

“Trust the Pilot”  
Churchnic August 7, 2022  
Genesis 15:1-6; Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16

We all know what a parachute is. We all know how they work. We’ve seen them in the movies. Maybe you know someone who has used a parachute. We believe in parachutes. We have faith in parachutes.

But if we’re in a plane and suddenly the pilot says, “This plane is going down and your only hope is to grab a parachute and jump,” that’s different. Do we trust the pilot? Do we trust the parachute?

Believing is a big picture kind of thing. It’s something we do with our minds. Yes, we believe in parachutes. We have faith parachutes work.

But trusting is personal. Trusting involves the mind and the body. It means being involved, doing our part. It means putting on the parachute and jumping and trusting it will take us safely to the ground.

I say all this because of a funny quirk of the Greek language. In our Hebrews passage we read about people of faith. They have faith, they believe in God. The Greek word is ‘pistis’ and it can mean faith or belief. It can also mean trust. Trust.

In this passage, I prefer trust. All these people believed in God. No doubt. But they also had to trust God was with them. They had to trust God and do their part.

Abraham believed in God. Certainly. But when God spoke, Abraham had to trust God enough to get up and leave his country, his family, and his home and go where God told him. Abraham had to trust God enough to do his part in God’s plan.

Abraham and Sarah are old. I mean, old. God says they are going to have a son. But they have to do their part. What? We have to do what? Well, do we trust God or not? If we trust God, let’s do it. Let’s be involved. Let’s do our part.

It’s not just a matter of believing God exists, that God loves us. It’s trusting God enough to get busy and do our part in God’s plan.

Why does the writer to the Hebrews keep going on and on about faith, belief, trust? He’s doing it because it’s what the Hebrews need to hear. The Hebrews believe in God, but they’re having a hard time trusting.

The congregation of the Hebrews is sort of like a Church in the Parking Lot. They believe in God. That's not the question. They have faith there is a God who loves them. At least, enough faith to get to the parking lot.

But getting out of the car and going into the church, that's a different matter. Getting out of the car and going into the church means being involved. It means doing. It means trusting the pilot enough to do what the pilot says.

You and I, we are people of faith. We believe in God, sure. If we don't believe in God, why are we here?

The question is do we trust God? Do we trust God enough to do our part, to let go of our anxieties and step out, trusting God is with us? Do we trust God enough to step out of our comfort zone and do something we've never done before? Like embracing livestream? Or having a cantor? Or doing VBS in an entirely new way? Do we trust God enough to be a part of the Congregational Mission Study? Do we trust God enough to go beyond easy giving to sacrificial giving?

We believe in God. Sure. Even the devil believes in God. But do we trust God enough to get busy and do our part?

We have it in our history. We've done it before. When covid came we didn't close up shop and disband. We got busy finding new ways to do ministry. When our building burned and our pastor left, we didn't stand around and stare. We got busy finding a new pastor and building a new church.

This is what Christians have always done. When Calvin, Knox and Luther were persecuted they didn't quit. They trusted God. They kept going. When the Apostle Paul was shipwrecked and jailed and beaten, he didn't throw in the towel. He trusted God and stayed true to his ministry.

And when Jesus was crucified, he knew he could call on God and make it stop. But he didn't. He trusted God was with him and God would stay with him through his death and into his resurrection and new life. Like Abraham, Jesus trusted God. And I'm sure, like Abraham, God reckoned it to him as righteousness.

Whatever happened to the Hebrews? Did they sit in the parking lot a while and then go home? Did they trust God enough to get out of their cars and enter the church? We don't know. No one knows what happened to them.

But I know what we are going to do. I know what we are going to do because I know we are people who don't just believe in God. We trust God. We trust God is actively doing something with us.

If our pilot suddenly appears and says, "We're changing course," we won't be phased. If our pilot announces, "We're expecting turbulence, hang on," we'll do it without batting an eye. We trust our pilot.

And if our pilot says, "Someone needs to crawl out on the wing and fix that oil leak," I know we'll all jump up and volunteer because that's the kind of people we are. That's the kind church we are. We don't just believe in God. We trust God enough to get busy and do our part.

Right now, the ride's pretty smooth. Not a lot of turbulence. At times like this it's easy to have faith. But the pilot may come out any moment and ask us to do something. If that happens let's remember Abraham, Sarah, the Apostle Paul, John Calvin, Jesus, and all those we have known and trusted through the years right up through today.

May we trust God. And may God reckon it to us as righteousness. Amen.