

[PRAYER] [BLANK] Good morning. I am so glad to see you today! After those storms early in the week, it's been beautiful, hasn't it? It's hard to trust in the middle of a heat wave that relief is on the way, but, sure enough, things got better, maybe not how we expected them to be, but better. And I thank everyone who turned out for last week's worship in the middle of the heat. Bless you for trusting that you'd find good things when you got here!

I am grateful for your trust in God. You may or may not trust me, but I believe that you're here not because of me, but because of the God who is worthy of our trust. A lot of people don't trust God these days, or at least the church as a place to find God. The latest Gallup poll shows that only thirty-six percent of Americans have high or pretty high confidence in organized religion. In 1973, when Gallup first asked this question, 65 percent of Americans had strong confidence in religion. Today, the scales of trust in religion are tipped the exact opposite way.

We know that most people don't trust churches any more. And yet, most churches still assume that they are trusted places. That's not really news, either, and yet, it should be. We're a little church with a big heart. But if a world that doesn't trust churches is going to find the freedom that God's joy offers the world, we need more than just a big heart to help them find that joy. We need discipleship. We need to do the things that not only bring God's joy into our own lives, consistently, and persistently, but also the things that make God's joy evident to God's world. Because, truth be told, the world doesn't trust our hearts enough to come here.

It takes more than a good heart to be a Christian who finds God's joy. It takes more than unity, commitment, and focus to be a Christian who can find God's joy, and share it with God's world. Because, deep in our hearts, people know who we really trust, and who we don't. And if the people of God's church don't trust a God who gives us the freedom to find God's joy, then the world will know it.

I learned a lot about trust in my very first job. [BRUSHES] My first summer out of high school, I got a job selling Fuller Brush Company products door to door in my hometown. It was my mother's idea, to be honest. I had absolutely no interest in sales. I was a shy kid, for the most part, and the idea of knocking on the doors of perfect strangers terrified me. [KNOCKING] In spite of that, after being handed some samples and an order pad, I found myself knocking on people's doors, asking if they'd like a free vegetable brush, or how their tile and grout was looking. They were good products, but for the most part, I was a miserable salesperson. I had no confidence.

[HOUSE] And yet, much to my surprise, I got an order at the very first house I stopped at. It was a very nice woman, who invited me in to her house, and we chatted for a good while. She trusted that I was a good person, and saw that I respected her. That pattern repeated itself over that long, miserable summer. A lot of people just didn't trust me, and I didn't trust them. But if I could get people to trust that I was a good person, then we would get to know one another better, and sometimes they even would buy something. I learned that I wasn't selling brushes, or mops, or brooms, or cleaners. I was selling trust.

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Luke’s gospel tells us today about people who had come to trust Jesus. They believed that Jesus was God’s savior for the world. They listened to Jesus, and saw what Jesus did for people, and how he acted with people, and trusted that he really did understand better than anyone else what a real, living relationship with God was like.

And so, we read in Luke today that the followers of Jesus wanted Jesus to teach them how to pray the way that the prophet John, who baptised Jesus, had prayed with them. We don’t know what John’s prayers were like. But we know that John was not like other religious people. John stripped away everything that would separate him from God, and trusted in God absolutely for his very life. Jesus did the same, because, after all, how could God not trust God? Who better to teach people how to trust God in our prayers than...God?

We call the prayer that Jesus taught his followers “The Lord’s Prayer.” Chances are, you know at least one version of it by heart. The version we see in Luke’s gospel is the simplest of all. Jesus tells his followers, first, tell God that you respect God, that you trust that God is the most holy of holy beings, and yet like our parent, respected above all, and loved like the one who gave us our life. Then, ask God to rule over us now, not later. That takes trust, the willingness to let God’s way be the way of the world. Then, ask God for just enough strength for the day, trusting that God will take care of tomorrow. Then, trust that God wants us to ask for forgiveness for what we’ve done wrong, and trust that, as a forgiven person, we can find a way to forgive people who have hurt us. Finally, ask for trust that God wants to lead us away from evil things.

That’s a lot of trust to ask of anyone, much less God. Trust that it’s okay that God is in charge of everything, including us, like a loving parent. Trust that this powerful, intimate God wants us to tell God, like we would a parent, what we’ve messed up. Trust that God wants us to forgive people like God forgives us. Trust that God will lead us away from evil things if we do all of this.

We might know this prayer as a rote prayer, words that we just say, without thinking much about what they really say. When we break it down, though, we can see that it is the most un-rote prayer of all. It defines the core of everything that we need to do to trust that God can lead us to real joy, and to find it now, not just later. In this prayer, we ask to trust the most powerful God in our most vulnerable state with our most intimate hopes. And we have to do this, if we’re going to experience real joy. Without that trust, we’ll never get to the easter daylight of the risen Jesus. We’ll be stuck fearing a grave, with a stone of despair shutting out the promise of God’s joy.

You might think that the followers of Jesus heard this, and thought or said something like, “Got it, Jesus! No problem! We’re on it!” Clearly, though, that’s not what happened. There is no response from the disciples to this prayer in Luke’s gospel. Probably there was a stunned silence. And so, we see that Jesus tried to give his followers some mental pictures to help them trust God this way. Jesus asked his followers to consider what they would do for a good friend who needed help in the middle of the night. You’d help

them, wouldn't you? Of course you would. We have to trust that this most powerful God, seeing us so vulnerable, will treat our prayers seriously. Or, like a good parent, we must trust that God wouldn't hand a dangerous thing to a child who asked for something good.

[DOOR] The followers of Jesus needed help finding the trust of God in their hearts the way that Jesus asked them to find it. And so do we. As God's church in Christ, too often we are afraid to knock at the door of God, the way that Jesus asks us to knock. Like someone knocking on the door of a stranger, or even a friend, we're afraid of God's rejection, when God is a stranger to our hearts. And so, while we might find happiness in this church, if we are not knocking on the door of God in our prayers the way that Jesus asks us to, and trusting that God will lead us to God's joy in our prayers, no matter what, it's not likely that our neighbors will knock on our door to find the joy of God in Jesus here, or open their doors when we go knocking.

[BLANK] Knock, knock. Who's there? It's Jesus. Jesus is knocking at the door of everyone's heart. Everyone in God's world gets a knock on the door of their hearts from Jesus. Jesus trusts that it's worth it to try to offer every single person in God's world the joy of God's saving love. Most don't answer. Some answer, get scared, and shut the door. Some talk to Jesus in the doorway of their hearts, but never let him in. Some find enough trust to let Jesus in, and have a chat with Jesus in their hearts. And some learn that Jesus is worth trusting like a friend, because Jesus is the only one who shows us the fullness of God's heavenly joy on earth. The Lord's Prayer of Jesus tells us everything we need to do to learn how to trust God enough to find that joy. Knock on the door of God in your heart with this prayer, and every prayer, and the door will be opened, by the God who is already knocking on the door of our hearts. And then, start knocking on the door to the hearts of others, as Jesus does, every day. Hopefully they'll open their doors, and our doors, soon enough. Amen.