

## “Trust, Praise, Peace & Love”

*Psalm 46, Psalm 146, Philippians 1:1-11*

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During fearful, violent, depressing chaos the psalmist, Jesus and the Apostle Paul did and taught four things: trust, peace, praise and love.

Our money says “In God we trust”. Since we are all fallen, broken and flawed, no person, no pastor, no leader, no politician, no matter how wonderful, faithful, Holy Spirit filled and wise, will be able to fill you with peace, joy, and love. The psalmist declares, **Psalm 146:3 “Don’t put your confidence in powerful people; there is no help for you there.”** Only God is able to transform us and the world filling you and the entire cosmos with abundant life.

If you are trusting in this election, trusting in any person, even if you could elect your ideal person, they will disappoint, for all of us are broken. This also means even if we as a country elect the worst possible candidate all is still well, because God is our never-ending source of peace, joy, and love. Please make a prayerful informed vote. Receive the results with peace knowing that all eternal blessings come from God. The psalmist declares **Psalm 23:3a “God restores my soul”** God’s love is constantly restoring the entire cosmos. Even if the worst happens, God’s love will transform, renew and make all glorious. In every situation trust and praise the Lord.

**Psalm 146 “Praise the Lord! Let all that I am praise the Lord. I will praise the Lord as long as I live. I will sing praises to my God with my dying breath. Don’t put your confidence in powerful people; there is no help for you there. When they breathe their last, they return to the earth, and all their plans die with them. But joyful are those who have the God of Israel as their helper, whose hope is in the Lord their God. God made heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them. God keeps every promise forever. God gives justice to the oppressed and food to the hungry. The Lord frees the prisoners. The Lord opens the eyes of the blind. The Lord lifts up those who are weighed down. The Lord loves the godly. The Lord protects the foreigners among us. God cares for the orphans and widows, but God frustrates the plans of the wicked. The Lord will reign forever. God will be your God, O Jerusalem, throughout the generations. Praise the Lord!”**

Trust God. Receive God’s peace. Praise God. Love extravagantly.

God is our refuge and strength, so we will not fear when hate speech bombards us, terrorists seek to harm us, and our health falters as health care costs skyrocket. God is our refuge and strength, so we will not fear when war kills, destroys and sends multitudes fleeing, when protest and violence erupts in our neighborhoods and when storms flood homes. God is our refuge and strength so we will not fear when our money is inadequate, when we are criticized, betrayed, and suffer loss. God is our refuge and strength so we will not fear when racism and sexism hurts us, greed divides us, and viewpoints anger us to fight.

**Psalm 46 “God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble. So we will not fear when earthquakes come and the mountains crumble into the sea. Let the oceans roar and foam. Let the mountains tremble as the waters surge! A river brings joy to the city of our God, the sacred home of the Most High. God dwells in that city; it cannot be destroyed. From the very break of day, God will protect it. The nations are in chaos, and their kingdoms crumble! God’s voice thunders, and the earth melts! The Lord of Heaven’s Armies is here among us; the God of Israel is our fortress. Come, see the glorious works of the Lord: See how God brings destruction upon the world. God causes wars to end throughout the earth. God breaks the bow and snaps the spear; God burns the shields with fire. “Be still, and know that I am God! I will be honored by every nation. I will be honored throughout the world.” The Lord of Heaven’s Armies is here among us; the God of Israel is our fortress.**

Trust God. Receive God’s peace. Praise God. Love extravagantly.

**Philippians 1:1-11 “This letter is from Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus. I am writing to all of God’s holy people in Philippi who belong to Christ Jesus, including the church leaders and deacons. May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace. Every time I think of you, I give thanks to my God. Whenever I pray, I make my requests for all of you with joy, for you have been**

**my partners in spreading the Good News about Christ from the time you first heard it until now. And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue God's work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns. So it is right that I should feel as I do about all of you, for you have a special place in my heart. You share with me the special favor of God, both in my imprisonment and in defending and confirming the truth of the Good News. God knows how much I love you and long for you with the tender compassion of Christ Jesus. I pray that your love will overflow more and more, and that you will keep on growing in knowledge and understanding. For I want you to understand what really matters, so that you may live pure and blameless lives until the day of Christ's return. May you always be filled with the fruit of your salvation—the righteous character produced in your life by Jesus Christ—for this will bring much glory and praise to God.**

The Apostle Paul begins several of his letters by praising God and thanking God, for others. Paul clarifies that his trust is not in the people he is thanking God for, rather his trust is in God who does good works in and through people. Paul prays for us to join God in transforming the world by expanding our love.

Today we give thanks for saints. All who live in union with God on earth and in heaven are saints. We give thanks for saints for the ways they shine with the love of God.

Last week we gave thanks for reformers. Those who proclaim that we are saved by the grace of God. In gratitude for God's saving, transforming renewing grace, we love. The reformers believed that God loves every person equally, that the Holy Spirit inspires every person with insights, therefore they promoted the priesthood of all believers. The reformers established a radical idea, public education for everyone.

It was a fearful, violent, depressing chaotic time, confirming that humanity is horribly broken and messed up. Christians slaughtered each other, because they had a different perspective of God's will for the world. Many tens of millions of people were killed. Humanity's ugliness reveals the glorious grandeur of God's grace to continually love, redeem, and bring good out of chaos.

Public education emerged from the mess. God speaks to each person. Every person should be educated to read the Bible and other books, so they can share their understanding of God. Next time you are tempted to avoid reading the Bible think of those who died to give you the opportunity to read the Bible.

Some feared a horrible invention, the printing press. They feared it costs too much to print books. Public education is impossible; it is too expensive. Reading books will keep people from working and talking to each other. Freely sharing ideas will destroy the order of society. People being able to read the Bible on their own will hurt worship attendance resulting in the end of the church. The ability to quickly share ideas, like Martin Luther's 95 theses, lead to unrest, protest, and the upheaval of society.

Some today fear what they think is a horrible invention, smart phones and the internet. It costs too much. It distracts people from working and talking to each other. Watching sermons online will hurt worship attendance resulting in the end of the church. The ability to quickly share videos of violence, misconduct, and lies is causing unrest, protest, and the upheaval of society. The printing press was a conduit for tremendous good. It seems that smart phones and the internet is also becoming conduit for tremendous good.

Out of the blood bath of the reformation wars emerged the conviction that church and state must be separated. Our country was founded on the conviction of separation of church and state. The government should protect the freedom of the individual to choose their beliefs about God, even unbelief, and protect the individual's freedom to live their beliefs, as long as they do not impose on another's freedom. We should be careful that we are not going back to the mess of mixing politics and religion.

Today we give thanks for veterans who overcame their fear and lovingly sacrificed, to fight to keep us free, to give us the right to vote. Millions upon millions upon millions of people died and sacrificed to educate you and give you the freedom to vote. Please cast a prayerful, informed, well-educated vote.

If your candidate wins, praise the Lord! If your candidate loses, praise the Lord! If you are excited about the next four years, praise the Lord! If you are worried about what will happen next, praise the Lord! There is nothing that can happen on Election Day that should shift your focus away from giving praise to the God who has created you, redeemed you and sustained you throughout the course of your life.

The most important leader in our lives is God who will reign forever. When we give praise to God, we are joining a community of faithful people who are linked together across the generations. Our praise fills us with joyful, grace-filled peace that enables us to love extravagantly. The apostle Paul knew what it was like to live by faith in the middle of political changes, joys, sorrows, triumphs and setbacks. He described himself and

his colleagues as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as financially poor, yet rich in spirit; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything. Paul felt this way because he took the long view and praised God in good times and bad.

Thousands of years ago the Israelites got distracted from praising God and loving each other. They begged God through Samuel for a king. In essence, God's response was that Kings, and political leaders, become corrupt and greedy and will fail in leading everyone to peaceful, joyful, gracious, abundant life. Yet the people still demanded a king to rule over them in place of God.

When Jesus came, the political leadership was corrupt, a mess with ruthless, violent, oppressive leaders. The people wanted to make Jesus an earthly, political king. Jesus easily could have done this with the support of the people on Palm Sunday. Jesus chose instead to change the world through disciples in their everyday life who lovingly forgive and serve. Over the last two thousand years billions upon billions of people have experienced God's love that was passed on by Jesus' first disciples. Think of all the mission work that Jesus inspired, people fed, clothed, housed and educated. Jesus inspired reconciliation, peace, social justice, and freedom. God working through the masses has made the world more like heaven and will continue to redeem the world.

Four hundred and ninety-nine years ago many thought the reformation would be the end of the church, yet God continues to do abundant amazing love through the church. Generation after generation are worried about change and what they see in the next generation. The church will look different in the future, yet God will continue to expand love through the church. The next generation is less likely to worship at a traditional worship service, yet more likely to serve with love and more likely to worship through their daily activities. The next generation measures success by their service that makes the world a better place. The church is once reformed, always reforming. Each generation provides a unique gift. The confirmands are amazing Holy Spirit filled servants of God who will make our world a better place. It will be different, yet God will always love through people, so relax and praise God.

Election day will be divisive and difficult. Our hope for a better future will not come from our leaders, even if we would have the finest humans on the ballot. Our hope for a better future is already guaranteed because God is loving through you and me, and people around the world. Our progress in becoming a more loving world in the next four years will not come from politicians, rather through everyone in our country.

If your candidate wins, praise God, be humble, reach out to those who voted for the other candidate with gracious reconciling love. If your candidate loses, praise God, let go, and reach out with gracious reconciling love. Forgive, praise God, befriend those you unfriended because you couldn't stomach their political position. Stop judging anyone through name calling. Praise God. Affirm their gifts. Whenever you, or anyone else is being negative, cynical, hopeless, praise God, identify something wonderful that God is doing. Let go of the temptation to tear another apart, praise God, so you can let come the grace to build another up. Stop being passive aggressive. Praise God. Be active in debating the issue. Jesus took all fear, hate and division to the cross. Fear, hate and division is losing, diminishing and will be buried. Praise God. Love, grace and reconciliation is winning, growing and will make all whole, healthy and glorious. Unite in praising God for our blessings. Unite in praising God for all God is doing through us in the present. Unite in praising God for God will redeem the entire cosmos through humanity in the future. Trust God. Receive God's peace. Praise God. Love extravagantly. Amen