

*In the name of God, who makes us, loves us, and keeps us. Amen*

Okay, trivia time! Set your phones aside, no fair looking up the answer on the internet! Here's your question: What was the first 'motto' ever engraved on a coin minted by the United States? Here's a hint: It was just 3 words. Anyone think they know the answer? The coin was a penny, about the size of a quarter. The year was 1787. It was designed by Benjamin Franklin. Anyone (don't be too shy to guess now...) It was "Mind Your Business", by which Franklin, himself a very successful businessman, meant 'take care of business', invest your money wisely, and so on. He didn't mean that our national motto should be 'mind your own business' in a societal scolding. Anyway, here's your second question: What's the motto on our currency today? It has 4 words, and was first used on 2 cent pieces minted during the civil war. Since then, it can be found on many of our US coins. And in the 1950s, the congress voted unanimously that it should be printed on all our paper currency. Do you know what it is? "In God We Trust". Imagine that: a unanimous representative vote to express our national faith in a God who makes us, loves us, and keeps us! Why, the motto even made it onto some of our postage stamps. And, believe it or not, onto a few license plates!

Of course, not every American agrees with that sentiment these days, but I am unaware of any serious national move to eliminate it, and whether they want to or not, whether they know it or not, everyone carries that motto in pocket, billfold, and purse. It is still acceptable to many, including the faithful of the three mainline Abrahamic faiths. Now, the Muslims might prefer 'In Allah We Trust' and Jewish citizens might prefer 'In Yahweh we trust', and Christians might prefer 'In Christ we trust', but the recognition of one God for all is certainly a good thing. BTW we call those three faith traditions 'Abrahamic' because they all look back on Abraham as the seminal father of their religious life, the first faithful named person (other than Noah, perhaps) who trusted God enough to stake his entire future, and the future of his progeny, on God's benevolent promises. According to our reading today from Genesis, Abram (as he was known then) was seventy-five years old when he finally listened to what God had been trying to tell him: that he would find blessings in a relationship with God, and that those blessings would flourish and multiply even as his family grew. All he had to do was "Go". Go and be a blessing to others. And, demonstrating his trust in God's grace, he went.

St. Paul, in his Letter to the Romans from which we heard a portion this morning, says that Abraham was 'hoping against hope', considering that he and his wife Sarah were old and as good as dead. But that conviction that God's promises and callings are true and trustworthy provokes him to get up off his backside, take God's word for it, and begin a new life. A life which would be in close relationship with God and permit Abe to be an agent in God's creation of a new hope for the world. His life would become a heritage for many. His new home would become a sanctuary for all. And his trust, his faith, would be reckoned as righteousness, as 'doing the right thing' both in the history books and the scriptural record. Generations to come would look back on Abe, God promises, as Father Abraham, who would eventually set the example of faithfulness. But there would be quite a physical and spiritual journey yet to be accomplished. Abe, as God certainly knew, was just a human being, like us, and doing the right thing would never be all that clear, even for Abe. As we read selections from

Genesis over the next few weeks, try to be patient with Abraham, remembering his basic good intentions and the way he trusts God even when he seems clueless and lost on his journey.

Whom do you trust? Whom can you trust? Personally, I reserve my deepest trust for those in whom I discern a relationship with God, even if they might not think of it that way themselves. I would, for example, trust that person who can sit with sinners and yet love God. That one who can witness to the right things even when surrounded by temptation. That one who has the sense that their presence could, in fact, heal the brokenness in which they find themselves, the sinfulness all around them. I would trust them for I trust that God is using them to begin a new family, just as God used Abraham, a family which has the potential to flourish despite itself. Some who saw Jesus eating and socializing with sinners and tax-collectors thought him to be a hypocrite, maybe even a fool, but his witness to those who were broken, especially those who were broken and didn't even know it, inspired trust among many others. That trust must have seemed rare among them; it must have been compelling. It was that trust which must have persuaded Matthew the social outcast to leave his comfortable but unfulfilling life to follow Jesus. It must have been that trust in Jesus, God's Love incarnate, which prompted the leader of the synagogue (think of the irony) to seek him out when his daughter was thought to be lost. Trust as the sheep, even the lost ones, develop for their shepherd.

And this woman in the scriptural story from Matthew, who, by rights, ought to be hopeless, who has suffered for years, and yet she finds the inspiration to trust. She trusts in the power of love to heal even her. She craves that trust. She reaches out in trust. She can feel the power of that trust between her fingers. She desperately longs to be in a trusting relationship, and Jesus turns to her and calls her 'daughter'. Jesus recognizes her as a member of his family. No more a stranger or a guest, but like a child at home. One whose problems and brokenness are over-shadowed by love, healed by loving relationship, raised to new life by the breath of God. Oh, how often have I had pastoral conversations with those who think they have been abandoned by God, removed from the circle of trust for some brokenness they think is unforgivable! And yet they ought to see that Jesus has come to sit with them, has come to dine with them (perhaps even in Eucharist), and has come to remind them that they are worthy to trust his promises. My own pastoral work is often just to encourage those who are reluctant to reach out for the hem of Jesus' cloak to overcome their hesitancy and just do it.

And that is part of our work here as a parish of believers. Oh, we sing our songs of praise, sincerely keep the prayers, and hear the fascinating old stories, but we also build a trusting environment. It is central to our work as an Episcopalian parish. Trust is at the core of our sacramental life together. In God we trust. In Christ we trust. And we hope to be the Body of Christ in our generation, trustworthy to one another and to the world around us. May God, in whom we trust, help us to mind the business of our relationships, that we might share in the adventures of Abraham, the convictions of Paul, and the compassion of Christ. Amen.