



In God We Trust

This statement is embossed on American currency, yet today some question the relevancy of these words and the validity of their imprint on money. Trust, and more importantly, in whom and what we place our hope can vary greatly and many of the differences are situated within basic demographics—age, gender, socioeconomic status, etc. The notion of trust had a drastically different meaning several months ago, regardless of demographics. One day that may come to mind is Ash Wednesday 2020. As we began our annual Lenten journey, we anticipated fish fries, Bible studies, prayer, meditation, and fasting. All in preparation for the Easter celebration in April. And then, in a relatively short time, our worlds were turned upside down with information about a widespread virus posing a threat on the United States. This was no longer a long-distance problem being observed from afar...it was in our neighborhoods, schools and businesses. The level of fear and anxiety has been compared to that of 9-11. But this was much different. After 9-11, activities began to return to some kind of normal within a week or so...as businesses began to reopen, students returned to classes, and airplanes returned to the sky. April 26th will mark the two-month anniversary since Ash Wednesday 2020, and most are still awaiting some glimpse of “normal” and yet the waves of fear and anxiety continue.

Our human response to these events is understandable. Fear is an emotion in which our bodies typically respond with fight/flight/freeze. Anxiety symptoms (hyperventilating, racing heartbeat, sweaty palms, panic sensation) are the body’s response to prolonged worry; mostly about the future...will things ever be normal or will it always be like this? Some may ask, does fear lead to anxiety or just the opposite; or perhaps they go hand-in-hand? One new term that’s recently surfaced is “anticipatory grief,” which refers to feelings of grief occurring before an impending loss. The impending loss refers to our future as we think about what it might look like instead of what we may have hoped for.

We could review the scientific research about our autonomic nervous system (composed of the sympathetic and

parasympathetic nervous systems) and how their function in stress situations lead to experiencing fear and anxiety due to changes in our brain chemistry resulting in these bodily responses; but can the information be trusted coming from a non-scientist such as myself? And besides, there’s not all that much interest in the scientific origins behind fear and anxiety symptoms. We just want it all to stop and go back to normal, right?

So, we rely upon our instincts and intuition to guide our actions and responses in these stressful times. This may translate into a desperate hunt to satisfy our appetite for information. As with other traumatic events, we turn to mainstream media but now there’s also social media as additional information resources; at our fingertips in an instant! But oh, how to determine which resources are reliable and trustworthy? Wading through the massive amount of media information can be overwhelming in itself. Some put their trust in local television and radio and others prefer larger, mainstream media (some might call this old-school thinking). While others put their trust in live press conferences by governmental leaders. Still others place their faith in the opinions and postings of celebrities, family and friends on social media. Who to trust? Where to turn? What’s reliable? Are there any concrete answers about our future?

None of the above resources can impart God’s wisdom to any of us. Which begs the bigger question, is it in God we truly trust? We may reach out to God in prayer, imploring Him for guidance and strength in these troubled times, but what do you hear? In these times, I’m reminded of the story of Samuel (1 Samuel 3). You may recall this is the story of Eli and Samuel where they lie down, the Lord speaks to Samuel but Samuel is confused and thinks it’s Eli speaking. Once Eli provides Samuel with a suggested response, Samuel then responds appropriately to the Lord’s call, who imparts a message of His coming actions in Israel. Samuel was then recognized as a prophet of the Lord.

How closely are we listening to God’s words and more importantly what’s our response? Trust in the words of the Lord is anchored in our faith. While there are physical challenges to participating in worship, there are no restrictions to access God’s word and our appetite for information can be satisfied in His word. But we must also listen and trust that when the Lord imparts a message to us of love, hopefulness and helpfulness that we then pass this along to others by whatever means available. A card, letter or telephone call reaching out to someone with wishes for a blessed day or that you’re keeping them in thoughts and prayers can make a difference in the world of another, especially when the actions are accomplished out of trust rooted in God’s inspiration. We can’t go back and tomorrow is unknown so how about we live for today?

Just for today, I will let go of anger.

Just for today, I will let go of worry.

Just for today, I will give thanks for my many blessings.

Just for today, I will do my work honestly.

Just for today, I will be kind to my neighbor and every living thing.

You would be amazed at the things you can do, just for today.

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