

**Sermon Preached at Alstonville Anglicans  
7 November 2022, All Saints Day  
Dr Murray Harvey, Bishop of Grafton**

*Those who trust in him will understand truth, and the faithful will abide with him in love, because grace and mercy are upon his holy ones ... [Wisdom 3:1-9]*

These words from the Wisdom of Solomon are worthy of our reflection today.

*Those who trust in him will understand truth.*

Grafton is a great place for walking. My favourite route at the moment takes me along the side of the magnificent Clarence River, over the old Grafton bridge with stunning views west to the Great Dividing Range, and then around via the railway station. If I time it right I'll see a Sydney or Brisbane bound XPT. I know nothing about trains but I like train spotting! If you time it wrong you encounter a freight train (full speed ahead). The rail bridge, walkways, tunnels and the railway viaduct offer a lot of scope for graffiti artists (not just random stuff – actually commissioned street art – trendy). But one such artist fancies himself (herself) as a bit of a philosopher. A street philosopher perhaps.

*The full truth cannot be forged through the disturbing lens of thought. For the tip of the iceberg, visible to the human mind, lies to the volumous (sic) truth beyond. (Anon).*



I think our street philosopher is right in that the truth we see and that we can comprehend is only the tip of the iceberg of truth, most of which is too great or too mysterious for our limited human comprehension.

But of course our reading involves the theme of trust as well.

*Those who trust in him will understand truth.*

To trust in someone there is usually a relationship on which the trust is based.

*Those who trust in him will understand truth.*

So the trust we have in the person, Jesus, helps us comprehend a little more of the truth that he reveals.

The last 18 months or so have challenged our trust, perhaps more so than ever before. Our trust in governments, experts, scientists and others, in whose hands have been our public safety and personal health care. In record time, vaccines have been developed, and public health measures of unprecedented scale and magnitude have been imposed the world over.

Whether we like it or not, we've all had to trust, perhaps more than ever before in our lifetimes.

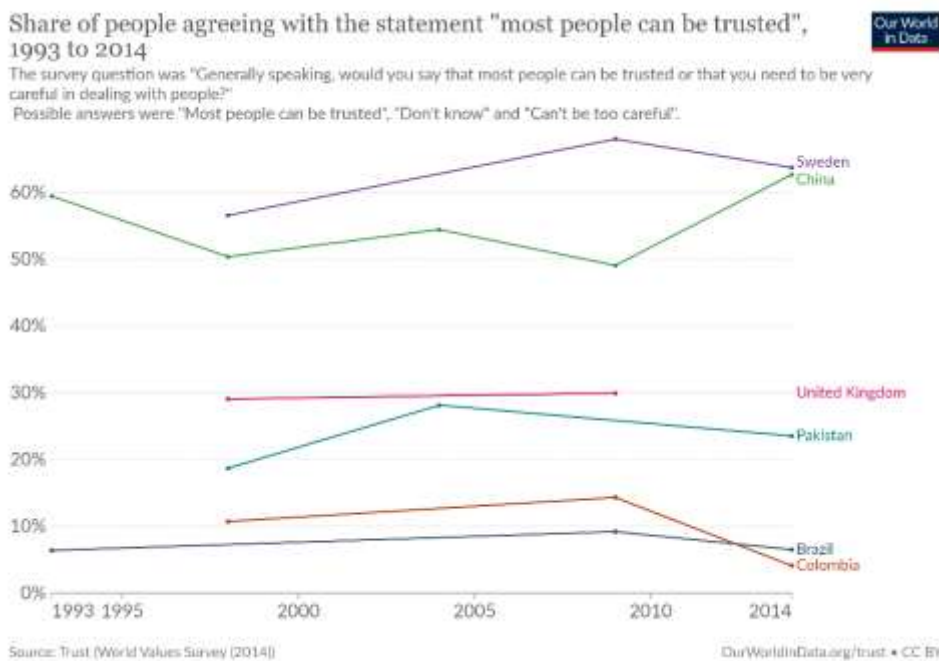
Trust is an important contributor to well-being.

In response to the question, “*Generally speaking do you think that most people can be trusted?*” when asked in countries such as Norway, Sweden and Finland, more than 60% of respondents (in the World Value Survey) thought that most people can be trusted. But in countries such as Colombia, Brazil, Ecuador and Peru, less than 10% think that this is the case.<sup>1</sup>

Data from the Gallup Poll tells us that trust in national governments went down every year in the period 2009-2013. In the majority of European countries, people trust the police more than they trust each other. In many countries, ironically, the police tend to be trusted more than the governments and the legal systems that employ them.

Longitudinal data from the USA shows that people there trust each other a lot less today, than they did 40 years ago. I expect COVID has further eroded that.

In Australia, about 55% of the respondents said that, “most people can be trusted”, placing us amongst highest ranking countries in the world in terms of trust, although not as high as the Scandinavian countries.



Of course, if we’re not trusting of others, it’s likely to be because we’ve been hurt: our trust has been abused. Brother Roger of Taizé once wrote that memories and experiences of past hurts can hold back the gentle breeze of trust. He also reminded us that Christ calls us to trust. We have to choose to love and trust.<sup>2</sup>

There is much wisdom in today’s reading: *those who trust in God will understand truth.*

In the face of the anxiety, stress, depression and other challenges of modern life, in the face of past hurts, we need to be able to trust those around us, and trust in God who sustains us and offers us hope in these circumstances.

Who do you trust? Are you a trusting person? If not, has something, or someone, abused your trust and made you wary. What would it take for you to be more trusting?

Christ calls us to trust. But ours is the freedom to choose to love and trust.

And then there’s the rest of that verse:

*and the faithful will abide with him in love, because grace and mercy are upon his holy ones*

Those who have chosen to accept Christ's invitation will enjoy his love and grace. On All Saints Day we should be encouraged by the Saints of the Church who have gone before us, as those who have chosen to trust, and are now examples of how God's love and grace has flourished in their lives.

This is highlighted for us today too in the Sacrament of Confirmation. Here we ask God that those to be Confirmed might grow in his grace, and that their wisdom, knowledge and understanding might be increased.

There is a message here for all of us who have given our lives to Christ through Baptism and Confirmation, no matter how long ago this might have been. Or maybe you are just thinking about giving your life to him.

Choose to trust him, to receive his offer of grace, and be filled with his truth, wisdom and understanding. If you've been hurt by trust that has been abused or broken, allow yourself to feel the gentle breeze of God's love and grace, so you can begin to trust him. This will set you free from all that is false, fake, untrustworthy and untrue in the world around, all that would bind you up.

Maybe we all need to see ourselves as being like Lazarus: effectively dead and bound up. The bindings will be different for each of us: past hurts, unforgiveness, resentfulness, unwillingness to trust, greed, self-deception, selfishness.

Through God's grace we are unbound and let go into a trust in this person Jesus.

A Prayer from the Confirmation Service APBA:

*Almighty and everliving God, you have given your servants new birth by water and the Spirit, and have forgiven them their sins. Strengthen them, we pray, with the Holy Spirit that they may grow in grace. Increase in them the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of discernment and inner strength, the spirit of knowledge and true godliness, and fill them with wonder and awe at your presence, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

#### **Notes.**

1. Statistics and other data from the surveys referred to here can be found at: <https://ourworldindata.org/trust>
2. Choose to Love, *Letter from Taize*. Special Issue, 1996, p.2.