Last Sunday, I asked you the question “What do you think the maker of the world is after, in creating you and me and putting us here on the earth?” In other words really, what’s the point of your life? Why are you here? Why are you alive? Some of us might say, "Well, to prove our own incompetence," because I think most of us, though we have some things organized in our lives and we have some things in order, yet most of us here have some closets that have never come into order. Most of us here have some relationships that have never actually come into absolute rightness. Most of us here have certain situations in our ordinary practical life that are not exactly yet, what we think they should be.

I think it would be surprising if we went round all of us here this morning, how many of us would agree to that. We’d say, "Yeah, yeah I have that closet but I am going to get right sometime", or "I have that nail that I am going to put in completely, it’s been hanging out so long", or "I have that thing in the car that isn’t right, just exactly as it should be", or "I have this relationship, (either it can be even with our loved ones or with people at work) that isn’t exactly right, I know it isn’t exactly right." I think that’s why some of us might answer kind of half seriously, "Well, what is God after in putting us here?" “Well, to prove our own incompetence.” We kind of answer half seriously that way because in a sense, we are all aware that there are many things in our lives that show our incompetence and show that we have not everything absolutely tight.

Actually, that isn’t far off the mark. I know it kind of irks you when I suggest this, but that isn’t far off the mark that the point of your life here on earth is to prove to you your own incompetence. Strange thing is you see all of us here get exasperated when something goes wrong. We just get irritated when there is something in our life that goes wrong and you see why we get exasperated or irritated, because we assume that it ought to be going right. We all strangely enough here this morning, assume that everything in our lives should be going right. I don't know where we get that idea from but you must admit, we have it and what makes us exasperated and frustrated is that strangely enough all of us here have things in our lives that aren't right.

The truth is that every time you and I try to set up a little ordered world that we can control and dominate, God allows that world to fall into decline in some way, it’s interesting. He does. He allows it to fall into decline in some way because that is unreality. That is unreality. It is unreal to believe that you and I can create within this big world that we have here, a little ordered world that we can rule and control and make go right by our own power and our own direction. That is not reality.

The reality is that we are not self-created individuals. The reality is that we are not self-sustaining individuals. The reality is that we are not self-dependent creatures. The reality is that we are dependent on God, utterly and absolutely dependent on him. That this little heart beats, because the doctors don't know why it beats, it just beats, they say, "Well, it's the electrical charge you know that makes it beat", and we know they sound very competent when they say that but they don't know anymore.
We are absolutely dependent on a mass of mysteries that enables me to speak to you and you to hear me today. In other words, we are utterly and absolutely dependent upon God, the Creator of the world and that's why he allows so many things in our lives to go wrong that we try to control ourselves to bring home to us that, “You're finally dependent upon me, my child, you're dependent on me. You cannot actually run a little ordered world on your own. It's always going to go wrong because finally all things are dependent upon me.” And God is after trying to get you and me to admit that, that's it.

God is trying to get you and me to come to the place where we consciously in our minds, in our emotions, in our wills and in our bodies, acknowledge and admit our utter and absolute dependence upon him and translate that into everyday behavior in our actions, our thoughts and our feelings, that's it. I mean it's not complicated, it's very reasonable. Loved ones, that's why you're always going to find things going wrong, you are.

You're always going to find there are things in your life that aren't quite in order. God graciously allows those things to occur so that you will not live in a fool's paradise thinking that you yourself are in control of everything, thinking that you are the “be all and end all” of the world. God graciously allows those things to come into your life. We need to relax and start seeing that and stop getting irritated with ourselves and stop getting frustrated. We need to see that is the Lord's plan. The Lord has planned that every time you and I try to run an ordered little world on our own without his help that will go into decline. And he does that to bring us into conscious absolute trust in himself.

Now, there are many places in this Book where that is expressed but one of them you remember that we looked at last Sunday was Proverbs 3:5 and it is a verse that most of us know at least more or less the words of it. Proverbs 3:5, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight." Or the old King James Version has it translated, "Trust in the Lord with all thy heart, and lean not to thine own understanding." And that's why God created you and me that we would come to that place from the dent in your new car to the smashing of your grandmother's china tea set, that you would trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not to your own understanding.

From the most minor disaster to the most major disaster that you would rest deeply in God every moment, trust in him completely and lean not at all to your own understanding. That's why the Father put us on earth -- to do that. If you're like many of the others of us here, you'll probably say this kind of thing. "Well, I manage to rest and trust sometimes but usually it's trust in what I can see myself as a way out. When I can't see how I can rescue myself, I usually fail to trust that God has it all under control."

I wonder are you like that? We say, "Yeah, yeah we trust God, as long as we can see a way in which he can rescue us from this thing but if we can't see how he is going to rescue us, if we can’t understand how he's going to do it, then we lean to our own understanding and we begin to get tense and worried." Loved ones, that's just proof that you still depend on yourself. See, where it counts is where you can't see, that's where trust counts. It counts where you can't see.

That's especially true, do you realize it’s especially true of those of us here who are pretty competent and I know there are number of us here. You know there are many of us professional people, many of us very able business people here and I know that we are, in other words, in fact we are in our positions because we are the answer people, that’s why we are alive, that’s why we’re still alive, in our business or our profession. We're the answer people. We're the competent people who
always have a way out. We always have an answer. You always have another answer after the last one fails, you have another answer. It's especially to people like ourselves that the Lord is speaking to this morning.

He is saying, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not to your own understanding." See the point is this, what does it matter if you can do 25 or 35 difficult brain operations and magnificently deliver these people from death. What does it matter if as a competent businessman, you can bail dozens of little business people out of trouble by your clever insight into the market, if when you face something that you can't see an answer to, you become a neurotic, worried, anxious, sleepless creature? Isn't that it?

What does it matter if we're competent with 99 percent of the difficulties that we face, if the last 1 percent reduces us to neurotic, anxious, worried, sleepless creatures? That's it. In other words it's not the 99 percent that proves that you trust God, it's the 1 percent where you can't see how on earth He's going to do anything about it and you can't see a way out yourself, that's when your trust in God is proven. Now why have we difficulty with that? Why do we have difficulty trusting God in that crucial 1 percent? Because we're like teeth, that's right we're like teeth.

I learned some things from my wife over the years (she's a dentist) and I learned this about teeth. She told me constantly, though I didn't believe her, I always said, "You pull teeth." She said, "No, I don't pull teeth, you can't pull teeth." And I said, "Look, you know the way they say, it's like pulling teeth, everybody knows you pull teeth." And she said, "No, you don't pull teeth" and I said, "Okay", as we all do with our wives, "What do you do?" She said, "If you pull teeth, you'd never get the tooth out. It would never come out." And I asked her, "Why?" and she said, "Because all round each tooth are dozens of little membranes that attach your tooth to the socket in which it's placed and if you pull the tooth, those membranes are clever, they're elastic, they give way a little and then they whip the tooth back into the socket and so you'd never get the tooth out by pulling because those membranes won't let go. You actually push to stretch them and you twist to break them and then you lift the tooth out."

So every time you see the dentist with her foot up you'll know she's doing it wrongly. You push it to stretch them and you twist it to break them. Every time you and I resolve that we will trust God, in one of those situations where we cannot see an answer, there are not dozens of little membranes, there are millions of little membranes, millions of little elastic membranes that attach you to your parents, that attach you to your grandparents, that attach you to your great grandparents, that attach you to the whole human race of mankind down through the centuries who have been living for generation after generation as if there's no God. And you, with all these little membranes, are attached to all those people and all those human wills and human emotions and human minds that have existed for generations in this world.

Moreover, you are attached to millions of other influences in our society. The whole of the society itself is trying to live successfully without God and you are attached to the society by all kinds of spiritual and mental and physical and volitional membranes invisible as they are -- but every time you attempt to go out and trust God, those membranes elastically give way a little and then they snap you back into the socket of distrust, that's it. That's why you have difficulty.

You try to trust God but you have leaned so often to your own understanding and you're attached to all the human beings who have for years been living according to their understanding that you yourself are constantly being pulled back into that socket of distrust. And that's the difficulty.
You are filled with a basic distrust of God that is not only found in you yourself but is attached to a cosmic distrust that fills not only the world but fills the whole universe.

Now can a leopard change its spots? We know the answer is no, it can’t. Is there any way in which you then can trust God while you’re like that? No way, no way. You’re going to continually be trying to trust him and then you’re going to find yourselves snapped back into the socket of distrust, except for the fact that God has renewed again the nature that he gave you at the beginning of the world. That nature that has become perverted over generations of man’s life here on earth, God has renewed that nature.

He has taken that nature of distrust of yours and he has destroyed it in his son Jesus. That’s what Calvary is about, loved ones. Calvary is not just about the forgiveness of our sins. Calvary is about that nature of distrust that you have that makes it impossible for you to trust God. Calvary is about the fact that God destroyed that in his son Jesus. That tendency in you to lean to your own understanding that you cannot control; that tendency not to trust what you can’t see, that has been destroyed in Jesus on Calvary and you are free to lean not to your own understanding if you so choose.

The only way to be free of it is to believe that that’s what God did on Calvary. That's what that verse says you know, so many of you know it off by heart but it’s such a dear verse, I’ll ask you to look at it, it is Romans 6:6. That's what it says, because you’re dead right, with the self that you have you can’t trust God, nor can I.

Romans 6:6, "We know that our old self,” the old self that would not trust God and that would only trust itself, “our old self was crucified with him so that the sinful body might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin.” “We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the sinful body might be destroyed and we might no longer be enslaved to sin.” I don't know if you realize how strong that old self is.

I mean you and I are stubborn creatures. We are stubborn creatures. We have a willful trust in ourselves that is overwhelming and you know it, you have found it in your own life. You have found yourselves at times holding on to a steering wheel and you will not let it go even though you can’t quite see where you are going, you will not let it go because you’re absolutely sure that you alone know how to steer this car, and that’s only the illustration.

In certain financial situations, in certain emotional situations, in certain domestic situations, you know it. You will not let go even though all the facts are against you and even though someone else is offering you wise wisdom, there's something in you that will keep on holding on. Dostoevsky, you remember says, "The only reason a man will act against his own best advantage, is to have his own way", and there is something in us, that will not let go.

Loved ones, you will never beat that. You will never beat it. It doesn't matter how often you try to train yourself to trust God, you will never beat that distrust, that is bitten right deep into your being, into the very heart of your nature. Only God can free you from that and that's what the Bible says he did in Jesus. That our old self was crucified with Christ so that we might be free from that old nature of distrust. That's the only way you will come into restful trust in God.

If you will believe that that old distrustful nature of yours has been crucified with Christ and then if you begin to act in the light of the new nature that God has given you in his Son. Now,
loved ones, I'll show you the connection between those two if you would look at Ephesians 4:22. This verse lays bare the whole frustration of the “improve yourself” self-improvement books which are just tantalizing tortures to us human beings really.

Ephesians 4:22, "Put off your old nature which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness." Now the only way you can put off the old nature is if in fact you believe that God has destroyed it.

The cruel thing about the self-improvement books that we read is there’s no teaching that God has done anything with the old nature and so they’re trying to get you to tackle the old nature by your own power and you’re doomed to failure. That’s why the self-improvement books seem to do a little good but they finally don’t solve the basic problem of our distrust and our self-will. The only way to put off your old nature is by seriously believing that God has already destroyed your old distrustful nature in his Son Jesus. Then when you believe that, you are able to put that distrust off.

Now if you say to me, "Well, is there any difficulty in my believing that that old distrustful nature has been destroyed in Jesus?" Yes, there is, because God in Jesus has not only destroyed all your past life. He has not only destroyed all that you have done in the past and all that you are up to this present moment and renewed you completely this very second so that you’re absolutely new -- that's what being born again means, you’re absolutely new and clean this very moment, and the moment you believe that, that moment that is manifested in your life. That's not only done in Calvary, but God has taken all the future plans that you had for your life, all the plans that you have for tomorrow and for next week and for next month and for ten years down the line, and he has destroyed those in his Son on Calvary and he is saying to you, "Are you willing to let my Son live the life that he has planned in your place?"

Loved ones, unless you say yes to that, you cannot experience deliverance from that old distrustful nature. Why? Because you'll question the Lord at every turn, that's it. Because you'll go out of here this morning and you'll say, "I believe Lord that I was crucified with Christ. I believe that my distrustful nature was taken away. I believe I have been given a new trusting nature as a little child to look upon you as my own Father and to rejoice in everything you do." And then you come out and see the tire flat and you’ll say, "But I didn't bargain for that. Now, Lord why did that happen?" And then it'll go on, it will just go on, you know.

The loss of the $50,000 on Wednesday, the loss of the job on Saturday, you see you'll question him at every turn. You'll lean to your own understanding, unless you say this morning, "Lord, I am going to trust in you with all my heart. I am going to trust in you with all my heart for everything that I have at this present time and for everything that is going to happen to me tomorrow. I am not going to lean to my own understanding. I am going to trust your understanding. Even where I see something coming up that appears to me another tragedy, even when I see something coming up that I believe couldn't be your will at all, Lord I am not going to lean to my own understanding, I am going to trust in you with all my heart. I am going to be at peace, I am going to rest and I am going to sleep well at night." That's it.

If you say to me, "Even when they diagnose cancer?" Sure, sure. Cancer isn't the worst thing; death isn't the worst thing, that's a lie. Death is not the worst thing at all. Jesus made that plain. Don’t be afraid of those who can kill the body, be afraid of those who can kill and destroy your
soul. Yes, if you have a heart murmur, yes, yes. Absolute trust in the Father that he has all things under control and that you trust him with all your heart and you lean not to your own understanding. And let me just encourage you a little. Why? Because we're silly little fleas thinking this is a wonderful world, this is all of life. This isn't all of life, this is a fraction of life. This thing will be over like that. This is a fraction of life.

The Lord made you with your sense of eternity inside you because you're made for the life that goes on forever. You're made for the real life that he has already prepared for us, that's it. Not a place where you play harps, not a place where you rest and do nothing, but that's the real life. This is only a little preparation here. Oh yes, loved ones, the death is nothing, the heart attack is nothing, the cancer is nothing, those things are not the end at all.

The Lord has a plan for your life that is way beyond 70 or 80 years. That's why he requires you not to lean to your own understanding and not to get worried or anxious when the bottom falls out of the stock market or when you lose your job, or when the car gets dented or when you are diagnosed with an incurable disease, no. You keep moving calmly, calmly, calmly, because you trust in the Lord with all your heart and you lean not to your own understanding. Why? Because it's reality. Because it's reality.

You can't add one inch to your stature with all your thinking, you can't add one year to your life with all your worrying. The Father is the one who is in control and he loves you with all his heart and you're the only one that he has made exactly like you and he doesn't intend to lose you and he asks you to believe him, and that's not too much to ask. Let us pray.

Dear Father, we are ashamed when we think of the nights when we've lain awake, worried and anxious. We're ashamed Lord when we think of the many occasions when we've been preoccupied with ourselves, when we've been with others and they wanted us to enjoy things with them, and we've been worried about something and anxious. Lord we're ashamed of the times we've been so worried about things that we haven't been able to hear your voice at all. Our head has been filled with our own thoughts and our own calculations.

Father, we repent of this attitude of distrust towards you. Lord, it is not only illogical and unintelligent, it is unloving, it is disobedient to you, and it is rebellious against you. It is downright sin and Lord we repent of it this very moment and Father we don't know all the details but we do believe what your Word says that our old self nature was crucified with Christ and that we are able to live free of it and we can live as trusting simple children who believe you and believe that you will provide all our needs from your riches and glory in Christ Jesus.

So, Lord we give ourselves to you anew today so that during this coming year we will trust in the Lord with all our hearts and lean not to our own understanding. So Lord, here we are, we put our trust in you and we refuse to lean any longer to our own understanding or to rely on our own insight, we'll rely on you Lord that you'll never allow anything to come upon us that you're not able to use to conform us to your image and that you're not able to deliver us from. We acknowledge you our Father as the all-wise omniscient God who can do all things. And now the grace of our Lord Jesus and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with each one of us now and evermore. Amen.