

Sunday 14th November 2021
Glynde Lutheran Church
Sermon on 1 Peter 4:19
Theme: “Trust and obey...”
“Trust yourself to God’s care”

Introduction:

Over the last month or so, Jenine and I watched the Netflix series *The Crown*.

It was a bit of a history lesson about the events of the 20th Century, and it gave some good insights into the life of the Royal family....

One thing that I had forgotten is that the Queen is a mad horse lover.... She has been involved with horses over much of her life: riding them, racing them, caring for them, and so on....

Part 1: The analogy

Personally, I’ve never had much to do with horses.... What about you? In fact, I’ve only ridden on one a couple of times in my life. But I admire the sort of relationship that can develop between a rider and her horse....

In one of her books, *A Step Further*, Joni Eareckson Tada writes about the special relationship that she used to have, *before her accident which left her paralysed*, with an old light reddish-brown thoroughbred named “Augie”.

Joni used to ride Augie in all the open jumping events, and she and Augie used to win many blue ribbons.

Listen to how Joni writes about her relationship with Augie:

In addition to the marvellous way he could pace himself, the exciting thing about Augie was the instant obedience and absolute trust *that* he showed toward me. Whenever we entered a show ring, he would quietly dance and prance in one place, never pulling on the reins, ears flicked backward and forward in anticipation of my command. I never had to tug his head; I just held his...bit firmly against his mouth, keeping the reins low and taut.

Whenever I wanted him to move ahead, all it took was a slight tightening of my knees against him and – flash! Off he would go....

And Joni goes on to write:

Manoeuvring a complicated jump pattern requires a trusting and obedient horse. After completing a fence, the rider has to pull the horse up so he won't tire himself and so he can properly pace himself for the next fence. If the horse doesn't listen, they're both in trouble!

Feeling the horse begin to shift his weight a few feet from the fence, the rider must know when to release the reins and to give the horse his head so *that* he'll be able to jump cleanly and clearly. The horse must trust his rider to do this. It's a two-way street; there must be real cooperation.

Joni writes:

Augie and I had that kind of relationship. I knew his trust in me was absolute and complete. At my command, he was eager to obey in an instant. It was the joy of Augie's great heart to do my will.

It did not matter whether or not he understood the course of jumps before him. He showed no concern over how hard those four-foot rail jumps or five-foot triple spread jumps appeared. He simply loved to jump. And because he trusted my judgment, he loved to do my will (*Joni Eareckson, A Step Further, p. 81-83*).

And because Joni and her horse Augie had a relationship of trust, when the really difficult times came in their relationship, Augie was able to trust Joni to lead to him to safety.

Joni shares in her book, too, about what happened when someone set the barn alight that Augie and the other horses lived in.

She writes:

Since fire can cause an otherwise calm horse to go wild with fear, we covered their eyes with blankets before leading them past the roaring flames out to safety....

In that confusing moment when they could not understand *what was happening and why their eyes were being covered with a blanket*, they trusted us to care for them as we had always done. There was no rebelling, no challenging of our wisdom or authority, and as a result we were able to save their lives.

Part 2: The analogy explained

Now, I think that this picture of a horse's relationship of trust with its rider, *with its master*, is a good picture for us to dwell on as we think about our relationship with God.

Like Augie, the horse, trusted Joni, so we can trust God. Why? Why did Augie trust Joni? Because he had experienced the love and the goodness of the One in charge. And that's what we have done: we have experienced the love and the goodness of the One in charge.

This was the experience of God's Old Testament people: they experienced the love and the goodness of the One in charge.... They always remembered how God had cared for them in the past: through rescuing them from slavery in Egypt, *through the various plagues in Egypt, and through the parting of the Red Sea in particular*, and how God had taken care of them in the desert and taken them to "the rich and fertile land" of Canaan. Listen to the confession of their faith in the love and the goodness of God, *a confession that they made when they were bringing their harvest offerings to God*:

⁴ "The priest will take the basket from you and place it before the altar of the LORD your God. ⁵ Then, in the LORD's presence you will recite these words: 'My ancestor was a wandering Aramean, who took his family to Egypt to live. They were few in number when they went there, but they became a large and powerful nation. ⁶ The Egyptians treated us harshly and forced us to work as slaves. ⁷ Then we cried out for help to the LORD, the God of our ancestors. He heard us and saw our suffering, hardship, and misery. ⁸ By his great power and strength he rescued us from Egypt. He worked miracles and wonders, and caused terrifying things to happen. ⁹ He brought us here and gave us this rich and fertile land. ¹⁰ So now I bring to the LORD the first part of the harvest that he has given me.' (*Deut. 26:4-10*)

This was the experience of God's Old Testament people: they experienced the love and the goodness of the One in charge.... And this is our experience too....

When we look at Jesus, God's Son, and we see his love and compassion for people, we see God's love and his compassion for people, and we are reminded that this is how God feels towards us... (*e.g., Mark 1:40-42; cf. John 1:18; 10:30; 14:9*).

And when we look at Jesus, God's Son, we see the lengths to which God has gone out of love for each one of us: in the person of the Son, God has gone to that horrifying death of a cross in order to rescue us (*Mark 10:30; 1 Cor. 15:3*).

Also we've experienced God's ongoing care of us, in our life, *through thick and thin*, and we can look back and see how God has answered our prayers for our good. It has certainly been my experience.... (*cf. Wayne's Life Story: God's protection and care of me during my wilderness years, His leading of me into being a pastor, the gift of Jenine, His care of me over the years*).

We, like Augie, have experienced the love and the goodness of the One in charge. So we, like Augie, can develop a relationship of trust with the One in charge.

And we *like Augie* have become aware that the leading and guiding of the One in charge is always a leading and guiding in good directions....

As we've obeyed the Ten Commandments, as we've listened to Jesus' words and done what he commands, *as we gone in the direction that God points us in through the rules and the injunctions of the New Testament*, we've found that the leading and guiding of God is always in good directions....

So when life seems tough, and things aren't going the way that you would want them to go, what should you do? When sickness strikes, or when you lose our job, or when a loved one dies, or when you don't know which way to turn so far as the future is concerned, *what should we do?*

We should go on trusting in the love and the goodness of the One in charge, and we should continue to strive to do what God wants us to do. God will bless us as we trust in His loving care, and as we strive to do His will. And not only that, He will forgive us when we fail....

I really like Peter's words in his first letter, the words that are part of our Bible reading for today. Peter is writing to Christians who are suffering at the hands of the Roman authorities because of their faith (*1 Peter 4:12*).

To them, Peter writes:

So then, those who suffer, according to God's will, should commit

themselves to their faithful Creator, and continue to do good (1 Peter 4:19 NIV).

Committing ourselves to our faithful Creator.... That's trusting God!
Continuing to do good.... That's obeying Him!

One final comment, before I finish up. It isn't always easy to trust God, and His directions. As Joni Eareckson says:

Trusting God is not necessarily having trusting feelings. *Trust* is an act of the will. Because essentially, trusting God is reasoning with yourself to act upon what you know in your head to be true, even though you do not feel like it is true.

I think that it is a good observation. There are many times in life when like Augie in that fire we don't understand why things are happening. We may not feel like trusting God in those situations, but with our head we know that God can be trusted in the future, because we have experienced the love and the goodness of God in the past, *particularly in Jesus, God's Son.*

Nearly forty years ago, Helmut Thielicke, a very well-known German pastor, came out to Australia, and he spoke to the Lutheran students in Adelaide. I always remember what he said about suffering:
I do not know the meaning, but I trust the one who does.

And he went on to give an illustration that I'll always remember. He said:
Now I like to explain this with a picture.... If you hold up a magnifying glass to a piece of fabric, a table cloth *for example*, then you will see the weave in the centre of the glass as clearly as you want, but around the edges it becomes blurred. That is the way I experience things when I see *the* mysteries of life, the strokes of fate..., suffering, and everything else which seems to contradict God.

As long as I look through the middle of the glass, through the stable at Bethlehem and the cross of Jesus, then everything is crystal clear. But the further away I move toward the edges, the more blurred it becomes....

But then I know that the blur, all the I don't understand, is not blurred in reality; it is a visual problem which has to do with the glass that I am using. I need to pull myself together by looking through the middle again (*Thielicke Visit, Lecture No. 7, p. 7*).

Do you hear what he's saying? If ever you don't feel like trusting God, remind yourself that you can trust God by looking through the centre of the magnifying glass at Jesus, *and at the manger and the cross, which together tell you just how much God loves you and everyone.*

Conclusion:

How should we live out our life as God's children? Well, that old hymn says it all:

**Trust and obey,
for there's no other way
to be happy in Jesus,
but to trust and obey (SLH #877) .**

And always remember, too, that when you mess up, the One who is in charge is Someone who loves you and who will forgive you for Jesus' sake. He'll pat you on the shoulder, speak loving words to you, and pull in the right direction....

Addendum:

“Why doesn't God heal me now?”

- * Jesus miracles, such as the healing of the paralytic in Mark 2, are the breaking in of God's Kingdom, *His rule*, into this world.
- * Jesus' miracles point to what life will be like in God's Kingdom to come: *no more wheelchairs, sickness, death.... (see John Chapman, “Making the most of the rest of your life”).*
- * *From A STEP FURTHER by Joni:*
 - **“Here is the conclusion I've come to regarding miraculous healing: God certainly can, and sometimes does heal people in a miraculous way today. But the Bible does not teach that He will always heal those who come to Him in faith. He sovereignly reserves the right to heal or not to heal as He sees fit” (p. 127).**
 - **“From time to time God, in His mercy, may grant us healing from disease as a gracious glimpse, a ‘sneak preview’, of what is to come.**

- It is my opinion that He sometimes does. But, in view of the fact that the kingdom has not yet come in all its fullness, we are not to automatically expect this” (p. 133).
- “Does Jesus want the best for His children? Sure He does. But that doesn’t mean a life of ease and comfort cushioned on a velvet pillow” (p. 134).
- “If you have tried everything to be healed but nothing has changed, then has it ever really hit you that the reason you are in your present condition is that God, in His wisdom, wills it to be do...? For God to answer our prayers, they must be in line with His will (p. 154).
Read 1 John 5:14; James 4:15
- “But why in the world would it possibly be God’s will to deny a Christian’s request for healing? In some ways, this whole book is about that very thing. The pages of Scripture teem with good things that can come from suffering. Pain and discomfort get our minds off the temporary things of this world and force us to think about God. Trials knock us off our proud pedestals and get us relying on God (2 Cor. 1:9)....
- Sometimes sickness serves as God’s chastiser to wake us from our sin (1 Cor. 11:29-32).... Sometimes God uses suffering to help us to relate to others who are suffering (2 Cor. 1:3-4).
- I sometimes shudder to think where I would be today if I had not broken my neck... (p. 154, 155).
- “It takes real humility and self-denial to put our pleas for healing before God and then willingly leave the answer to Him” (p. 157). *Read Luke 22:42*
- “As we grow in our faith, our way of looking at things changes. Once it seemed as if the only way God could glorify Himself would be to remove our sufferings. Now it becomes clear that He can glorify Himself through our sufferings (p. 157).