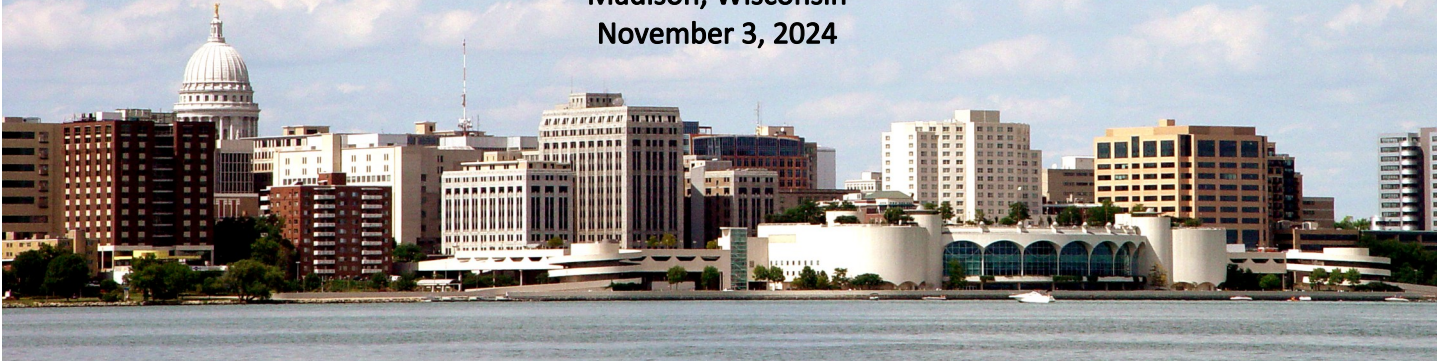


Do Not Worry

Matthew 6:25-34 (Part 1)

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Four Lakes Church of Christ
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Good morning and welcome! If you are visiting with us today, we are happy to have you with us, and we'd like to ask that you fill out a visitor card – either online or on a card from the pew in front of you. And we also invite you to pass along any questions or prayer concerns in that way.

In terms of our schedule, all of us are invited to stick around after worship today to participate in a fellowship dinner. And even if you didn't bring anything, come anyway! And then, after we eat, Caleb will be teaching a class on the Fundamentals of Music (around 1 p.m.), and all of us are invited to come together for that as well. Anything we do in worship is worth doing well, and learning more about music is certainly a part of that.

We are here this morning to preach the good news that God loves us. He sent his Son Jesus to save us from sin: He died on the cross, he was buried, and he was raised up from the dead on the first day of the week. This is the good news, and we obey this good news by believing the message, by turning away from sin, by publicly confessing our faith in Jesus as being the Son of God, and by allowing ourselves to be buried with Jesus in baptism (an immersion in water for the forgiveness of sins). And, as usual, we have several examples to share this week, starting with an update from the Blue Springs congregation down in Mount Vernon, Kentucky (about an hour south of Lexington). They posted a few days ago, and they say, "OH HAPPY DAY! We are rejoicing today that we have a new brother in Christ! Steve Davidson was baptized for the forgiveness of his sins. Please be in prayer for him as he begins his new life in Christ and also for his physical health to improve so that he might be able to assemble with us for worship some day." They then go on to quote the account of the baptism of the Ethiopian officer in Acts 8.

This next one comes to us from the Millington Church of Christ, just north of Memphis. They posted last Lord's Day and they say that, "Brittany Anderson was baptized this morning!! Angels are rejoicing and heaven and so are we!!"

This next one comes to us from the Lord's church in Somerset, Ohio (southeast of Columbus). They say, "Tonight Imaree Watkins decided to be baptized. She also requested that her brother be the one to baptize her. We are rejoicing that another soul has been added to the church."

This next one comes to us from the Lord's church in Cumbernauld, in central Scotland. I don't think we've shared one from Scotland before, but they posted this week, and they say, "More rejoicing with the angels! Jennifer was baptised for the forgiveness of her sins last night! Another sister added to the family of God!"

This next update comes from a friend in Alabama concerning his son (on the right up here). My friend Caleb says that his son, "Alex hates to have his picture taken or be bragged on but I need to for a minute. He graduated this past weekend from Basic Training in Georgia and is headed to much more training with the military. Kristin and I are proud of him for that but much more so that he has seven new brothers in Christ that are also his brothers in arms that he was able to study with and baptize. Please keep them in your prayers!" Most of us cannot imagine the rigors of basic training, but this young man went into it with a higher calling and accomplished something eternally significant.

I know we've had several, but I'll wrap it up with six, all from the same family, right here in Wisconsin. The church up in Waupaca posted a few days ago, and they say, "We are rejoicing beyond belief as today six souls were forgiven of all of their sins, six received the gift of God's Holy Spirit and they were ALL added to God's family as they chose to obey the gospel and were immersed into Jesus. We welcome Ted the patriarch, his daughters Alyssa and Breanna, Alyssa's husband Ryan and their daughter Mia, and Brianna's husband Christian. Welcome home!" I just love that "Ted the Patriarch" was baptized first and got to baptize the rest of his family. As always, we share these pictures by way of encouragement and as our invitation to you to consider obeying the good news yourself. If we can help, if you'd like to study together, please let us know. We won't stalk you, or harass you, or hunt you down, but we would love to study the word of God together. Pull me aside after worship, or give me a call or send a text to 608-224-0274.

We live in an anxious world, don't we? Most of us will agree that we are surrounded by worry and anxiety. We are concerned about crime and the economy. We may be concerned about our health. Perhaps we are worried about our own personal finances. Maybe we're worried about our mental health. We may be concerned about our children or our elderly parents. We may be concerned about work – the stress, the future of our employment, or maybe a difficult coworker or supervisor. The American Psychological Association just released the results of a poll where they found that 77% of respondents identified "the future of our nation" as a significant source of stress right now. They compared anxiety over the upcoming election to getting an MRI or a blood test and waiting for the results.

And now that we start to think about it, maybe we are starting to be a bit anxious about our own anxiety. And one thing that may make this even worse is that we are so connected to the world around us through social media, we are now worried about everybody else's worries! Something happens in the world, something happens in the life of a friend or loved one, something happens politically, and we know about it almost immediately. We now have the ability to be anxious about everything in the world, simultaneously, all in real time. Perhaps you have heard the term "doom scrolling." I've heard the term a few times here and there, and just taking a look at the term, I think most of us can probably guess what this is. As the result of a quick Google search, doom scrolling is summarized by AI as "the act of spending too much time consuming negative news and other content online that makes you feel sad, anxious, or angry." That's it! The term was first used in 2020, early in the pandemic, and it was first recognized by Merriam-Webster as an official word back in September 2023 (just over a year ago). Surveys have found that roughly 31% of American adults doomscroll on a regular basis, with Millennials at 46% and Gen Z adults at 51%. We are an anxious people.

The question is: What do we do about it? This morning, we return to the Sermon on the Mount (in Matthew 6) where Jesus speaks on the issue of worry. The passage is Matthew 6:25-34 (p. 1510). But even before we read this paragraph, I want us to realize that Jesus starts this passage by saying, "***For this reason.***" For what reason?

Well, he's basing everything he's about to say on what he has just said, and that's what we've been studying for the past two weeks. Two weeks ago, we looked at that passage where Jesus warns about laying up for ourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal. Instead, we are to lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven, for where our treasure is, there will our hearts be also. And then, last week, we looked at the next paragraph where Jesus addresses our focus, what is important to us, what we look at all the time. If we're always looking at what we don't have, we are distracted. And in that context, he goes on to say that no one can serve two masters. We can either serve the stuff of this world or we can serve God, but we cannot serve both. It is impossible. We must choose.

Jesus, then, isn't jumping into a brand new topic, but he is referring back to all of this as we transition into Matthew 6:25-34. So, let's look together this morning at Matthew 6:25-34,

²⁵ For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? ²⁷ And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life? ²⁸ And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, ²⁹ yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. ³⁰ But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith! ³¹ Do not worry then, saying, "What will we eat?" or "What will we drink?" or "What will we wear for clothing?" ³² For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³ But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. ³⁴ So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Today and also next Lord's Day morning, I'd like to have us work our way through this passage as we look at the main command here, which is **"Do not worry."** My grandmother on my dad's side would refer to this as "an order from headquarters." In fact, it is repeated three times throughout this passage. This is important, **"Do not worry."** And as we work our way through this passage, I'd like to note six reasons for not worrying. We'll look at three of these today and three of these next Sunday morning, if the Lord wills. And we have a huge election in between these two lessons. I'm thinking of this as an "election worry sandwich." Do not worry, election, do not worry. As an election official, I sometimes tell my crew that my goal is to not end up on 60 Minutes the following Sunday night. I picked up my supplies yesterday, I've been watching training videos for the past two days, my schedule is clear for some last-minute training for Chief Inspectors tomorrow, then we have Tuesday, the county clerk wants me to help transport ballots to a top secret location Wednesday and Thursday, and I'm on deck for a possible recount after that. But, no worries! No anxiety whatsoever.

I. **So, let's jump right into it (in verse 25), where Jesus tells us not to worry by REALIZING WHAT IS TRULY IMPORTANT.**

And just a hint as we start to dig into it here: What is truly important is not what we usually worry about! Jesus says, **"...do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?"** And let's notice: He's not even talking about gold and silver here. He's not talking about a new car or a luxurious home. But Jesus is talking about the very basics – life itself, including what you will eat and what you will drink, as well as a need as basic as clothing. He's saying, then, "Don't worry about these things! Don't even worry about the basic necessities, because life is more than food and clothing." Jesus, then, is pointing us to something greater.

Ultimately, God and his kingdom must come first. We will get to that next week. But for now, Jesus starts with this command, ***“Do not be worried about your life,”*** because there is something more important than life itself.

When we strip it down to the basics, then, maybe we can try to put our worries into perspective. We may have some big things going on in our lives right now. Maybe we are worried and even anxious about some things. Jesus, though, reminds us to focus on what is truly important. And often, what we are worried about is far less than what is truly important in this life. There may be exceptions, but I don't think most of us were worried about not having anything to wear this morning. In fact, most of us probably have too much clothing. I have a box for Goodwill outside my bedroom door right at this moment, because my problem right now is that my closet is full; my dresser is full. So also, I doubt that many of us were truly worried about not having anything to eat or drink today. Most of us will probably have too much to eat and drink today. But even if we were in need of these things, Jesus would remind us that life is more than food and clothing.

In reality, though, what are we worried about these days? Generally speaking, do we worry more about spiritual things or physical things? Are we worried about our finances, and politics, and food, and clothing? Or are we more concerned that we're spending time with the Lord in prayer and study? Are we concerned about spiritual things and maybe the spiritual health of our friends and Christian family? What we worry about has a way of clarifying what is truly important to us. One author has said that, “Our actual theology is betrayed by our actual worries.” And what he meant by that is that we may say God comes first, but if we're worried and anxious about everything but God, our worries have told the truth on us. Jesus, then, reminds us that life is more than food and clothing.

Or, as Paul says in Colossians 3:1-4, ***“Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.”*** One way to stop worrying, therefore, is to replace our anxiety about earthly things with a focus on ***“things above,”*** knowing that what is coming is far more important than what we tend to worry about here on this earth.

- Living in view of eternity, it no longer really matters that I may be a few pounds overweight (but we like to worry about that, don't we?).
- Living in view of eternity, it no longer really matters that my clothes aren't the latest and greatest.
- Living in view of eternity, it no longer really matters whether I shop at Aldi or Whole Foods.
- Living in view of eternity, it no longer really matters that my car has a little ding in the side that may start to rust someday.

Jesus, then, tells us not to worry, and he starts by encouraging us to remember what is truly important, and it is not food and clothing.

II. Secondly, Jesus also tells us not to worry (in verse 26) by reminding us that **WE ARE IMPORTANT TO GOD – WE ARE VALUABLE!**

He says, ***“Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?”*** Let's notice here how Jesus reminds us that God is our Father. And this is repeated throughout the Sermon on the Mount. Back in Matthew 5:45, he tells us to love our enemies ***“so that you may be sons of your FATHER who is in heaven.”*** In Matthew 5:48, he says, ***“Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly FATHER is perfect.”*** In Matthew 6:1, he warns

against hypocrisy, *“otherwise you have no reward with your FATHER who is in heaven.”* In Matthew 6:4, he says that when we give in secret, *“your FATHER who sees what is done in secret will reward you.”* In Matthew 6:6, he tells us to pray in an inner room and *“pray to your FATHER who is in secret, and your FATHER who sees what is done in secret will reward you.”* In Matthew 6:8, he says that *“your FATHER knows what you need before you ask him.”* In Matthew 6:9, he tells us to pray to *“our FATHER who is in heaven.”* In Matthew 6:14, he says that if we forgive others, then our *“heavenly FATHER will also forgive you.”* In Matthew 6:15, he says that if we do not forgive others, then *“your FATHER will not forgive your transgressions.”* In Matthew 6:18, he says that we are not to fast to be seen by others, but we are to fast to be noticed *“by your FATHER who is in secret; and your FATHER who sees what is done in secret will reward you.”* And now we come to Matthew 6:26, where we are told not to worry, because we look at the birds of the air, and we need to understand that *“your heavenly FATHER feeds them.”* A few things to notice here, starting with the fact that God is OUR Father – not the birds’ father, but our Father. And the point is: If he cares for birds (which are just birds), how much more will he care for us, as his children. That’s the comparison.

And we’ll get to this again (later in the Sermon on the Mount), but as our Father, God loves providing for us. He loves taking care of us. And as earthly parents, we understand this (at least to some degree). Good parents love taking care of their children. Now, some earthly fathers are selfish, manipulative, terrible people. But most of the time, earthly fathers understand how important it is to take care of their children. We provide food, and clothing, and shelter. Our kids go to school, and we provide the needed supplies. We pay for field trips and vacations. Our kids may go to college, and we do the best we can to help in any way we can. So also, if God is our Father, he loves taking care of us as well. But even more so! And doesn’t that ease our minds just a bit? As our Father, God wants to take care of us. He loves providing for us.

Now, as we think about God taking care of the birds, let’s also realize: God doesn’t just feed them hand to beak! And what I mean by that is: The birds have to do something! We understand this. Birds have some responsibilities! They build nests, they dig for worms, they fly from one sunflower to another, they gather, they migrate. Generally speaking, birds are voracious eaters. We think of hummingbirds. I’ve read that hummingbirds, by weight, have an energy output that would be comparable to a human running 9 MPH, all day every day! And to convert that into calories, if an average human being behaved like a bird, his daily need would be somewhere around 150,000 calories. That’s equal to 370 pounds of potatoes. Years ago, some girls did a project for a school science fair where they put the caloric needs of a hummingbird in terms we can understand. At 70 pounds, the average 5th grade girl (if they behaved like a hummingbird) would need to consume 156 cupcakes every hour, all day long. This is equivalent to 12,000 Tic-Tacs every hour or 300,000 pounds of bugles every day, and so on. But ultimately, God provides. Jesus isn’t telling us we can’t plan for the future, he’s not condemning hard work (birds are constantly working), so the message here is: If God as our Father cares for the birds, how much more will he care for us as his children; therefore, do not worry! Do not obsess over the basic necessities. If he cares for them, he cares for you.

III. Let’s take a look at one more reason not to worry this morning – it comes in verse 27, where Jesus explains that WORRY DOES NOT WORK.

So, just from a practical point of view, worry is ineffective. Worry doesn’t accomplish anything (nothing good, anyway). In verse 27, Jesus asks the question, *“And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life?”* You may notice some translation issues on this one. Some have Jesus asking, *“And who of you by being worried can add a single cubit to his span [or to his stature; to his height]?”* I’m pretty confident that the NASB gets it right here, but either one is pretty much impossible, isn’t it? Can we make ourselves live longer by worrying? Can we make our selves taller by worrying? No! Years ago, when my nurse practitioner started getting concerned about my weight, I realized that if I could grow a cubit, if I could grow 18 inches taller, my

BMI would be perfectly normal! But alas, as hard as I tried, I couldn't get any taller; so, I had to approach that problem from a slightly different angle. But again, the NASB (and most modern translations) are more accurate here, with Jesus asking about worry adding a single hour to the length of our lives. That's not the way it works! In fact, now we know that worry can actually reduce the length of our life. Worry can actually cause damage. But the Lord's point is that worry really does no good. Worry doesn't really help anything.

With good eating and exercise and medical care we may be able to live a little bit longer on average, but most of us have also seen some surprises. We had five die in an accident down in Verona this past Friday night. Last week I lost a high school classmate – 52 years old, she was at a fundraiser for a dog rescue organization of some kind, surrounded by puppies and died of a brain aneurysm, right there at the event. And then we have others who take no care of themselves whatsoever and live to 100. Maybe you've seen the t-shirt, "If I had known I would live this long, I would have taken better care of myself." In reality, other than taking pretty good care of ourselves, we really don't have too much control over how long we will live. But what we do know is that worry will not help at all. And that's the Lord's point here: Nothing good comes from worrying.

Conclusion:

This morning, then, we've heard from Jesus, *"Do not worry!"* And we've looked at the first three of six reasons for not worrying: 1.) Life is more than food and clothing; in other words, we need to realize what is truly important in this life, and it isn't stuff, 2.) We need to realize that we are important to God. He takes care of the birds, and as our Father, he's even more concerned with caring for us, and 3.) Worry doesn't work; nothing good ever comes from worrying; in fact, worry only causes trouble.

Next week, let's look at the rest of this passage. No matter what happens over the next several days, Jesus' words will still be true and will still be an encouragement to us. Let's close our study today by going to God in prayer:

Our Father in Heaven,

We are thankful for the words from your Son this morning. What we've studied is so simple, so direct, and is such an encouragement to us. You know what we are worried about, and so we pray for your peace to fill our hearts. We know that you are our loving Father, but sometimes we get distracted and we forget. Forgive us when our faith is weak. Help us to trust in your promise to take care of our needs. Calm our hearts, Father.

We ask this in Jesus' name. AMEN.

To comment on this lesson: fourlakeschurch@gmail.com