

Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.

Caren Goldman, a cancer survivor, wrote a book entitled, "Healing Words for the Body, Mind and Spirit". You may have heard me refer to it previously; her definitions of common used words adds to their meaning. Here is how she characterizes the word "trust".

"Like many long-married couples in their eighties, Hugh and Naftel found themselves relying more and more on each other as their minds and bodies began to fail them. Naftel, who always prided herself on having the sharp memory every good teacher needed, found words slipping away and missing. As the problem grew worse, she trusted Hugh to speak up and fill in the gaps. In turn, as Hugh's eyesight began failing him, he placed more and more trust in Naftel to safely guide him through the day and into bed at night. Their mutual trust became especially important when they at last had to leave their familiar home and live in an apartment in a senior housing complex."

"One day, Hugh learned that a big band would be playing that evening at the complex. When he asked his bride of so many years if she would like to dine and dance, she eagerly said yes. That night, as they moved to the music of their youth, Hugh's and Naftel's infirmities seemed to fade. Hugh's feet went on autopilot as he guided her across the dance floor, and Naftel trusted him to get her where they were going. And as the familiar tunes jogged her memory of other dances they had shared, she recalled the most memorable ones without Hugh having to fill in a word."

When the music ended, both Hugh and Naftel again turned to each other for support. On the way back to their apartment, she took the lead and he helped her find words to express how much she enjoyed the evening. Once inside, they sat down on the couch. Hugh thanked Naftel for all their years together. Naftel did the same, and then, as she put her head on her trusted partner's shoulder, she died."

Caren Goldman goes on to comment that "from the cradle to the grave, life teaches us who and what outside ourselves we can trust and why."

The readings appointed for today talk about seeking that same trust outside ourselves. The Sixteenth Psalm says this: "Protect me, O God, for in you I take refuge. I say to the Lord, 'You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you.'You show me the path of life. In your presence is fullness of joy; in your right hand are pleasures evermore."

The trust we put in God resembles the trust that Hugh and Naftel put in each other. When we call out to God for protection and we yearn for God's steadfast love, it does not necessarily translate into a journey that will be free from obstacles and disappointments and illnesses; but placing our trust in God does mean we will "rest secure" and will stay connected with us regardless of the condition we may find ourselves in.

The Gospel reading about "doubting" Thomas is familiar to all of us. If we had been in Thomas's place, would we, at the sight of someone who had died and was buried, trust our own senses?

In today's society, if a stranger or someone who seems too good to be true, says: "Trust me! I have your back!" The first inclination is to say: "Yeah, right!" And run!

The majority of us need concrete proof. We want to be certain so we can rest secure. Frederick Buechner suggests that "even though Jesus said the greatest blessing is for those who can believe without seeing, it's hard to imagine that there's a believer anywhere who wouldn't have traded places with Thomas, given the chance, and seen that face and heard that voice and touched those ruined hands."

When God says: "Trust me"; God means it. Even though we will never see the actual face of God during our time here, we see the presence of God everyday. Hugh and Naftel are an example of the existence and presence of God. Their love and devotion personifies the love of God. God moves within us and within our relationships with each other and most times goes unnoticed by us. The Seventeenth Chapter of the Acts of the Apostles reminds us "that we should seek God, and perhaps feel our way toward him and find him. Yet He is actually not far from each one of us." Trust me, God says.

Margaret Guenther, in her book "The Practice of Prayer", describes it this way. "The big question, of course, is how do we recognize the angels who come to us in our everyday lives? They are easy to identify in works of art, in stained glass windows and Christmas cards. But how many do we miss in the ordinary course of our days because of our inattention or willful resistance? The writer of the letter to the Hebrews reminds us that we may never know where they might turn up: "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it."

She relates a personal experience. "One morning I stood at the bottom of the grimy stairs in the 23rd Street station and thought, like Jacob, "how awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!' It was not a vision, but the words were suddenly and powerfully in mind. 'Why not?' I thought. 'It's no less likely a spot to see angels ascending and descending than a rocky patch of desert.' Since then, I have been on the lookout. Angels have no dress code or standard of grooming, as far as I know, so why not see them in the subway?"

There have been so many occasions that God has spoken to me, in times of distress or just needing some guidance. Let me be clear! I never have actually heard God's voice; I cannot tell you if it is high pitched or a basso. It depends on the "angel" that God has sent to intervene into my life. God uses their particular voice to speak to me.

As Hugh and Naftel were connected in their life together, so are all of us....with each other and with God. The Reverend Anthony Seed talks about Psalm 16 and connections and trust.

"Three years ago, the Science Channel premiered a documentary titled "Connected: the Power of Six Degrees." For the experiment, a package was given to 40 people who were chosen randomly in 28 countries. The goal was to get the package to Dr. Marc Vidal in Boston at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute by sending it to someone they knew who would send it to someone they knew until it arrived in Boston and was handed to Dr. Vidal.

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“One recipient of the package was a woman in a small village in Kenya. She asked all her fellow villagers, but she could find no one who knew anyone to send the package to. Then an aunt from Nairobi visited who had a friend in New York and the package was on its way.

“A woman in Germany had a friend in Canada. A dancer in France had met a dancer from Boston at an international conference, but when the package arrived in Boston it was found that the dancer was no longer there and the package was returned to France. In Burma, a man knew a lawyer in Germany who knew someone in the U.S. The experiment became an illustration of how well the six billion people on this planet are connected.

Reverend Seel goes on to say that “the thesis of network science is that there is a hidden blueprint to nature. As Christians, we know who created not only the blueprint, but the entire universe. Network science says that we are “more connected than we ever thought.” Christians, with the author of Psalm 16, can say we are connected through God, the creator of all things. Once we realize this, our lives are then lived in gratitude for our connection to our creator through His Son, Jesus Christ.” Trust me in this, God is telling us.

From the cradle to the grave, we can trust God and his son Jesus Christ to do what has been promised. As it is written in 3 Peter: “Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”

AMEN