

The First Presbyterian Church of Birmingham
The Voice – Our Choice: Will You Trust?
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Genesis 8:6-19, Mark 9:2-9

“Can I take a look at your paper?” It was a question that I had gotten used to from one of my freshmen year college roommates. He and I were taking the same Intro to Philosophy class, though in different sections, and we were both having a very difficult time with it. In many ways I am a very concrete guy and doing the kind of abstract stuff we were doing in class was not my cup of tea. Nonetheless my roommate was having a much more difficult time than I was because he was not often in class. Our entire grade for the semester was based on the three papers we were to write. We had written two and he had made Bs and I had made Cs. This seemed a bit odd since before writing each of his papers he had asked to see mine. Finally when he asked to see my completed final paper, I asked him why, if he was making better grades than I was did he want to see my papers. His response? He had copied my papers verbatim, and then turned them in. I don’t remember what went through my mind at that moment, but it was one of those lessons that there are people in this world that you just can’t trust; my roommate because he copied my papers and my professor because he gave my roommate better grades for the same paper.

This is one of the great dilemmas for all of us, figuring out whom you can and can’t trust. Let me ask, how many of you have someone that you can trust? How many of you know someone that you can’t trust? And lest you think that this trust dilemma is something new, all you have to do is look at the Noah story. Here Noah is floating around in a boat with all sorts of flesh eating animals and a limited supply of food. Sure God was nice to him and his family. God had him build a boat so he could escape the flood. God had shut the door on the ark to protect them. It certainly appeared that this God could be trusted. But really, it had been forty days and there was no sign of land...just water...nothing but water. Noah kept checking the water. He sent out a raven...no luck. Then he sent out a dove...no luck again. We might imagine that Noah was beginning to wonder if this God was as trustworthy as a God might be...and for those of you who are adults...this is the point of the story as Genesis tells it.

Our second story is about Jesus and his disciples...and before we get to the story let’s remind ourselves that the disciples all had to decide if Jesus is trustworthy; if Jesus is who Jesus says he is, the messiah of the world. I ask this question for several reasons. First there had been other messiahs, or at least people claiming to be messiahs. All of them had ended up being killed by the Romans, because Rome had no desire to have messiahs running around all over the place stirring up the people. Second, the disciples had been asked to give up everything; their homes, their families, their businesses. They had cut ties with almost everyone and everything that they knew. Third, they were completely dependent on the kindness of strangers. Food to eat, clothes to wear and places to sleep would only come their way if some kind soul provided or paid for it. Considering all of this, there must have been times when the disciples wondered if Jesus was a guy they could trust.

Fortunately for all involved, our stories allow us to see how Noah and the disciples discovered that they could trust God and Jesus. First, consider Noah. The waters dried up. It did not happen overnight. It took a while. But it happened nonetheless. Slowly the land dried up and everyone got off of the boat alive. They did not end up as lion or tiger food. The provisions had been sufficient. The end result was

that Noah and his entire family were not only saved but were given a new lease on life. This God that had cleansed the world turned out to be a God that could be trusted. And the Jesus story? The entire story is one in which Peter, James and John are given the assurance that they need that Jesus is the one for whom they had been looking. In a sense it was an Angie's List moment. For those of you unfamiliar with Angie's List it is a service where you can turn for unbiased references for services from a wide variety of individuals or companies. At the top of the mountain, in the midst of the transfiguration of Jesus, the disciples got Jesus references. First it is Elijah, the greatest prophet of all time who gives his approval to Jesus. Next it is Moses, the law giver, who does the same. Then it is the very voice of God who tells the disciples that Jesus is the one to whom they ought to listen. You are not going to do much better than that.

In one sense then it would be easy to say, "I trust God, therefore I trust Jesus." We see the track record that demonstrated a level of commitment by God to God's people, and in some sense to the entire creation. Thus there is trust. There is, however, one thing missing from this sense of trust discussion...and that is that Biblically, trust means a willingness to follow; follow wherever God leads. Trust is not an intellectual agreement with a proposition that God is trustworthy. It is instead a commitment to risk everything, trusting that God will be with us through the journey to which we are called. Noah risked everything by building and sailing on the ark. The disciples risked by giving up their previous lives and traveling with Jesus. This is the essence of trust. This is trust through action. The challenge for each of us then is to ask ourselves, do I trust God enough to follow? Do I trust God enough to risk?

My challenge for you this week is to ask, How am I demonstrating trust in our God who has demonstrated that through Jesus, God can be trusted?