

SALT CO

11/10/24

“Trust in God: The Key to Life”

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things [matters] not seen.”

Hebrews 11:1

WELCOME TO THE SALT CO!

Welcome those who are joining us online.

This is the HUB of Seasoned Adult Ministry. For anyone new...by SEASONED ADULTS we mean:

SEASONED AS IN...

Chronologically-- we've lived a lot of seasons of life

BUT more importantly-

Spiritually--- ...like when sodium and chlorine combined make SALT... by the grace of God, when we receive Christ into our lives we become like THIS [gesture: one hand—two hands—joined together]

We become something beautiful, a *new creation*...transformed and *transforming* for the rest of our lives.

JESUS CALLS US THE SALT OF THE EARTH.

And this is the SALT CO (**where we** pull off the road to **gather**, AND share stories about **how to faithfully navigate** the ever-changing terrain on Route 60+; and Route 60++...and +++...

A place where we re-tool, re-fuel and re-charge.

For those maybe joining us for the first time...Our theme this fall is “*Living a Psalm 23 Kind of Life*”. We’re using as our guide the book written by Dallas Willard entitled Life Without Lack which we’re recommending but NOT requiring. There’s a copy on each table for you to have a look. Pick up a

copy at the bookstore. Each chapter is like a vista viewpoint on the amazing terrain the 23rd Psalm opens up for us.

The other book wrapped in a map is a reminder that we are exploring spiritual terrain together.

That Sierra cup on top of the books is just to suggest what it's like to live a Psalm 23 kind of life- a life with the Shepherd so full my cup runs over- like a cup full of mountain spring water on a long challenging hike.

Let's meet Dallas Willard. Pastor, professor, philosopher, writer. We catch up with him at (I believe) a chapel service at Westmont College.

VIDEO [3:44-6:59].

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XzzzH9z0SRE>

Dallas Willard asks good questions.

At the first viewpoint, we started at the first line: The LORD is my shepherd. We saw that living a "life without lack" requires us to first and foremost re-examine what we believe about who the Lord our God is. Because-- if our ideas (and our images and information) about God are too small and shriveled up; distorted or even outright wrong...we will never be able to trust God enough to live a 23rd Psalm kind of life believing we have everything we need; especially when we don't have everything we want. The rest of the Psalm might sound nice...but we won't be able to really live into the terrain it offers.

At the second vista we saw that the more we come to know about God the more we come to know about ourselves -who we are, and our need to cultivate faithful minds and imaginations about God (What Willard was getting at in that talk at Westmont.)

That led two SALT CO's ago to another good question: *Why are there people on earth?* This was about our calling to His paths of righteousness from which there is no retirement.

Last time we came to a vista that most of us would perhaps rather skip. But necessary. Willard's asked an important, honest question, "*Why Such Lack and Evil?*" We had to talk about the real presence of evil in our world and

how we can grapple with the evil we encounter by the power of His life at work in and through us—and live beyond the fear.

Today we come what Willard calls, and I doubt anyone here would disagree, what is the key to living a Psalm 23 kind of life?

What we also call “faith” in God. That the Lord **is** my shepherd.

Willard begins with this:

“Faith (trust) is the key that unlocks our readiness to receive God’s sufficiency in our lives.”

And...

“To have faith in God is simply to trust God, to rely upon him in the face of all our fears.” (p. 95)

So, here’s our question: *what is “faith”?*

Hebrews 11:1 gives the best-known biblical definition of faith

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” Hebrews 11:1

Let’s unpack this. Try using “trust” for the Greek word PISTIS.

This helps get at the problem of “blind faith” which has a feeling of disconnection, of unreality, of mystery or superstition.

We talk about “blind trust” when we’re setting up an estate plan.

We all know how critical trust is for sustaining any relationship especially when things get hard.

We could read Hebrews 11:1 like this:

Trust (is what stands under= lays the foundation) and make(s) possible things (matters-PRAGMATA) hoped for to help bring them into reality. Trust is the conviction of things (matters) not (yet) seen.

What is “not seen”? A few lines later the scripture reads, “***the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things that are visible.***” What is “not seen” refers to the word or energy of God in action.

This includes God’s “action” in His creation, in His creatures, in you and me. It makes good sense to say that God *makes it possible* for you and me to trust Him.

So Willard says,

“When we have faith, that is sure evidence that the word of the unseen God is active in us. Faith is a gift; God creates it in our hearts.” p. 95

Willard writes,

“I never worry about someone who wants to believe, because I know they already believe enough to want to believe more. If they did not already believe a great deal they would not even want to believe.”

Faith is reliance/trust revealed in both *attitude and action*. We experience faith on a daily basis. You trust your car to get you where you want to go most of the time...The fact that you rely on your car to work affects your attitude about how expect your day to go. Your attitude expresses as confidence that affects how you will act.

Attitude is our “posture”, our leaning, the state of our heart over time. Action of course is what we actually do. Loving as Jesus shows us takes both in attitude and action.

Jesus invites us not just to believe with our heads, but into an ongoing relationship of trusting him, of “*continuing* in his word”, of doing what he says, and as a result we will know in our lived relational experience a Psalm 23 kind of life, that will set us free from paralyzing fear of suffering and death WITH our Shepherd guiding, sustaining, providing, delivering us along Route 60 + [++; +++].

Thing is, trust is not established in an instant. Trust is based on trustworthy behavior...and Trust grows richer, deeper and more robust over time and

life experience through our interactive relationship with the most TRUSTWORTHY being in the universe: GOD!

Here Willard wisely invites us to have a seat to take in the drama of JOB's story-one of the oldest known stories in the Scriptures. As with so much of scripture it's not just a story of what "happened" as it is a story (our story) of what HAPPENS. In Job's story we are given a beautiful glimpse of a pattern for human spiritual formation through the crucible of life experiences lived in relationship with the Lord of all Creation that unfolds in three distinct developmental stages of faith transformation.

See if you can relate...

I. FAITH OF PROPRIETY

In the beginning Job lives a prosperous, successful life. He is a good religious man who sees to his family. John Ortberg says he is the first "helicopter parent", covering for his kids issues by making all the correct sacrifices to atone for their misbehavior.

The faith of propriety is religious faith that can be essentially superstitious, relying on ritual to get everything "right" in order to maintain "control". The prosperity gospel fits here. If you get it just right then all will go well.

This is what seems to lie behind the elaborate law codes in Judaism after Israel's long captivity and exile-how do we be sure we never mess up again? Answer? Be real careful on Sabbath... (for example).

Btw, there are worse things than being a Pharisee...

But then, after the conversation between God and the Satan, all hell breaks loose in Job's life.

Has all hell broken loose on you?

It's when the faith of propriety is exposed. Even though Job has done everything right horribly bad things have happened. Job loses everything he valued- his family, except for his discouraging wife, his livelihood, his reputation, his health.

Willard writes,

“Sometimes God even allows those bad things to happen because he has something better for us, just like he had something better for Job.”

His friends, who all hold a faith of propriety, come to be with him, first to sit SHIVA with him for seven days, their best move. But then they begin offering unsolicited, bad advice: *“Fess up. You did something wrong. Admit it, then God will make it all good...”*

Job will not give in to their advice. He has done nothing wrong. *He will also not give up on God.* God knows Job’s heart and what Job will come to discover, a deeper kind of knowing, emptied of all control.

Job comes into a second developmental stage of faith:

II. FAITH OF DESPERATION

This is faith that holds on, no matter what happens, when we lose, when we get sick, when we watch what we cherish go down the drain...

When the people we believed were solid and trustworthy turn out not to be.

It’s hanging on when the earth starts to shake. Psalm 46 begins,

***“God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble,
therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change,
though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;
though its waters roar and foam,
though the mountains tremble with its tumult.”***

Psalm 46:1-3

I suspect, sooner or later, we seasoned adults will understand what this faith of desperation feels like. We come to that moment, when everything we had relied on is gone. What happens to us rocks what we thought we knew about God and His ways. Either we throw up our hands and give up, or we let go of some of our “assumptions” about who God is and how he works to open ourselves to finding Him right where we are in ways we had

never known before. Only then do we come to a deeper sense of God's presence and as we do—we are on the path to know the reality of God.

When our assumptions about God and God's ways don't hold up under the weight of our most difficult and distressing experiences, as Willard puts it, we find that God's address is at the end of our rope.

-Dave Carey, tortured, close to losing his mind, face on cold concrete in a dark room. A phrase came to him...what happened to Dave Carey five years living defiantly, transcending prison camp abuse. He was a leader in the church where I served as an associate pastor in San Diego. To this day he bears witness as a consultant and motivational speaker to God's sufficiency.

As disorienting as it can be—it's only when we let go of our distorted, limited ideas of God and His ways that we can learn to trust him in deeper, stronger ways.

Willard puts it like this

“Regardless, when you have nowhere else to turn except to God, and you turn to him, your faith of desperation will meet the fullness of God, and you will taste the life without lack as you discover the depths of the faith of sufficiency.” (p. 107)

III. FAITH OF SUFFICIENCY

Job's friends have left. He has come to the verge of experiencing something deeper than anything else he had known up this point.

God comes. Like a whirlwind. A “twister”. RUACH! Holy, wild wind.

We get it about wild winds, don't we? I remember one morning during a Santa Ana seeing the envelopes my neighbor had clipped to his mailbox flying everywhere... A tornado out in Iowa that “rearranged” a farmer's fields and yard.

Throughout this ordeal Job had cried, *“I would like to appear before God. Where is God? I want to talk to God!”*

I wonder what you think about this. Do you want to talk to God? If you want to talk to God and pursue your desire to talk to God, God will grant you that talk. His way, His timing. You will have your talk. Buckle up.

Job did. For two chapters God asks Job questions he cannot answer. Point made that we do not know what we do not know! In the presence of the whirlwind we feel our insignificance and unworthiness, our foolishness.

Finally Job catches his breath to answer God...

***“I know that You can do everything,
and that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You.
You asked, ‘Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?’
Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand,
things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.”***

Job 42:22-3

When Job let go of his old assumptions of an earlier stage- the faith of propriety [if I’m good enough-I’ll be spared suffering and God will reward me—it’s kind of like a merit system], when he even let go of his faith of desperation, holding on to only what was left, his trusting God carried him to the place where he was opened *wide* to what God wanted to show him, where Job would and could take in an undeniable experience of God that changed his life.

Willard adds,

“This is why we need to live in clear view of the cross. When we look at what Christ did for us on the cross and keep that at the center of our vision, there are not many things that will bother us, or even matter at all. When we realize that Christ went willingly to the cross on our behalf, trusting in the greatness of his Father, it casts a transformative light on our own sufferings. That’s what Job saw. Job beheld the greatness of God.” p. 112

To see God is to see ourselves truly. That the Lord is our Shepherd, and because of His love for us beyond our comprehension, we shall not lack.

Joni Tada Eareckson knows the Faith of Sufficiency. Here’s her story:

VIDEO [00:00-7:30]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VVXJ8GyLgt0>

Let's talk about this.

TABLE TALK

1. Share your name and how long you have been coming to CCC.
2. Go over the three stages of faith development. How have you experienced these?
3. What has been your experience of how the people you hang out with influence your faith? How would you say CCC influences your faith?

WRAP UP

1. Seek the Lord and wait for him to show up. Set aside time to devote yourself to prayer and other spiritual disciplines that help to open and strengthen your faith to receive from him. Listen for God when you pray. Watch for him throughout your day. Keep seeking.
2. Doubts are flags signaling where to dig.
3. When faith begins to move, it moves on groups. Bruce Larson quote. =SALT CO!

WALK THE TALK

1. Shop toys for Christmas
2. Who needs your presence this week? Practice being with, praying with, without advice giving (unless it's asked for!)
3. Continue to contemplate the 23rd psalm to know it "by heart".

Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not lack.

He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside still waters.

He restores my soul.

He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.

For you are with me.

Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.

You anoint my head with oil.

My cup overflows.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Blessing