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SERMON TITLE: God Redeems Unbelief with Faith

SCRIPTURE: Proverbs 8:22-31, Advent 4

DATE: December 23, 2018

Check out the service at www.fpcd.org.

Read also John 1:1-3

Do you . . .

- have any coupons for companies that have gone out of business?
- Have you purchased with cold, hard cash, a VISA gift card that has subsequently expired?
- Do you have any friends or family members who asked you to do something, but they did not believe you would actually do it, so they went ahead and did it themselves? Or, perhaps you are the one who does not trust in them. ☺
- Have you worked for an employer who does not have trust in you?

When we were in New York City, I bought several subway cards to transport our people to places around the city. One of those subway cards did not work, so I went to the agent at the booth in the subway station to have the funds put on a new card. The agent said, “I can’t do that. The NYC Transit Authority does not allow me to handle funds. You will have to go to the machine and buy a new card. Then you will have to write a letter and send the bad card in to the Transit Authority home office for your refund.”

They don’t trust their employees to actually do the job of a subway ticket agent. They do not believe in them.

I got home from New York and promptly wrote the letter. It has been almost four weeks. Do you think I have heard from them? Do you think I have gotten my money back?

Of course not!

I have to admit, I do not believe in them!

Broken promises, lack of trust, unbelief. It is woven into the fiber of human relationships. It is the burr under life’s saddle.

We all know those little frustrations—we laugh about it, but underneath, a life without faith is hard, and when someone does not trust you it can be quite hurtful.

Who can resolve this core need for faith? My thesis is that God redeems unbelief.

Unbelief goes back a long time, even to the beginning when Adam and Eve were tempted in the garden. They were tempted to not believe:

The tempter, that shrewd, calculating snake said,
“God didn’t really say to avoid that fruit tree.”
“God’s motives are not pure.”
“God is keeping you in the dark.”

Doubt was cast about God; unbelief took root; the couple lost faith; they disbelieved in God and ate the forbidden fruit. They then hid from God in shame.

They are in a state of unbelief and it is not good. God does not want them to stay that way forever. There would be a limit to life now.

But God had a vision, having implanted in them—and in us—God’s image. This vision is that we walk with God daily even though we can’t see God. God’s intent is that we have faith in, not lack of trust in, God’s goodness. This opportunity is built on planet earth while we are here. When you become a Christian, you learn to trust God as you walk with faith.

We say *God is good* . . . all the time.

That saying implies faith in God regardless of what we see or experience.

God redeems our unbelief and gives us faith. Take Abraham. When God called him, God’s voice compelled him. It was filled with hope and promise. But faith takes time to develop. So, Abraham and his wife Sarah were given something to have faith about. They, an older couple without children, were told to expect a child.

It was impossible; they had to cling to the promise in faith.

They had to cling to the promise a long time. It took years of trying to solve the problem through human effort, even to the point of giving up, before finally the child of faith was born.

It was a miracle.

You cannot have faith without believing in miracles. God wants us to believe that with him, all things are possible.

What is stirring in you that you know will take great faith to achieve? Don't give up.

Disbelief is easy. Faith means you hang on for the ride! There may be ups and downs but God wants to redeem your unbelief and your fears through walking in faith, through impossible situations. Are you giving up?

Without faith, it is impossible to please God. (Hebrews 11:6)

What seems impossible in your life? What do you hope for? What is impossible for human beings is not impossible with God.

You might hope for family reconciliation. Are you praying? Are you looking at yourself and asking God to give you insight into what you might do differently? Are you looking for open doors?

Perhaps you have a dream. Are you preparing yourself for it?

So what has God done to help us all with unbelief?

He sent his only Son who was with him before the world was created. Jesus gives us a vision of faith because Jesus lived by faith.

Jesus was no ordinary man but the Divine Son. He offers one thing that we do not have: *complete trust in God*. We can be persuaded to trust God by simply trusting Jesus.

At the last supper when Jesus was praying with his disciples he said:

"So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed" (John 17:5).

Jesus knew God before the world existed, so when we trust in Jesus, we trust in someone with legitimate experience.

Everything in Jesus' life is marked by faith. He gave God credit for his healing, his authority over nature, and his forgiveness of our sins.

Proverbs tells us God lives in heaven but God created nature for us. God is not a sort of nature God but God is creator of your entire environment. Jesus was the architect who was with God. When doubt rises in your mind, look around. Realize God's work for you and Jesus' presence in creating. Nature did not create itself. Jesus was with God in the beginning because Jesus is divine. John said it like this:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being" (Jn 1:1-3).

Are you alone? No. To see Jesus is to know God. We do not have to live in unbelief or make up our own gods.

Unbelief can be redeemed. Faith comes in Jesus.

Carry this word with you:

"Without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever would approach him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him" (Hebrews 11:6).

Believe in something that lasts beyond today! **HAVE FAITH!**

AMEN