

# Sermon Note: Trust

## Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

### Introduction

We conclude our **Call & Response** series with trust. The movement of the past few weeks—through wonder, integrity, and lament—has not erased uncertainty, and hasn't promised that life will feel easy or safe. What it has offered is a way to stay in relationship with the God who listens, speaks, and stays near. Psalm 91 gives us words to hold onto in times of risk and fear. Trust grows from this divine relationship, shaped by prayer and strengthened by presence. It's a moment that shows courageous persistence in the face of uncertainty.

### Illustration Videos

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AlyYBtASteQ>

In this scene from *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers* (2002), Sam reminds Frodo that even when everything feels dark, there's still something worth holding on to.

### Why This Video?

*The Two Towers* is the second film in *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy. Frodo and Sam are two unlikely heroes trying to complete an overwhelming task. In this scene, they're worn out and unsure of whether they can keep going. Sam speaks from his own exhaustion, but also from hope. He doesn't ignore the danger—they've been surrounded by it—but he still believes the story they're part of has meaning. His words help Frodo keep moving.

### Video Discussion Questions

1. What stood out most in this scene? Was it a word, a feeling, or a shift in the characters' relationship?
2. Even if you don't know all the backstory, what can you tell about Frodo's emotional state? What signals do you notice that help you understand what he's feeling?
3. Sam doesn't try to solve anything, but rather speaks from experience. What kind of trust do you hear in his words?
4. Why do you think Sam talks about stories? What might that have meant to him—or to Frodo—in a moment like this? What stories have had an impact in your life?
5. Have you ever been reminded of something deeper or truer right when you were about to give up? What helped you hold on?
6. Where do you see trust in this scene? What makes it believable or hard-won, rather than easy or abstract?
7. What kind of relationship allows someone to speak with that kind of honesty and hope?

## Psalm 91:1-6, 14-16 (NRSVue)

- <sup>1</sup>You who live in the shelter of the Most High,  
who abide in the shadow of the Almighty,  
<sup>2</sup>will say to the Lord, "My refuge and my fortress;  
my God, in whom I trust."  
<sup>3</sup>For he will deliver you from the snare of the hunter  
and from the deadly pestilence;
- <sup>4</sup>he will cover you with his pinions,  
and under his wings you will find refuge;  
his faithfulness is a shield and defense.  
<sup>5</sup>You will not fear the terror of the night  
or the arrow that flies by day  
<sup>6</sup>or the pestilence that stalks in darkness  
or the destruction that wastes at noonday.
- <sup>14</sup>Those who love me, I will deliver;  
I will protect those who know my name.  
<sup>15</sup>When they call to me, I will answer them;  
I will be with them in trouble;  
I will rescue them and honor them.  
<sup>16</sup>With long life I will satisfy them  
and show them my salvation.

## Scripture Study Questions

1. This psalm, especially in verses 1-6, has imagery that's both frightening and courageous. What word or phrase stood out to you? What did it stir in you?
2. Verses 1-2 speak of shelter, shadow, and refuge. What do you think it means to "live in the shelter of the Most High"? Can you think of a time when you felt this way?
3. This psalm names dangers (night terror, arrows, pestilence) and doesn't describe a life without them, while still speaking praise and assurance. What does it look like for someone to feel fear and praise and assurance, all at the same time? Can you think of a time when you felt all of these together?
4. In verses 14-16, God responds with words of rescue, protection, and long life. What does it feel like to imagine God speaking these words directly to you?
5. For some, praise isn't what comes after the storm; it's what helps them survive it. What do you think God's commitment to us is when we must face challenging or even terrifying events?
6. What's one small way you could practice praise this week, not as performance, but as grounded trust in God's presence?

## Additional (Optional) Questions

1. What is the promise of protection in Psalm 91:1-6? Do you believe that promise?
2. How does Psalm 91 describe the relationship between God and those who trust in God?

3. What do you think “the shadow of the Almighty” means in this psalm? What is this metaphor trying to describe?
4. Think of a time you felt like you were going through a hard time. How would this psalm help you know what to do and how to process that difficult time?
5. How do the promises in Psalm 91 relate to the idea of unconditional love?
6. How would faith look different if God always seemed to answer us when we call on God?

### **Weekly Action**

Take a few minutes this week to revisit each theme from this series—wonder, integrity, lament, and trust. What has stayed with you? What felt like a challenge, a comfort, or an invitation? You might choose one word, one insight, or one small next step to carry forward. Share that with someone you trust, and ask what’s been stirring in them, too. Let this be a conversation grounded in graceful curiosity.

### **Prayer**

God of shelter and strength, thank you for being with us not only in peace but in the middle of storms. Teach us how to trust you, to rest in your shadow, and to praise you, even when life is uncertain. Let our praise be rooted in confidence, not that we are safe from harm, but that we are never alone. Amen.

*Disclosure: This Sermon Note was created by LJUMC staff with resources from Discipleship Ministries of The United Methodist Church and with the support of AI tools.*