

**“Renewing Our Trust”**  
**Proverbs 3:1-8 and Deuteronomy 6:1-9**  
July 2 and 5, 2006

Several years ago, an Episcopal priest from Michigan by the name of John Albrecht gave a sermon that made it into the Guinness Book of World Records as the shortest sermon ever preached. Apparently, when it came time for the sermon one Sunday, Pastor Albrecht stood up, faced the congregation and said just one word to them. And then he sat down. (1)

You’re probably wondering what word Pastor Albrecht said. Well, I’m not going to tell you. Instead, I want to ask you a question. If you were going to preach a one-word sermon today, what would your word be?

If I was going to preach a one-word sermon today, and, by the way, I’m not... my word would be trust. For, in a word, that’s what the life of faith is all about...it’s a matter of trust...trusting God with our whole heart.

Our second Scripture lesson for this morning is Proverbs 3:1-8, which can be found on page 585 of your pew Bible Old Testament. Let’s turn there and listen for God’s Word to us.

I want to tell you about a commercial that used to play on television. Perhaps you saw it. The commercial begins with a young girl standing alone in a picturesque meadow. The camera then pans to another part of the field where it shows a gigantic African rhinoceros. The ominous beast begins a lethal charge toward the girl, whose serene and happy face remains unmoved. As the rhinoceros gets closer, the words appear on the screen, “Trust is not being afraid.” A split second before the rhino tramples the helpless child, it stops, and the girl, her smile never wavering, reaches up and pets the

animal on its massive horn. The final words then appear, “even when you are vulnerable.” (2)

Now, this commercial was designed to tout the abilities of a certain insurance company to protect its clients from the uncertainties of life, but the words of this commercial are actually a pretty good description of the way Proverbs 3:5-6 calls us to live in the face of the uncertainties and vulnerabilities of this life.

With all due respect to the insurance company in the commercial, here’s what I believe Proverbs 3:5-6 calls us to affirm: Trusting God means not being afraid even when you are vulnerable.

Even when you are vulnerable...is there any question that life is filled with uncertainties and vulnerabilities? Is there any question that things don’t always happen as we plan or expect? The evidence is all around us. Storms, both literal and figurative, happen all the time. Marriages fail. Illness comes without warning. Disappointments, both great and small, are common. Jobs aren’t secure. Life is complex...and we are vulnerable and face uncertainty on a daily basis.

Amidst all the uncertainties and vulnerabilities of life the book of Proverbs consistently lifts up the truth that happiness and security in life are only found in trusting the Lord. In our text for today we are admonished to trust in the Lord with our whole heart. Proverbs 16:20 says, “...happy are those who trust in the Lord.” Proverbs 29:25 says, “...but one who trusts in the Lord is secure.”

The book of Proverbs also emphasizes that trusting in anyone or anything other than God is foolish. Our text for today stresses that we shouldn’t lean on our own

understanding. Proverbs 28:26 echoes this same sentiment and says, “Those who trust in their own wits are fools.”

Most of us have heard and understand what the Bible says about trusting God, and we don't have much trouble believing those words to be true when the sun is shining, the sky is blue and there isn't a cloud on the horizon. But what about when the inevitable storms of life come, and we wonder where to go for shelter and what to do. Do we turn to God and trust in him to see us through the storms?

In the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century, a group of 50 Spanish nuns led by the Carmelite Sister Teresa of Avilla traveled on foot to a neighboring convent during a nasty storm. Crossing a rickety bridge over a swollen stream, the sisters prayed that the bridge would hold up until they safely crossed. It didn't. Near the center it collapsed, spilling all the nuns into the water.

As they managed to swim safely to shore, Sister Teresa lifted her eyes to heaven and prayed, “Lord, if this is how you treat your friends, it is little wonder you have so many foes.”

Sister Teresa, who was later declared a saint by the Catholic church, was known for her wit and sense of humor. She was also known for her deep devotion to God. She knew that God did not keep the storms of life away. The storms came with great regularity. And yet, she trusted God to help her cope with trouble, and she believed beyond a shadow of a doubt that God would see her through any and all storms of life.

(3)

Do you and I have that kind of trust in God?

Sometimes I think it is hard for us to trust God in the midst of life's storms because we're so anxious to see what's going to happen next. We want to see clearly what tomorrow holds, and we don't want to wait until tomorrow!

Many years ago, the brilliant ethicist John Kavanaugh went to work for three months at Mother Teresa's home for the dying in Calcutta. For a number of reasons, John's life was in turmoil, and John went there seeking a clear answer regarding how to best spend the rest of his life. On the first morning in Calcutta, John met Mother Teresa. She asked, "What can I do for you?"

John asked her to pray for him. "What do you want me to pray for?" she asked. John replied, "Pray that I have clarity." She said firmly, "No, I will not do that." When John asked her why, she said, "Clarity is the last thing you are clinging to and must let go of." John then commented that she always seemed to have the clarity he longed for. Mother Teresa laughed and said, "I have never had clarity; what I have always had is trust. So I will pray that you trust God." (4)

Sometimes I think it is hard for us to trust God in the midst of life's storms because we have convinced ourselves that we are all alone in our struggles, and we forget that God is closer than we think...right beside us, ready to walk with us through difficult times.

Presbyterian minister and author, Frederick Buechner, in his book, "A Room Called Remember," recounts a time when he felt all alone in a difficult struggle. His teenage daughter was battling anorexia and was desperately ill. This is how he describes what happened to him one day in the midst of his despair.

I was sitting by the side of the road one day last fall. It was a dark time in my life. I was full of anxiety, full of fear and uncertainty. The world

within seemed as shadowy as the world without. And then, as I sat there, I spotted a car coming down the road toward me with one of those license plates that you can get by paying a little extra with a word on it instead of just numbers and a letter or two. And of all the words a license plate might have had on it, the word that it did have was the word T-R-U-S-T. Trust. And as it came close enough for me to read, it became suddenly for me a word from on high. (5)

Sometimes, in ways we least expect, God comes near to remind us that we are not alone in the midst of life's storms and that we need not be afraid.

The Psalmist, in Psalm 56:3-4, says, "When I am afraid, I put my trust in you, in God whose word I praise, in God I trust, I am not afraid." And in Psalm 91:2, the Psalmist declares, "God alone is my refuge, my place of safety; he is my God, and I am trusting him."

In closing, I want to take you back where we began with the commercial image of an African rhinoceros charging toward a serene and happy little girl. The insurance company that produced the commercial would have us believe that they will protect us from the uncertainties of life. Proverbs 3:5-6 reminds us that trust in God is not being afraid even when you are vulnerable, because God alone is willing and able to be our refuge and to lead us through all the uncertainties and vulnerabilities of this life.

Truly this has been a one-word sermon, and the one word is trust. Trust God. Whatever your circumstances may be today; whether you are confronting storms, uncertainties and are feeling vulnerable, or whether life is relatively calm for the moment, the word is still the same. Trust. Trust God. Proverbs 3:5-6 says it best. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths."

As we come to the table of our Lord this morning, let us renew our trust in the One whose giving knows no ending. May it be so that all honor and glory may be given to the One who has been revealed to us as Maker, Redeemer and Friend. Amen.

Notes:

- (1) Story from a sermon entitled "I Love You, Charlie Brown," preached by Rev. Edward F. Markquart.
- (2) "Unwavering Trust." An illustration from PreachingToday.com, 2004.
- (3) Story from a sermon entitled, "Trust at 28,000 Feet," preached by Rev. Dr. George B. Wirth, First Presbyterian Church, Atlanta, June 26, 2005.
- (4) "Needing Trust Over Clarity." An illustration from PreachingToday.com, 2006.
- (5) Buechner, Frederick. A Room Called Remember. San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1984, 149-50.