

Here we are in the eighth week of Ordinary Time and we are five weeks into the Sermon on the Mount.

We have been following a theme over the past few weeks highlighted by an increasing difficulty of Jesus' teaching.

Jesus has been progressively more challenging to our souls, and has called us to more radical ways of living out our faith.

Today, however, Jesus begins to wrap it all together. The Sermon is both winding down and picking up momentum. It is a pivotal moment where He asks us:

In what or in whom do we trust.

In whom or in what are we dependent?

Trust and Dependency.

Trust brings to mind certain images for us, doesn't it? Hopefully they are good images. Perhaps we see our spouse or maybe our parents or a dear friend.

Dependency is a word that most Americans bristle at a bit. We take a great deal of pride in our in-dependence.

Trust and dependency, are not however, opposites, but are more like two connected links in a chain. They are matched and strengthen each other.

For instance:

I flip a switch and the light goes on. Now I know that a whole lot of things have to happen, smoothly and in an orderly fashion before the switch can do its thing.

But because the light has turned on hundreds of times when I flipped the switch, I can say that, in a sense, the switch, and at a deeper level, everything from the laws of physics to the lamp itself, has **earned** my trust. Because I can trust it, I depend on it. I never think, "I hope that when I flip the switch the light will come on". It is just a given that it will work.

A newborn is both entirely dependent on AND trusting of its parents, for its very survival. At a practical level all they can do on their own is sleep, cry and fill a diaper. Every thing else depends on one outside of themselves. These attributes are a part of being human at its most basic.

So, using these simple examples we can see that the ability, even the desire to trust and to be dependent is hardwired into us.

And if trust is inherent to our humanity, then dis-trust must be both foreign to our nature and an acquired, or a learned trait. The same is true of independence.

The problems with these natural and learned traits is that they have difficulty existing together.

I cannot be both dependent on electricity and independent of it at the same time. I cannot trust or distrust a person equally in the same matter.

Duality just does not work here.

Jesus reminds us that in order to be fully human, we must re-learn to trust and to be dependent.

He then puts forth the argument to place our trust and dependence in God, giving examples of how God tends to the needs of even the smallest of things, a blade of grass, a flower, a bird.

There are basically two reasons that Jesus might do this, and they are connected, like those links in the chain.

One is that we can see, practically, that basic needs can be met with money and things.

But He reminds us that there is more going on than we see. God is at work in everything and in every one.

It is a message of great hope that we still need today.

But the second reason is one that might escape us.

We speak often of Faith, of how it can grow or fade depending on us and our willingness to work with it.

But faith is, and always will be, a free gift of God. We cannot merit it or buy it, and we cannot simply decide to have it.

Trust, however, is different.

If Faith is a free gift of God to us, then trust in God is our free gift to Him.

In Christ we hear God's words, we witness His power and we can see that He is committed to the Father and to our Salvation, even unto death.

His Resurrection is the well-spring of all hope.

He gives us His very Body and Blood to nourish us.

His steadfast love and constant provision are proof of His "trust-worthiness".

How can I NOT trust Him completely? How can I not turn everything over to Him, right here, right now?

And, there we are ..... back to the original dilemma.

In whom and in what do I place my trust?

Our first reading tells us that **Before us are set life and death. Whichever we choose will be given us.**

Trust in ourselves, our riches, our careers or trust in God. It is the same choice. And it is a very sobering one.

But this much I do know for certain, we can't have it both ways.