

God's Resolution Series
"Trust in the Lord"
Proverbs 3.5-6

Introduction:

It's that time of year when everyone wants to lose 10 pounds, get out of debt, and become a better person. While these are great aspirations shouldn't we ask what God desires for us in 2017? What would the wisest man in history tell us to focus on for 2017? The Lord told King Solomon, *"Ask for whatever you want me to give you."* Solomon asked for wisdom and the Lord granted his request. Now we have the opportunity to focus on one chapter in Solomon's Book of Wisdom and see what the Lord's desire is for our lives in 2017. The Bible tells us, *"If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you"* and that is actually what we are going to do for the next six weeks. We will ask the Lord to give us His wisdom for the New Year by focusing on six lifestyle traits that honor God.

For the next six weeks we will consider six character traits that God desires to implement into our lives from Proverbs chapter three. As a loving father advises his son in the ways of life so our heavenly Father gives us instruction on how we can glorify Him. Proverbs three begins,

*My son, do not forget my teaching,
But let your heart keep my commandments;
For length of days and years of life
And peace they will add to you.*

Our heavenly Father desires for our lives to reflect His Word for the length of our days and for all the years of our lives. If we apply His Word in our lives the Lord promises to give us peace. In the weeks to come we will consider six characteristics that our heavenly Father desires to implement into our lives. Characteristics such as "not being wise in our own eyes," "honoring the Lord with our wealth," "not despising the Lord's discipline," "diligently searching for wisdom," and "loving others."

This morning we will consider the fundamental characteristic of trusting the Lord. Our text this morning is familiar to many. It is often inscribed on wall decorations, coffee mugs, and plaques. We often recited it to our friends and families as they go through difficult situation.

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart
And do not lean on your own understanding.
In all your ways acknowledge Him,
And He will make your paths straight. (Proverbs3.5-6)*

The book of Proverbs is part of Scripture known as Hebrew Poetry. The poetic books of the Bible are Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Songs of Solomon. Where as there are portions of poetic literature found in the other Old Testament books, these five books are entirely written in poetic fashion.

Our text this morning follows a familiar pattern found in Hebrew Poetry. First is a positive affirmation, *Trust in the Lord with all your heart*. Then a warning, *And do not lean on your own understanding*. Followed by the extent the affirmation is to be obeyed, *In all your ways acknowledge Him*. Concluded with a promised result, *And He will make your paths straight*. Affirmation, warning, extent, and promise.

Trusting in the Lord is a simple concept to understand but is one of the most difficult affirmations to fully implement into our lives. It sounds easy, "Trust in the Lord," but sometimes it's hard to do. Our individuality often drives us to trust in our own options and perspectives while ignoring the warning not to lean on our own understanding. For many it's easier to trust in the Lord with the small stuff like the washing machine breaking down or our flight being delayed but we find it difficult to trust the Lord with a miscarriage, a lost job, an accident, a health concern, or a rebellious teenager. Regardless if our experiences are trivial or traumatic all pain is unpleasant. We all want live in peace but the fact is that many of us live with bitterness, bewilderment, and bereavement.

While none of us know what a day may bring we are usually optimistic that everything will go smoothly. But when things don't go smoothly and we are faced with adversity our minds immediately rush to unanswered questions like, "Where is God in all of this?" Or, "Why did God allow this to happen?" The reality is that it is difficult to trust God in times of adversity. We want to be strong, we want to be spiritual, but we feel weak, disabled, and paralyzed. And then we feel guilty that we aren't stronger, that we are not more spiritual, which drives us even deeper into despair.

We often forget that the Apostle Paul pleaded with the Lord three times to take away the "thorn in his flesh" that was tormenting him. (2Cor.12.7-8) Or that Joseph begged to be released from his unjust imprisonment. (Gen.40.14) And that even Jesus Himself *fell on His face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me.* (Mt.26.39)

But as we examine these terrible situations we see that each of these individuals sought the Lord in the day of their trouble and experienced God's guidance. For Paul he discovered that God's power was perfected in weakness. Joseph saw how his unjust imprisonment was the road that led him to become the Prince of Egypt. And Jesus realized the complete fulfillment of God's will.

So when we hear these stories of those who successfully went through crisis, why do we still find it difficult to trust the Lord? I believe that we find it difficult to trust the Lord because we all have a desperate desire to understand the details behind why certain things happen. We have been taught our entire life that if we seek the answers to questions we will gain knowledge. You know the phrase, "There are no bad questions. But the fact is there are certain questions we will never be able to answer. Questions like "Why did our child die in infancy?" "Why did my mother die at 62 years old?" "Why did that young man die in Afghanistan?" These are questions that we will never find the answer for.

We want to feel secure but the lack of ability to answer the "why" questions causes us to experience frustration, anger, and despair. The truth is that our inability to answer the "why" confronts us with our humanity. Our failure to answer the "why" questions confronts us with the reality that we are not God. Our lack of capacity to answer the "why" question confronts us with the fact that we are not all knowing. Confronts us with the reality that we are feeble, frail, and fragile and we don't like feeling like this! We want to be strong. We want to be stable. It is at these moments when we must trust God who is all-knowing and admit that we are not. We must come to the point where we gladly boast in our weakness so that the power of Christ may rest on us. (2Cor.12.9)

It all goes back to the original temptation when the Serpent of Old tempted Eve with the suggestion that she could *be like God*. (Gen.3.4-5) Satan's aim was to make her discontented with her current condition and suggests that she could rise above her current nature. The Tempter sought to plant the idea that God is somehow unjust and unloving because there are certain things she could not know.

The same thing happens in us today especially during times of adversity. We are tempted with the suggestion that we can be all-knowing like God. We become discontent with our limited condition and desire to rise above our own nature. We begin to embrace the idea that God is somehow unjust by not allowing us to know the intimate details surrounding the "why." Instead of trusting in the infinite, eternal, and unchangeable God we start leaning on our own understanding.

My point is that there are certain things that are beyond our understanding. We understand the fact that a certain event happened but we don't understand why it happened. This lack of understanding isn't because God is unloving. It is not that God isn't concerned about your feelings or emotions. Our lack of understanding is simply a result of our finiteness, a result of our humanness that is subject to limitations. Recognizing the limits of our own understanding actually brings great freedom. Freedom to say, "I don't know why." Freedom to say, "Only God knows." Freedom to say, "Now I see dimly but one day I will see face to face." Freedom to say, "Now I only know in part, but one day I will know fully." (1Cor.13.12)

We must come to the point where we admit there is a certain level of irrationality in trusting in our own understanding because there is no way we can know the details surrounding the “whys.” In other words, only God can handle such knowledge. It’s too big for us. This means that it is irrational to trust in our limited understanding when we can trust the all-knowing God.

Let me offer an illustration. You are walking along the rim of the Grand Canyon and you come across this sign:



Would the rational person begin asking questions like “Why can’t I lean on the rail?” “Where are the engineering details that prove that I shouldn’t lean on the rail?” “The Park Authorities are being unjust by not giving me all the facts surrounding why I can’t lean on the rail.” No! A rational person would conclude that someone who has great concern about my well being posted that sign. A rational person would say, “I don’t need to know all the details behind why I shouldn’t lean on the rail. I’m going to trust the authorities and not lean on the rail.” Why? “Because there is an extreme possibility that I will cause great harm to myself if I lean on the rail.” Well, the Lord, the greatest authority of all, posted a sign in Proverb chapter 3 telling us not to lean on our own understanding. He is telling us that if we do lean on our own understanding there is an extreme possibility that we will cause great to ourselves. He is telling us to trust Him even if we don’t know all the details. Trust in the One who posted the sign!

Trusting in the Lord is not a blind trust. Trusting in the Lord is not trusting in the abstract. We are trusting in the Lord who is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. (WSC#4) We are not trusting in some abstract being but rather we are trusting in the Creator *who is the blessed controller of all things, the king over all kings and the master of all masters, the only source of immortality.* (ITim.6.15-16 PNT)

Many people today, even Christians, embrace a Deist view of God. Deism is a theology that was popularized in the seventeenth century. Deism teaches that God created the universe and then walked away leaving it running according to natural law and human devises.

Deism is also known as “Big Top Theology,” which teaches that God created the Big Top, He wrapped the string around it, and set it on it’s own course of beauty and majesty while at the same time colliding with anything in it’s path causing destruction and pain. These people believe in God, they believe that God is sovereign, but they believe that God chooses not to exercise His sovereignty in the daily affairs of our lives.

In His well-known statement about sparrows, Jesus said, “*Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father’s care. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.*” (Mt.10.29-31) According to Jesus our heavenly Father cares about the minutest events in life and He is intimately aware of every area of our life down to the number of hairs on our head. Even though we do not know all the details behind why this little bird fell to the ground, this shouldn’t prohibit us from knowing that our heavenly Father cares and that He is intimately aware of the tragedy. We should be convinced that if God has so much sovereign concern for this little bird how much more does He care for you.

If there is a single event in the universe that can occur outside of God’s sovereign control, then you should not trust Him. But if God is the Creator *who is the blessed controller of all things, the king over all kings and the master of all masters* then you should trust Him with all of your heart even if you can not understand all the details. *Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you. Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.* (IPt.5.6-8)

Trusting in the Lord is the ultimate expression of faith. *Faith is the assurance of things hope for, the conviction of things not seen.* (Heb.11.1) Faith is believing that God is in control even when things are out of control. Faith is believing that God is with me even when I feel abandoned. Faith is believing that God is all-knowing even when I’m confused. Faith is believing that God loves me even when I feel unloved. Faith is trusting in the things I know instead of rationalizing about things I don’t. Faith is knowing that God is loving, all-knowing, and in control while rejecting the things I don’t know like “why,” “how come,” and “how could this happen.” Faith is coming to the Lord as a little child trusting in God’s paternal love and His providential care.

Living in the arena of adversity can be like riding a roller coaster.



There are twists and turns, ups and downs, and it can be extremely scary and frightening. But if you trust God for the journey you will eventually reach a straight set of rails so you can thank God for a safe arrival.

Conclusion:

One thing I can tell you for sure is that God desires for you in 2017 and that is to:

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart
And do not lean on your own understanding.
In all your ways acknowledge Him,
And He will make your paths straight. (Proverbs 3:5-6)*

I must conclude by telling you the greatest reason why you should embrace God's affirmation to trust in the Lord with all of your heart. Have you ever heard the phrase, "Walk a mile in my shoes before you tell me how to live my life"? Well, God has done actually that through Christ! Since we all share in flesh and blood, Jesus Himself likewise partook of the same. (Heb.2.14) The Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory as the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. (Jn.1.14) Since Jesus was tempted in that which He suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted. (Heb.2.18) Since He was tempted in all things as we are He sympathizes with our weaknesses. (Heb.4.15)

I know we all like to think about the happy Jesus but the Bible tells us that He was man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. (Is.53.3) Jesus wept at the loss of one close friend, Lazarus, when He saw the distress that his passing brought upon the family. (Jn.11.35) He was betrayed by His close companion and abandoned by all of His followers. Yes, *He was despised and forsaken of men. Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried.* (Is.53) He knows what you are going through and you can trust Him. Actually, *as a result of the anguish of His soul*, the Father sees His suffering and is satisfied. *By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, As He will bear their iniquities.*

God is love and He has demonstrated His love by sending His Son, the Lord Jesus to bring good news to the afflicted, to bind up the brokenhearted, and to comfort those who mourn. Why doesn't God prevent such tragedies? We don't know? But what we do know is our God brings "beauty out of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. God has given us a Savior who sympathizes with what we are going through because Jesus Himself experienced affliction, sorrow, pain, and grief.

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart
And do not lean on your own understanding.
In all your ways acknowledge Him,
And He will make your paths straight. (Proverbs3.5-6)*