

TITLE: "In God We Trust"

TEXTS: Isaiah 12:2-6 (OT pp. 641-642), Philippians 4:4-9 (NT pp. 198-199)

Isaiah 12:2-6 ²Surely God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid, for the Lord God is my strength and my might; he has become my salvation. ³With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. ⁴And you will say in that day: Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name; make known his deeds among the nations; proclaim that his name is exalted. ⁵Sing praises to the Lord, for he has done gloriously; let this be known in all the earth. ⁶Shout aloud and sing for joy, O royal Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.

Philippians 4:4-9 ⁴Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. ⁵Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. ⁶Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. ⁸Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. ⁹Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

Introduction - PARAPROSDOKIANS

I want to talk about paraprosoydokians for a moment. What, you may ask, IS a paraprosoydokian? According to Wickipedia, it is: "A Figure of speech in which the latter part of a sentence or phrase is surprising or unexpected." Here are some examples:

Do not argue with an idiot. He will drag you down to his level and beat you with experience.

We never really grow up, we only learn how to act in public.

You do not need a parachute to skydive. You only need a parachute to skydive twice.

You're never too old to learn something stupid.

Going to church doesn't make you a Christian any more than standing in a garage makes you a car.

Here are my thee paraprosoydokians for this morning:

There is no fear, that is not the dread of death.

There is no ultimate trust, that is not faith in the love of the Lord.

There is no longing, that is not the hope of heaven.

1. All fear is ultimately the dread of death

There is no fear, that is not the dread of death. On the surface, this may seem to be ridiculous; after all, we are ALL afraid of many different things. We all fear severe pain. In our presently poor economy, the fear of losing a job or not finding a job looms large. Many fear speaking in public.

All fear has to do with separation.

The loss of a job separates us from income, self-esteem and job satisfaction.
Severe pain separates us from feeling fit and capable.
Speaking in public may separate us from our normal comfort level.

Death appears to be the ultimate in separation.

Death separates us from those we love.
It separates us from the life with which we are familiar.
It separates us from the ability to accomplish things.
Death, ultimately, separates us from the ability to control our lives.

My point is that all the things we fear are really reflections of our ultimate fear of death.

My hope is that if God can relieve your current fears, then your fear of death will be diminished as well. I want to focus on one of those fears, which is the fear of losing control. I recently was confronted this fear, and it was not pleasant.

When presbytery met here on June 14th, I lost my pocket calendar. In that small tome were carefully listed each and every one of my appointments, meetings, and events for the next year-and-a-half. I searched for my calendar until I found myself looking in the same places again and again.

Then I prayed. What WAS it that I feared? ...It was control. When I had everything written down, I felt that I had things pretty much under control. As I prayed, however, I realized that control is really an illusion. If I was hit by a Mack truck, I couldn't make ANY of the meetings I had listed. You really do not know what is going to happen 1 minute from now. You IMAGINE things will go as expected, but you can't be SURE. This can either cause you to be anxious or cause you to TRUST the Lord.

TRUST is what Jesus WANTS each of us to have. When He sent the twelve disciples out to spread the good news, he said:

¹⁶“See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. ¹⁷Beware of them, for they will hand you over to councils and flog you in their synagogues; ¹⁸and you will be dragged before governors and kings because of me, as a testimony to them and the Gentiles. ¹⁹When they hand you over, do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you at that time; ²⁰for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you” (Mt 10:16-20).

No matter what we have to face, Jesus WILL give us what we need when we need it. And when we let go of the reigns of our lives and give those reigns over to Jesus, trusting JESUS to guide and direct our lives, then we will find that “peace that surpasses all understanding” that Paul is talking about. And the more trust in Jesus we have in our lives beforehand, the more trust we will have in Jesus when our life comes to an end.

2. There is no ultimate trust, that is not faith in the love of the Lord

That brings me to the next paraprosookian, which is: There is no ultimate trust, that is not faith in the love of the Lord.

You cannot have a mutually loving relationship with a person if you don't trust him or her. And the same is true of God. You cannot have a mutually loving relationship with God if you do not trust God. And you can only trust God if you know and experience how much God loves you.

Isaiah in the Old Testament and Paul in the New Testament KNEW how much God loved them and that is why Isaiah could say: “Surely God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid, for the Lord God is my strength and my might; he has become my salvation.”

And that is why Paul can say: “Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

One of the biggest problems we seem to have about trusting God is the fact that life does not go the way we want it to. This is especially true when life goes exactly the way we DON'T want it to. Then, instead of trusting God, we tend to blame God and assume that God does not care. But God DOES care ...more than we can ever imagine.

Let me give you an illustration. ...A friend of mine, 80 years old, loved to work in his shop where he had a lot of tools and woodworking machinery. One day he had a stroke. As a result, he was barely able to speak, his left side was paralyzed and he couldn't feed himself. His doctor told me that he was refusing to go for physical, speech or occupational therapy and his nurse told me he was being rude to the nurses.

I prayed and had the sense that he would get better within a year if he worked at it. This was VERY unusual because I rarely get messages from God about others. So, I went to the hospital. When I saw him, I asked how he was doing with God. He indicated that he thought God did this to him and he was obviously angry.

I said, "God did NOT do this to you. Your stroke happened. God loves you and wants to help you get better, but you have to TRUST that God loves you and ask God to help you to do your therapy. If you do, a year from now you will be back working in your shop. And BE NICE TO YOUR NURSES! They're here to help you!"

Next time I went in, he was eating pureed food by himself and his nurse told me that he was doing all his therapies. When he saw me, he scowled at me, as best he could, he pointed up with one finger and slowly said, "One year." I understood that to mean that he would give God one year and I had better be right.

I continued to visit him and he did make steady progress. A year after his stroke, I stopped to see him at his home. His wife told me he was out in the shop. There he was, running a board through his planer. I could tell that his left side wasn't perfect, but he was able to compensate and do what he loved to do.

Back when he was in the hospital, he had pointed up with one finger to show he would give God one year to recover. This time, his finger pointed to God who he now trusted because he knew that the Lord HAD helped him to recover.

Life is a series of decisions and events that give us opportunities to either to let go of our control and TRUST God's love more and more or to hang on to our illusion of control and become more and more self-centered and anxious.

3. There is no longing, that is not the hope of heaven.

My last paraprosookian is this: There is no longing, that is not the hope of heaven.

Even though we may IMAGINE that death will separate us from those we love and that with which we are familiar, this is not true. Hell is where there will be separation: separation from God; separation from the love of others; separation from the beauty of creation; and separation from the satisfaction of accomplishment.

Those who are narcissistic, who put their own wants above the needs of all others and the influence of God, will get exactly and precisely what they ask for in the next life. Whether they will like an eternity with other narcissistic people remains to be seen.

Heaven is all about reconciliation.

We will be reconciled with God. Here we can only see the Lord as "through a glass darkly" and then we will see Jesus "face to face." And when we see the love on the Lord's face, anything we have had to endure in life will have been worth it.

Here we have problems with relationships, in heaven, there will complete love and harmony.

Here, no matter what we do, it is flawed. Every sermon, every quilt, every car, every vacation, every home, every garden are flawed and less than perfect. In heaven, what we make will be perfect and will give us perfect satisfaction.

Here we do not have enough time to spend with God or with people, but in heaven we will have eternity to get to know and enjoy Jesus and one another.

I think Plato may be able to help us imagine heaven. Plato was a philosopher who lived in Greece in the 5th century BC. One of the things he and his teacher Socrates talked about was the theory of forms. They believed that the material world as we see it is not the real world, but only an image or copy of the real world that existed elsewhere. Although our world constantly changes, the world of forms never changes. As their theory goes, the world of forms may even cause, or inspire, our own world.

Hold this thought for a moment and then listen to what Paul writes in Hebrews 8:5. He was talking about the priests in the temple and he says:

They offer worship in a sanctuary that is a sketch and shadow of the heavenly one; for Moses, when he was about to erect the tent, was warned, "See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain."

In other words, God used the temple in heaven as a reference when He gave Moses directions to build the tent of worship.

Conclusion – Graduation from the shadowlands

C. S. Lewis picked up this theme in his writings and he often referred to this life as "the shadowlands." In the last book of *The Chronicles of Narnia* titled *The Last Battle*, Aslan the great "Christ figure" says this to those who have been faithful to Jesus Christ and died: "...you are – as you used to call it in the Shadow-Lands – dead. The [semester] is over: the holidays have begun. ...The dream is ended: this IS the glorious morning."

Then C. S. Lewis closes with his series with this:

"...the things that began to happen after that were so great and beautiful that I cannot write them. And for us, this is the end of ALL stories, and we can most truly say that they lived happily ever after. But for them, it was only the BEGINNING of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover, the title page; now, at last, they were beginning Chapter One of the GREAT STORY, which no one on earth has read: which goes on forever: in which every chapter is better than the one before."

As we let go of our fears and our illusions of control and begin to trust the love of God, we will begin to experience the peace of God that surpasses all understanding and we too will someday live happily ever after.Amen.