

# TRUST ISSUES

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## The Real Jesus

John 10:11-21 // Craig Smith

February 18, 2018

**Craig //** : Welcome to Mission Hills. So glad you are here, but I don't know about you, I'm really tired of the horrific things happening in our country. Anybody else? Obviously, the latest in the string of mass shootings and school shootings raises all kinds of emotions, and there's nowhere to go with those emotions, honestly, but to God. I would like to pray this morning. I want to do this a little bit different. I find sometimes when I pray in a group, what I'm really doing, I'm serial listening. Whoever's praying, I'm listening to them. It's hard for me to pray when someone else is praying and I'm listening to them, so I'm going to do something a little bit different, maybe a little bit uncomfortable here. I'm going to ask that we all pray together. I'm going to turn my mic off, and I'm going to pray, but I want you to pray out loud too. You don't have to do it super loud, but I would love there to be a murmur of prayers that lots of people are lifting up. In spite of the fact that it might be a little bit uncomfortable, I think it could be a powerful thing, so I'm going to encourage you to do three things. First, I want you to pray for healing for those who have been injured. I want you to pray for comfort for those that have lost loved ones and who are struggling with all of this emotion, and thirdly, I want you to pray that God would intervene and this would be the last of them.

You think that's naive. No, that's just faithful. Our God is more than capable of pulling that off, so let's ask him for those three things. I'm going to turn my mic off. We'll all pray, and I'll close us out.

God, we are sick about this. We are tired of this. We do pray for healing those who are injured and are still in the hospital, and still recovering from their wounds. May you bring them to health quickly. Lord, we pray for those who have lost loved ones who are emotionally scarred by this, whether it's in Florida or around the country, would you draw close to them in a way that they sense. And Lord, would you bring an end to this? Would you allow us to be your hands and feet in whatever ways you call us to that ultimately will change what's broken about our culture? We know the only medicine for that is the Gospel. Would you show us how to be the hands and the feet and the light of the Gospel in a way that changes things fundamentally in this country so we don't have any more of these? In Jesus name, amen

Things -- this kind of thing raises lots of different questions. As a pastor, probably the most common question I get after something like this is, the why question, right? Why would God allow this, which is a perfectly natural question? It's a good question, but what I have come to understand over the years, is there is another question lurking behind it. It's not so much why would God allow this as, can I really trust a God who would allow this? Can I trust God? The reality is that faith is nothing more than the choice to trust this God, right? That's what faith is. Faith is the choice to trust that God can and will accomplish the good that we can't. It doesn't mean in faith that we don't do anything. We are called to be the hands and feet of Jesus. It doesn't mean we sit on our butts and just pray. What we pray for is that God will show us how it is that we are supposed to be his hands and feet. How it is we are supposed to act in the world that he would take and use and magnify to accomplish things that are beyond what we could accomplish.

Ultimately faith is this choice that we trust God can and will accomplish the good that we cannot. The problem is that trust is hard, right? Because we all have trust issues. Anyone here not have trust issues? We all have trust issues. There is probably a lot of reasons for that. One of the reasons, one of the most common reasons, honestly, is that trusting others has often led to hurt. Trusting others has often led to hurt. We have tried it. We tried people and they didn't do good things for us. They didn't do good by us. They have hurt us. We have all had those experiences. Most of us don't have to try real hard to think back to a time we chose to trust somebody and it just didn't work out well for us at all. What happens then, we become embittered. We become callused. Those bad experiences cause our hearts to become skeptical and cynical about trust. Trusting anybody, a human being or God. What happens is a call to trust God falls on a cynical, skeptical heart that says, you know I tried that. I have tried this trust thing and it did not work out. Why should trusting God be any different? I think Jesus has an answer to that question.

If you will grab a bible, I would love to have you turn with me to John 10. We are going to pick up where we left off at verse 11 to see what Jesus has to say and answer the question, why should you trust God? While you are finding your way, let me set up the stage a little bit. What we are going to be looking at today is a continuation of a conversation we have been looking at for the last several weeks. A conversation Jesus is having with a group of people that are struggling trusting him. He gives "the" answer, the definitive answer about why we should trust him. He says this. He says, I am the good shepherd. We stop there. That's the answer. That is "the" answer about why we should trust him because he is the good shepherd. Honestly, too, it's the number one reason we struggle to trust him. He says, I am the good shepherd. That's why you should trust me, but we struggle to trust him because we are not entirely sure that's true. We are not entirely sure he's good. We know in our heads,

that's what I'm supposed to feel, but we struggle to believe that he's truly good.

The statement, I am the good shepherd is the number one reason we should trust him and at the same time the number one reason why we struggle to do that. I think to be able to trust that Jesus is the good shepherd, two things have to happen. One is that we have to understand what good really is. Second, we have to understand that Jesus really is good. Those are the two things we are going to tackle today. What is good, really? What does He mean when he says he's good and how do we know that's really true about him? Those are the two things we are going to tackle today. The first one is this idea of what really is good? What does he mean when he says he's good? What does God mean when He says He calls himself good? You and I need to understand that we have a built in handicap when it comes to understanding good. We have a built in handicap that gets in the way of understanding what true good is. Here's the way I would say it. Our default setting is to think that good equals pleasant, don't we?

Isn't that our default setting? From the moment we are born, our default setting is to go pleasant equals good. Good equals pleasant. If it's not pleasant, therefore it's not -- that's just our natural default setting. Think about it. I don't mean to get into a controversial subject here, but here we go. I'm going to guess that most of the parents in this room had their kids immunized. I don't want to get caught up in whether or not that's the best thing medically to do, because that's not my point. The point is most of us had our children immunized, and we did it because we thought it was what? We thought it was good for them, but do we mean pleasant? Of course not. From their perspective, we take them out of a comfortable crib. We take them to a strange place where a strange person sticks sharp things into their tender little bodies. If they were capable of having a conversation, don't you think the question they would have for you is, why did you do this to me? I thought you were a good mommy. I thought you were a good daddy. Of course, we would say, I did this because I am good. But clearly, we don't mean pleasant.

Yet, for small children, that's the default setting. How can it be good if it's not pleasant because good equals pleasant, right? Even as adults, we know that's not true. We know that as a holy, inadequate definition of good, yet we struggle with it. We have plenty of evidences, all kinds of things that are not pleasant that are good. I mean, let's talk about kale, right? I have seen the reports. I know it's good for you. But it's nasty. I'm sorry, it's hairy, and it's bitter, and it's really unpleasant, but I know it's good. We know in our heads lots of things that aren't pleasant that we know are good, exercise, surgery. Not pleasant, but good. We know in our heads good doesn't equal pleasant, yet if we are not careful we always default back to this understanding that good equals pleasant, so we struggle to understand what God means when He says He's good.

If it doesn't mean pleasant, what does it mean? We have spent a lot of time on this, but I'm going to go straight for the heart of it and say when we are talking about good as God understands it, good means what is healthiest for us over the long haul. That is what good means, what is healthiest for us over the long haul which only God has the wisdom and the perspective to determine. In the same way as we get our kids immunized is not pleasant, we go, yeah, but your moment of unpleasantness is absolutely better than a lifetime of polio. I'm concerned for your true good, what is healthier for you over the long haul. God does that for us on a depth and on a scale that you and I can't even imagine. Because of that, I have come to believe that anything God does or allows, anything God does, anything God puts in our lives, anything God allows us to go through, it's not necessarily that the bad things that we go through God has sent into our lives, but He allows us to live in such a way that sometimes these hard things come because there is something going on, that context in which we are allowed to live ultimately leads to us being healthy in a way that can't be accomplished otherwise. In the same way I don't want my kids to get hurt. I don't ever want my kids be the subject of -- you know, people being mean to them, and yet, I let them play in the neighborhood with the neighbor kids. Why? Because I want them to be able to make friends. I want them to grow and to relate and to develop.

That required putting them into a context where defect things might happen, but the long-term effect of those circumstances is for their good. Obviously, I'm not going to go find kids and say, please, be mean to my daughter. But if it happens, I say, you know what? There is actually something profoundly, deeply good that happens long-term by allowing them into that context. In the same way, God doesn't necessarily send every bad thing that we struggle with into our lives, yet He's allowed us to have freedom. He's allowed us to live in a world where we have freedom because there is something about it that will produce health for us over the long haul. We can spend a lot of time unpacking how that works, but I don't want to spend a lot of time there today. I want to spend more time with what Jesus says than what I have to say in unpacking that. The first thing we need to tackle is what is good, and that is what we have done.

When Jesus says he's the good shepherd, he says I'm the shepherd committed to your long-term health, whether you understand how it works or not, that's what I'm looking for. The second thing we need to deal with is how do we know Jesus is that kind of good? He goes on and gives us three reasons why we can trust that Jesus is good. He says, I'm the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd. He does not own the sheep, so when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is the hired hand and he cares nothing for the sheep. Jesus says, you want to know that I'm good? Here's how you know. I lay down my life for my sheep.

Now, if you know much about Christianity, if you spent much time in church, as soon as you hear Jesus talking about laying down his life, you immediately want to go, oh, he's talking about the cross, and he's not. He's not talking about the cross here. He's going to in a minute, but his focus here is not how he's going to lay down his life. We don't want to get sidetracked on that. When Jesus says the good shepherd lays down his life, he's not focusing on how he does that, he's focusing on why he does that. Why does he lay down his life for the sheep? He draws a contrast

between the good shepherd and the hired hand. He said the hired hand doesn't lay down his life for the sheep. Why not? Because they are not his. He's not emotionally invested in the sheep. He's doing a job, right? There's nothing wrong with that, but the reality is, when something gets dangerous about the job, when suddenly there's a wolf that shows up, the hired hand says, I am not getting paid enough for this. Heck with these sheep. I'm out of here? Why? Because they are not his. He's not emotionally invested in them, but Jesus says the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. Why? Because they are his. Because He's emotionally invested in them.

He says you want to know how emotionally invested I am in them? He says I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep and my sheep know me. Now understand when he's talking about knowing the sheep and the sheep knowing him, he's not talking about information. He's talking about intimacy. He's talking about relationship. This is not just knowledge he has where he says that one has a crooked nose. That one has a gimp leg. That one struggled with pornography. That one had a terrible father. That one has is struggling with a medical condition. It's not just that he knows this information about us. He's not talking information. He's talking about intimacy. He's talking about relationship. He goes on and says I know my sheep and my sheep know me just as -- verse 15, just as the Father knows me, and I know the Father, and I lay down my life for the sheep.

He describes his knowledge of us, and our knowledge of him in the same way that he knows the Father and the Father knows him, and again, it's information. It's intimacy. It's relationship. You might go then why does he use the word know? Why not use the word, love, right? I lay down my life because I love the sheep and they love me, just like I love my Father and he loves me. Why use the word knowledge? Because he wants us to understand that this is a well-informed intimacy, okay? This is a well-informed intimacy. This is an intimacy that comes despite everything he knows about us. I think that's important because how many of us have relationships with people that think, if they really knew the real me, if they really knew everything about me. If they knew all of the stuff I struggle and all of the stuff that I hide from the world, that would be the end of our intimacy. That would be the end of our relationship. Don't we all have those relationship, in fact, on some level isn't every one of our relationships built on the belief that if we were truly transparent, that would be the end of our relationship?

What Jesus is trying to say is that's not the way I think about you because he knows everything about us. Everything you try to hide from the world, He knows all about it. In fact, he knows things about you that you don't know about you but if you did know them you would hide them, but he knows them all. You are never going to surprise Jesus. There is never any point in your life where something is going to come out where Jesus says, whoa, whoa, hang on a second. I did not know that. I'm out of here. It's never going to happen, okay? With Jesus, information will never threaten intimacy. You hear me? With Jesus, information will never threaten intimacy because he knows it all, the past, the present, the future, it's all on the table. He knows you, but he loves you. What he's trying to help us understand is this, he's the good shepherd who will lay down his life for his sheep, that they are his. That he knows inside and out, never anything that will come out that will threaten his love for you, his emotional investment.

What he's saying is we can trust Jesus to care for us because he's emotionally invested in us. You hear me? You need to hear this. Jesus can be trusted to care for you because he is emotionally invested in you. He sees you as his. It's not a job for him. It's emotional. He loves you. Nothing can ever threaten the depth of his love for you. You can trust him to care for us, because he's emotionally invested in us. He goes on to give us a second reason we can trust him. Verse 16, he says I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They will listen to my voice also. There will be one flock and one shepherd. What he's talking about here is the idea that Jesus didn't come just to save the people in Israel. He has other sheep to bring into this flock that are outside of the borders of Israel. He's going to go to the rest of the world. That was always Jesus mission. Start in Israel, but then his mission was going to spread to the very ends of the Earth.

You and I are the result of that mission, right? I mean, the vast majority of us here today who follow Jesus, we have been brought into the fold even though we are not Jewish by ethnicity. We are the other sheep from the other sheep pens. What Jesus is saying, it's not enough for me to rescue people in Israel. I have to go rescue everybody who will be rescued. What Jesus is helping us to understand is that he's insatiable. Good enough is not part of his vocabulary. He never gets to the point he says, I think we are good. Let's move on to something else. Israel is not enough. Honestly, even in Israel, it's not enough because at this minute in his ministry Jesus has crowds of thousands of people who are following him. Thousands of people, yet -- for the last three weeks we have been looking at a conversation He's having with who? An incredibly small group of religious leaders that he's still trying to convince to trust him because He cares about them. He spends all of this time trying to win them even though there are thousands of people that already trust him because the thousands are not enough. He still cares about those reluctant sheep still struggling to trust their shepherd. The crowd is not enough. He needs to rescue everybody who will be rescued. Israel is not enough. He's going to rescue everybody who will be rescued.

Jesus is insatiable. I don't know about you, but to me, that says this is, is someone who can be trusted. He's never going to get to the point where he says I have done enough. I have poured in enough. I have spent enough. I have made enough. It's never going to happen. He's going to keep pursuing. He's going to keep pursuing you. He's going to keep pursuing more and more good in our lives because good enough is not part of his vocabulary. What this means to me is that we can trust Jesus because he is insatiable. He's insatiable in his pursuit of us and our good. Good enough is not part of his vocabulary. Jesus says, you can trust me. He goes on. He gives us a third reason we can trust him.

He says, the reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father. In three different ways here, Jesus makes the same point. I think the reason he does it three different ways was because in ancient Israel, three was a big deal. If you said

something three different times what you were really saying is this is rock solid truth. This is truth you can take to the bank. This is truth you can live in light of. He says it three different times to emphasize the importance of it, but it all boils down to him saying, you can trust me because I'm willing. I'm willing to do what I do for you. I'm not forced into it. I'll willing to do what I do. The first time he says it, he says, the reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life for the sheep. The key there, I lay down my life, I choose to lay down my life, it's not forced into me. It's not something I have to do. He says I lay down my life.

I'm willing to lay down my life. I do it willingly. He says it the second time. He says no one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord, right? He says I do it willingly. No one forces it into me. I lay it down of my own accord. You say, wait a minute. Didn't He get arrested and executed? It's not like He committed suicide, right? He was kind of forced into it, wasn't He? No. At this point in the Gospel of John there have been several attempts made on Jesus' life and every one of them failed as John tells us, because it was not yet his time. He wasn't ready to go to the cross yet. He had other things that he wanted to do. It was only when he was ready to go that they were able to do what they wanted to do all along. It was only when he was in the garden and they came to arrest him. His disciples said, we are going to fight for you. Jesus said, no you are not. That's not how this is going to play out because now's the time.

He did it of his own accord. He did it willingly. The third time he makes the same point. He says I have authority to lay it down, and I have the authority to take it up again. This command I receive from the Father. Clearly, you understand, I said earlier when he talked about laying down his life he wasn't talking about the crucifixion per se, but here he definitely is, right? He says not only do I lay it down, but I take it up again, so he's talking about the resurrection too. So he clearly is talking about the crucifixion and the resurrection, but again here the focus is not on how he does it. The focus is on why he does it. Why does he do it? Because he has authority to do it.

He chooses to do it. He does it willingly. Anybody go, wait a minute, it says he received the command from his Father, yes, but he chose to obey the command. That was his choice. That famous prayer in the Garden when he knew what it was going to cost. He knew the price he was about to pay. He spoke to his Father and he said, do we have to do it this way? If it's possible, could you take this cup away from me? I don't want to do this, but then he said, but not my will, but yours be done. He chose to submit to the command he received from his Father. He chose to do it. He did it of his own authority. That's why he says I have authority to lay it down. I have authority to take it up. Again, what he's saying is -- I'm willing to do it. He's willing to do it. I think that matters a lot, doesn't it?

If somebody makes a sacrifice because they have to, if they are forced into it, does that cause you to trust them? Of course not. The dead beat dad who the court comes in and says, if you are not going to support your kid, we are going to garnish your wages and send them to your kid. That's great. That's helpful to the kid, but does that make the kid trust the dad? No, because he's being forced into the sacrifice. He's being forced into the provision. He's not doing it willingly, so there's no trust that comes from that, but Jesus says that we can trust him because he's willing to pay the price for us, right? That's the third reason. We can trust Jesus because he's willing to pay the price for us. He did it without compulsion. He did it without coercion. He wasn't forced into it. He did it willingly, why? Because he loves us. Because he loves us.

Those are the three reasons Jesus says that you can trust that he's good because he's emotionally invested in us. He's insatiable in his pursuit of us and our good. Good enough is not part of his vocabulary, and because he's willing to pay the price for loving us, which honestly, if we think about it for a minute, the price doesn't even make any sense, does it? The cost for what Jesus did for what he gained -- he gained me. I don't get that. Like, I know enough about myself to know that I am not worth the price that Jesus paid for me. I don't get why he was willing to do that for me. He's the Son of God. He's infinitely valuable. His life is of a value that I can't even begin to wrap my head around. It's weird, honestly, when he talks about the shepherd laying his life down for the sheep. That's a weird thing to do, right? The value of a shepherd versus the value of a sheep? Why on earth would the shepherd give his life up for a sheep? That's not a good exchange rate. When we talk about the Son of God dying for me, dying for you, the exchange rate is even crazier. That's like a shepherd laying down his life for a mouse or a beetle or an amoeba. I know this is getting worse and more insulting as we go, but you understand what I am saying.

The value of the Son of God's life versus the value of you and I? It almost feels like what he was willing to do there was just plain reckless, wasn't it? Like you didn't pay any attention to the cost. You didn't pay any attention to the price and exchange rate of what you were getting in return for your sacrifice. It's reckless, but at the end of the day, that's why I trust him, and that's why you should trust him. Jesus has earned our trust with a reckless love. More than anything else, that's what we are supposed to understand from what Jesus is saying here. He says I'm emotionally invested in you. I'm insatiable in my pursuit of you and your good, and I'm willing. I'm willing to pay the price for loving you in spite of the fact that honestly, yeah, it doesn't make any sense but Jesus has earned our trust with a reckless love, but we still struggle to trust. It's always been the case.

So he goes on, and he says the Jews that heard these words were again divided. Many of them said, he's demon possessed. He's raving mad. Why would you listen to him? Others said, these are not the sayings of a man possessed by a demon. That doesn't make any sense. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind? They still had a group that went, I just don't know that I can trust that he's a good shepherd. Maybe for some of the group -- maybe for all of that group, the real issue was a bad understanding of good. Maybe they are still operating from this default that says good equals pleasant because honestly, they were in a pleasant position. They had privileges. They had powers. They had respect and honor and all of that stuff that was really pleasant, and to follow Jesus, to trust Jesus as their good shepherd would have required that they would be willing to set those things aside in order to follow him, and that doesn't sound good because it doesn't sound pleasant, so maybe the reason they struggled to trust is that they had a bad definition of good. They are still operating out of the default that we all have.

There are probably other reasons, but notice, there was another group that was beginning to say, you know what I actually think? I think maybe we should trust this man. And I think it's important to notice what they pay attention to. They say, demon possessed people don't talk like this. Demon possessed people don't open the eyes of the blind. That's what started the whole conversation, right? Jesus healed a blind man, blind from birth, he gave him sight. They are continuing to go, I can't get past that. It's an undeniable reality. As we said a few weeks ago, we have to cling to what is undeniable, not what is inexplicable. That's what they are doing. They are going, I have a bunch of questions. I don't have them all answered, but I can't get past this. He was blind. Now he sees. They are clinging to what is undeniable and they are going, it's undeniable that he's doing good. It's becoming undeniable that he is good. Because of that, he just might be worthy of my trust. I would say we more than they know absolutely that he is worthy of our trust, right?

He was anticipating what he was going to do. We celebrate it. Jesus has earned our trust with a reckless love. Two questions. The first question to wrestle with this week, when you are struggling to trust Jesus, which of those three reasons resonates the most? We are always going to struggle to trust. We have trust issues. We have to have something to cling to when we are struggling to trust. Which of the three reasons Jesus has given us most resonates with you when you are struggling to trust? Is it clinging to the idea that he's emotionally invested in you? That he's loving you while completely knowing you, and that he loves you, and he's willing to risk everything for you because you are his? Is that what allows you to trust him? Maybe what resonates most is the idea that he's insatiable in his pursuit of you and your good. Maybe you find comfort and strength in the idea that good enough is just not part of his vocabulary. Or maybe what allows you to trust him when things get hard is remembering that he is willing to pay the price for loving me.

We are all going to struggle to trust, but in those three reasons Jesus gives us, I think there is room for every one of us to go that's the thing that's going to allow me to trust when it gets hard. So which one of those is it for you? Wrestle with that. The second question is this. In what way do you sense Jesus is calling you to trust him more this week? If he is trustworthy, you have to demonstrate that with trust. What way is Jesus calling you to trust him more this week? Maybe for you, that's beginning a relationship with him. To go, there's something in this that Jesus says that has grabbed me. It flipped a switch. I don't have a relationship with Jesus right now, but I think I want to, and I think I'm ready for that because I think, actually, yeah, I can trust him. Maybe that's your step, and so maybe it's that you come down after the service and there will be people down here that would love to pray with you, so just come up to one of them and say, I want that relationship with Jesus. I want to trust him today. They would love to talk through that with you. Maybe it's that you trust Jesus to go on mission with him this week. Maybe it's some difficult situation that you are aware of that's in your sphere of influence, and you are hesitant to step into it because you don't know if you have what it takes.

You don't know what it's going to mean. You don't know what the price is going to be, yet you sense Jesus calling you to do it, and you go, I'm going to trust you this week, Jesus. I'm going to step into that. When it gets scary, I'm going to cling to the reasons that most resonate with me. Maybe you are here today, and honestly, you are just in a hard place. Maybe it's your marriage or your job or your health or something, and honestly it's just really hard right now, and it's difficult to trust Jesus right now, that he's really good, and so trusting him more this week is to just cling to trusting him in the midst of difficult circumstances.

I want to share a little story with you. This is a friend of mine. She's a friend of a lot of the staff here, who is in a really hard place, and yet, consistently says, in spite of the circumstances, I trust him. Check this out.

*[Video]*

Hi, my name is Suzy. I'm sister to your worship leader Danny Oertli. I wanted to share something with you about our family's story that is happening right now. That is that I have cancer for the third time and currently have an inoperable tumor in my abdomen, which is growing at an alarming pace, and why would I share this with you on video? It's because I want you to know that I know without a doubt that God is good all the time. And if I can know it right now, then you can know it right now too. No matter what you are going through, God is good, and He is the light in our darkness. He can be our everything, and we ground all of our truth on His Word and on His character that no matter what our circumstances, His character does not change, and that's what we can rely on that He is always good because His character doesn't change.

*[Video Ends]*

How can she say, I trust him in the midst of this really difficult thing? Because she knows that Jesus has earned our trust with a reckless love. If she can know that in her circumstances, so can you. Will you pray with me? Jesus, we thank you that you don't just say, trust me, you demonstrate exactly why. You make it clear that you are emotionally invested in us. You are willing to do for us what you do for us because we are yours, because you love us. We thank you that you demonstrate your trust, and your insatiable pursuit of us and our good. Thank you. Thank you that you demonstrated that we can trust you because you are willing to pay the price for loving us. Thank you. Help us to trust you more. Help us to cling to the truth of your trust worthiness and to live in light, in Jesus name, amen.