

The world that we live in is a really difficult place. Over the past several weeks I've been wrestling through some situations that I've heard about, some local and some from around the country and around the world. And I've been trying to get to the bottom of why do people do the things that they do. Especially in the situations where it brings harm to him or herself, or in the cases where it causes harm to other people.

Like on Monday morning I woke up early and was in the car driving over to Chardon. As I was driving I was listening to the radio as they were describing the deadliest mass shooting in United States history. I know it shouldn't be shocking anymore because it is becoming almost normal to hear on the news or to discover on one of the social media networks that we browse, that someone has done the unthinkable. That someone has harmed another individual or a group of individual's, and in my estimation, for a shallow reason.

And I hear the news on Monday that an individual opened fire on a crowd and has ended up killing at least 59 people and has wounded hundreds more... and I ask myself the question why? What drives someone to do something so destructive? Where people have destructive behaviors and philosophies that develop in their individual lives and sometimes that ideals break out to do inflict harm on themselves but also onto the people around them.

But as shocking and saddening as these events may be, this isn't exactly a new phenomenon for people to draw misguided conclusions and for it to bring about horrendous results. For if you look across the world and you study history, you'll quickly discover that there's a long record of heinous and barbaric events that have taken place over the centuries. I mention names like Joseph Stalin from the Soviet Union, or Adolf Hitler in Germany, Pol Pot in Cambodia, or even Timothy McVeigh in Oklahoma City, and you come to the understanding that when people look at the world incorrectly and land on wrong conclusions, it can have devastating results.

Everyone, no matter who it is, looks at the world through *three basic components*. We are all trying to make sense of our lives and so we all work through (knowingly, or unknowingly) the framework of Creation, Fall, and Redemption.¹

Creation: Creation refers to how did everything begin. Everyone has to think through how did I get here. Everyone has to come to some conclusions on how did the world come into existence. We all have to wrestle through who we are.

Fall: Everyone also as to come to an explanation as to the source of all the evil and suffering. Everyone knows there's something is wrong with the world but we have to come up with an explanation as to what is the cause of the problem.

Once you've discovered the cause, you can pursue redemption.

¹ Nancy Pearcey. *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity*, 134

Redemption: To engage people's hearts, everyone has to inspire hope by offering a vision of Redemption –an agenda for reversing the “Fall” and setting the world right again.

This is grid right here, is not just what Christians work through; this is what everyone on the face of the planet works through. Everyone operates out what we would call a worldview. Everyone looks at the world in a certain way and draws conclusions on how to go about pursuing redemption, of getting to a place where the world makes sense and everything is right. **And if our system of thought does not begin with God it will take us in countless directions.**

You know, Jesus once told His disciples that those who hear His words and actually do the things that He instructed them to do is like a wise man that built his house upon a rock. And you know how the story goes, the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house. But the house didn't fall, because it had been founded upon the rock.

But the sad news is that those who don't build their house upon a rock, *who reject the things of God*, are like a foolish man who built his house upon the sand. And when the rains come, and the floods rise, and the wind hits hard, that house doesn't stand a chance. It's going to fall in a tremendous collapse because it wasn't built on solid ground.

So as I look at current events where I see and hear horrendous events taking place, I may not know all of the details and I may not be able to answer all of the questions that are raging through my mind, but what I do know is that what has taken place is the result of not building a life upon the solid rock of who God is. If we don't trust the Lord, we will look for something/someone else to trust as we attempt to make sense of the purpose for our life.

Now, I've been reading a lot from a book this past week called Total Truth, and it is without a doubt that the things that I read and think about a lot during the week will spill into our time together on Sunday mornings. And that's happening right now. But Nancy Pearcey in one of her book says this,

No one can live without a sense of purpose and direction, a sense that his or her life has significance as part of a cosmic story. We may limp along for a while, extracting small installments of meaning from short-term goals like earning a degree, landing a job, getting married, establishing a family. But at some point, these temporal things fail to fulfill the deep hunger for eternity in the human spirit. For we were made for God, and every part of our personality is oriented toward relationship with Him. Our hearts are restless, Augustine said, until we find our rest in Him.

I know I've said a lot already this morning, but here is where I want you to turn to your Bibles and I want to encourage you to do today and I want to encourage you today to build your life upon the promises of God. I want you to trust the Lord; I am praying that you wouldn't put your focus anywhere else. That as we turn in our Bibles and look at the book of Joshua this morning, that you would know that the God who fulfilled His promise to the people of Israel is still the same God that we worship this morning. That there is not a need now, nor has there ever been, a reason to turn our back on the Lord.

We're going to see in Joshua 21 that the Lord has fulfilled his promise to the people of Israel. God was faithful to His people then, He is faithful to His people now, and God will forever be faithful to His Word. When the Lord makes a promise, He will always come through with it. And my hope for you is that you would stake your life upon the Lord's promises.

We're going to read verses 43-45 and you will notice that God's promises are permanent and He thoroughly carries through with every aspect of His commitment.

Read Joshua 21:43-45

The first thing that I want to draw your attention to is the emphasize that the writer of this book puts on how complete of a job the Lord does on carrying through on His promise. If you circle things in your Bible, it may be helpful to circle every time the words "all" or "every" are written.

- You can see it there in verse 43:
 - the Lord gave to Israel **all** the land that he swore to give to their fathers.
- Then in verse 44:
 - "And the Lord gave them rest on **every** side
 - "Not one of **all** their enemies had withstood them"
 - "the Lord had given **all** their enemies into their hands.
- Then it keeps going in verse 45:
 - "**all** the good promises" had come true
 - "**all** came to pass."

In three verses it is repeatedly emphasized how thorough God's promises are. Not one detail is left undone. Not one guarantee falls shorts. God sees everything from all angles and is fully capable of carrying it through. He's not lacking in effort. He's not lacking in wisdom. He's not lacking in power. When the Lord sets out to do something He will carefully carry it through until it is completely finished.

That is something that we're not always capable of in our promises.

Let me give you an example: I remember when I was growing up and I used to help cut the grass for a guy in my neighborhood who had an incredibly big yard. He would mow the wide-open sections while I would push mow around the areas that he couldn't get with the bigger tractor. I did decent job at that and he paid me each week to help him with that. But one week after we had finished the work in the yard he asked me if I was capable of doing some cleaning in the house.

The lady who typically cleaned their home was unable to do it that week, so he asked me if I would do it. I was a 12 or 13 year old boy at the time, and I do some cleaning at home when mom asks me to clean up my room or vacuum the living room or dust the furniture, so I sure, I'll do it. After all, he was going to pay me.

So I headed inside while he got to work on something in the garage. Forty-five minutes goes by and I come back out and tell him, I'm done. He gives me this look, "You're done?" I don't know what this gentleman was thinking, I was a 12 or 13-year-old boy who probably wouldn't change my clothes everyday unless my mom made me. I didn't know what it took to sincerely follow through with that promise.

But God is so unlike us in His promises. He is not lacking in anything when He sets out to accomplish His desires. When the Lord gives His Word that He will do something, the Lord will carry it out completely.

The Israelites had to learn to trust the promises of God. If you recall, the Lord had made the promise that the land of Canaan would be theirs, they simply had to trust the Lord as they entered into the land to capture it and drive out the inhabitants of the land of Canaan. But the first opportunity Israel had to capture this land, they refused to trust in the Lord when they allowed their fear of the Canaanites to overwhelm them.

God had promised to conquer all of their enemies. God had promised to give them a place of rest on every side but they made the choice to go in a different direction will left them wandering in the wilderness for forty years, and the fulfillment of God's promise had to wait until the next generation was ready to trust in the Lord.

This is where I want to encourage you. You see, you have a choice of whether or not you're going to trust in the Lord. You have a choice of whether or not you're going to believe that God is fully capable of carrying out the promises that He has given. You have a decision of whether you're going to build your life on the promises of God or you're going to attempt to build your life your own way.

I give you few passages to think through as you make your decision of whether or not you're going to trust God.

- Numbers 23:19 – (God is absolutely trustworthy) –God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?
- Malachi 3:6-7 –(God does not change) “For I the Lord do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed.
- Isaiah 55:11 –(God has the power to fulfill His promises) –“so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.”

Our text has been about the promises of God being fulfilled, so let’s spend some time as we start to wrap things up today by discussing why the God’s promises are still so important to us today. God’s promises were significant to the people of Israel as they looked toward the land that God would provide for them, but for us today, God’s promises are still an essential part of our life. We must, as the old hymn says, stand on the promises of God.

One of the first reasons why God’s promises are significant is because...

First, We find that God’s promises are the foundation for our faith. Like you ask yourself the question this morning, why are you here? And I’m not talking about why are you here at church on a Sunday morning. I’m talking about why are you here on this earth?

We believe that you’re here and everything is here because God created it. The Bible teaches that God is the one and only source of the entire created order. No other gods compete with Him; no natural forces exist on their own; nothing receives its nature or existence from another source.² God promises all of that in His Word.

That sets up the foundation for everything that we think, everything we do, everything that we say. God’s promises are what we stake our life upon. In J.I. Packer’s book, *God has Spoken*, he says that those who see Christian faith as a weak and desperate substitute for knowledge miss the biblical point. Faith is a “step in the light,” a step as sure as the promises of God.

Faith in the Bible is not, as existentialists make out, a leap in the dark, but rather a step in the light, whereby (to extend the metaphor) one puts one’s whole weight on the firm ground of God’s unshakeable promises . . . The truth is that all faith, at every stage in our Christian pilgrimage, is essentially a resting upon God’s promise. It has the nature of assurance, because it relies on God’s assurances . . .

² Nancy Pearcey. *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity*, 45

The heart of the life of faith is in fact the recognition that all the promises, which God is recorded as having made to His people in the past, are still in principle (not always, of course, in detail, because of differing circumstances) extended to each individual Christian in the present . . .

The promises of God are the ground of faith; for where professed Christians are not living in the joy of the knowledge that all of God's promises are theirs, the truth is that God's Word is not being heard.

If our faith is going to be built on solid ground, if our life is going to have any stability whatsoever, it must be built upon the promises of God.

Second, We find that God's Promises sustain us as we wait.

Promises are given to those who must wait. I believe that we are severely aware that the life that we live is not free from tests, trials, or temptations. We will walk through moments of frustration, difficulty and sadness because the world in which we live is a fallen world. When Adam rebelled against God in the Garden of Eden, it brought about a curse on the earth, which leaves us longing for something better, something greater.

And the promises of God can be a great encouragement as wait.

Our three old daughter, Libby, is always asking us for things. She'll ask us if she can go outside, or if she can watch a movie, if she can have an apple. There are plenty of times that we say yes, but there are also plenty of times that we say no. And every time that we say no, she immediately responds by going, "Later?" Can I go outside? No. Later? Sure.

In that moment she's hanging onto the promise, not right now, but later I will be able to have an apple. Later I'll be able to go outside and play with my sisters. Later mom will read a book to me. The promise, most of the time, sustains her.

And the same is true for us, for while we do enjoy a portion of God's fulfilled promises today, we cling to the promises of God that will be thoroughly carried out in the ages to come. So fix your gaze on the promises of God to sustain you as you wait for the return of Jesus Christ.

Third, We find that God's Promises are fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

There are so many promises in Scripture. In each one of those promises, God guarantees that something will (or will not) be done. And God never gives His promise in a casual way as we sometimes do. We may say, "I promise I'll be home by 5pm tonight" and then come rolling into the driveway at 5:15pm. We sometimes stick to our promises very loosely... but God never does that. The promises of God are rock-solid, absolute commitments made by God who is completely faithful.

And as you read through your Bible you will quickly discover that God makes promise after promise after promise...

- God promised salvation to all who believe in His Son (Romans 1:16-17).
- God promised that all things will work out for good for His children (Romans 8:28).
- God promised comfort in our trials (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).
- God promised new life in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17).
- God promised every spiritual blessing in Christ (Ephesians 1:3).
- God promised to finish the work He started in us (Philippians 1:6).
- God promised peace when we pray (Philippians 4:6-7).
- God promised to supply our needs (Matthew 6:33; Philippians 4:19).
- God promised eternal life to those who trust Him (John 4:14).
- God promised His disciple's power from on high (Acts 1:8).
- God promised that He will return for us (John 14:2-3).

There are many more promises of God that could be listed. But all of them find their ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ, and as Hebrews 1:3 puts it, Jesus is **“the radiance of God’s glory.”** And **“No matter how many promises God has made, they are ‘Yes’ in Christ”** (2 Corinthians 1:20).

So I encourage you today to cling to promises of God, as they are the foundation for all of life. And allow those promises to lead you to Jesus Christ.