

A Firm Foundation

Psalm 137:1-6
Luke 17: 5-10

Faith Community
October 3, 2004

Introduction

Many people think of Henry Ford as a self-made man. Others look at Andrew Carnegie or, more recently, Donald Trump as self-made people. They took a little bit, or a new idea and made it into something great. Some would say they are geniuses.

But Henry Ford's idea of the assembly line wouldn't produce anything if there weren't people working on that line putting together cars. And those workers wouldn't be as productive if they didn't have managers and supervisors to help them. The managers need executives to help them do their work. One person can have a great idea but he needs many people to make it successful. The idea of the self-made person is as silly as it sounds! **SELF – MADE PERSON:** Someone who has created himself!

The truth is we all depend on other people. Donald Trump not only depends on skilled executives around him, he depends on his secretary, the night watchman, and the guard at the front door.

I

We all trust in someone, or something. There is no such thing as really going it alone. We all need other people.

The idea that we can pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps is as impossible as the image conveys. All of us owe other people a debt of gratitude for who we are.

At the Academy Awards, a woman hears her name read as the winner of the Best Actress award. She is recognized for her great acting in an inspiring film. She delivered a stunning performance, and now throngs of people rise to applaud her incredible ability. She is a great actress.

As she stands at the microphone, her voice quavering, she says, "I have to thank my parents who supported my crazy obsession with acting when I was a child, and have ever since. Thank you to my manager, who got me this picture..."

She goes on to thank her acting teachers, her director who brought out the best in her, her fellow actors who played to her role, the crew that made everything right, her make-up staff who helped her look the part so convincingly ...

In the midst of all this, the music gets louder. In a panicky voice she says, "No, no, you can't raise the music, I have lots more people to thank." The music continues, louder. "Thank you especially to my husband and to my children for encouraging me and often putting up with me through it all."

Finally, the presenters take her by the arm and walk her off stage. She was acutely aware of all the people who had helped her become who she is. At this time of great recognition she knew to thank the people she counted on.

No of us stands alone, we all have a supporting cast that we depend on.

II

We all trust in someone, the question is, “Whom do we trust”. It isn’t a question of whether we need other people or not; it’s a question of who we need – who we trust. Where do we go to get guidance, help, support, direction?

Look around. Many people want that job. Your boss might like you to depend on her. She probably would like to give you direction and tell you the rules to live by.

We may rely on the corporate ladder, trusting that if we work hard, stay late, know the right people, and perform well we can count on that ladder to take us higher and higher. We trust that we can climb that ladder and find success.

Some may trust in their assistant. I know a man who sends out a lot of correspondence. He is a terrible speller, so he relies on his staff to know what he means and make the spelling right. He trusts her to make him look good.

Lots of us rely on our spouses. We need that support to do what we do. We rely on their judgment. We need their stability and support. It is said of Dr. Benjamin Spock that his wife was so supportive and helpful in writing his famous baby book that her name should have appeared as coauthor.

All of us rely on others. It isn’t a question of whether we depend on others, but who it is we count on. There are lots of options available to offer support, guidance, help, and direction.

III

For Christians, there is one in whom we trust – the God who came to us in Jesus Christ. The one we depend on is the one who gave us life.

This God insists that we trust in him. You and I are called to put our lives in God’s hands. We find meaning in life through God; we see the direction of our lives in what Christ taught us. We know who we are because of God’s acceptance of us.

As the Bible says, “In Him we live and breathe and have our being.” Our trust in God is all-encompassing.

What is it like? It’s like the foundation for a home. The foundation supports the entire house. If it isn’t strong enough the home will begin to shift and crumble. The foundation determines what the house will be like. It limits how far it will go. It gives shape to the house. Without a foundation the house won’t stand for long; it will be blown over by the first strong wind that comes along.

In a similar way, our faith guides us through our lives. The strength of our faith supports us when the storms strike. Our faith sets limits on what we will do and won’t do. Our trust in God shapes what kind of people we will be.

There are lots of people we depend on everyday, and they are very important. However, the foundation that holds our whole life together is our trust in God.

Conclusion

Dag Hammarskjold was the Secretary General of the United Nations for many years. He headed the United Nations in a very difficult time and spent much of his time flying around the world trying to end wars and bring peace. He gave himself tirelessly to the job and was successful.

In September of 1961 as he flew to help resolve a conflict in the Congo, his plane crashed. Dag Hammarskjold was killed in that crash. A great deal of mystery still surrounds the explosions that brought his plane down. Wherever he went, Hammarskjold carried a notebook with him. Each night he wrote his thoughts in that book. After his death those notes were published in a book called Markings.

This book shows the faith and struggles of a great Christian. Some passages express thanks to God, some wrestle with difficult questions, some celebrate God's mystery. It is clear from his writings that Hammarskjold built his life on a foundation of faith in God. It was because of that foundation that he was able to do what he did.

Amen.