

**Sermon Transcript from October 9th, 2016
Can I Get an Amen? (We Value Faith)
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Today, we begin a series that is and isn't a break from our Year of Biblical Literacy series. First, let me explain what The Year of Biblical Literacy is if you're new to the church. We have been in a year-long initiative where we are reading through the Bible together as a church community. We are reading the Bible with the express hope of becoming more literate in how we read the Bible, how the Bible works together and how we understand the Bible. On Sunday's, we've been following the story arch of what we've been reading throughout the week and doing sermons that correlate. All these sermons can be found online.

This last week we began the New Testament book of Acts, which is about the birth of Jesus' Church. Today, I won't be teaching from acts, but I will be teaching about Jesus' Church and the part of Jesus' Church that I want to talk about today is our church, Reality San Francisco. Today, I'll start a vision series. We do this almost every year. I want to talk about who we are as a church community and what we're about. But, this year will be a bit different. What I want to focus on is our values. What do we value as a church community?

So, do you see how this isn't and is a part of The Year of Biblical Literacy? It's not really, but we are talking about Jesus' Church as we're reading through the book of Acts. So, that's kind of how we get there. It's kind of squirrely, but whatever. That's where we're at today. So, I want to talk about our values. Our values are the kind of people we want to be as we move in the vision of our church. That's what we say as a leadership team. Our values are the kind of people that we want to be as we carry out the vision and as we move into the vision of our church.

So, let me start by talking to you about the vision of our church. This is our vision statement. It's found on our website. And, if you've ever come to a "Welcome to Reality" class, I talk about this. Our vision statement is pretty simple. It's been there since we started a church community. We added this second part a few years in. But, this is it:

"A community following Jesus, seeking renewal in our city."

We are a community following Jesus, that's under Christ, that's following Him, that's learning how to practice the way of Jesus. And we're doing that in community because Christ saved a family of people into His family, not just isolated people that Jesus is your personal savior and you do whatever by yourself. But, we're actually a community of people following Jesus and learning what it looks like to follow Jesus in San Francisco.

And, as we follow Jesus as a community, we believe that renewal will happen in us and then working its way out. Renewal will happen in our lives and in our relationships and in our church and then in our neighborhood and then in our workplaces and it works its way out into the city. So, that's our vision. Our values are this: faith, humility, hospitality and rootedness. And this is going to be the next four weeks on Sunday morning.

Faith, humility, hospitality, rootedness. We think that our values are what it will feel like in our hearts and in our minds and even in our bodies as we accomplish our vision. So, a community following Jesus, seeking renewal in our city. Okay. That sounds great. But, what does that feel like? What does that experience as we're doing that in San Francisco? What does it feel like to be a community following Jesus and seeking renewal in our city? It will feel like faith. It will feel like humility. It will feel like hospitality. It will feel like rootedness. We think our values are the culture which our vision gets accomplished. What kind of culture is a community following Jesus that's seeking renewal in its city? What kind of culture does that create? We believe it's a culture that values faith in Jesus, that values humility, to be in community rightly, that is radically hospitable to the outsider and is rooted in Jesus as it roots itself in San Francisco; in this very transient, hyper-connected but terrible disconnected city.

So, are you with me? So, values. Faith, humility, hospitality, rootedness. These values also shape our community groups and our church. So, if you're in a community group, these words might not be that new to you. You might know them really well. Today, I would like to talk about the value of faith, because we value faith as a community. But, what does that mean? Faith is a very broad subject. Very, very broad subject. So, what do we mean when we say that we value faith, that we hope that every member of Reality, ever person that calls

Reality their church and is practicing the way of Jesus with us in this church. When we hope that everyone in here values faith, what do we mean by that?

So, I want to tell you three stories from the Scriptures that try to capture this and what this might mean for us. So, the first one is in Genesis 15. So, if you have your Bible, turn to Genesis 15. On your device or whatever you have. Genesis 15. This first story, above it I would right "Faith is amen to God." Amen? Okay. "Faith is amen to God."

So, in Genesis 15 – if you need a Bible, you can raise your hand. Sorry about that. If you need a Bible, you can raise your hand. One of the ushers will get you one. Absolutely free. Take home. Read yourself. Give away as a Christmas gift coming up. Whatever you want to do. It's up to you.

First story is this: Genesis 15. "Faith is amen to God." Okay. So, in Genesis 15, we meet this guy called "Father Abraham." This is what we call him. This is what we sing about in children's church. Father Abraham had many sons and many sons..." – you know that song. But, when we meet Abraham, his name is not Abraham; it's Abram. And he's not a father. He's very old though. He's very old Abram. So, we don't sing that, really. Very old Abram that's barren but no kids. Like, we don't sing that song. We sing, "Father Abraham had many sons."

How did he get there? God appears to Abraham – his name was Abram – in a vision and God promises that although he is childless and he's very old, he's getting old, he and his wife Sarah, who is also very old, would in time have a son. And eventually, his descendants would be as uncountable as the stars in the sky. That's hyperbole, by the way. Hyperbole. You get the point. Let me just read it to you so you know it's there. Some of you guys are like, "I don't know if I believe you."

Just read this.

Genesis 15:1: **"After this, the word of the Lord came to Abram..."** – see, I told you. His name was Abram – **"...in a vision: 'Do not be afraid,' God says to Abram. 'I am your shield, your very great reward.'**

"But Abram said, 'Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?' And Abram said, 'You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.'

"Then the word of the Lord came to him: 'This man will not be your heir, but a son who is from your own flesh and blood will be your heir.' He took him outside and said, 'Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.' Then he said to him, 'So shall your offspring be.'

"Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness."

"Abram believe the Lord, and God credited it to him as righteousness," it says. That word "believe," "and Abram believed the Lord," is the Hebrew word "amen." Or, if you're British, "ah-men," right?

It's the Hebrew word "amen" and it means this. Typically, today when we say "amen," it's typically a social cue to let everyone know that I'm done praying or someone's done praying. Right? Like, "Please say 'amen.'"

"Amen."

"Oh, you're done. Good. That's good. I love that word 'amen.' It means you're done praying."

Or, when someone's preaching and someone says "amen," it means "keep on preaching." It means, "Go ahead. Keep doing this. More of that. That's what I want. Come on."

That's what "amen means." So, it either means, "Okay, someone's done praying," or, "Keep preaching." One of the two. But, that's not really what it means here. That's not what "amen" means when it says, "And Abraham amen'd God."

"Amen" is a declaration of trust. "Amen" is a declaration of trust. "Amen" is Abraham saying that he trusts God to bring about what God said He would do. So, when God says, "You're old, you're kind of dying, your wife's womb is all but dead. But, I'm going to give

you a son and your family is going to be like the stars in the sky. You're not going to even be able to count them."

Abram says, "Amen. I take You at Your word. Even when it makes no sense to me and I don't see how You're going to do this, I trust in You."

He's old. His wife is old. He's getting beyond years of childbearing. Not physically possible to have kids. Losing hope in his own body. But, against all those odds he says "amen" to God. And what does that mean? It doesn't mean that Abraham simply believed that God was able to pull it off. It wasn't when God said, "I'm going to give You a son," it wasn't that Abraham said, "God, I believe that that is possible for You. I believe that You could do that. I believe that all things are possible with God and that You can pull that off."

When Abraham was saying "amen," he was not saying, "If anyone can pull this off, it's probably You, God."

That is not what He's saying. Believing that God can do something is more of an intellectual belief, which has its place, but it's not what's going on here and it's not what God requires. There's something deeper and there's something even more profound going on here. Abraham's "amen" to God is not simply a faith that God was able to give him a child, it was trust in God to give him a child. There's a huge difference there. It's not a faith that it was possible, it was a trust in God to do it; to bring it about. And there is a big difference between these two. Because, at this point in the story, Abraham is not even saying "amen" to a creed. He's not saying "amen" to a system of belief of who God is. He's not saying "amen" to an intellectual understanding of Yahweh. He is saying "amen" to a person. He is saying "amen" to the person of God. He doesn't even know God, really. All he knows of God is this: he's walking along, he's worshiping another false god and Yahweh appears to him and says, "I want you to leave your home and I'm going to make you a great nation and I'm going to give you children, offspring and a land."

And Abraham says, "Okay. I'll follow You."

He knows nothing about this God. He doesn't go, "Could you give me a creed? Can I see on your website what you believe first or what I'm supposed to believe first?"

None of that. He says "amen" to the person of God. He says "amen" to Him. He says, "I'll follow you."

Then, later on, God brings him outside, shows him the stars and says, "Abraham, I'm going to do this for you."

And Abram says, "Amen. I trust You."

The reason why we say "amen" at the end of prayer is because it is a final word of declaration of trust. It's saying this: "God, I've said my piece and I put this matter into Your hands. Now I trust You with this prayer."

That's what "amen" means. It means, "God, I've said everything I'm going to say and I trust it into Your hands."

Because, faith is a "who" word. Believing is a "who" word. Trust is a "who" word. What these mean is that when I put my faith, I'm putting my faith in God; in the person of God and who God is. We make faith a "that" word. We make faith, "Do you believe that? Do you believe that?"

Which allows room for a whole rise of a whole new segment of people that they are calling the INOs. These are people who are – especially in a voting segment, and we have that kind of going on in our nation right now – called "In Name Only." What this means is this. INO. In name only. They are Christians in name only. The way that they vote or they way they self-identity is "Christian." Which means this: they check all the right boxes. So, "Do you believe that the Bible is God's Word?"

"Oh, yeah. Check. I've got that one."

"Do you believe that Jesus is God's Son?"

"Check."

"Do you believe that Jesus died for your sins?"

"Check."

"Do you believe that..."

"Check. Check. Check. Check."

And checking the boxes in a belief "that." The problem with this way of thinking about faith in belief is that's way too easy. That's way too easy to do. That is so easy to go, "Well, I believe that. I believe that. I believe that. I intellectually believe that. I can get there."

Look at this. James. If you've never read the book of James in the New Testament, you're going to get there soon. James does not pull punches at all. He just gets right to it. He says this. And this whole section, he's talking about faith as action.

He says this in James 2:19: **"You believe that there is one God."**

You believe "that" there is one good.

"Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder."

Do you hear what he said there? "Oh, you believe that? Oh, you believe that Jesus is God's Son? Oh, yeah. So do demons. Yeah, that's cool. You believe God? Demons do that too. Yeah."

Believing that God is X, Y or Z has its place, but it's so easy that a demon can do it. It's that easy. Technically, a demon can be a Christian in name only. That's what it's saying here, technically. And what is required from God is trust in God. That is something a demon does not have. Trust in the person of God. And when we're talking about faith, we're not so much talking about believing as much as we're talking about trusting. So, when the Bible talks about faith, talks about belief, it talks about trust. Trust is being all in with God. Like, "I am completely all in with You and my whole livelihood is wrapped up in You and my whole future is wrapped up in You and I've left family and friends to follow You and if You don't come through, I'm done. All of my life is wrapped up with You."

When we're talking about faith, we're not talking so much about believing as much we are about trusting. And trusting is that. Simply believing can be easy. See, believing can give us wiggle room to think our way out of a tight spot with God. It allows us room to go, "Well, you know what? That thing that happened in life did not match up with what I believed. Therefore, I'm out."

It gives you wiggle room. But, trusting doesn't give us any wiggle room. Trusting's like, "I trust God."

"Yeah, but this happened."

"I know. And I can't explain it. I trust God."

And trust takes work. Trust is not easy. The Christian life is not effortless. If someone told you the Christian life is effortless they: A) have not read the Bible or, B) they're not a Christian. So, those two things. The Christian life is not effortless. The Christian life takes work. And the work that we do starts with trust. That takes work. Trust takes work. It takes work for us to trust in God.

Yesterday, I was on a friends' roof watching the Blue Angels, right? Like half of San Francisco was on some roof, illegally, watching the Blue Angels. I was there with some friends and Tarik was there and Isabelle, his four-year-old daughter was there. If you've met Isabelle, she's a doll. She's cute. And we had to get up onto this large platform. On the roof and then up on this top part. Anyway, it's about as tall as me. Like, this wall and then a roof. And I had to jump up. So, Tarik got up there first and he's literally yanking people up. Just like Hulk. And I get up there and he's like, "Dave, just give me your arms. I'll yank you up."

And I'm like, "I don't think you can... oh!"

And he just, literally, all the way up. I lost a toe, but it's fine. Other than that, it's fine. Tarik's a strong guy. So, we're all getting down and Isabelle is sitting on the ledge and Tarik's down below and pretty much has her in his hands and he just says, "Jump. Daddy's got

you."

And I'm like, "Isabelle, he yanked me up. He can handle you. You're a little bit smaller than I am. I'm sure that he can."

And she even knows like, "My dad's strong. I know. I know."

So, Tarik counts. "1, 2..."

And I can see her little body like, "Uh, no."

That thing that happens where she lets go is work. That takes a lot of effort. It seems easy. Well, intellectually we know that Tarik's way strong, he can definitely catch his own daughter, he would not let her fall. Yes. We know this in our head, but there's still effort of going, "I have to let go." And I think that's what faith feels like. Faith feels like letting go. Letting go of what? Faith feels like letting go of control.

Second story. Mark 5. Under this I put "faith is losing control." Mark 5. I'm going to read this to you. This is literally one of my favorite stories in the Bible, and I say that a lot. But, I really mean it this time. I promise. This is so good. I'm just going to read it to you. I'll make little comments as we go along. Mark 5. I've referred to this story a lot. We have even over the last few weeks. Let me just read it to you because two people kind of cross paths here.

Mark 5:21: "When Jesus had again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered around him while he was by the lake. Then one of the synagogue leaders, named Jairus, came, and when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet. He pleaded earnestly with him, 'My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live.' So Jesus went with him.

"A large crowd followed and pressed around him. And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years."

By the way, Jairus' daughter is 12 years old.

"She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse."

Now, the thing is, the Bible looks very favorably on doctors. Luke was a doctor and wrote Luke and Acts. But, what it's saying here is that she exhausted all of her resources, had nothing left, did not get better from doctors or people or anything, but got worse.

"When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak," – like the hem of His garment, the bottom of His garment – "because she thought, 'If I touch his clothes, I will be healed.'"

Strange thing to think.

"Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering. At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him."

I'm going to ask Jesus about this sentence. What is that? I don't know what that is. He's like, "Whoa. Stop. Power has gone out from me." That's just a weird sentence.

"He turned around in the crowd and asked, 'Who touched my clothes?'"

The thing was, everyone was touching his clothes. This is a weird statement.

They say, **"'You see the people crowding against you,' his disciples answered, 'and yet you can ask, 'Who touched me?'"**

Like, "Everyone is literally touching you right now."

"But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. Then the woman, knowing what

had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. He said to her, 'Daughter, your faith has healed you.'

What does faith mean? Trust.

"Daughter, your [trust] has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.' While Jesus was still speaking, some people came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader. 'Your daughter is dead,' they said. 'Why bother the teacher anymore?'"

They called Him a "teacher." They're basically saying this: "Jesus could have done something when she was alive, but now that she's dead, Jesus' power stops. Don't bother Him anymore. He could have taught you something. He's a rabbi. He could have even done maybe a miraculous thing because He's a miracle worker. But, she's dead and that's where His power stops, because no one can go on that side of the grave. Don't bother Him anymore. His power has ceased. He can't help you anymore. Move along."

That's what they said to Him. "Move along. There's nothing else here."

Mark 5:36: "Overhearing what they said, Jesus told him, 'Don't be afraid; just [trust].'"

"He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James. When they came to the home of the synagogue leader, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. He went in and said to them, 'Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep.' But they laughed at him.

"After he put them all out, he took the child's father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was. He took her by the hand and said to her, 'Talitha koum!' (which means "Little girl, I say to you, get up!") Immediately the girl stood up and began to walk around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished. He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat."

Neither Jairus or this woman's faith was very impressive. And when they came to Jesus, they both had a plan. But, what it means to follow Jesus, to place your faith, to place your trust in Jesus is letting go of your plans. Jairus insisted that Jesus go home with him. He went to Jesus like, "Would you come home with me? My daughter is sick."

Now, there is an account of Jesus healing a Gentile Centurion's servant without going to his house. The Centurion went to Jesus. He was a Gentile. And he said, "Jesus, I'd like you to heal, but you know what? You don't even have to come to my house. I believe that you're so powerful that you can just say the word and my servant will be healed."

Jesus said, "I have not seen faith like this even in all of Israel."

Jairus' faith didn't reach that level. He didn't say, "Jesus, you don't have to come to my house."

His faith wasn't there. He begged Jesus: "Please come to my home."

And Jesus did not say to him, "Well, your faith isn't quite there yet. When you ask me to come over but then say I don't have to come over because you believe that my word's that powerful, then you come to me."

He didn't do that. He said, I'll go with you. And when He was on the way, He meets a woman and the woman's faith is really, really wonky. It's almost superstitious. She just wanted to touch this garment. She didn't want to meet Jesus at all. She didn't want to talk to Jesus. She didn't even want to worship Jesus. She just reached out barely on what He was wearing and she touched the hem of His garment. And when she did, Jesus knew that power went from Him. And when He asked who did it, she did not answer. She wasn't like, "Oh my gosh. It was me. It was me. Praise God. Everyone, come on."

She didn't do that. She hid. She didn't want to say, "It was me."

So, both of them had this really imperfect, wonky kind of faith. One of them was even a bit superstitious. And then they both came to Jesus with a plan. The woman tried to control the whole situation. She wanted like a drive-by healing. Like, "I'm just going to drive by

and touch Him and I want it on my own terms. This is how I see this thing going down. I'm going to touch His garment really creepy-like. Just like, 'Ooo, touch it,' and then I'm gone. I'm going to leave."

And Jairus came looking like, "Hey, this is what I want You to do, Jesus. I want You to heal my daughter by coming over. This is how I see the day going. I'm going to come find You, I'm going to bring You over to my house and You're going to heal my daughter."

Both the woman and Jairus, though having faith, went to Jesus with a plan. Almost trying to stay in control of the whole situation. It's like, "I'll follow Jesus, but this is how I'll follow Jesus. I'll go to Jesus for healing, but this is how I want it to go down. I'll serve Jesus, but this is what it has to look like. If I serve Him, this is how much time I can give Him every week."

And Jesus is like, "No. I want your entire life. I want it all."

So, the woman and Jairus both were both with Jesus for about five minutes and both their plans get thrown out the window. Five minutes. The woman tried to get this healing just by touching and done in secret. And Jesus says, "No. I want you to go public."

Because, just having faith is not virtuous in itself. Listen, people can have faith in some truly awful and tyrannical things and people. You can have faith and it can be misguided and you can hurt a lot of people. So, Jesus doesn't say – if you go to Forever 21 and start touching hems of garments and just have faith, that doesn't work. Faith in garments is not the thing. Faith in hems is not the thing. Faith in your own faith is not the thing. It's trust in Jesus that's the thing.

So, Jesus makes sure, "Okay. I want you to know that it was your trust."

Because she says, when she heard about Jesus, "If I touch the hem of His garment, He will make me well."

And Jesus wanted her to know, "Your faith that's placed imperfectly in me is what makes you well."

This is what Jesus was trying to do. Faith in Jesus. Jesus makes sure she knows it's not just faith in faith, but faith in Christ. Jairus tried to get Jesus over to his house for a healing and Jesus said, "You're not getting a healing today, Jairus. You're getting a resurrection today."

He was not expecting a resurrection. He was wanting a healing. So, the reality is when you place your faith in Christ, you have to give Him way more than you planned. But, on the other hand, you get from Christ way more than you ask or imagine. When you trust in Christ, you have to lose control. Bottom line. You have to lose control. And that does involve a lot of fear. It's scary not to be in control. You can imagine the fear that must have gripped the heart of the woman when Jesus stopped and shouted, "Who touched me? Because, someone just got healed and they're not fessing up about it."

Like, the fear that rose in her heart. Can you imagine the fear that must have gripped or crippled Jairus when the message got to him that his daughter was dead all because Jesus was talking to this woman? It's a fearful thing not to be in control. But, Jesus turned to Jairus and said, "Do not fear. Keep on trusting. Do not fear. Keep your eyes on me."

Jairus' world was spinning. I can imagine being a parent and losing a child is probably the worst thing that can ever, ever, ever happen in this life. So, the second that Jairus heard that his daughter was dead, his world was being flipped upside down. His world was spinning. His eyes were out of focus. Everything. And Jesus looks him right in the eye and He's like, "Keep your eyes on me. Keep your eyes on me. Don't doubt. Keep trusting. Keep trusting. Take me to your house. Keep trusting."

And I imagine what Jesus was asking from Jairus is this. What He's saying to him is this: "Entrust your daughter to me. Entrust your daughter to me."

At this point in the narrative, Jairus has his daughter and he knows what he needs for his own daughter. "I have to get her the best care possible. I've gone everywhere. I'm going to Jesus next. And then when she dies, that's it. I have no more control. I don't know where to turn."

And Jesus is like, "Will you entrust me with your daughter?"

And I imagine, as a dad, that's the hardest thing in the world to do. In AA, they have this preamble to the 12 steps which is basically a paragraph about letting go and surrendering control. You may have heard this paragraph. Let me read it to you. It goes like this:

"Our stories disclose in a general way what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now. If you have decided you want what we have and are willing to go to any length to get it, then you are read to take certain steps. At some of these we balked. We thought we could find an easier, softer way."

That sentence right there. Do you like that sentence? Listen to this.

"We thought we could find an easier, softer way."

I think that describes everyone before they come to Jesus. "There's got to be an easier way than that. There's got to be an easier way than completely losing control."

"But we could not. With all the earnestness at our command, we beg of you to be fearless and thorough from the very start. Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas and the result was nil until we let go absolutely. Remember that we deal with alcohol—cunning, baffling, powerful! Without help it is too much for us. But there is One who has all power—That One is God. May you find Him now! Half measures availed us nothing. We stood at the turning point. We asked His protection and care with complete abandon. Here are the steps we took, which are suggested as a Program of Recovery."

That is so important to any recovery. Faith in God – not to downplay alcoholism – feels kind of like a recovery. An ongoing recovery from independence, from self-reliance, from, "There has to be an easier way. I can think my way out of this one," to a dependency on the person of God no matter what. That you believe in God and you trust in God anyway. You're like, "My life is this, but I trust in God anyway."

Third and final story. Psalm 73. Lastly, moving towards trust. This one's a personal one for me. This Psalm has always been a personal one. This last week, we had an early morning elder meeting praying through some really hard stuff going on. We called a meeting to pray through some stuff and to talk about some stuff. You know, you sit around an elder meeting – and I called the meeting, so everyone's looking at me like, "Hey, start the meeting."

And I'm like, "I don't know how to start this meeting."

So, Dave Dealy goes, "Well, let's just read a Psalm."

And he does the holy flip. Have you ever done the holy flip? Like, the flip. Just flip and point. That thing. He's like, "Boom," and he puts his finger down and he's like, "That's the one."

And I don't even believe in that stuff, but God did something through that thing. He turned to Psalm 73. Psalm 73. I'm like, "Oh, gosh. Wow."

It says this in Psalm 73:1-2: **"Surely God is good to Israel to those who are pure in heart. But as for me, my feet had almost slipped; I had nearly lost my foothold."**

The psalmist starts off by talking about who God is and that God is good and that He is good to those who are pure at heart. The psalmist knows these things as a faithful Israelite. He knows that God blesses the righteous and God punishes the wicked. Period. That's the way God works. God punishes the wicked and God blesses the righteousness. That equals God's goodness. God is good meaning He does what is right. But, this psalmist had almost stumbled. He nearly slipped. Why did he nearly slip?

Psalm 73:3-5: **"For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong. They are free from common human burdens; they are not plagued by human ills."**

He sees that the wicked prosper. "What's up with that, God? I thought the wicked are punished? But, the wicked are prospering and the righteous are suffering. That makes no sense, God. Explain Yourself. I don't understand that. It doesn't even seem like You're matching up to what You even said about Yourself. It seems that You're doing nothing about this, God."

And here is where his faith that God is like this starts to unravel. "I don't know if I can do this anymore. I had had all these structures in place where I believed that you acted according to this and You did this certain thing, but now You're working outside of that and I don't understand what's going on and I think I don't know if I can do this."

And the thought of God not coming through to what He has heard about God is so distressing that he's literally coming undone.

Look at Psalm 73:15-16: **"If I had spoken out like that, I would have betrayed your children. When I tried to understand this, it troubled me deeply."**

He is saying that he couldn't even talk about what he was going through. He had such a crisis of faith, a dark night of the soul, that all he could do was write a psalm to God. He couldn't even process it with other people. He's like, "If I started telling people what I was thinking, I might have caused Your children to stumble. I might have betrayed Your children. I might have sowed disbelief in Your people. I couldn't even do that. I couldn't even process that with them."

"When I tried to understand all this, it troubled me deeply."

He's saying that he's trying to understand the evil in the world and how God fits into it and it troubled him so much and so deeply.

And then he says this in Psalm 73:17: **"Until I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny."**

There's a moment in the psalmist where he can't take thinking his way out of this, so he just decides to enter the sanctuary of God. "I can't reconcile the way the world is. I just can't reconcile it. I can't reconcile why the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer. I can't reconcile how the rich people oppress the poor and the poor people can't... I just don't understand it. Why some people are born into a place where they have the lavishness of society and wealth and privilege, and some people are born in the worst possible situations. I don't understand it."

And all he can do is go to the sanctuary of God. There, he sees that God can be trusted. Because, one day, God will eventually come through and execute His justice. Just not yet. And that a lot of patience is needed. The reason why I share this is because all the evidence around this guy seemed to point toward how God doesn't follow through on what He said He would. That's what it feels like. The psalmist, though, still enters the sanctuary.

And what this means is this is what happens when your daughters dies and Jesus doesn't raise her from the dead. I have experienced this with very, very close people. What happens when Jesus doesn't raise your daughter from the dead? What happens when people prophecy over your daughter, "Oh, she's going to be made well." Or your son, "Oh, they're going to be made well." Or your spouse or whatever. "Oh, they're going to be made well."

And it doesn't happen. What happens then? See, a belief in a system can give you the wiggle room to go, "I'm out of this. I can't do this anymore."

But, trust doesn't give you that wiggle room. Trust goes, "Well, then I'm going to show up in the sanctuary of God and I'm going to keep trusting anyway. I'm going to keep trusting anyway."

And what the psalmist does is he moves toward God, not away from God. He just steps toward. He leans into God. He doesn't go, "You know what? I can't reconcile this stuff. I'm out. I can't do this."

He just steps in. Trust is moving towards God even when everything seems stacked against you. Some of you in here are struggling with your faith in God due to our world's problems, maybe something personal you're going through or maybe a best friend of yours is going through something. And you had believed God said certain things or things that He would do or promises He had made and now you don't see those things happening and you're tired, but you're here. You're here right now. And you've made a move toward God. Simple as it may seem. It's not the mountain moving kind of stuff. It's not the stuff that people can

talk to God and say, "God, we want You to do this."

You just don't have that. You just go, "I just took a step. I just called an Uber and got here. That's it. That was my faith today."

And that's what's going on in this Psalm. And that can be the biggest act of faith in God. Just showing up. Trusting enough to move towards God. For this psalmist, this was the only option open to him. This was the only option open to him. Because, he had placed his trust in the person of God. So, he was not going anywhere. He couldn't go anywhere. His belief was not in a system of beliefs, but it was in the person of God. A system of beliefs has its place. It does have its place. I love systematic theology. I love all that stuff. But, our faith must be in the person of Jesus.

So, when we say we value faith, we mean that we value, as a community, making decisive movements towards God in trust, against all odds at times, that we are learning to let go of our control and depend on the person of Jesus, that we are okay with others bringing their wonky, sometimes superstitious faith to Jesus because we trust that Jesus will learn, will take this person and learn how to make sure it's put in the right place. So, when people come into our lives or in our community group in our church that have this sort of wonky faith, we don't go, "No, no, no, no. Didn't you read on the website we believe this, this, this and this?"

We go, "We trust that our wonky faith, Jesus will take and place squarely on Him and we can trust Him for that."

Let's pray.

God, I pray that we would move into some of these areas that You might be calling us to lose control or to let go of control. The more and more that I see it, Lord, I think that we're all in some sort of recovery. Our recovery from self-reliance and independence, our recovery from our coping mechanisms or our ways that we attach or detach. You're making all of us like You, Lord. You're making all of us like You.

So, this morning, I pray that we'd make a move towards You. I pray for those people who just got in a car today or put on their shoes today and just walked over here or drove here and that was the only thing they had the strength to do today because their faith is like hanging on a thread. I pray they'd go deeper still. I ask, God, that You'd give them the strength and maybe even the courage to move even closer towards You. To come forward and remember You through communion. To come and ask for prayer that has really no direction. Just saying, "I need prayer."

Or maybe even coming and kneeling. I pray for those that are grasping onto their life right now. Like, holding on and saying, "Yeah, but I can do this. I can do this. I know I've messed up. I know that I've done that. But, I can do this this time."

I pray, God, that they would let go. And that's going to feel like a trust fall, that's going to feel like all those cliché things that we say. It's going to feel like that. But, I pray this church would step into faith in Christ. I pray for those that have not placed their trust and their faith in You, Jesus. But today, they're there. They're right there and they want to. I pray they'd move a step toward You and they would receive Your love and forgiveness and grace, they would confess their need for You and receive You as their God and Savior. So, we move towards You now. In Jesus' name, amen.