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Trust in the Lord

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we see; we hope for what we do not see. That is Christ's redemption of all of creation. We are to wait for this with patience. But this patience isn't suppressed energy or subdued silence, but has a note of eagerness, excited expectation. Let us wait in patience by actively caring for the created world of which we are a part, hopeful for our collective redemption and treating creation, not as a prop or something purely for our use, but as participants in this groaning with whom we will share eternity.

I think the mosaic in Sacré Coeur gives expression to Revelation 5.11–14, a vision of what the redemption of the world will look like.

Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels surrounding the throne and the living creatures and the elders, they numbered myriads and thousands of thousands, singing with full voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slaughtered to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" Then I heard every creature in the heaven and on the earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, singing,

"To the one seated on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!"

And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" And the elders fell down and worshiped.

Amen.



Trust in the Lord

JENNIFER HALE CHRISTY

Jennifer Hale Christy is a graduate of Abilene Christian University, where she received her M.Div. This sermon was presented in graduate chapel at Abilene Christian University on April 12, 2006, while she was a student there.

Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name give glory,
For the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness.

Why should the nations say,
"Where is their God?"
Our God is in the heavens;
He does whatever he pleases.

Their idols are silver and gold,
The work of human hands.
They have mouths, but do not speak;
Eyes, but do not see.
They have ears, but do not hear;
Noses but do not smell.
They have hands but do not feel;
Feet but do not walk;
They make no sound in their throats.
Those who make them are like them;
So are all who trust in them.

O Israel, trust in the Lord!
He is their help and their shield.
O house of Aaron, trust in the Lord!

He is their help and their shield.
You who fear the Lord, trust in the Lord!
He is their help and their shield.

The Lord has been mindful of us;
He will bless us;
He will bless the house of Israel;
He will bless the house of Aaron;
He will bless those who fear the Lord, both small and great.

May the Lord give you increase,
Both you and your children.
May you be blessed by the Lord,
Who made heaven and earth.

The heavens are the Lord's heavens,
But the earth he has given to human beings.
The dead do not praise the Lord,
Nor do any that go down into silence.
But we will bless the Lord
From this time on and forevermore.
Praise the Lord! (Ps 115, NRSV).

“Not to us, O Lord, not to us but to *your* name give glory” (Psalm 115.1a). To *your* name give glory?! Okay, I’ll give you that, but what about *my* name? Let’s be honest, we’ve all daydreamed about our own glory. Maybe you imagine seeing your name up on a billboard. Maybe your daydreams include making a scientific breakthrough or discovering a profound insight into a certain text based on your Greek or Hebrew translation.

We all have these dreams on some level. We revel in the thought of our own glory. We want our ministry to be a success. We want our hard work to be recognized. We long to be appreciated. When someone glorifies our name, we feel appreciated, honored; we feel glorious. Yet, our glory is not found in our name or in our accomplishments, or even in our good works. We glory only in Christ, and him crucified.

“Okay Jen,” you say. “I remember reading that in the Bible, but what does that mean? Are you saying we don’t take credit for anything and think lowly of ourselves?” I’m not saying we should have no self-worth. I think to “glory in Christ” means our value and self-esteem are properly grounded in Christ. We do not esteem ourselves more highly than we ought, and whatever glory we may receive we redirect to God as the one who is worthy of glory and honor. We give God the glory because of his steadfast love and faithfulness.

You see, we can’t call *our* love *steadfast*, and we miss the mark on faithfulness. “But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us *alive* together with *Christ*—by *grace* you have been saved” (Eph 2.4–5). We worship a God who is *faithful* and *steadfast* in his love for us. And so we say: “Not to *us*, but to *your* name give *glory*, because of *your* steadfast love and *your* faithfulness” (Ps 115.1).

So “why should the nations say, ‘Where is their God?’” (Ps 115.2). Our God is in heaven, but “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news” (Mark 1.15). Okay, “our God is in the heavens; He does whatever he pleases” (Ps 115.3). So what *pleases* God? What does God *want* to do? Our God is a loving God. He is a God of saving activity; he is a merciful God, full of kindness and compassion. God wants all of humanity to be saved and enter into relationship with him. God desires communion *with* and *among* his people.

Yet, we live in a post-enlightenment world. We want proof, evidence; and so, we ask: where *is* our God? We see idols all around and people reaping the benefits for the homage paid to their idols. We covet the Lamborghinis and Hummers, the mansions in Malibu, the extravagant lifestyles that *their* gods provide. Part of us wishes we were famous; we want to be adored, and above all, we desperately want to be loved. Their gods make life grand. What about *our* God? Where is the evidence of his reign, of his kingdom? And what about the benefits of being an heir to the king?

The kingdom of God isn’t about high society. It’s not about having the most expensive car or the biggest house. It’s not about “storing up for ourselves treasures on earth” (Matt 6.19). God’s reign is a reversal of expectations; it is an upside-down kingdom where the last are first and the first are last, the meek are blessed and the righteous are humbled. It *is* living life to the fullest—but not according to the world’s standards. Kingdom life is Captain John H. Miller staying behind so that Private Ryan can make it home to his family. Kingdom life is Harry Stamper staying behind on the meteor to continue drilling to his death so that A. J. Frost can return to earth and live. Kingdom life is Forrest running back into the line of fire over and over and over, until his whole company is out of harm’s way. Kingdom life is Gwyneth Curtis sharing his passion for Eastern Europe with everyone he possibly can, until his dying day. Kingdom life is Bryan and Libby Harrison *risking their lives* to bring the gospel into Sudan.

This “full” kingdom life is about giving up privilege for the sake of others. Kingdom life is about humility, it is about the cross, it is about having the mind of Christ, who “though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross” (Phil 2.6–8). Our God *is* in heaven, but through Christ’s coming, his *kingdom* has come *near* to us.

Yet, we are constantly reminded that we live in a fallen world, a world of idols. “Their idols, silver and gold, the work of human hands” (Ps 115.4). They have human characteristics, but they don’t *act* like

humans. “They have mouths, but do not speak” (Ps 115.5a). *We* have mouths but do not speak. We have within us, *life-giving words!* There are countless women and men out there who have not heard, but *we* have been *blessed* to hear the gospel! We’ve taken it in, and we let it sit there. We have *good news* for people! Or do we? If we don’t believe it to be good news for us, of course we’re not sharing it with other people. We’re excited to tell people about engagements, babies being born, our team making it to the play-offs, or finishing comps, now that stuff’s *good news!* Is the gospel good news? Is it good news that Jesus offered himself as the ultimate sacrifice, to die, be buried and then resurrected by God into eternal life, offering us abundant life now and forever—is that “good news?” You bet. We just need to start acting like it. Because “we have mouths, but do not speak” (Ps 115.5a).

“We have eyes but do not see” (Psalm 115.5b). There’s a man who approaches us at the Shell station, asking for money. We quickly refuse, apologetic, but nonetheless we vow to find a new gas station. There’s a woman who sits on the corner of East Highway 80 and North Judge Ely every Sunday morning. She’s selling newspapers, but we can tell she’s living in poverty. We’re college students, we don’t have money for a paper, and we can hardly feed ourselves! So we drive slowly up to the intersection, praying for the light to turn so we won’t have to stop. We avoid eye contact, turn up the music, roll up the windows and lock the doors. Because “we have eyes but do not see” (Ps 115.5b).

“We have ears, but do not hear” (Ps 115.6a). As we round the corner of North 3rd Street and Cypress, a disheveled, broken woman lies crumpled on the ground, propped up by bags filled with cans and bottles to be recycled. She quietly asks for spare change, quietly enough that we can pretend not to hear her and keep walking.

At Christmastime, we rush out of Wal-Mart, fumbling with our bags, our keys, our cell phones. We keep our heads down and charge forward, narrowly avoiding the small children that stand in our way as we try not to hear the ringing bell and accompanying voice that asks for our donations. “We have ears, but do not hear” (Ps 115.6a).

“We have hands, but do not feel” (Ps 115.7a). The five o’clock news roars with stories of genocide, tyranny, social injustice—incomprehensible violations of morality. Our hands move to the small plastic rectangle that magically makes it all go away. Or maybe we don’t. Perhaps we watch until the program ends, at which point we promptly turn off the television and return to life as usual. This world is suffering, being persecuted, and dying. We keep our hands busy with writing, typing, or playing Xbox, but we fail to reach out and *feel*. “We have hands, but do not *feel*” (Ps 115.7a).

“We have feet, but do not walk” (Ps 115.7b). We may not feel that we can *walk* to the devastation in Rwanda or the genocide in Sudan, but we *can* walk to the house of our next-door neighbor, who lost his mother last Monday and is still deeply mourning. We can reconsider our spending and find a little more money in the budget for the needs we see in our community and abroad. I know, I know, we’ve polished our excuses. If we give money to beggars, they might use it unwisely. We don’t have to give them *money*, we can buy them food, pay for a night’s stay at the Salvation Army, give them the spare umbrella that’s in our trunk or the extra rain coat that we never wear.

But we probably won’t. There are probably some exceptions here in this room full of students preparing for ministry in a church, a clinic, or a school—at least I hope so—but as a whole, as Christians, we probably won’t. Cynical? Maybe. Realistic? Definitely. Because we’re content to give our 10 percent at church, or less, and we trust that the leaders will see to it that the poor are cared for, maybe we even send large donations to relief organizations. But we don’t actually go where the suffering is, where the needs are. It’s much easier to write a check than to buy a plane ticket or to walk around the corner. “We have feet, but do not walk” (Ps 115.7b).

By now, you’re probably thinking, “Wait a minute, I’m not buying all this. I hear, I see, I speak.” You’re right. You do. *We* do. Just enough to get by. We open our ears, our eyes, and our mouths just wide enough to live, just enough to exist. But we are not called to simply exist. Paul urges us to live a life worthy of the calling we have received (Eph 4.1). We are called to lead cruciformed lives. We are called to action.

We serve a God who speaks all of creation into existence, who sees us in our affliction, and who hears our cries. Our God felt the dirt between his fingers as he formed Adam, and between his toes when he *walked right down to earth*, to be the *way*, the *truth*, and the *life*. Our God is not like those idols. He acts, he promises, and he fulfills his promises. He is trustworthy. He is worthy of our trust and our praise because he is faithful, his steadfast love endures (Lam 3.22). We are created in his image: male and female, he created us. We are created to see, to hear, to speak, to smell, to feel, to walk. We are created to *do*! Psalm 115 describes pagan idols and it describes *us*: in our passivity, our sedentary lifestyles, our nonchalance about what's going on *in* and happening *to* our world. We don't have to be powerless. Our God is powerful, and he is ready and willing to work powerfully in us and through us. We have chosen inactivity long enough. God is a God of action. Do we trust him? Are we ready?

"Israel, trust in the Lord! He is their help and their shield. House of Aaron, trust in the Lord! He is their help and their shield. You who fear the Lord, trust in the Lord! He is *your* help and *your* shield" (Ps 115.9–11). Israel faltered in their trust. They wanted freedom, and God provided. But when the going got tough, they began to doubt and they wanted to go back to Egypt, back to slavery. God provided manna, but they wanted more. He sent quail; still they complained and doubted God's promises. Moses was faithful. He trusted in the Lord, his help and shield. Moses was faithful as a servant in God's house, and his faithfulness was credited to him as righteousness. *Trust* in the Lord, he is our *help*. *Trust* in the Lord, he is our *shield*.

"The Lord has been mindful of us; he will bless us; he will bless the house of Israel; he will bless the house of Aaron; he will bless those who fear the Lord, both small and great" (Ps 115.12–13). God is a God of remembrance. God makes covenants with his people and he is faithful to his promises. "The Lord has been mindful of us; he will bless us" (Ps 115.12). God is ready to act. God will bless our trust. Are we ready?

"May the Lord give you increase, both you and your children. May you be blessed by the Lord, who made heaven and earth. The heavens are the Lord's, but the earth he has given to human beings" (Ps 115.14–16). We have a great responsibility as caretakers of the earth. God set Adam over the garden to till and work the land. He decreed that Adam and Eve would have dominion over the earth and all creeping things. We are called to be good stewards of this planet we call our home. We also bear responsibility for the earth's inhabitants. Jesus *commands* us to *go*, make disciples of *all* nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything he has commanded (Matt 28.19–20). And what is his promise? "I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt 28.20).

God is faithful. God blesses. He keeps his promises. He acts! He is ready to act through us. Are we ready? In the words of our Lord Jesus: "As you go, proclaim the good news, 'The kingdom of heaven has come near'" (Matt 10.7). "The Lord has been mindful of us; He will bless us" (Ps 115.12). May the *peace* of Christ dwell in your hearts, and may the *love* of Christ compel you to act.



What The Lord Had Done In Me

AMY BOST HENEGAR

Amy Bost Henegar is an associate minister for the Manhattan Church of Christ in New York City. Formerly a hospital chaplain, Amy received her M.Div. from Fuller Theological Seminary. Amy preached this sermon at the Manhattan Church of Christ on Mother's Day, May 13, 2007.

The story begins with Eve, the first woman in the Bible, and the list of women in this story is long. The Old Testament is filled with stories of God's women. The wives of the patriarchs: Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, and Leah. In the book of Exodus we learn about Miriam, Aaron's sister and herself a prophet. Earlier in our service we heard the powerful story of the midwives who protected the Hebrew babies from the king of