**St Martins C3 – March 27, 2022**

**Trust me – He is always faithful**

**Sermon Summary:**

We have no idea how our lives are going to turn out. With the global events we are facing at the moment, our lives are probably more uncertain than ever. So, what keeps us centred in the ups and downs of life? The premise of this series is that God calls us to centre our confidence in him. Which got me thinking: “*If we put our trust in God, does He actually make our lives better?”* After all, lot’s of people who don’t trust in God seem to have pretty good lives and those who do trust in God, still endure hard times.

**Read: Psalm 139:1-6 & 13-18**

* God created you
* God gave you life
* God knows you better than you know yourself

We wouldn’t be here if it wasn’t for God. We wouldn’t have a world to live in if it wasn’t for God. (Psalm 24:1) One of the reasons we trust in God is because we are GRATEFUL for all that He has done for us. Our Trust is based on the appreciation of the life we have, not just looking at what God can do for us.

When we come from a place of gratitude, our focus shifts from how to make our lives better, to how we HONOUR the one who gave us life in the first place**.** That GRATITUDE and RESPECT leads to God’s blessing on our lives.

We not only trust God for what He has already done, we trust God for what He will do. (Philippians 1:6)God is committed to your full maturity. Which ultimately means reigning with Him in His Kingdom. God, is more committed to your future than anyone else will ever be.

**Therefore, our motivation for trusting in God is not based on whether He makes our lives more comfortable, but on …**

* RESPECTING God for who He is.
* GRATITUDE for what He has done.
* CONFIDENCE in what He WILL do.

When we appreciate that God has a much bigger perspective on our lives than we ever will, it will help us TRUST Him through the ups and downs of life. (Romans 8:18 & James 1:2-3)

What matters to God, and what ought to matter to us, is the person we are now and the person we are becoming in the future.

There are more important things in the context of eternity than things not going well for us at a particular point in time. Not that we diminish the pain we are in now, but we put it in the context of God’s whole purpose for our lives.

Trusting God will make our lives better, but making our lives better, by our definitions, isn’t the point. The point is aligning our lives with the one who created us and who is committed to our eternal future. We trust God, because He is the only one who is fully trustworthy. God is faithful to His purpose for our lives and calls us to submit ourselves to Him and His ways (Pr 3:5-6), so that He can extend His blessings to us.

**Suggested Questions for Connect Group Discussion**

*Do the national and global events that are happening at the moment cause you more stress than usual?*

*Which promises from God do you lean on in challenging times?*

*Was there a time where you were going through a trial and God helped you through it? If so, how did God support you during that time?*

*How might keeping the big picture of God’s purposes in mind, help us deal with the stressors of everyday life?*

*What would it look like for you to lean in to trusting God a little more than you do now?*

**Monday’s Devotion - Learning to trust in God’s protection**

This week we are looking at what life lessons we learn as we put our trust in God.

The book of Esther is the amazing historical account of God using Mordecai and Esther to save the Jews from Haman and the Persian army. (If you have time, have a fresh read of the book of Esther).

Esther was asked by Mordecai to approach King Xerxes and inform the king of Haman’s evil plot. However, this came with huge risk. King Xerxes could have Esther executed as soon as she set foot in his throne room. Esther needed God’s protection, so she asks Mordecai and all the Jewish people to pray accordingly. As it turns out, Esther doesn’t die, Haman is hanged, and the Jews are saved from extermination.

It is unlikely your trust in God’s protection will be tested to the same level as Esther’s. However, we can still apply the same principle to situations we are in. There will be times when we are very nervous about stepping out and doing what we know God is calling us to do. Maybe it is initiating a conversation with someone when we don’t know how they will react. If we pray, God will be there for us, but we won’t know His protection in that moment unless we have the courage to follow through and do what He has called us to do.

So, let us learn to trust in God’s protection, by committing to prayer those nervous situations we find ourselves in and discover His supernatural courage and peace.

**Tuesday’s Devotion – Learning to trust in God’s provision**

**Deuteronomy 8:17-18**

*You may say to yourself, “My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.”**But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today.*

This verse describes where a lot of people put their confidence. They put their confidence in their ability, rather than in God’s grace.

This passage is set in the context of the Jewish exodus from Egypt. A time where millions of people witnessed the extraordinary provision of God for His people. God took a whole nation of slaves and provided for them for 40 years in the desert, before setting them up in a land flowing with milk and honey.

However, God knows our human propensity to trust in our ability rather than His provision. We so quickly assume that our success is all our doing.

An important Christian ritual that has been handed down for many generations is to take a few moments before eating a meal and thank God for His provision. It is an acknowledgement that the food that you have before you, is there because of God’s grace, not just your hard work.

Let us stay in the habit of thanking God for His provision every day. Let us remind ourselves that all we have is a gift of His grace.

**Wednesday’s Devotion – Learning to trust in God’s direction**

**Judges 7:7**

*The Lord said to Gideon, “With the three hundred men that lapped I will save you and give the Midianites into your hands. Let all the others go home.”*

I think we can all relate so well to Gideon. We are all on a journey of learning to trust in God. Our challenge, like Gideon’s, is that God’s direction supersedes what we think is logical. Logic would not have chosen Gideon to lead the army. Logic would not have whittled that army down to 300 when taking on an army of thousands. But our logic is based on our resources, not God’s resources.

Think back over your life and consider how God has guided you in various situations. My suspicion is there will have been times in your life where you courageously followed God and were blessed by His provision, even though you would have naturally chosen a different path. Notice, how faithful God was to His word. Notice how He didn’t let you down. Notice that He can be trusted.

It might be easy for us to criticise Gideon for being a bit hesitant to trust in God initially, but consider how quickly Gideon learnt to trust in God’s direction. Will we be that quick to learn to trust in God’s direction in our lives?

May we be willing to follow Gideon’s example and seek God’s direction for how to fulfil His purpose for our lives and then be willing to follow through on God’s leadings with wholehearted trust in Him.

**Thursday’s Devotion – Learning to trust in God’s healing**

**John 5:6**

*When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, “Do you want to get well?”*

God is passionate about making us whole. Primarily this means bringing wholeness to the spiritual and emotional areas of our lives but can also include physical and social as well.

For something to be healed, the patient needs to submit themselves to receiving treatment. That may sound obvious but dwelling in our hurt and pain is very common. It can seem easier to us to stay where we are, than it is to move towards wholeness.

In this example of the man at the pool of Bethesda, Jesus addresses his willingness to be made whole. Jesus asks, *“Do you want to get well?”* Jesus is asking the same question of us today. Do we want to get well? Are we willing to submit to the process of the Holy Spirit exposing things in our lives that need to be exposed? Are we willing to admit that we live our lives avoiding feelings and problems we ought to be confronting? Are we willing to admit that we have sinful habits in our lives that need to be repented of?

We can trust God with our deepest secrets. We can trust God with our deepest hurts. We can trust God with our deepest fears. God is the one who will take us in our brokenness and lead us to a place of wholeness. We can learn to trust in God for our healing.

**Friday’s Devotion – Learning to trust in God’s purposes.**

**Hebrews 11:39-40**

*“These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised,**since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.”*

I love achieving stuff. It’s just the way God created me. If you are familiar with the Strength Finder Assessment, “Achiever” is one of my top 5 strengths. As I go through my day, I feel good when I can tick tasks of my list that needed to get done. I needed to explain that so that you will appreciate why Hebrews 11 is so mind-blowing from someone like me. Many of these giants of the faith did not receive what had been promised! – WHAT?? You mean they lived their whole lives without that sense of achievement?

Yep – That’s the point of Hebrews 11 & 12. What actually matters in our lives is not what we think we will or won’t achieve, but whether we faithfully serve the purposes of God or not. We may not see what we expected to see in our lifetime, because we may be one of the links in a longer chain of God’s purposes for the world around us. What matters is God’s purposes not our purposes.

To live with the big picture of God’s purposes in mind, takes a lot of trust. It is learning to trust that God knows what is better for our future than we do. He knows the end from the beginning. So, don’t be discouraged or lose heart, when things don’t work out the way you expected. (Heb 12:3) Keep your trust in God and His purposes. He has the future (including your future) in His hands.