

Can God Be Trusted?

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Preacher: Graham Cole

[0 : 0 0] This is the evening service at Holy Trinity on the 22nd of October 2000. The preacher is Graham Cole and his sermon is entitled Can God Be Trusted?

May what I say now please you and be genuinely helpful to us all. For Christ's sake, Amen. Amen. Great pleasure to be with you tonight here at Doncaster and to think together with you about this really important question Can God Be Trusted?

Let me start with another question this time a question of my own. I wonder as you sit there do you know what it's like to be let down? Maybe you feel let down by certain politicians you may have voted for their party but now you're a bit concerned about their phone bill.

You may feel let down by the media you used to live in Sydney and you'd love to hear John Laws especially put down those pesky talkback callers but now it seems he was getting paid for what appeared to be informed opinions of his own.

The talk for cash scandal maybe it's religious leaders and we must remember that sometimes a religion can be toxic rather than healthy and that religion can be exploited by people in the pursuit of power or sex or money and maybe you feel let down when you've read the newspapers and you've learnt about this particular religious leader or that and what they've done which is a disgrace to what they're supposed to stand for.

[1 : 5 6] Maybe you feel let down by parents. Many of us come from broken homes and that may be how some of us feel about that experience.

Talking about parents there is a story told about a man who had a very big reputation as something of a rogue as a business person but he also had a reputation as something of a caring father because every time he came home from work his little boy used to be able to wait for him and then hear the door opening slowly and then race down the stairs from the first floor and jump into his father's arms.

This went on for year in and year out. The boy got about five or six and one day there was the turn of the key in the door and the little boy was up on the first story waiting on the landing.

He comes racing down and he jumps towards Dad and just as he gets to Dad's arms Dad just actually steps to one side. The little boy eventually gets up very teary very distraught and his father leans over to him and says Son there's a lesson for life trust no one.

Well that's a pretty cynical story about one particular parent and what that particular parent had to offer his child. But again I'd imagine all of us have a story of what it is to be let down by someone.

[3 : 3 5] But what about God? Can God be trusted? Well let me approach that question through that gospel story that story about Jesus that we heard tonight from Mark chapter 4 and let me approach that question with a key Christian idea.

The idea is that in God there is no un-Christ likeness at all. that if we want to know what God is like we look at Jesus the Son of God.

Now if you want to follow the story it's on page 816 in the Bible in the seats. It's not a long story but it's one of my favourite stories about Jesus because in this brief story it seems to capture so much about what he's on about and how we're to relate to him and what it is to trust God.

Well if you're looking at it in verses 35 and 37 we find there's a storm on the Sea of Galilee on that day. Evening had come Jesus had said let's go across to the other side of the sea and he leaves the crowds behind he heads off in a boat other boats are following and then there's this great wind storm and with the wind comes the waves and the boat starts to take the water in.

I understand the Sea of Galilee can be like that. It can be calm one minute change of wind change of weather and all of a sudden you've got the waves.

[5 : 18] From calm to chaos if you like and indeed to the Jewish mind back then the sea being so unstable calm and then so chaotic was like a symbol a picture of that that can threaten our life.

And here they were and their lives were under threat because look at the question in verse 38 if you're following it there. He was asleep that's Jesus in the back of the boat the stern on a cushion he was asleep and they woke him up and they said teacher don't you care that we're perishing we're going to die out here we're going to drown that was the question you see these were experienced fishermen at least some of them they knew the danger they knew the danger of the weather they were in trouble here was Jesus asleep don't you care that we're going to perish out here they saw the problem they saw the danger and I was watching the news a couple of years back and I think I can understand why they were so worried because there's this little news item on the evening news the television news and there seems to have been some dry spell in Israel and the sea of Galilee had dried up a little bit some mud was exposed that hadn't been exposed for a long long time and they actually found a fishing boat well what was left of it a fishing boat from Jesus' world had been preserved in the mud and if you looked at the boat it was an open boat you could understand how the waves could easily start lapping in over the sides how it could take water and how it could sink no wonder they were saying teacher wake up don't you care that we're going to perish out here and that question don't you care isn't that a question that we all ask sometimes we ask it of other people but don't we also ask it of God when the things in our life just aren't going together do you care now if you put it the other way you're asking

God can you be trusted can you be trusted I wonder as I speak tonight if that is your question may not be exactly the way it was put by these disciples in the boat but I wonder if it's your question do you care what's happening to me well how does Jesus respond to this well he wakes up that's promising and then he rebukes the wind he treats the wind like an animal that you can just say heal and it comes to attention peace be still and it is the wind ceased in verse 39 and there was dead calm now this is really important for our question tonight can God be trusted because I think

Christ is the key to that question it was a philosopher by the name of E.D. Trueblood who wrote a book to explain why after 50 years of teaching philosophy in America and an American university he was a Christian and his answer was that he found in Jesus Christ a place to stand in life not that life's easy at times can God be trusted is a question that comes out of the fact that life's not easy at times but he found in Christ a place where you could stand and as he said that wrote about that he thought about that ancient Greek inventor Archimedes Archimedes amongst other things learnt that if you got a pole and you placed it in the right way under a rock and then you had somewhere something that you could balance the pole on it actually moved the pole and in moving the pole moved something that's really heavy if you got a place to stand you can have what's called a fulcrum to be able to do that and Trueblood said that after 50 years of teaching philosophy in America that Christ was this place to stand

Christ put another way was the key certainly the key in this story the wind was there the waves were there the danger was there but Christ was there and he did something he did something that those fishermen disciples could not do for themselves he stopped the storm and then he challenged them it's there in verse 40 why are you afraid he says I know what I'd say my feet are wet that's why I'm afraid I think I'm going to sink have you still no faith no trust that's what the point of it is notice

[11 : 13] Christianity is about trust not in a set of ideas although ideas are involved but in a person this person and trust as I read the gospels is the real antidote to fear to be able to trust someone that you really are in good hands so you can fly to Alice Springs because you've got a trustworthy pilot you can go for that operation because you've got a surgeon you can trust I can identify with that because I had some medical problems last year and at an early stage it looked like it might be cancer well that concentrates the mind I can tell you it didn't turn out to be that but I found I was out of my depth I couldn't go down to Bunnings or Kmart and have a do it yourself self surgery kit straight off the shelf see if I could poke around a bit and find the problem and deal with it

I had to trust someone else I had to trust the surgeon these disciples including the experienced sailors had to trust someone else they had to trust the son of God I wonder as I speak tonight whether you're a person who's reached a place in your life where the challenge is the same to you to transfer your trust from yourself to another namely this Jesus Christ indeed you may be here tonight because of the impact of a friend's life on you or because of this church having something that you can't quite put your finger on but it's different it's alive maybe you've been reading the Bible and it's speaking to your life or you prayed a prayer and wow got answered so you're here maybe the challenge to you is the same to trust in this

Christ this Christ who stilled the storm no wonder we've got the reaction we've got there in verse 41 they were filled with great awe they just were just amazed and they responded to Jesus like you'd respond to God which is very good sense that he's the son of God and they asked another sort of question now it's not don't you care we're perishing but who then is this that even the wind and the sea obey him look they knew their Old Testament Bibles only God could do this sort of stuff Jesus had done it so friends can God be trusted

I want to rephrase that into can Jesus be trusted and I want to say Jesus does care the storm but not just the story of the storm here in Mark 4 that you've been reading but also the story of the cross that's to come in Mark's account of Jesus where later in this very same account of Jesus in chapter 10 and verse 45 Jesus says he's come into this world not to be served but to serve and to give his life to die a death as a ransom for other people as a sacrifice that will set them free and that's what the story of

Good Friday is about that we celebrate every year Jesus can be trusted not simply because he spilled a storm for a few people but because he's died for everyone in this church listening to me tonight because he died for you that whatever it is in your life that stands between you and God might be forgiven that he might take the due punishment that we deserve for what we've done wrong himself that we might go free free to be God's children again I wonder if you realise that or are you a person who lives as though Good

[16 : 37] Friday never ever happened there was a sign outside the church in a place where I used to live in Sydney some years ago it was a uniting church it had great signs and this particular sign which was up for about a month said this God does not promise us an easy journey but a safe arrival crossing Galilee that day was not easy they encountered a storm but they arrived safe on the other side and I want to say if you trust your life to the one who died for you it doesn't mean that everything in life will go easily for you but I believe it will mean that you will arrive safely on the other side and that hope that future can make all the difference to how we experience the present why did they arrive safe on the other side because

Jesus was with them and Jesus can be with us he can be trusted tonight and to be practical if you want to know what that might mean to start trusting your life to someone else tonight I tell you what I've done I've brought with me a prayer that a minister friend of mine wrote to help people know what to say to Jesus people who want to trust him with their lives it's a response to what you've been hearing tonight what I'm going to do is read it out to you so you know what's in it and then after tonight's service if you're keen to think about this further just ask me for a copy I've brought multiple copies and I'd be very happy to give you one so you can take away and think about it and maybe make it your own response

I want to say that this is not a magical thing just praying a prayer doesn't as it were make you glow in the dark if we had a power failure and you prayed this prayer it doesn't mean that all of a sudden you'll be luminescent I think we'd all flee the building if that happened we've got someone radioactive in our midst it goes like this dear Lord please forgive me I turn from my opposition to you from leaving you out of my life basically because that's the problem thank you for dying for me it's addressed to Jesus I put my trust in you that's the theme tonight isn't it I take the gift of life and want to live with you as my Lord someone else in charge help me to live for you

Amen it's this Christ we can trust may I encourage you if you're not trusting in this Christ already to begin this night let's bow our heads in prayer once more our great God I just pray to help us all to entrust our lives to the one you sent to bring us safe to the other side Lord be gracious to us that we may be a trusting people who find a new life through the key to life the place to stand the one who cares the one who can be trusted

Jesus the Lord Amen people are who are to that people drum that people have to love or all I can't especially Thank you.

[22 : 22] Thank you.