TITLE: Faith and Trust

TEXT: Prov. 3:5-6; Mal. 3:6-12; Is. 1:18; Mt. 17:20;

Mk. 4:31-32

INTRODUCTION: This morning I want to talk about faith and trust and how they are meant to operate together in our life.

**Prov 3:5 (NIV) Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;**

**6 in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.**

 Do you trust in the Lord this morning?

 Two words that seem to be inseparable in Scripture are trust and faith.

 The amount of trust that we place in the Lord will depend on the degree of faith that we have in Him. And in order to have faith in God we must have a degree of trust.

 There is a story of a man who was attempting to cross the frozen St. Lawrence River in Canada.

 Unsure whether the ice would hold him, the man first tested it by laying one hand on it. Then he got down on his hands and knees and gingerly began making his way across the river.

 When he got to the middle of the frozen river, trembling with fear, he heard a noise behind him. Looking back to his horror he saw a team of horses pulling a carriage down the road toward the river. And upon reaching the river they didn’t stop, but bolted right onto the ice and right past him, while he crouched there on all fours, trembling in fear.

 Real faith requires trust! The driver of the carriage had a great faith and trusted in the ice underneath him. The man crawling had little trust in the ice and it affected his faith in its ability to hold him…

 Before we can truly trust we must first have faith!

 This is true in all of life, and it is especially true in our relationship with the lord.

 Our trust in God will depend on the amount or degree of faith that we have in Him.

**-- D. Elton Trueblood,**

**Faith is not belief without proof but trust without reservation.**

Scripture admonishes us to---

 **Prov 3:5 (NIV) Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;**

**6 in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.**

Trusting in the Lord with all our heart and leaning not upon our own understanding will require a great deal of faith on our part**.**

This kind of faith, toTrust in the Lord with all ones heart and lean not upon ones own understanding of things, is not always an easy thing for us to do. In fact, it can be very hard for us to do!

 Yet it is what each one of us as Christians have been called to do.

 Several years ago Pam and I were brought to a place where we were tested in this area of trusting in God with all our heart not leaning upon our own understanding.

 It was a time in our life when we were pretty heavily in debt from years of bad stewardship.

 Our debt was so great that after paying all the bills we were about $300.00 a month short.

 About this time I was starting to grow in my relationship with the Lord and as I was reading my Bible one night I was reading in the book of Malachi.

 (Mal 3:6-12)

This scripture starts out with an important statement!

 God says: **I the Lord do not change!**

Hebr 13:8 (NIV) Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

 God doesn’t change! In Gods eyes, what was sin in times past is still sin in times present and will still be sin in times future…

 What was Gods truth in times past is still Gods truth today and it will still be God’s truth tomorrow.

**Mala 3:6 (NIV) "I the LORD do not change. So you, O descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed.**

**7 Ever since the time of your forefathers you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you," says the LORD Almighty.**

**"But you ask, `How are we to return?'**

**8 "Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me.**

**"But you ask, `How do we rob you?'**

**"In tithes and offerings.**

**9 You are under a curse--the whole nation of you--because you are robbing me.**

**10 Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.**

**11 I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit," says the LORD Almighty.**

**12 "Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land," says the LORD Almighty.**

 As I read this the words that I couldn’t get away from where: Will a man rob God? Yet you rob Me!

 How am I robbing You, Lord?

 In tithes and offerings!

 You are under a curse because you are robbing Me!

 The Lord really convicted me with this passage.

 I looked up the word tithe and what I feared came true.

 It did mean what I had always heard that it meant. A tenth part or 10 %.

 Keep in mind that we were so far in debt at this time that we were already about $300.00 short a month on paying the bills.

 As we were struggling with this God brought another verse of Scripture to mind…

 **Prov 3:5 (NIV) Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;**

**6 in all your ways acknowledge him,**

**and he will make your paths straight.**

 My understanding said that if we are already $300.00 short a month and we give God a Biblical tithe which is 10% of our income, and for simplicity sake, say our income is $3000.00 a month, 10% of that being $300.00, then it is going to make us about $600.00 a month short.

 I have always been good at math and enjoy working with numbers and it didn't take me long to figure this out. (Actually I even did this in my head)!

 But I knew that God was speaking directly to me through these verses…

**"Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me.**

**Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse,**

Up until this time our concept of a tithe was whatever was left over which wasn’t much and certainly wasn’t a tenth part.

It has always been hard for me to walk away from a challenge. And now here is God Himself, the Lord God Almighty challenging me personally!

**Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.**

**11 I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit," says the LORD Almighty.**

 This is exactly what we felt was happening in our finances!

 Like pests were devouring our crops and our vines were casting off their fruit! We simply could not seem to get ahead! In fact we kept falling further and further behind.

The promise here seemed great! Having God throw open the floodgates of heaven and pouring out so much Blessing that we wouldn’t be able to contain it!

 Having God prevent pest from devouring our crops, and the vines in our fields will not cast off their fruit!

 A few days later came the test. It was the first of the month and time to pay the bills…

 It wasn’t easy as I found myself leaning upon my own understanding of things. Well, God, this can’t possibly work. We can’t make our money stretch now! How are we going to make it through the month if I double our shortage by tithing?

**Isaiah 1:18 (NIV)** **18“Come now, let us reason together,”     says the LORD.“**

 So, I reasoned this out! God has made a promise here and it is impossible for God to lie! He must be true to His Word!

 So the first check that I wrote out that month was our full tithe.

 To this day I don’t know how but we made it through the month really no worse off than the month before.

 The next month I was just as apprehensive as the month before as I once again wrote out the check for our full tithe, but the same thing happened! We made it through that month!

 And this happened month after month!

Sometimes we would see the blessing of God’s floodgates being opened up to us, however most of the time we didn’t see anything to explain our getting through the month. We just did!

 Thinking back to that time I can see that God gave us wisdom and discipline in our spending. The wisdom to tear up credit cards, take them one at a time and pay them off then move on to the next one and do the same.

 Slowly but surely we began to climb our way out of debt!

 By the time I went into the ministry a few years later we had not just reduced debt but eliminated all debt other than our house payment.

 How did it happen? Our obedience to God in this area of our lives opened the floodgates of heaven so God could pour out His blessing upon us!

 Until we became obedient in this area of our lives I firmly believe we were living under a self-imposed curse!

 **9 You are under a curse-- --because you are robbing me.**

**10 Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.**

**11 I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit," says the LORD Almighty.**

**12 "Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land," says the LORD Almighty**

 I need to point out something here and that is this: tithing is not for Gods benefit!

Think about it? Or as the Lord has invited us:

**“Come now, let us reason together,”     says the LORD.“**

 God does not benefit from our tithe! God does not need your or my money to run the universe!

 God has created everything that has ever been created! Including all the silver and gold and diamonds and every other precious material! If God were ever to be strapped for cash all that He would have to do is create some more!

 God has chosen to use the tithe as the means for the operation of His Church but He could do it another way if He so choose.

 If the tithe is not for Gods benefit then for whose benefit is it?

 Yours! Mine!

 You see, if we come to a place of trusting God with what often is most valuable to us, our money, once we see His faithfulness then we will be more able to trust Him in every other area of our life as well.

 I really believe that for the Christian obedience in the tithe isn’t something that God wants us to grow into; I believe it is where He wants us to start! Because it is a matter of simple obedience!

 It is simply a matter of trust! Do we trust God or not?

 Is God faithful to His Word or not!

 As we increase our trust in God and see His faithfulness it will increase our faith in Him.

 The more faith that we have in Him then the more that we will trust Him! Do you see how it works?

I love this story…

 A church member was having trouble with the concept of tithing. One day he revealed his doubts to his minister: "Pastor, I just don't see how I can give 10 percent of my income to the church when I can't even keep on top of our bills now."

 The pastor replied, "John, if I promise to make up the difference in your bills if you should fall short, do you think you could try tithing for just one month?"

 After a moment's pause, John responded, "Sure, if you promise to make up any shortage, I guess I could try tithing for one month."

 "Now, what do you think of that," mused the pastor. "You say you'd be willing to put your trust in a mere man like myself' who possesses so little materially, but you couldn't trust your Heavenly Father who owns the whole universe!" The next Sunday, John gave his tithe, and has been doing so faithfully ever since.

 It shouldn’t be so hard for us to simply trust God because God must be faithful to His Word! What He says He will do!

 As I said before, obedience in areas such as tithing are not for Gods benefit, they are for our benefit!

 Several years later God started to call me into full time ministry.

 I had a great career. I was making good money and I liked what I did. Yet I knew that God was calling me to go into the pastorate.

 It would require my quitting my job and going to Bible college.

 When the time came to actually do it, It was not a hard thing for me to do! In fact there was very little struggle with the decision to leave my job, even though at the time we didn’t have the exact plan of God laid out before us.

 It was not a struggle to know that when I left my career I would go from making a very good income plus bonus’s and stock options to $0.

 Why wasn’t there a struggle or great apprehension?

 Because God had already proved His faithfulness to us in the area of our tithing!

 God had already proved that He is faithful to His promises and that He is our true source of all things!

 When we trusted God in the area of our finances and He proved Himself faithful, it increased our faith in Him so that we could even step out in that faith in bigger areas and trust Him even more..

 That is the way that it is meant to work!

 Jesus described faith as a seed. A seed is meant to grow.

 Jesus tells His disciples

 Matt 17:20 (NIV) He replied, --I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, `Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."

 Before we can understand this completely we need to understand something about the mustard seed…

**Mark 4:31 It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest seed you plant in the ground. 32 Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds of the air can perch in its shade."**

You see, all of us have a seed of faith that God has implanted within us. Like the mustard seed, as planted, it is but a small seed, almost insignificant. Yet as it is nurtured, cultivated and allowed to grow it becomes a great tree with big strong branches!

 Faith, like a mussel needs to be exercised in order to grow!

 Example: Body building. The more you exercise a mussel the bigger and stronger it gets!

Stop exercising that mussel and it starts to shrink.

 We exercise our faith by trusting in God.

 As we step out and trust God it will cause our faith to grow! The more that our faith grows the more that we will trust God, and so the cycle goes until we have a faith that Scripture says can move mountains!

 The mountains that our faith can move that Jesus was talking about here were the obstacles of this life.

 The previous verses to this one tell of the disciples coming to Jesus because they had tried to cast out a demon from a child and the demon didn’t come out.

They ask the Lord why? He tells them it is because of their lack of faith! And that if they had faith like a seed, a growing faith, a faith that will grow into a great tree, then they could say to the mountains of obstacle in this life to move and they would be removed!

 Our faith always comes down to a matter of trust. Do we trust God or not? Is He faithful or is He Not?

 This morning do you have a faith that will move mountains or do you find that your faith has trouble moving a pebble out of the way?

 If we want a mountain moving faith then we need to exercise the seed of faith that God has planted in our life. We exercise that faith through trust.

 As we simply **Trust in the LORD with all our heart and lean not on our own understanding;**

**but in all our ways acknowledge him, and he will make our paths straight.**

 Do you have a mountain of obstacle in your life this morning that you need removed?

 Then trust in the Lord with all of your heart and allow Him to create within you a faith that will move that mountain?

 Simply believe God! Step out in your faith and trust Him to do that which He says He will do!

 Put your faith and your trust into action and see the faithfulness of God do the miraculous in your life..

 In what area of your life is God challenging you to step out in faith and in trust of Him today?