1 – 5 – 2020 Message – Fear Not, "TRUST"

Video – Linus 1:23

 I was recently reminded of this scene in the 1965 movie, *A Charlie Brown Christmas* where Linus explains to Charlie Brown what Christmas is all about.

 I'm sure you all remember Linus, he is never separated from his "blankie", his reassurance and comfort in a sometimes-scary world.

 Did you notice in the clip as he recites the angel's words "Fear Not" from the Bible verse, that he lets go and drops the blanket. It's like he doesn't need it anymore, as he speaks and trusts the Word of God.

 Linus is reassured and comforted by the living word just as God spoke to His people in Isaiah 41: 10, *Do not be afraid, for I am with you. Do not be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand.* And verse 13*, For I hold you by your right hand I, the LORD your God. And I say to you, ‘Do not be afraid. I am here to help you."*

 We have just celebrated the birth of God's Son, Christ Jesus our Savior and Lord. Luke's account of these events begins in chapter 1 verse 28 when the Angel Gabriel appears to Mary with greetings from the Lord and right up front tells her not to be afraid "Fear Not".

 I don't know how I would react to a surprise visit from an Angel of God, but I hope it would resemble the calm complete trust Mary showed in the Scripture.

 Mary was young, poor, and female all characteristics that, in her culture, would make her unusable by God for any task. But God chose Mary for one of the most important acts of trust and obedience He has ever demanded of anyone.

 You may feel that your ability, experience, or education makes you an unlikely candidate for God’s service. Don’t limit God’s choices or abilities. He can use you if you **trust** Him.

 In Matthew 1: 20 – 21 Joseph also received a visit from an Angel of the Lord telling him not to be afraid and about the child Mary was carrying.

 Joseph was faced with a difficult choice after discovering that Mary was pregnant. Perhaps Joseph thought he had only two options: divorce Mary quietly or have her stoned. But God provided a third option marry her.

 In view of the circumstances, this had not occurred to Joseph. But God often shows us that there are more options available than we think. Although Joseph seemed to be doing the right thing by breaking the engagement, only God’s guidance helped him make the best decision.

 But that did not make it an easy decision. Consenting to marry Mary surely cast doubt on his own innocence regarding the pregnancy and yet Joseph chose to **trust** God and obeyed the angel’s command.

 Have you ever avoided doing what is right because of fear of what others might think or do? Like Joseph, let's choose to trust God rather than seek the approval of others. As in Proverbs 29: 25 *Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe.*

 Many Christians are harangued by Satan’s exaggerated lies, which produces fear and worry but **trusting** in our victorious God gives courage to act.

 The Scriptures call Satan "the father of lies." He is the originator of the proverbial "snow job." His tactic is to produce a storm of lies that buries us to the neck in a drift of freezing fear.

 The specks of fear fly in our faces and become flakes of worry. Quickly they pile up until we find ourselves immobilized in the blizzard.

 We are so paralyzed with fear we don't realize that it is all a cold mirage. We do not see that the storms of anxiety are illusions projected by Satan to keep us from standing and acting on our foundation of faith and trust in God.

 This emotional reaction to Satan's "snow job" can drain, weaken, and paralyze us.

It makes us react to problems that may not ever arise

Dulls our awareness and mindfulness

Robs us of peace, replacing it with worry

Keeps us from being productive, wasting time and energy in worry

Robs us of relationships, again wasting our attention on overwhelming concern

 Finally, and most important it robs us of God's blessings as we deal with real or imagined problems **in our own strength** rather than **trust** God to see us through

 Jeremiah 29: 11 is a prime example of God's expressed plan and purpose for all who completely trust Him. *"For I know the plans I have for you" says the Lord. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope".*

 I hope I am not the only one who sometimes experiences flashbacks from past guilt or shame for errors in judgement or missed opportunities to follow God's leading.

 Satan will use any opportunity, fatigue, sadness, or stress to flash on the screens of your minds close ups of sins and bad attitudes that merit God's judgement.

 In times like this God's still small voice is speaking love and truth into us. We have a choice, to accept God's all-encompassing forgiveness or continue to wallow in guilt, shame, and self-punishment.

 Satan's accusation of unforgivable guilt is designed to make us lose confidence in the future losing our confidence in God.

 God answers the accusation in just one word, one Name, one act that has forever established His love and forgiveness: JESUS!

 In Jesus we are not only good, we are great. We are not only strong; we have the entire arsenal and might of heaven for our defense.

 So why carry a load of guilt when we can repent and be forgiven? Why worry when we can pray? The absurdity of doing otherwise comes through in the irony of that popular bumper sticker that states "Why Pray when you can WORRY".

 Confronted with life's problems, a person will usually pray seeking God's direction **or** worry, thereby be filled with a spiritual and emotional numbness that paralyzes them for any action.

 When our senses tell us that things are not right, we are prone to worry. But when we know that **Jesus** has made things right, that He has given us the power to do right, that in the final settlement all will be right, we can (1) Rest in Jesus and (2) resist the enemy’s whispers.

 Let's look at some ways to grow in trust, and block Satan's attempts to take our focus away from our relationship with God.

**1. Trust God's Word**

 There are many people who have looked into how many times the phrase fear not, do not be afraid, and other similar cautions are used. (531) Showing that it may be the most repeated command in all of the Bible and perhaps the easiest to fail.

 I have also found many passages of Scripture encouraging all believers to trust in our Lord and He will always be there to help us.

 One that is dear to my heart is found in Proverbs 3: 5 – 6 *5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. 6 Seek His will in all you do, and He will show you which path to take.*

 Trust is a decision. It involves taking a stand, sticking to our commitments, and acting accordingly. It means that in the midst of an anxiety attack, we call upon God, our Defender, our Advocate, who just "happens" to be in control of the universe.

 Isaiah 26: 3 is one of God's promises 3 *You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in You, all whose thoughts are fixed on You!*

 Fear almost always paralyzes you in one way or another. It stops you from doing what needs done in that situation. You react rather than respond.

 The Bible suggests in 2 Timothy 1: 7 we cannot have a “sound mind” and be fearful at the same time. *For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.*

 Fear circumvents good decisions and right living. Fear short-circuits living by trust in God.

 As it says in Hebrews 4: 12 *The Word of God is alive and powerful* , read it, study it, trust it, hide it's words in your heart to protect yourself from fear.

**2. Trust Past experiences with God**

 This is very personal for me I can recount at least three maybe four times when God literally saved my life. This is one of many reasons I know He has a plan and purpose specifically for me and why when God calls, I take action.

 The Israelites turned from, disobeyed God so many times, they forgot all the wonderful miraculous things He did to save them from those who would imprison and enslave them, and most times from their own sinful nature.

 Our personal experience with God is our witness and testimony of the transforming power we are to share with others.

 There are also many Scripture passages about remembering what the Lord has done for us. As in Deuteronomy 8: 18 *Remember the LORD your God. He is the one who gives you power to be successful, in order to fulfill the covenant, He confirmed to your ancestors with an oath.*

 And in John 14: 26 *But when the Father sends the Advocate as My representative that is, the Holy Spirit, He will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I have told you.*

 The Holy Spirit of God holds our memory and will remind us of all the Lord has done if we will open our hearts and minds to His power.

**3. Trust God**

The verse from Proverbs 3: 5 – 6 speaks volumes about trusting God with everything in our lives. *5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. 6 Seek His will in all you do, and He will show you which path to take.*

 Jeremiah 17: 7 – 8 is a perfect picture of how our trust in God will influence others and produce fruit for God's Kingdom *7 “But blessed are those who trust in the LORD and have made the LORD their hope and confidence. 8 They are like trees planted along a riverbank, with roots that reach deep into the water. Such trees are not bothered by the heat or worried by long months of drought. Their leaves stay green, and they never stop producing fruit.*

God himself is our Defense and our Defender. When we take shelter in Him, completely trusting Him, His plan and purpose, truly we have nothing to fear but fear itself.

 I would like to close today with a responsive reading from Psalm 91 and unison prayer, please read the bold print on the screen and join me in the closing prayer;

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.

**I WILL SAY OF THE LORD, “HE IS MY REFUGE AND MY FORTRESS, MY GOD, IN WHOM I TRUST.”**

Surely, he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence.

**HE WILL COVER YOU WITH HIS FEATHERS, AND UNDER HIS WINGS YOU WILL FIND REFUGE;**

His faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.

**YOU WILL NOT FEAR THE TERROR OF NIGHT, NOR THE ARROW THAT FLIES BY DAY,**

If you make the Most-High your dwelling—even the LORD, who is my refuge

**THEN NO HARM WILL BEFALL YOU, NO DISASTER WILL COME NEAR YOUR TENT.**

For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways;

**“BECAUSE HE LOVES ME,” SAYS THE LORD, “I WILL RESCUE HIM; I WILL PROTECT HIM, FOR HE ACKNOWLEDGES MY NAME.**

He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him.

**WITH LONG LIFE WILL I SATISFY HIM AND SHOW HIM MY SALVATION.”**

Let us Pray

Father God, Christ Jesus, when all is darkness
and I feel weak and helpless, give me the sense of

Your presence, Your love, and Your strength.
Help me to have perfect trust in Your protecting love
and strengthening power, so that nothing may frighten or worry me, living close to You, I see Your hand, Your purpose, and Your will through all things.