

Who Can You Trust?

2 Kings 5:1-14

Peace from God to you all; and I cannot tell you how pleased I am to be still testing negative and to be allowed back with you all.

Of course, in saying that, we are trusting that the COVID test, properly administered, gives us accurate results. I know that, especially earlier in the pandemic, there were people who didn't trust that this was the case. Which really highlights the question, who (or what) can we trust?

So who can you trust? Who do I trust? (Apart from Tim, of course, whom we saw in the children's address looking resplendent in his SES uniform.)

During my down time, I've been listening to a BBC podcast series called *Money, Money, Money* by Rachel Botsman, who is described as an author, broadcaster, and "trust expert". That made me wonder, what's a trust expert? Has anyone here heard of a trust expert? She is, in fact, the first Trust Fellow at Oxford University's Saïd Business School. She's observed and researched what we trust and how we trust, and in these times, she's well regarded as an expert on trust and technology, and what this means for life, work, and how we do business in the developed world.

So who can I trust? Who do you trust in life? What about for eternal life? Do I need a human trust expert to give me the answers? What do you think?

In the podcast, Ms Botsman interviews many people from different backgrounds and across different continents. I think the series on money largely grew out of the crypto currency phenomenon, and the importance of trust for any currency (including the Australian dollar) that's needed for the society to operate, and what the trust of money might mean for the individual within that society, and for the society in the world. Trust is an important element of society.

In the final episode of the series, an interviewee says what seems pretty obvious to me: that money and things aren't the source of all happiness. The interviewee said that money can buy us something which gives us a short term hit. But once that short term hit wears off, we're chasing the next hit, and a vicious life cycle can follow of forever chasing, selfish chasing of the next thing.

I think God might have said something about that! Here's what we find in Paul's first letter to Timothy:

But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains.

1 Timothy 6:9-10

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Whether it's our trust in money, or a culture which models success and happiness on my own strength as a leader — this is not making us happy. So again, who or what can you trust? Who or what do you trust?

It's an important question for the whole of life, especially when we face life's big questions, and it's a question that all people tend to ask. I know when Sue and I first received her cancer diagnosis, we listened to all the advice, because we had many things to decide in a short time — and our problem was that there were *differing* opinions. We needed to know who could we trust? (We're very grateful for the advice we received, and even more grateful that things are proceeding well on that front.) But for each day and every part of each day, we all make decisions based on trust. Who or what can you trust? Who or what *do* you trust?

In today's reading from the first book of Kings, we heard the story of a powerful soldier called Naaman who came to the prophet Elisha for healing from the terrible skin disease of leprosy. He trusts in human power, and has human expectations of who or what you should trust. For him, it's a case of "money, money, money" or "power, power, power", if you will. He's a man of power. He's won great battles. He's accumulated great wealth. He expects to deal with people of high standing, like the king of Israel. But they can't deliver — they can't heal him. They have no real power. And when Elisha does not act with due deference to Naaman's power, Naaman loses trust and starts to ride away.

And it's more than a little interesting that God shows his power in these places, but in a way opposite to what Naaman expects: God's power is revealed in seemingly weak, the humble, in the little ones. Did you notice in the story:

- **A young girl, a captive from the land of Israel**, who served Naaman's wife:

‘...said to her mistress, “If only my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy.”’

- When **Elisha, the humble man of God**, heard that the powerful king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent a message to the king:

“Why have you torn your clothes? Let him come to me, that he may learn that there is a prophet in Israel.”

So Naaman came with his horses and chariots, and halted at the entrance of Elisha's house. Elisha **sent a messenger** to him, saying, “Go, wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored and you shall be clean.

- And then Naaman's reaction:

But Naaman became angry and went away, saying, “I thought that for me he would surely come out, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and would wave his hand over the spot, and cure the leprosy! Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them, and be clean?” He turned and went away in a rage. But **his servants approached** and said to him, “Father, if the prophet had commanded you to do something difficult, would you not have done it? How much more, when all he said to you was, ‘Wash, and be clean?’” So he went down and immersed himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; his flesh was restored like the flesh of a young boy, and he was clean.

Finally Naaman is healed. He trusts finally, at the end of the day, not in his wealth or his reason; not in his status; not in his own power or thinking; but in God, and God's Word.

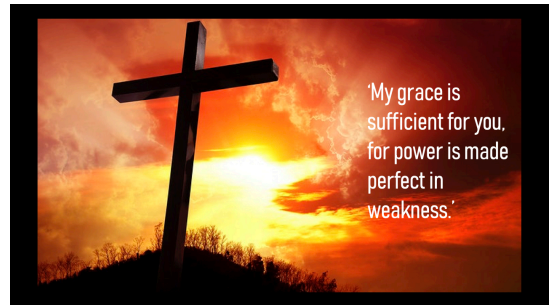
Then he returned to the man of God, he and all his company; he came and stood before him and said, “Now I know that there is no God in all the earth except in Israel.”

2 Kings 5:15

Naaman makes a confession of faith. In God, and in his Word, he trusts.

How about you and me and us? Who can you trust? Judging by the way you speak, you live, you act, you think — who do you trust?

When Jesus came among people, they too expected that the Messiah would be an earthly king who would physically build an earthly kingdom of power and, well, maybe “money, money, money”. But Jesus’ kingdom was different. God’s power is made perfect in weakness. It would be on a sacrificial cross of death that God’s power over sin, over death, over the powers of the devil would be made clear. In the suffering servant, we meet the power of God to heal, and three days later new and eternal life would follow for all who trust in him and his promises of life.



Who do you trust, and what does this mean for others in your life?

We share the name of Christ as Christians together. As his dearly-loved disciples, we put our trust in him; and what a wonderful and powerful gift this is for us, for eternity, for the world.

As we hear in Luke 10 today, Jesus sends out his disciples like lambs in the midst of wolves. They don’t have much earthly power, do they? In fact, they are even to leave their money at home, because money could do nothing to help those original itinerant disciples spread the word.

But with their trust in Jesus, and in his gifts and his promises, they go into the world to make a difference. And so do his disciples... his disciples here and here and here today. We too go like lambs among wolves. We go like the humble servants in the story of Naaman. We may not think we have much to offer. But we too are prepared by God to make a difference.

Dear friends, in all the reading I’ve been doing on personal and whole community evangelism, I keep on finding the same two acts of love are key elements for people in world where trust is not easily found. These two acts are:

- The act of being a good and trustworthy listener
- The act of offering care and love in the gift of hospitality.

There is so much mistrust in the world today, and we as humble servants of God (just like those who have gone before us) have much to offer. May I commend these books to you?



- *Dwelling in the Word*
This includes the art of listening someone into speaking freely and safely — *being* there for the other person so well, so genuinely interested in them and their thoughts, that they feel safe to share, to openly share.

- *How Missional Change Comes to your Church*

They mention holy practices for missional change and the first two are:

- Dwelling in the Word: Listening someone into free speech
- Hospitality — both hosting (which we are brilliant at) and being hosted (which we have some learning to do).

- *How to Talk About Jesus (Without Being That Guy)*

This includes six evangelism tips and the fourth one is:

“Listen (develop the gift of active/attentive listening).

The Golden Rule of Evangelism: Evangelise the same way you want to be evangelised.

Not like those who knock on your door with something to shove down your throat. Unless your friend feels heard, they will struggle to hear you. If you're not listening to your friend, they will tune out."



**Unless you
ACTIVELY LISTEN,
you won't be
HEARD.**

All of these gifts and skills can be learned by everyone, and in my experience they are gifts which begin to engender trust, so that, like the humble servants in the story of Naaman and the disciples sent out in Luke 10 like lambs among wolves, we can be ready to share the reason for our hope and trust... to share the gift of God for them in Jesus.

So who do you trust? And how will you live?

Join with me in answering this question in the words of the Nicene Creed.

Video of the service including the above address: <https://youtu.be/om6djjG0EoE>