

I come in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

In 1864, Congress enacted a law declaring the national motto for the United States to be “In God We Trust,” and had it engraved on the two-cent coin that same year. Over the next almost 100 years, the motto had been added and removed from coins. Then in 1957, the motto was added to the one-dollar bill. Did it take 100 years to commit to placing our trust in God? Who did we trust prior to 1864? And even after 1864, I wonder if we ever did place our trust in God. If we trust God, would we still be deep in injustice, division, hate, greed, and corruption? If we don’t trust in God, in whom/what do we trust?

Maybe it would help to clarify what it means to ‘trust’? Webster tells us that trust is **firm belief in the character, strength, or truth of someone or something**. To trust someone is to relinquish control, and to have confidence that promises are kept, knowing that the person has your best interest in mind. Done. No interfering. No worrying. Note that trust does not include how the promises are kept, or what an end result might look like (if there is one). In the 1980’s, President Reagan popularized the phrase, “trust but verify.” But verification is in opposition to trust. It means that, “I say I trust you, but I don’t. I want control, and I want to make sure you keep your word.” That’s not trust.

For example (I made this up). A horse-drawn carriage maker wants a more durable product design. The kind he's making falls apart too soon. So, he calls Henry Ford, hands the project over to him, and trusts that Henry will create a better carriage. The carriage maker probably has an expectation of what a more durable carriage should look like. Henry Ford drives up in an automobile. Henry kept the promise. He delivered. Not what the carriage maker envisioned.

I don't know about you, but to trust someone **without any anxiety**, without interference, and with total confidence **makes me anxious**. How does that sit with you? I may not have total trust in other people, but I know I can trust God.

But do I? Of course, I do, don't I? Do I only trust God as long as the outcome is what I expect it to be? That's trust but verify. Ok, maybe I don't totally trust God, but I know I can trust myself. If I only trust in myself, then I don't have to lose control, and I can determine the outcomes. I can have things done my way, and kick everyone else down the highway. So, perhaps it's best that I don't trust God, because He may not give me what I want. I want financial stability, status, and enough power to get what I want.

But Jeremiah tells us that trusting in the things of this world (wealth, power, status), draws our sights away from God. He warns us that reliance on these false gods will always leave us high and dry when life gets hard. None of them provides

lasting nourishment. None of them gives eternal hope. Trusting in the Lord offers a lifeline, endurance, and hope when life gets ugly.

In our Gospel today, Jesus is with a great crowd of disciples and a multitude of people. In biblical times, Tyre and Sidon were prosperous cities that tended to resist the power of God. Judea and Jerusalem were losing the spirit of the Laws of Moses, and were showing signs of bowing to the false gods of the world. The crowd likely consisted of a mix of those who were wealthy, had honor and status, and had power, as well as those who were oppressed, persecuted, and poor.

But here, Jesus showed them the power of God as he healed those who suffered from physical, emotional, or spiritual afflictions. He gave them proof of what it means to trust in Him, and what happens when you allow Him to touch you. Jesus spoke words of liberation and words of warning. In words of liberation, the poor, hungry, depressed, and oppressed would be freed from their suffering, be able to live in hope and assurance of God's promises. Then, Jesus spoke words of warning when he said those who are rich will be poor, those who are well-fed will go hungry, and those who are laughing will be in sorrow.

Jesus seemed pretty harsh on the prosperous. Does he want everyone to be miserable? I don't believe that Jesus is targeting those who have money, food, and happiness.

I believe that Jesus is warning those who have prosperity and privilege to avoid being held hostage by it, and depriving others from having a sustainable life. The false gods of the world convince us that we are self-made, and have no responsibility to anyone other than ourselves. We don't need anyone else, or God.

He warns that those blinded by worldly idols will ultimately be left high and dry. Wealth, status, and power are fleeting. Once they are gone, there is nothing left on which to cling. These idols rob us of freedom, and do not liberate us. How many are obsessed with money, power, and job title? How many of us sacrifice freedom to feed our egos?

To trust in God is to surrender personal control, and to place our trust in His promises. Surrendering control to God opens our hearts to His will and his love, which means that all we do is for the glory and will of God. It frees us to share our prosperity and good fortune for the good of all, to stamp out hunger, oppression, persecution, and injustice. To trust in God is to trust in love.

When life is difficult, it may seem that we are left high and dry. But, has God ever gone back on a promise? Has God really ever been unfaithful? Has God ever withheld love? Has God ever done anything evil? If you feel that you have been short-changed, ask yourself, "Have I ever considered God to be untrustworthy because I didn't get my way? Or did God's performance fall short of my

expectations? Or why did someone else have a better outcome than I did?” Did you notice that these questions were all self-centered? Perhaps the questions should be different. Perhaps they should start with, “Did I truly relinquish control? Am I looking for what I expect and not how God may be working in my life? Is what I am asking done in love and not for self-gain?”

To firmly trust in God is a step towards liberation. You are no longer held captive by the troubles of the world, but places them into God’s care, with the assurance that He will handle it, and you do not need to worry.

Perhaps we should get our two-cents worth of priceless advice from that 1864 coin. Imagine what our world could look like if its motto was engraved on our hearts as deeply as it was on the coin. “In God We Trust.” Amen.