

Trouble in Life – New

Good morning. My name is Jerry Eisner. I'm a Certified Lay Minister at Faith Community Church in Franklin.

"Trouble in Life" is the title of my sermon this morning. And "trouble is from one of our readings today: Luke 12:49-56 (NIV), where it says: "From now on there will be five in one family against each other (v 52)." Now, that's trouble with a capital "T. Like the song, "Ya Got Trouble," from the movie, "Music Man."

Let me start by asking all of you a question. Has anyone ever told you that you'd have NO trouble in your life? Well, if anyone did, they lied to you! James tells us in his first chapter that God uses trials to test our faith to make us perfect and complete. A phrase I've heard before that speaks to the scripture is, "A faith that cannot be tested cannot be trusted." Even Jesus tells us we'll have trouble in John 16:33 (NIV), "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." There are two scriptures today that will be my guiding texts. The first is from Proverbs 3:5-6 (NIV): "**TRUST** in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding: in all your ways acknowledge him and he will make your

paths straight.” The second scripture that is my guiding text is from 2nd Corinthians 4:8-9 (NCV – New Century Version): “We have troubles all around us, but we are not defeated. We do not know what to do, but we do not give up the **HOPE** of living. We are persecuted, but God does not leave us,” – which is his **PROMISE**.

I hope you noticed the three words I emphasized in those two readings: **TRUST**, **HOPE**, and **PROMISE**.

The first word I want to talk about this morning is TRUST – trust that comes when someone keeps their PROMISES. And, isn’t it true that when someone keeps their PROMISES, we tend to TRUST them?

One example of God keeping his PROMISES comes from the Old Testament when Joshua took over the leadership of Israel and Moses reminded him of God’s help in tough times. Moses told Joshua that in the difficult days to come, that he would need to remember to TRUST God and his PROMISES. In Deuteronomy 3:13 (NIV), we read one of those PROMISES: . . . “for the Lord goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.” This verse from Deuteronomy is a PROMISE that no matter who you are

or who you become, you can TRUST that Jesus will always be there to help you and give you HOPE. Which leads me to the second word I emphasized: **HOPE**.

In Romans 5:3-4 (NIV), we are told, “but we also rejoice in our sufferings because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, HOPE. SO, that end result of trouble and suffering is **HOPE**.”

When I think of HOPE in the Bible, I think about Romans 15:13 (NIV): “May the God of HOPE fill you with all joy and peace as you TRUST in him, so that you may overflow with HOPE by the power of the Holy Spirit.” So, any HOPE the Christian has comes from God by his Spirit.

The third word I emphasized is **PROMISES**. Some of the PROMISES that Jesus made to us were: he will extend forgiveness; he will give us rest; he will never leave us, and he will empower us when we have troubles in life. Which is what it says in Psalm 34 (NIV): “I sought the Lord, and he heard me and delivered me from my fears.”

God has made many PROMISES in his Word. Jesus, for example, fulfills at least 300 Old Testament PROMISES.

Now, with these three words in mind – **TRUST**, **HOPE**, and **PROMISE** – let's move on to find how we handle trouble in our lives.

Yes, Christ **did** save us from sin, but he did **not** save us from trouble. All the pain, suffering, hardship, and problems that we suffer in this world originated in the Garden of Eden, when Adam and Eve sinned. From that time on, we have lived in a fallen world **AND** in sin. Yes, Christ set us free from the guilt and penalty of sin with his death on the cross, but we have NOT been exempted from the pain and trouble that is common to all humankind. The fact is, Jesus doesn't protect us from all trouble, BUT his love and his companionship guide us as we go through it.

So, we need to maintain our faith to allow for the possibility that **God might HAVE** a better AND different picture in mind for us. **MAYBE**, just maybe, our trouble is an opportunity for us to respond in a way that God can turn us into his likeness.

If you're going through a difficulty right now, pray for the wisdom and discernment to ask yourself, "Is this something that God may be allowing to happen to me in order to bring me closer to Him?"

Many people fail to realize that God may desire to use a difficulty to shape us into the person HE wants us to be. That is the way God often works. He'll call us to TRUST that he will accomplish his plan for us. But he'll also permit trials that test whether we'll believe our eyesight more than his PROMISES.

James 1:2 (NIV) says: "Consider it pure joy, my brothers whenever you face trials of any kind, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance." When James spoke of joy, he wasn't telling us to be happy about our trials, but to know that as we go through them, God is doing something good in our life. So, when Jesus PROMISES us peace in the middle of our trials, we need to let go our troubles and ENTRUST them to his care.

We need to remember: **God will help us if we ask him.**

God, however, cannot help us unless we allow him to do so. You see, God has made us “free agents” with the power of choice, which is called **FREE WILL**. So, that means: **We have to ASK!** It reminds me of William Holman Hunt’s painting of Christ standing outside a door and knocking. (HOLD UP A COPY OF THE PAINTING)

What’s interesting about this painting is that there is **NOT** a door handle on the outside of the door – you have to open the door from the inside and **ASK** Christ to come in. And when you open the door, Christ will come in and eat with you and you with him.

And then there’s Dave Dravecky, a major league pitcher for the San Diego Padres. Dave was left-handed and played in the All-Star game in 1983, his second season, in which he won 14 games. Dravecky helped the Padres to their first pennant the following year.

Dave Dravecky definitely had a promising career. But then Dave contracted cancer in his left shoulder and after several years and several surgeries, his left arm and shoulder were amputated.

Once, when Dravecky was talking to a woman who was having trouble, he said: “God’s not the one to blame if things don’t work out the way you think they should. Life isn’t always fair, at least not in the short run. But the Bible taught me not to confuse life with God. When you’re confronted with trouble, you don’t ask, ‘Why me?’ You ask God, ‘What do you want me to do in this situation?’”

Let me repeat that: **When you’re confronted with trouble, you don’t ask, ‘Why me?’ You ask God, ‘What do you want me to do in this situation?’**”

In every trial we face, we have a choice to view that trial from our perspective or from God’s perspective. In Psalm 13, David is weighed down with burdens. He asks four times, “How long? How long? How long? How long?” He describes his troubles and pleads for an answer. By the end of the Psalm, his perspective changes when he remembers that God is TRUSTWORTHY and gives him HOPE.

And THAT is the key to making trials and troubles bearable. When you’re holding the weight of the world

on your shoulders, STOP and LOOK UP to God, which is what it tells us to do in Psalm 123:1. Remember a time in the past when God carried you through the hard times – similar to the poem “Footprints in the Sand.” Then, REJOICE in his faithfulness. He didn’t fail you then and he won’t fail you now. We can be content in all trials with Christ’s strength. When we see every matter from God’s perspective, we will find inner peace, confidence, and **HOPE**.

Now, let me tell you about some of the trials my wife, Eileen, and I have experienced. Two weeks after our oldest daughter was born in 1970, Eileen had a post-part hemorrhage which required five pints of blood.

We all have a little less than 10 pints of blood in our bodies, so she lost half of her total blood supply. And the first pint of those five pints had to be **PUMPED** into her, not dripped, which is the normal procedure.

In the mid-1970s, Eileen miscarried; and for the second time in just a few years, I thought I was going to lose her.

In 1986, we lost our business and all our material possessions. In 1990, Eileen was diagnosed with breast cancer and she has been cancer-free for the past 32 years. In June 2019, I was diagnosed with Stage 4 non-Hodgkin's lymphoma cancer. After five months of chemo-therapy, I was declared 95% clear of cancer. And now three years later, I am 100% in remission.

So, what have I learned from these experiences?

I've learned that there would be other difficulties in my life, but none as difficult or scary as losing my wife. I still have a lot to learn about priorities, and my faith, and my ego. But I could never again say that God had NOT led me through some deep waters to strengthen me when those new lessons come.

Most of us when we face our present-day troubles and difficulties want to REASON everything out and understand what's happening to us – and even more we try to plan our way out of trouble. In other words, we FIRST try to figure it out on our own. Instead of FIRST going to God and ASKING HIM what we should do.

What we forget is how God helped us in the past. What we need to do is remember what God did for us in the past and ask Him what we should do in this situation today. Why do we forget so easily when we're faced with a present crisis? **(PAUSE)**

To help me NOT forget what God has done for me in the past, I write down what he has done. And I've been doing it for 35 years. So, here's what I recommend you do: keep a written record – a journal or a book of remembrance – of when and how God has helped you with your troubles and difficulties in the past. Make a list of the prayers God has answered and when he has done marvelous things in your life.

Write down the tough times you've been through and how God delivered you from those tough times. Then when trouble or difficulties come your way in the future, look at your journal and remind yourself of God's faithfulness and the HOPE you have in him. As you do, you'll be encouraged. Why? Because our **TRUST** in God grows with experience as it tells us 2nd Corinthians 1:10 (Living Bible): "And he did help us, and saved us from a

terrible death; yes, and we expect him to do it again and again.”

The same God who has been faithful in the past will continue his love in the present and in the future.

Right now, if you’re like me, you’ve got some questions – What if I can’t remember anything God has done for me? Or, what if I have bad memories of what has happened to me – how can I have **HOPE**? Or, how can I **TRUST** God to keep his **PROMISES**? To answer these questions and others you may have, let me review the **ACTS** acronym I talked about last week.

First, you can **ASK** God in prayer what you should do – the first letter of the **ACTS** acronym. In addition, you can ask others to pray for you. **Second**, you can CONSULT the Bible for direction and guidance from God – the second letter of the **ACTS** acronym. You can also read publications like UPPER ROOM and OUR DAILY BREAD to see how God helped other people and see how he can help you. **Third**, you can **TRUST** in God – the third letter of the **ACTS** acronym – by doing his will. And his will is for you to worship him and serve him. So, stay involved

in church activities by worshipping him, fellowshiping with others, and serving him. This will help you grow in **TRUST** of God. And the **Fourth** letter of the ACTS acronym says to **STEP** out in faith and do the things you know God is leading you to do.

Remember, God never **PROMISED** us a life without pain or sorrow, trouble or difficulty. But God does **PROMISE** to be there when we ASK for his help. Moreover, we have God's **PROMISE** to "cause **all** things to work together for the good of those who love God," which is what is says in Romans 8:28 (NIV). And the word **all** in that verse means the good, the bad, and the ugly.

So, **now** when trouble starts, I **immediately ASK** for his help in prayer. I've learned **NOT** to **TRUST** my own strength, my own wisdom, nor my own skill, as I did in the past. I've learned to **TRUST** that God will help.

In addition, I've learned that God may actually be using this difficulty to shape me into the person he wants me to be. And since my desire is to become more Christ-like, I work at seeing each trial as an opportunity to be what God wants me to be.

Please bow your heads as I pray.

Heavenly Father, whatever challenge I am facing today, I pray for your insight to see how you're using this trial to mold me into a better person. I pray for you to give me **HOPE**, and to teach me to **TRUST** you in all things, at all times, with all my heart, as you **PROMISE** us throughout scripture. And help me remember, that this won't happen all at once. Help me take one step today to move forward, **TRUSTING** that you will keep your **PROMISES** and give me **HOPE**. Amen.

And now let us pray the prayer Jesus taught his disciples.

Our Father, who art in heaven. Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and power and glory forever. Amen.