

GENESIS 15:1-6  
HOW BIG IS YOUR JESUS?

Trust is hard. Why do we find it hard to trust God? Here are some reasons you might give: “God hasn’t answered my prayers as I expected; I’m frightened to trust - I’ve trusted others and they’ve let me down; I want to run my life my way; if I trust God He might ask too much of me; I’ve tried to trust Him in the past, but it didn’t work out!” It is interesting that, when I googled that phrase “Why I find it hard to trust God?” into my computer and asked it to search “Why I find it hard to trust God?” the top answers were not a list of reasons as I might have expected, but the answers. “If you find it hard to trust God, here’s the remedy!” It is not always a great deal of help to us to get the answers quickly; sometimes we want to feel that people are listening to us when we find life hard; sometimes we want to find that other people think the same way we do before we go looking for answers; sometimes it is not answers we want, but just a sense that I’m not only one who feels that way. Maybe you’ve discovered that already this morning and if I do nothing else for you in next few minutes, maybe that sense of others struggling in the same way has helped you in your struggle for faith.

It is also interesting, when you look at story of Jesus, only once does He say “trust me” as a command and that is at end of His ministry, recorded in John 14: “*Trust in...*” (John 14:1) Other people saw that He trusted God: His enemies, as He hung on cross said that “*He trusted...*” (Matthew 27:43) and with perhaps slight sarcasm spoke of the possibility of God coming to rescue Jesus from the cross. You find the word ‘trust’ most of all in the Psalms, where it is most often one of two things: either it is one person urging another to trust – “*trust in...*” (Psalm 37:3) – or it is a declaration of the psalmist’s own faith – “*I trust...*” (Psalm 52:8) The whole Bible story is full of people who find it hard to trust God; sometimes they trusted other things instead and that got them into trouble. They found it hard to trust, for many of same reasons as we saw before: “God hasn’t answered our prayers, or kept His promises; God has left us alone and life is hard.”

We might struggle to find the word ‘trust’ in parts of the Bible story, but the idea is everywhere there! Trust is the heart of the relationship between God and His people, between the people and their God. Almost nowhere is there a command to ‘trust’ because Jesus knows that you can’t command someone to trust you. Trust is something you must inspire in people. When those fighting the US presidential campaign urge people to “trust me and I will make America great again!” they have a real problem – people are finding it hard to trust either candidate; neither of them totally inspires trust. Trust is inspired, not commanded! What we find in the Bible is God revealing Himself as someone to trust, someone who is faithful, someone who keeps His promises and answers prayers, someone you can be inspired to trust. What Jesus does in the gospels is to show people what He is like, compassionate and powerful, someone they can trust, and so He inspires that kind of response in the hearts and minds of His followers. Trust is never commanded, but is everywhere inspired.

The book of Hebrews is more of a sermon than a letter; no-one quite sure who the preacher is, but if ever a people had reasons to struggle in their trusting God, it was these people. They were Christians from a Jewish background who were being persecuted for their faith, some were in prison, and others had been martyred; many of them were thinking about giving up the Christian faith and going back to their old ways because these were safer ways. What does the preacher do? Well, later in his sermon he will try to inspire them by telling stories of people who have lived by faith in previous generations; Abraham’s story is there, amongst lots of others. But the first thing the preacher does is to remind these people of how great and good Jesus is and why they trusted Him in the first place and why they should trust Him now. The nature of our trust in Jesus is always the answer to the question: how big is your Jesus?

We read two pieces from Hebrews, both about Jesus, both of which show us something different about Him. The first piece, from chapter 1, is all about Jesus the Son of God. “His

*son, whom...*” (*Hebrews 1:2f*) This is Jesus in all His glory as the Son of God: through Jesus God made the universe and everything belongs to Jesus; Jesus shows us what God is like; He sustains everything. Here is the cosmic Jesus, Jesus the Son of God whose being fills the universe and who has power not only to create but to sustain the universe. It is a picture of Jesus in His glory; a picture of the powerful Jesus, the Son of God in all His glory. So when Christians are frightened that Jesus doesn’t have the power to help them in face of their persecution and suffering, Hebrews reminds them just how great Jesus really is; Jesus holds the universe in His hands; Jesus is able to save!

The second piece we read shows the other side of Jesus, Jesus the human being, one of us. *“We see...”* (*Hebrews 2:9f*) “brothers”; “the same family” – Jesus is human, just as we are; He is One of us, a real human being; more than that, He suffered and died, facing these real, tough human experiences, and all part of His being human. This Jesus, whom we call Saviour, knows what our life is like; He knows what we face; when are persecuted for our faith, He knows what that feels like because He has been there; when we face death, He knows what that feels like because He has been there. Jesus gave up His glory to share our human nature, and to live in our neighbourhood.

The sermon’s point is this: *“fix your...”* (12:2) You have to get to the end of the sermon, chapter 12, to get the point, but this is the point of the sermon. There is no command to trust, but simply to keep focused on Jesus. Fixing their eyes on Jesus will inspire them to trust Him. They will see someone worthy of their trust, someone big and powerful enough to save them and human enough to understand them and bring them grace. The answer to the struggle with trust is not a command to trust more, but is a deeper appreciation of the character and quality of the one to trust. This is why people struggle in the US, because there are pieces in the character or background of both candidates that make trusting them a difficult thing to do; they cannot command people to trust; trust can only be inspired. Jesus is the perfect One to trust, because there is nothing in His character or background to create that kind of wave of discontent. Jesus is the perfect One to trust because He is perfect in every way: He is powerful and strong, loving and compassionate; He is the perfect combination of character and experience. So *“fix your...”* (*Hebrews 12:2*) and let trust be inspired.

I wonder what was going through Abram’s mind that night out under the stars! We don’t really know. We do know that God had made a promise to Abram that he would have a son; it had not happened; we also know that it would take 25 years from the beginning to the end of that promise. Were doubts creeping in? Eliezer of Damascus, a servant, is the front-runner to be his heir! But no, God said, it would not be him. What does God do? There is no command to trust, but there is an inspirational picture: *“Count the stars...”* (*Genesis 15:5*) We know that God kept that promise; Isaac was born and every Jew on the planet has claimed their descent from Abraham through Isaac; how many millions are there? Every Christian on the planet claims spiritual descent from Abraham through Isaac, as children of the promise; how many millions are there? *“Abram believed God”* (*Genesis 15:6*) and years later, at the age of 100, Abraham saw God keep His promise. His view of God got a little bit bigger under the stars that night; he was inspired to trust God more.

You need a smartphone or a tablet for the next bit. Someone sends you a picture on your phone and it is a picture of your friend or your grandson, but the person is small dot in the centre of the picture. But here’s what smartphones can do: you can put fingers on the screen and by touching the screen, instantly make the person bigger! You could hardly make them out before and by the touch of the screen all of a sudden they fill the screen. Oh that it were so easy to make the picture of Jesus in our minds and hearts bigger! There is no simple answer to all of reasons we gave as the start as to “why I find it hard to trust God!” but in one way or another, the answer to all of them is a bigger picture of Jesus. Trust is to be inspired not commanded, and we learn to trust when we have a picture of Jesus as someone who inspires that trust; trust deepens as the picture gets bigger. The preacher in Hebrews is trying

to give the Christians a picture of Jesus, and to remind them of how big that picture is, or give them a bigger picture than they already have. The bigger the picture, the deeper our trust will be; that's a simple answer, but certainly not meant as a trite answer!

A father was at his wit's end; his son was ill and no-one could find a cure for him, from his fits and convulsions. He didn't know what to do, but he had heard about this man called Jesus, and His reputation for healing people. So he brought his son, but Jesus wasn't there and an argument broke out between His disciples and the crowd. When Jesus did arrive, the man brought his son to Jesus and said "*if you can...*" (*Mark 9:22*) to which Jesus replied "*if you...*" (*Mark 9:23*) The father's reply lives on in the gospels and he represents many, if not most of us, when he said "*I do...*" (*Mark 9:24*) He lived in that place where faith is, but there are questions; where faith is not as strong as we would like; where faith has doubts and there is a struggle to believe. How many of us identify with that man; does he represent our faith and our experience?

Jesus the Son of God, full of power and glory, who has the universe in His hands; who is able to help and save. Jesus, one of us, the human being, who knows what life is like for us, who has tasted it first hand, and has suffered and died; He knows how we feel and brings grace and mercy to our lives. "*Fix your eyes on Jesus*" (*Hebrews 12:2*) Trust is inspired; how big is your picture of Jesus? The more we read of Jesus in the gospels, the bigger will be that picture. Life can have so much struggle for faith; there are so many hard times; there is so much longing and yearning. Be inspired by Jesus and let trust grow stronger and stronger!