

Rev Sally's Sermon  
Lent 4 March 16, 2021

Two weeks ago, I told you about my foster cat, Daisy. We're having a good time together and she's learned that she can trust me. But this past week, I was reminded that sometimes, even the best-intentioned humans, fail. Daisy loves to follow me. She's usually wherever I am. And I try to watch for her. But sometimes I fail. Last Wednesday, as I worked in the kitchen, I was startled when suddenly I felt my shoe squish something soft. Almost before I had a chance to process what I had felt, I heard Daisy squeal and saw her runaway as fast as she could. I had stepped on her foot. I felt so bad. She trusted me completely. But I had failed in my trustworthiness.

We tend to learn about trust – faith – from our relationships with others. Some people are worthy of our trust, but often even those with the best of intentions, will fail us at some point. I know I have been on both sides. I have both trusted in someone who failed me, and I have failed someone who trusted me. We are human.

In the lessons we heard today, for the fourth Sunday in Lent, we heard about trust - faith - in God. In the book of Numbers, we heard about the Israelites' time in the wilderness, after they left slavery in Egypt. They wandered in the wilderness for many years and some of the people started questioning whether they could trust in God. They questioned whether the Lord would be faithful to the promises he had made. They were hungry and thirsty and then snakes came into their camp and killed many. The people recognized they had sinned, by failing to trust in God. So, Moses told the people to look to the Lord and they would be saved. And when the people trusted in the Lord, he provided. In his letter to the Christians at Ephesus, Paul also spoke of faith. He reminded the young Christians to place their faith in God. The love and life of God are God's gifts to us, if we will simply receive the gift, if we will place our trust in his loving kindness.

But sometimes it's hard to learn to trust God. We have too much experience with those who aren't trustworthy. This makes us a bit jaded. We question whether we can really let go of our apprehensions. We want to protect ourselves. So, we raise our defenses.

But the gospel of John tells us that there is a love we can trust in. The love of God. This is a love so strong that God himself was willing to sacrifice his son. This was a revolutionary idea, especially for the Romans and Greeks. Usually, the humans, who worshipped Greek and Roman gods, were expected to make sacrifices to appease the gods, not the other way around. But here is a love so deep, so strong, it gives its all.

Sometimes, though, it's hard to recognize this love. Yes – at times it's present with us through each other. But as I said earlier, sometimes we fail to reflect the divine love we've received. But somehow, some way, I find that God still finds a way.

Often, I see it best when I look back over my life. Sometimes when disappointment and grief come, it's tempting to think God has failed us. Why didn't God want me to have that success? Why did the relationship that I wanted so badly fail? Why did my loved one, who I prayed so hard for, die? And I'm not one who says that everything that happens to us is part of God's master plan. I do believe that there are times when God is as sad and disappointed as we are. But I do also believe that if we let him, God will come to us in the midst of our struggles and make what seems impossible possible.

As I look back over my life, I see many disappointments and losses. But with some of them – not all of them – but with some of them, I see that they have opened the door to divine blessings later on. When I was 25, I lost my first job in accounting. I was devastated. I felt like a failure. But it was that event that changed the course of my life. It was that event that set me on a path that led me to the priesthood.

Throughout my life, I have learned that God is trustworthy. When we claim his grace, his unconditional love, he will be there for us. He will share his love with us. God will save us from death. He will give us eternal life. This is indeed the one in whom we can trust.