer COVID-19 on its own. We have been called into a different camp, into God’s Holy Nation, which is the Church. In His death and resurrection Christ has defeated enemies far worse than the Virus: sin, death, and the devil. Christ has shown He is more than capable of protecting our earthly existence today. Unlike those Talking Heads Christ reigns forever. As much time as you spend listening to and reading what the “Talking Heads” have to say, spend more time reading, hearing, and meditating on what your Savior has to say. Spend time with us here, spend time with us online at home. But during the week turn to His Word devotionally. Meditate and pray on

what you read. Place your trust in the One who calls you **out of darkness into his marvelous light.**” Trust in The One that has prepared a place for you in His Father’s house. The One who gave you life and keeps your life both now, and for eternity to come. Amen