

Pastor Roy's sermon from Feb 17, 2019

Children: Genesis—Jacob worries and God provides

Blessed are they who trust deeply not in themselves but in God. They have roots. They are grounded. They are less blown about by instinct and fear, nor the temptation to take shortcuts to blessing and joy which lead to disappointment.

I think we all *want* to trust God. . .but it's easier to read it on a coin than to practice it. Why is it we must keep deciding to trust? Why can't we just choose once and then go on trusting because our mind is made up?

It's as if our default setting is to worry. Perhaps that is a good definition of what we call sin or original sin. Worry, mistrust, the need to take care of ourselves and get things right—or else—all rather than trusting in God's care which. . .really always has the final say anyway, right?

So the blessed life is not a life of worrying about getting it right. And yet, we worry. **Faith is about trust, not about worrying ourselves into the Kingdom.**

*We worry about so many things, but fortunately, our salvation in this life and that to come is not about us getting it right but in **finally getting that we aren't ever going to get it right.** That we will live every day struggling to trust and receive the love of Christ. . .*

And God loves us unconditionally. Whether our faith is at a high ebb or low. So we needn't worry. We are blessed whether we know it or not. But our readings today remind us that we are more aware of our blessedness when we understand that we broken people, by nature worriers, and that God still loves us.

In fact, it is true to say that the better and more worthy we feel, the further we are from knowing the joy of the God. For those who believe they are in charge of their own lives are truly mistaken and, therefore, lost. If I think I can pull off whatever goals I have for this life, myself, I am lost. Truly lost.

So faith is not about figuring out how to trust, how to have strong faith. It's about giving up figuring out how to trust. It's about leaving the trust in God's hands.

Faith is not faithfulness, it is consecration and surrender in our day to day struggle. Faith is giving ourselves over to God's purposes each time we realize we can't really do anything ourselves. The cross of Christ is our highest example, our salvation, because in allowing himself to be crucified, Jesus becomes for us the

greatest example of injustice, of despair, of poverty, hunger and thirst, grief, and having a shattered reputation. . .and he allows it. . .for love of all those who also experience these things. Jesus Christ is perfect in suffering and is welcomed by God.

The truth of the beatitudes I just read are fulfilled in his crucifixion and death. These blessings are points of despair. Who wants to be poor? Yet who learns to trust better than the poor. Who wants to be hungry? Yet, blessed are those who have no choice but to look to God to be fed. Who wants to be overwhelmed with grief? Yet, blessed are you who despair because you have lost loved ones? Who wants to be hated, excluded, reviled, and defamed? Blessed are you who find your reputation in God because yours has been destroyed. Rejoice, leap for joy, for only then will you ever be forced to abandon your addiction to providing for yourself/to take care of yourself/to be sufficient. Only then, will you find God and learn to trust God.

Jesus lists opposing woes, because those who never doubt themselves, those who are always able to take care of themselves, those who never abandon hope and give up on saving themselves--they will never give themselves over to trusting God because they don't have to. Jesus suggests that those who cling to their own ability will miss out on the blessing and joy of faith.

Indeed, there is nothing good about being poor, or hungry, overwhelmed with grief, or excluded and despised, but until we run into significant trouble in our lives and actually need help that no one but God can provide, we are spiritually hopeless because we haven't been forced to trust in anything but ourselves.

The good news is that everyone has ample trouble in their lives to discover the freedom of faith and the grace of God.

So we tend to think faith is easier for strong, wise, and good people. Jesus suggests that it is only with suffering that we learn to trust and love God. It is born not of our own goodness, but out of the desperation of our humiliation and trouble.

For it is there we learn that there is no hope except in the mercy of God who always welcomes those who seek help. Thanks be to God and may we be aware of our need so that we can allow ourselves to fall into the mercy of God.