

Trust

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[0 : 0 0] Well, good morning, folks. Let me add my welcome to ours. My name's Archie. I'm actually the pastor in training here. I haven't had a promotion, in case you were wondering. Graham will be back next week.

But we are taking a break this week from our series in Haggai. Graham will conclude that next week. Instead, we're going to be looking through this Psalm, Psalm 115. And we're going to get into the world of those, I think, returning exiles, like we've been reading about in the book of Haggai.

And we're going to see some of the things that they might have been experiencing, and in particular, the spiritual battle that they faced. But before we do that, shall I pray? Let's pray. Lord, I pray that this morning we would trust in you with all our hearts.

That as we come to your word together, we would lean not on our own understanding, but that your spirit would be ministering to us and helping us see truth in your word.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. It was about five years ago that I met Katie, my wife. We met just down the M8 in Glasgow, where we were both at university.

[1 : 1 1] And it was our second date. We went to a nice Italian place. It's called Eusebio's Deli. If you're ever in Glasgow, you should check it out. It's really, really nice. And it was all going really very well. I was charming, as ever.

I really liked her. Even the food was delicious. And we were sat there, one of those brilliant seats in the window, where when the conversation gets a bit awkward, you can just sort of watch as people walk by. It was delightful.

But we were sitting at one of those tall tables. I don't know if you know the sort of table I'm talking about, where you have to sit on a stool rather than a seat. That's so uncomfortable. And all of a sudden, the bar that I was resting my feet on on that stool snapped.

And the stool just collapsed from underneath me. And I was left in a pretty embarrassed heap on the floor. I trusted that stool. It completely failed me.

It's a silly story, that really, isn't it? But trust is important to us. You'll know this, especially if you've ever trusted someone and they've let you down. That sort of betrayal, it can be horrible, can't it?

[2 : 1 4] And on the other side of that coin, how wonderful it is when we're able to trust our friends and our family. Trust is right at the heart, isn't it, of a healthy relationship.

It's just so important to us. And that psalm that we read this morning gets us asking this question, I think. What do we trust?

And not just what sort of seat might we trust to support a slightly overweight student, but what or who do we trust when our lives are collapsing around us?

When things begin to get overwhelming, in the storms of life, when we're no longer able to steer the ship, who do we trust with the wheelhouse?

And what do we think happens when we die? Who do we trust with the answer to that question? Who do we trust with our eternities?

[3 : 14] It's the questions that we're asking this morning. We're in a section here of the psalms that are often known as the Egyptian Hallel. Hallel is a familiar word to you, though you might not think that it is, but it is a familiar word, Hallel.

Hallelujah means praise Yahweh, praise God. And so these psalms that we're in from 113 to 118, we're in the middle of 115, they are praising Hallel, praising God for rescuing Israel out of Egypt.

And so they're often known as the Egyptian Hallel, the Egyptian praise. And it's hard to say when or who this psalm was written for exactly, but I think verse 2 might give us a clue.

So have a look at verse 2 with me in Psalm 115. Why do the nations say, where is their God? So if nothing else, we can imagine that this psalm was probably written at a time where the nations surrounding Israel are questioning the existence and the potency and the goodness of their God.

Now, if we're honest, that might have been almost any time in Israel's history, a time where Israel are struggling. It does not look as though their God is with them, a time, I think, probably of national crisis.

[4 : 32] I suppose it could have been in the aftermath of the Assyrian or Babylonian invasions as Israel and Judah are carried into exile. I wonder if it could even be as in Haggai, as we've been learning about over the last few weeks, as they return from that exile and are struggling to build this unimpressive second temple.

Whatever the context, the nations around them are asking, where is their God? He doesn't look so powerful now, they say. And maybe that attitude sounds familiar.

It's true, isn't it? It's true, isn't it? That the secular world around us is constantly calling into question the potency and existence and goodness of our God.

I mean, just over the last couple of years, how little has God been in the conversation? If you watch BBC Breakfast in the morning or you flick through the Scotsman or the Times or the Week, nowhere will you find the suggestion that God has anything to do with what's been going on.

We've just been praying about all sorts of things, crisis in Ukraine, COVID. Nowhere is there a suggestion that God has anything to do with any of that, much less would you see any claims that he might be the solution.

[5 : 55] And I think that really reflects how people think about God in Scotland today. In other words, that the world around us just does not think about God at all.

That he probably doesn't exist. And that even if he does, he must surely be impotent, evil, or both.

Just recently, I was with some friends from school. We were at a wedding together, and we had some brilliant conversations about the gospel, about Jesus, about God's word.

And in many ways, that was a massive encouragement to me. I mean, these friends, they're genuinely interested. They see that the gospel makes logical sense. They know that they're sinful.

They long for eternal life. But in some ways, it was also super discouraging, because for them, what their unbelief boils down to, simply, in their minds, God does not exist, and therefore has no power.

[6 : 57] For some of them, they may have convinced themselves that that's true, to justify their sinful lifestyle, to avoid confronting their sin, though they seem, I think, to know that it is there.

But however they've reached that position in their thinking, like the nations in this psalm, they see this messy world that we live in. And they see the faith of Christians, they see my faith, and they're asking, where is your God in all of this mess?

Maybe you're here this morning, and maybe you're there too. Maybe you have similar questions about where God is in all of this mess. If that's you, stay tuned this morning, because let me tell you, this God is incredible.

He is utterly amazing and totally trustworthy. And it would be folly to put your trust anywhere else. But where is this God?

Well, the psalmist answers that question right off the bat, doesn't he? Have a look at verse 3. Our God is in heaven. He does whatever pleases him.

[8 : 09] This God, Israel's God, the God of the universe, is absolutely in control. He's in heaven, not some spiritual other world, but literally here in the heavens, the skies.

Where is he? Our God fills the galaxies. He inhabits the universe. And notice that he does all that he pleases.

Not some of what he pleases. Not what he pleases for some people and in some circumstances. No, he does whatever he pleases. Our God is absolutely in control.

He was in control when he rescued his people from slavery in Egypt. When he spared them from the wrath, from his wrath at the Passover. He was in control in whatever the context of this psalm is.

Whatever they faced as they were mocked. Israel's God was in control. And he is in control today. And all of the mess out there, in the midst of this global pandemic, with everything going on in the news, political scandals, looming wars, and in all of the mess in here, in my sinful heart, though the world around us does not recognize him, our God has got this entire thing under control.

[9 : 32] Would we trust him? It is absolutely essential that we do. Because, and this is really our first point this morning.

Sorry, it's taken a while for us to get there. But this is our first point. If we trust in man-made idols, the psalm says we will become dead like them. If we trust in man-made idols, we will become dead like them.

Let me read from verse four. Their idols are silver and gold, made by human hands. They have mouths, but cannot speak.

Eyes, but cannot hear. See, they have ears, but cannot hear. Noses, but cannot smell. They have hands, but cannot feel. Feet, but cannot walk.

Nor can they utter a sound with their throats. Friends, do you see the irony here? The Israelites, God has rescued them out of slavery.

[10 : 33] He's spoken to them, given them commandments, his perfect commandments, helping them to live wisely in this world. And yet the nations around them, those nations that mock their God, they worship these idols, created trinkets.

They're preciously made, yes, from silver and gold. But of course, as these verses, yes, these idols, they're silent. They cannot speak. They're blind. They're deaf.

They cannot smell or feel or walk. Picture with me Andy's bedroom. Andy from Toy Story, if you know the scene. What happens when Andy leaves the room?

The toys come to life, don't they? They talk to one another. They even plot together. Those toys, they are literally alive. They're precisely the opposite of what this psalmist is describing.

Because what's the psalmist saying? These idols, they are utterly inanimate. They are not alive. These idols, they are dead.

[11 : 39] And to our modern sensibilities, of course they are. Right? We know that Toy Story is fantastical. And perhaps the world around us, I think, would probably agree. Maybe if you're here this morning and even if you don't believe in the God of this psalm, you'd probably still say, wouldn't you, that inanimate objects can't actually be gods.

They have no real agency in our world. And that's true here, but of course there are millions across the world today who worship idols exactly like these.

Virtually every world, major world religion, takes man-made things, puts them in a temple, or even a church, and calls them holy. But there's more to it than that, I think, because increasingly the secular worldview around us isn't simply atheistic, but spiritualistic and superstitious.

Let me give you some examples of that. I know a lady who, with all the well-meaning in the world, whenever she sees a robin in her back garden, she is convinced that it is her dead mother come back to visit.

Maybe that sort of vaguely supernatural belief is familiar to you. If you could have been a fly on the wall in our rugby changing room yesterday afternoon, you'd have been amazed at how many of the lads are completely obsessed with which sock they put on first, with which seat they're sitting in, and with what sort of music we listen to as we get ready.

[13 : 12] Maybe if you're honest, you're a bit like that too. Even just in subtle ways, superstitious, trusting in our own man-made rituals and idols to get us through the storms of life.

People do trust in all sorts of vaguely spiritual and superstitious things today, don't they? And these things can be comforting. That's why we trust in them. And yet, perhaps like the comfort of a bubble bath, if we spend too long immersed in them, gazing at them, they do eventually grow cold and their bubbles of hope begin to burst.

But more than that, and I think outside of the explicitly supernatural, perhaps more normal for us today, is to place our trust in the material. Perhaps most obviously we do this just bluntly with our money.

I know I sometimes do this. very often think, don't we, that if we just had enough money, then all our worries and problems would disappear. And maybe if we do have full wallets, how easy it is to trust our wealth in place of our God.

Friends, whatever our idols and superstitions, whatever we are trusting other than God to see us through this life, will we see what this psalmist says?

[14 : 37] We have got to see that those things are not alive, that they have no real eternal agency, they do not speak today, and ultimately they cannot save us because they are dead themselves.

And did you see in verse 8 where the psalmist is going here? Have a look at verse 8. Those who make them will be like them, and so will all who trust in them.

In other words, those who make and trust in idols will die. Do you see that? These idols, they're totally inanimate, impotent, they're dead.

But here I think is comfort actually for the Israelites because the psalmist is saying those nations around you, they may well look powerful, and you might be facing troubling times.

Maybe your temple project is just so unimpressive. times that cause people to mock God, but ultimately those people, they're going to become just like their idols, dead.

[15 : 44] And us too, if we trust in man-made idols, we'll become dead like them. And yet, of course, we will all die, won't we? I hope that's not news to you, but you will one day die.

And so whatever it is that we're trusting in, maybe as we think about the pandemic again, or as we've been trusting in vaccinations and continued restrictions, or maybe you're one of those who trust in those who tell us that the pandemic is over, whatever it is that we face in life, whether you're unwell, or you're trying to buy a new home maybe, or looking for a new job, navigating a tricky relationship, whether we're at work, or at school, or in the lecture theater, wherever we are, and those around us are calling our God into question.

Whatever it is we trust through that, well, we've got to say that it's really just putting off the inevitable, isn't it? Because though it may help us steer the course, at the end of it all, we will all die.

We will all become like the idols that we've worshipped. And yet, in all of this, there is the glorious hope of the Christian gospel, that if we trust in the living God, we will live forever.

That's our second point this morning, really. If we trust in the living God, we will live forever. Do you notice the repeated refrains in verses 9 to 11?

[17 : 17] See what the psalmist says? Trust in the Lord. He is their help and shield. All of Israel, he says, the house of Aaron, the priestly family, you who fear the Lord, that's the outsiders welcomed in.

The psalmist says, trust him. Trust him, for as we've been singing, he has proved faithful and he will be faithful forever. For the readers of this psalm and the other psalms around it, singing them and remembering the exodus out of Egypt, that rescue from slavery, from the Passover, the deliverance from God's wrath and justice.

These are reminders that he has proved faithful and that he will be faithful forever into eternity. Have a look at verse 12.

The Lord remembers us and will bless us. Again, this is for Israel, Aaron's house and all who fear the Lord, small and great alike.

mock. This God who is in total control, he wants to bless his people, the least as well as the great, the poor as well as the rich, the servant and the king.

[18 : 33] He has remembered them all, he will bless them all, but just imagine how difficult that must have been to see for these people. Incredibly difficult to see in the context as the nations look at God's people and mock as the glory may be of the Jerusalem temple, once a genuine wonder, now nothing compared to the temples of those idols in the empires around them.

Even as it's being rebuilt, unimpressive, they may not look much blessed. But God's promises are sure and he promises here that he will bless those who trust in him.

I love that about our God, don't you love this, that this is both the small and the great, that his blessings are not measured according to our worldly greatness. Now if you're here this morning then and for whatever reason you feel or you've been made to feel insignificant, for whatever reason, whether that's in the world around you, at school or at work or maybe even here at church, maybe it feels like everyone else is getting all the good opportunities, like you're constantly overlooked, as though your gifts aren't recognized or utilized or celebrated.

Firstly, let me say how sorry I am, because our God does not see you like that and we're a church who wants to see people flourish and use their gifts.

And our God wants to bless you, so would you trust in him, from the smallest to the greatest, the least to the most, whoever you are, however you have been made to feel, would you trust this God and receive his blessing on your life?

[20 : 26] But what exactly does that mean, to trust him and he will bless us? What are we saying? Are we saying that we are blessed according to a measure of our trust?

And is that a material blessing that we're talking about? There are lots of people who would speak this way today, aren't there? Claiming that with enough trust in God we can claim any blessing as our own. What blessing would you like today?

If you're single, would you like a husband or a wife? Money for that building project? Some physical healing? And look, of course, God does give good things to his people.

He blesses us, but not because we trust him more than someone else does. That's not how blessing works here. Instead, I think God's people are to recognize that every good gift comes from above, to trust that any prosperity his people do receive comes from him and not from the dead idols that we read about in this psalm.

But probably more in view here, to trust that God's blessing his people is not going to look like worldly blessing. It won't always look impressive. The people around will still be able to say, where is your God?

[21 : 43] In fact, it might look very unimpressive. But ultimately, God wants us to trust him in the final and perfect blessing of eternal life.

Have a look at verses 14 and 15 for an example of how God's blessing works in this psalm. May the Lord cause you to flourish, both you and your children.

May you be blessed by the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth. The idols of the surrounding nations at the time, they were very often attributed with fertility and prosperity.

That's what the people were foolishly trusting in them for. But one of the great promises of Israel's scripture was that God's people would be fruitful and that they would multiply.

It's a blessing from God. It comes right at the beginning of the Bible with Adam as a global promise. And it is repeated at various points of God's word to the leaders of God's people as a particular promise.

[22 : 50] It's a promise then that had been partially fulfilled by this time in the nation of Israel as the Israelite nation grew and occupied the land. But of course here in the context of this psalm as it seems as though they face a national crisis and they do in their history they face a number of national crises and God says to them you may be decimated now.

It may look as though your God has deserted you. The nations may mock but still I am your God and my promise to you that those who are left will once again be fruitful and multiply is still true.

And of course for us today through Jesus that promise has once again become global and his kingdom it has grown and it is growing.

In Matthew chapter 28 this is a key verse for us as a church. Jesus commands the disciples to go and make disciples of all nations. go and tell the good news Jesus says to them that they might follow me too for that is where true blessing lies.

Entrusting this God who blesses us now not least with the presence of his Holy Spirit blessing us as a church with gifts to build and encourage one another and ultimately he blesses us wonderfully with adoption into his family and eternally with life eternal life because if we trust in the living God we will live forever.

[24 : 31] For us today it's through that command through the commands of Matthew chapter 28 as it's come down through history that we have become part of his kingdom and now we can lay hold of that promise and take part in that command ourselves.

We can be disciple making disciples. As the nations around us continue to mock as they call our God into question it means that we can respond to them we can hold out to them this offer of eternal life in the gospel.

We saw back in verses 4 to 7 that idols are dead that they have no life in them and in verse 8 that those who trust in them will go to the grave with them.

I take it that that is the eternal grave because an idol who is not alive cannot die to save. You see our human proclivity to trust anything other than this living God in other words our rebellion against him our sin it demands a price it demands death it's why those who turn away from this God this psalm says face eternal death death but we can point to a victorious savior the God who became man who joined us in our suffering who really encountered that crisis that all of humanity faces who witnessed and was tempted by humanity's rebellion against God but who having lived a perfect life took the punishment for that rebellion in our place who unlike the already dead idols he could really die for us and he did he really did die and rise again we read that wonderful story of Thomas's encounter with the risen Jesus where Thomas felt the nail marks in his hand where he put his hand in the wound in Jesus side and friends this is no ghost story he's alive and now he sits at the right hand of the father reigning from heaven and he's with us by his spirit today our God is alive would we trust him and as we point people to him to Jesus would we know that under his sovereignty and his control some will respond in trusting him too for he promises that his kingdom will continue to grow the Lord will give increase and if anyone trusts in him in the living

God they will live forever just notice then finally as we finish how God's people are called to respond to him in verses 16 to 18 how do God's people respond they respond with halal in praise do you notice that these verses contain a bit of a summary of the psalm don't know if you noticed that where is God in the heavens which are his where is man on earth which is his but those who trust in the things of the earth will die and in their death they will not praise him but we

[28 : 11] God's people we will bless him we will praise him surely the implication there is that if we trust in him we will praise him forever because we will live forever and so we can we can praise him from this time and forever more if you're here this morning and you do not trust in this God maybe you're one of those who mocks who laughs at us where is your God I suspect if you're here this morning you might be a bit more respectful than that but if you're honest you can't help but agree God doesn't seem all that powerful in the mess that is this world you might not be so sure either way and if that's you let me ask you a question who or what do you trust who do you trust to steer the ship in the storm of this mess and who do you trust to see you through the other side can the things that you trust really make a difference in this world and ultimately though to your eternal fate to your eternal position before God do the things that you trust do they really speak can they really save do they really live and for the

Christian here this morning how will you respond to this God to this God who is in absolute control to this God who is alive who is nothing like the toys in Andy's bedroom this living God who has promised to rescue you this living God who has rescued you in Christ he is far more trustworthy than any man-made idol he's certainly more trustworthy than a flimsy stool in a cheap Italian restaurant and so will you put your trust in him and will we praise him together will we say with the psalmist if you're here today and you want to declare your trust for this God back in verse 1 why don't we read this verse out loud together it's going to come up on the screen can we say this together not to us Lord not to us but to your name be the glory because of your love and faithfulness let me pray heavenly father we thank you that you speak today

Lord we thank you that in Jesus you really are alive today that you came to this earth and you were able to die in our place but that you are alive again having walked through that resurrection path for us Lord I pray that we would trust you this morning in Jesus name Amen beast dad so uh