

Genesis 37:1-4, 12-28  
Psalm 105:1-6, 16-22, 45b  
Romans 10:5-15  
Matthew 14:22-33

Here's a question for all of you this morning? How did you first learn about trust? It probably happened before you were able to speak. You cried and someone picked you up. You smiled and someone smiled back at you. You got hurt and someone put on a band-aid. You got sick and someone took you to the doctor. Basically, you learned about trust because someone took care of your needs. As we get older, the concept of trust gets a little more complicated, but at its heart, trust is the glue that holds all relationships together. Trust is what makes us feel safe in the world. We trust in many things and in many people...from the physical universe in which the sun comes up every morning and goes down every night...to the most important human relationships we have. Trust is critical to our being able to make our way in the world. And it's critical to our sense of well-being. Once trust is broken, however, it's possible, but it's very hard to restore it.

On Sunday mornings...and perhaps at other times during the week...we read the Bible to learn about God. When we look at the Bible as a whole, we see story after story about God's overtures and relationship with human beings and with the creation itself. And time and time again, we see God's action in the world and wonder what God wants from us. What *does* God want from us? These stories all point to one thing: God wants a relationship with us and God wants us to trust him. God proves himself over and over again as our scripture passages this morning show us.

The story of Joseph that is our Old Testament lesson for this morning is one that's very familiar to many of us. We all know about Joseph's amazing multi-colored coat with sleeves and his brothers' jealousy of him. And we know that the brothers intended to kill him, but threw him into a pit instead...a pit, however, from which there was no escape. There was no way out. There wasn't even any water. But as we heard last week when Jesus provided food for 5000 people, God can make a way where there is no way. And lo and behold, Joseph is pulled out of the pit and sold to some Ishmaelites traveling by on their way to Egypt. Imagine that? What a coincidence! We all know that Joseph ended up being the right-hand man to the Pharaoh and saved thousands of Egyptians...and eventually his own brothers...from starving to death during a famine. We heard the psalmist this morning sing God's praises for all that God did for God's

people not only *for* Joseph, but *through* Joseph. The Lord, does indeed, move in mysterious ways and encourages us to trust him.

And we know, too, that the Israelites who ended up in Egypt looking for food were also rescued by God when they were enslaved. God had seen to it that the baby Moses had a network in the Pharaoh's household so that when the time came, Moses could negotiate with the Pharaoh to free the Hebrew people. And God provided the incentive to the Pharaoh of all those plagues...to let the Israelites go...right through the parted waters of the Red Sea!! God makes a way where there is no way and encourages us to trust him.

When we hear the New Testament lesson this morning, Paul reminds us that the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. For, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Paul reminds us that God is as close as our heartbeat and as near as the breath we take. Jesus Christ was sent by a God who wants to impress upon us how much God loves us, but Paul tells us that we absolutely must spread the word. We have to let people know about Jesus as God's gift to us and testimony to God's overtures to us in building trust and building relationship.

For the past several weeks, our gospel lessons have been designed to show us how Jesus teaches us about the kingdom of heaven. He tells the parables about the sower and the soil and then about the wheat and the weeds and then about the mustard seed that grew into a huge bush. Jesus continues to teach and to show all of us about the nature of God. The piece de resistance in all of these stories is the one we heard last week about Jesus multiplying 2 fish and 5 loaves of bread so that his disciples could feed 5000 people, not counting the women and the children. Jesus showed us that he can make a way where there is no way and that God takes care of physical needs as well as spiritual ones...encouraging us to trust him.

All through the Bible we are told about circumstances in which God has taken care of God's people the way a good parent takes care of a small child. Even though the parent of the small child has limited powers, we need to remember that God does not.

This morning we heard another story about who Jesus is and how he responds to the needs of those around him. After feeding the 5000 and sending them on their way, Jesus is still looking for some solitude. This time, instead of taking a boat out on the sea by himself, he puts the disciples in the boat. While they drift out on the Sea of Galilee, Jesus climbs the mountain to commune with God. Jesus is still trying to absorb the painful news of John the Baptist's gruesome murder. Sometimes we forget about Jesus' human side, but we all need some solitude when we are grieving and Jesus is no exception. Early in the morning, some time

between 3:00am and 6:00am Jesus realizes the waters in the Sea have gotten quite rough. He makes his way toward the boat and the disciples by walking on the water. The disciples are already a little on edge because of the rough water. Now they are terrified in seeing what appears to be a human form walking on the water. As Jesus gets closer to the boat, they cried out in fear. Jesus reassures them. "Take heart. It is I. Do not be afraid." Peter responds right away. He knows that he will obey any command that Jesus gives him, so he asks Jesus to command him to get out of the boat and walk toward him. And Jesus does. "Come," he says. Once on the water, however, Peter realizes where he is and is overcome with fear and begins to sink. Jesus reaches out and grabs him and pulls him up out of the water and into the boat. How many of us right now are feeling tossed around by uncertain seas...and we're in a small boat? Our normal routines have been disrupted. We have plenty to fear...from contracting the coronavirus to losing our source of income...to weathering the storms of social unrest and facing a national election in just a few months. Our boats are feeling swamped and Jesus commands us to come to him. The promise that he makes is not that we will not have to weather the storm. The promise he makes is that he will not abandon us when we are in over our heads. God's promise to us is not that no evil will ever befall us, but that he will be with us no matter what. God will not prevent us from an earthly death, but God will preserve our very souls and the essence of who we are.

And all God asks of us is that we be in relationship with him...that we trust him...that we keep him close to our hearts and always in our minds...and that we share with others what we know about him and about Jesus. God wants us to talk to him and confide in him our deepest fears and our most overwhelming joys and everything in between. When we get out of the boat...that seemingly comfortable and familiar place that we think will keep us safe...and walk into the arms of Jesus in the midst of turmoil, Jesus will uphold us. In his arms is where true safety dwells.

In all our thoughts, in all our decisions, in all our joys and our sorrows, God wants only for us to love him and to trust him...to be in relationship with him. He is our ultimate best friend and no one loves us more fiercely.

God makes the first move. How do we respond?

Thanks be to God.

AMEN.