

TRUST GOD OVER ALL
Psalm 62; Mark 1:14-20
Preached by Dr. Cahill
Babcock Presbyterian Church
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Several Sundays back I preached on Psalm 139 which helps us realize that God's constant searching and knowing us shouldn't be intimidating but actually reassuring if only because God searches and knows us for our own good.

Today, Psalm 62 expands on this theme, exhorting us to trust God's knowing, especially when we're in crisis and there's nowhere else to turn.

The Book of Psalms was originally written to be set to music so each psalm could be sung in worship. Many are songs of praise others are laments, but each sings to God's sovereignty but also his intimate involvement in the lives of his people.

Reading the psalms today gives insight into the psyche and theology of the Jews a thousand years before Christ's birth. Through the psalms, most composed during the reign of King David, we get the sense God wasn't expected to shield his people from trouble but could always be counted on to help them weather any storm and survive any calamity.

The Book of Psalms is really quite a remarkable document as each of the psalmists, divinely inspired, rose above the prevailing grass roots theology and rejected the false assumption God was Israel's private mascot, rooting them on whether Israel was right or wrong. Instead God was to be obeyed so Israel could truly become the people chosen to be the vanguard of the Kingdom of God.

Psalm 62 especially calls the faithful to stop seeing God, in Martin Luther King's words as, "a cosmic bellhop at our beck and call," but as "the One to be trusted and obeyed."

*For God alone my soul waits
in silence;
He alone is my rock and my salvation...
I shall never be shaken. (Psalm 62:2)*

Obviously this psalm was inspired during a period of danger and uncertainty in King David's life. We don't know the details of the crisis, but we don't need to know. What's important is knowing David's calm and deliberate response to crisis. Instead of going off half cocked and shooting from the hip, David goes inward and becomes silent as he waits for God to make known his will.

*Trust in him at all times, O people;
pour out your heart before him;
God is a refuge for us. (Psalm 62:8)*

David also exhorts us to know what he learned, open your heart and trust in God. Don't jump the gun and mindlessly react when you're being challenged for the right reasons or threatened for the wrong reasons. Don't rely on yourself alone, or be goaded into action by others who may or may not have your best interest. Instead, quiet yourself and listen for that still small voice speaking clearly through all the noise and chatter. Don't let your pride or fears jump

start your actions. Don't let your self-interest or hate force your hand. Instead, be still, for God alone is your rock and salvation.

David was no stranger to intrigue and plots against him, nor was David above intrigue and plotting against others. Even so, at his best he knew what length some would go to in order to destroy their opponents.

*Their only plan is to bring down
a person of prominence.
They take pleasure in falsehood;
they bless with their mouths,
but inwardly they curse.*

(Psalm 62:4)

David acknowledges there are people who can't be trusted but he also realizes their power and influence is fleeting.

*Those of low estate are but a breath,
those of high estate are delusional...
they are together lighter than a
breath.*

*Put no confidence in exhortation,
and set no vain hope in robbery...*

(Psalm 62:9-10)

In other words, don't fight fire with fire, sink to their level and become like them. Instead always remember:

*...that power belongs to God,
and steadfast love belongs to you,
O Lord.*

*For you repay to all
according to their work.*

(Psalm 62:11-12)

In the end, God's love and God's power overcomes and prevails. Our challenge is to submit to God so we can be empowered to love. The Roman poet Virgil, who lived a generation before Christ, was inspired to write, "Love conquers all." Certainly this saying is given new life and dimension when applied to the life of Jesus. He allowed his Father's love to conquer his life and ambitions so he could then go out and conquer the world.

In today's gospel we find that soon after John the Baptist was imprisoned, Jesus emerged from his forty-day trial in the wilderness. There he was tempted by Satan to reject the calling to be the Suffering Christ and instead become a Conquering Christ.

Very likely the words of Psalm 62 empowered Jesus to silence himself and resist temptation by listening, trusting and obeying his Father's will.

Mark reports, "Now after John was arrested Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the Good News of God saying, 'The time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God has come near; repent and believe in the good news.'" (Mark 1:14-15)

Don't think for a minute Mark wrote John the Baptist was arrested as an afterthought, but to make the point Jesus' ministry began in crisis. Hearing his cousin was now Herod's prisoner could have discouraged Jesus, forcing him to rethink his strategies maybe even go underground until things calmed down. As it turned out John's arrest, which could have been seen as a set back, became Jesus' first test. His time of temptation in the wilderness prepared Jesus to trust God's Kingdom is coming with or without the cooperation of King Herod, the religious establishment or even Caesar himself.

So even with John behind bars, a harbinger of the rising opposition Jesus would soon be facing, Jesus, trusting God's sovereignty, began his journey to the cross, speaking truth to power while assembling his motley team of fishermen and tax collectors to become his disciples.

If Jesus started out this way today, political consultants and pundits would write Jesus off as the next up and coming has been. Maybe they'd be right if Jesus was out to play the game, but as it turns out they'd be wrong because they wouldn't understand God's Kingdom is not of this world. Jesus' ministry wouldn't be driven by sound bites and brilliant strategy, but by simply trusting and obeying God's unassailable prevailing will.

Being a devout student of the psalms Jesus knew despite the mounting opposition his mission would prevail, paving the way to his ultimate triumph: to save the world through the cross.

What can we learn from David's psalms and Jesus' application of their assurance of God's sovereignty over our lives? Certainly, by watching Jesus discern and submit to God's will, even when everything and everyone was against him, should teach us things aren't always what they seem to be. Somehow, hidden from sight, God works out his purposes for our good. It may not seem that way, especially when we're in the thick of it. All the more reason for our preconceived notions to have a midcourse correction, so we can trust God's planned outcome.

Isn't it true we sometimes ask God for guidance without realizing we're really asking God for his stamp of approval? We see this in Peter's opposition to Jesus' decision to go to Jerusalem to be crucified. Peter couldn't trust God's planned outcome, that Jesus would be the Suffering Messiah God ordained from the beginning to die for the sins of the world. Isaiah knew this 700 years earlier:

*“For as the heavens are higher
than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts that your thoughts.”*

(Isaiah 55:9)

Maybe the hardest lesson we need to unlearn is impulsively trusting our instincts. Instead of making our plans, putting them into action and then as an afterthought asking God to baptize and make it Christian, we should first ask God to show us the way, trusting God's way is the best and only way.

If we could only put this into practice, life would be so much easier and our world would be so much better.