Lifelong Trust

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[0:00] Well, here we are, lifelong trust. We're at the end of our sermon series, Growing Older and Wiser. I don't know about you, I hope you feel older and wiser, probably just wiser, probably. And hope is a crucial element of what we've been talking about through the last few weeks in our teaching, in our home groups, wherever we've been listening, maybe on our podcasts. And this morning's psalm reminds us, as for me, I will always have hope. I will praise you more and more.

I will always have hope. And through that, I will praise you more and more. And during this service, I think, again, I've been reflecting on those two things, hope and trust, two important elements of our discipleship. Because life, as Russ said, tends to speed up as we get older. And as it speeds up, I need to learn who to trust in wisdom, because I find there's not much time there to reflect.
Trust. Trust is high on my character list. It's high on my character must for teams. You know, I want to know the people that I can trust. I want to know the people that can trust me. It's an important element in not only our working partnerships, but in our life as well. Trust is so important. And we hope together, we trust together. And we all know, we all know what broken trust is like. We know how hard that is for us to bear. And there is this lifelong trust that we're talking about in this series. So what does that look like? What does lifelong trust look like for each of us in our own settings, in our relationships, in our everyday, most importantly, with God?
If you throw into Google, lifelong trust, the one that resonated with me that came out is, trust takes years to build, seconds to break, and forever to repair. I'm not really sure I agree with that. But it's an interesting take that somebody's had. And as I thought about that quote, it took me back, when I was a custody sergeant in Central Police Station in Bristol. The one thing you hoped you weren't working a two to ten shift in Advent and Christmas, because all the young people would come out sadly, and your custody officer office would be swamped with young people who had gone shoplifting on the broadmead on a Saturday afternoon. It was a real sadness, because a lot of the young people that came in or were brought in were from very, very kind and loving families. They were wealthy, they had things they didn't need to go out stealing. And yet, they would come, maybe they'd done it for a dare, maybe they'd done it just for kicks or whatever. But you'd be confronted by this person.
But then, you would be confronted by a parent or parents or carers. And the first question that they would say in their upset and their distress would be to say to their child, however can I trust you again? How can I trust you to go out without knowing that you're going to do this? Trust is such an important element of our life. Some said trust is a gift, don't try to exchange it for something else.
[4:06] Lifelong trust, I guess, has been the constant, I hope, for many of us in our discipleship journey, in different forms and different shapes. And so, I have to ask myself at this sermon series, where am I now? Where am I now? Where are many of us? Halfway home, thought I'd get a plug there, for sale at a manse near you, on the podcast. And who is there?

Francis, Henry Francis Light wrote a great hymn that we know well, and maybe sums it up really well. He said, abide with me. Abide with me. When other helpers fail and comforts flee, help of the helpless, oh, abide with me. And that sense of God being with us, Corrie Ten Boone said, when a train goes through a tunnel and it gets dark, you don't throw away the ticket and jump off. You sit still and you trust the engineer. That's trust. And so, as we think about this, we think about that issue of when you stop trusting. Because my experience, and maybe the same as yours, is when I stop trusting, the door is left wide open, way, way wide open, for anger, doubt, frustration, suspicious, bitterness to walk in. And as we said, as life accelerates, that too can accelerate if we don't trust. Trust in the one. And sadly, if you're not careful, cynicism, frustration, bitterness and anger takes over, and we become like Victor Meldry. If you're listening on the podcast, we've just watched

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Victor Meldry and the toilet scene. I hope this series, as I said, has challenged us. Because it says, even when I am old and grey, says the psalm. And maybe that's got to be Russ's next book, really? Three quarters or seven eighths home towards home. You know, when I am old and grey, but it's psalmist continues and says, do not forsake me, my God. Do not forsake me till I declare your power to the next generation, your mighty axe for all of those who are to come. And there's an imperative in this about growing older and wiser of how we reflect that trust that we have in God for those who are following us, for those who look to us, for those who come to us. And that's where I think I am at the end of this sermon series. I think that's where I am. People will let us down, trust gets knocked, we slip, yet God is constant. And in him, we trust. And in him, we trust. In his strength, we carry on. And often, it is in his strength alone, as we will know that we carry on in his strength. Joel Alston said, I believe if you keep your faith, you keep your trust, you keep the right attitude. If you're grateful, you'll see God open up new doors. And that's really interesting, because I sensed this morning before I came walking up here, I sensed that thing of God wanting to open new doors. I sensed that thing of maybe the Lord speaking about new doors for us. And that may be not just new doors in the way in which we think, but maybe new doors in our character, to actually have a deeper faith and trust as we move towards this exciting Advent season.
Perhaps this series has already opened the door for you. Fresh possibilities, fresh wisdom. Do people see age and kingdom wisdom in us? Is that what they look for us, to us? Is that what they see? Is our godly character coming out through what we say and we do in the everyday? Do they see us growing older and wiser with Jesus? Because there's a beauty in that. And we all know those saints that have grown beautifully older and wiser with Jesus, who we know and we love, we admire and we go to.
Have we declared his greatness to the next generation? Have we done that? Have we actively done that? Have we focused our all towards those which are coming, which we long to reach? And surely that's our hope, isn't it? This thing that we call church, God's kingdom increases and multiplies in us and through us, and it doesn't stop. We trust, we hope, we choose Jesus because he chose us first.
[9:35] And he trusts, even when we let him down. If God puts his trust in me again and again, then he is worthy of my trust, which he so richly deserves. We have a choice, grow older and wiser with Jesus or grow older and cynical without. And we trust. I will come and proclaim your mighty acts, sovereign Lord. I will proclaim your righteous deeds, yours alone. Since my youth, God, you have taught me and to this day, I declare your marvellous deeds. Where did it stop? There is no full stop. It continues. It never stops, but increases. Because the psalm is about you and me. And we express our hope and trust in what we do.

We praise God and thank him. Your righteousness, God, reaches to the heavens and who has done great things. Who is like you, God? As I was writing this, I thought, the number of people that have let me down.
You know, we can all do the list. And I'm sure I'm on other people's lists as well. But who is like you, God, that would never, ever, ever let me down? Because you are not on that list.
And you never will be. It's true. Though you have made me see troubles, many and bitter, you will restore my life again. And there isn't one of us here that have seen troubles, many and bitter, as the psalmist says. Enough to destroy me over and over and over again. Do I allow them to define me? Does God allow them to define me? No. Because my trust is in him. He will restore my soul. All is well with my soul. There is hope.
We were talking in our prayers. I think people need the message now. I really think people need the message now of hope and trust. If there are two things that we need and the people that we are seeking to reach and we know is hope and trust. They need to hear the experience, that trust, through us and the power of the Holy Spirit, so they don't miss the message, so that they don't see a church that's dying. So rather than a church of people who are full of life on their way to glory, full of hope and trust, who express a trust and hope that the world cannot give.
[12:45] And I love that prayer when it's prayed over you, that thing of trust and hope, that sense of God's peace that the world cannot give. Just like to invite the team back up if we could and noodle along.

That would be brilliant. So where does that leave us? At the end as we enter into Advent where we talk about trees coming up where we've got this huge opportunity, when it's time to give people the gifts. And it's our time to give people the gift of Jesus. What a great gift of hope and trust.

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Then it says, my lips will shout for joy when I sing praise to you, I whom you have delivered. It doesn't say again and again, but I think it should. My tongue will tell of your righteous acts all the day long.
There's trust and hope in that, for us to do that. We are older and wiser to know that the greatest gift we received, we received, that we have received, for those of us who have been through there, is the greatest gift ever and is there for everybody else. Emmanuel, God with us.
Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. I just sense the Lord wants to empower us afresh this morning.
[14:29] Empower us afresh with hope and with love as we enter this Advent season. To talk about him. To live our Advent as though we truly, truly know him and trust him.

So that people will not be just drawn to us, but be drawn to him. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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