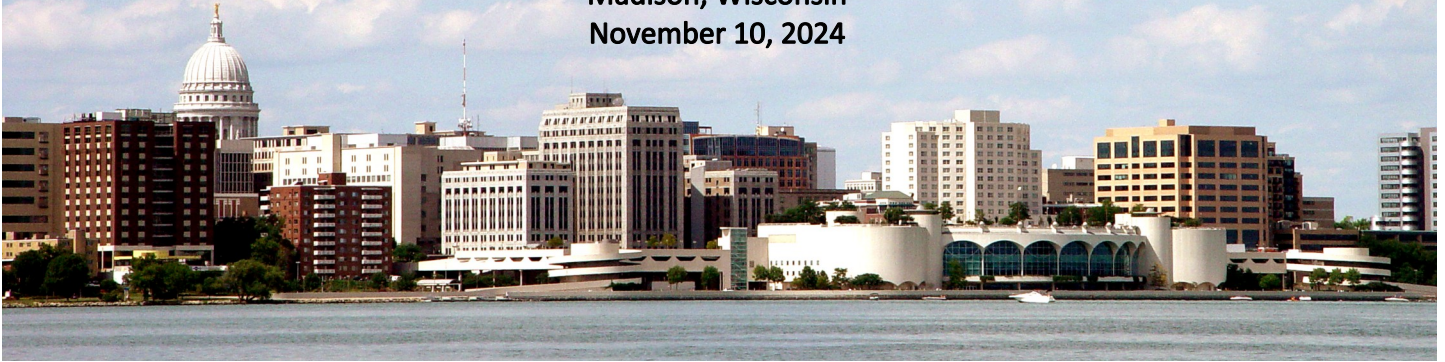


Do Not Worry

Matthew 6:25-34 (Part 2)

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Four Lakes Church of Christ
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Good morning and welcome to the Four Lakes congregation! 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.

Before we get to our study this morning, I wanted to give an update on the Bible correspondence course program. I came in during the week a week or two ago to find a huge stack of mail filling the mailbox. I brought it in, and added it to the pile that was already here. But these are lessons being returned from some of our Bible correspondence course students. We get lots of mail here at the Four Lakes congregation, and this program is a big part of our budget, so, I thought it might be good to give an update. I want to read some random notes that Patsy has handed to me here and there over the past few months, and as I do that, I'll put our contact information up here, in case you might be interested in signing up to study the Bible through the mail. ****NOTES FROM STUDENTS****

We are here this morning to preach the love of God! The good news is that God 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 responding with faith, repentance, confession of Jesus as 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 Edwin-Blenda Inso, from somewhere in the Philippines. He posted a few days ago and says, "Great News. Angels are singing for the salvation of these four precious souls who obeyed the Lord's command on how people can receive salvation. After our study about God's Plan of Salvation, four surrendered their lives to our Lord Jesus Christ, even though the night was dark they were still ready to accept the Lord through water Baptism. Please keep these four babes in Christ in your prayers. I hope they will continue living as Christians because they will face many trials and persecutions." Good news from the Philippines!

This next one comes to us from Panama City, Panama. I don't remember having one from Panama before. They had a video, but I'm pasting this image because I think the kid is saying, "What in the world are they doing to my mom?" But they say, "One more soul added to the body of Christ (in Panama)! God continues to back up his work. Welcome to this beautiful young lady. Let's continue to pray for the souls God adds to his

church. God bless Ana's life. Glory be to God. Now there are three of this beautiful family who have also become like our family.”

This next one comes to us from Edwin Tate, who preaches in Rogersville, Tennessee. He says, “It is so beautiful to see Christians born! We’re proud of our new brother in Christ, Keaton. Tonight he was baptized by his grandpa Phillip Condra. This is one of the many jewels of rejoicing to enjoy and cherish in ministry. We’re so proud of your decision and heart Keaton!” Epic beard with this one, but good news from Tennessee this week!

We have another one from Kentucky this week, this time from South Shore, which is about as far north in Kentucky as you can get – Kentucky has that hump, and South Shore is right across the river from Ohio, straight south of Columbus. Brian Hall posted a few days ago, and he says, “My cousin Leonard was baptized today in the Hospice Center. The staff there is wonderful and accommodating.” It looks to me like they brought the baptistery to the end of his bed, filled it up right there, and slid him right into it. We are looking forward to meeting Leonard someday.

I know we’ve had several, but I’ll wrap it up with one more, this one coming to us from the church in Mexico, Missouri, who’s done some mission work in Haiti. They posted this past Thursday, and they say, “In Haiti today an entire Baptist Church obeyed the truth and were baptized into Christ, thereby added to the church of Christ by God (Acts 2:47). 55 new souls makes 9,100 souls in 6 years, and 33 new congregations of the Lord’s church. Praise God for open hearts.” 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. Pull me aside after worship, or give me a call or send a text to 608-224-0274.

Over the past several weeks, we’ve been looking at some words from Jesus concerning worry and anxiety, and we noted that we do live in an anxious world. We are concerned about crime, and the economy, and our health, and our families, and our jobs. We are concerned about the future of our nation. It may even be to the point that we are now anxious about our own anxiety. And on top of this, we noted that we are so connected to the world around us through social media, that we are also now worried about everybody else’s worries! Something happens in the world, and now we have to worry about it, in real time. Last week, we noted the danger of “doom scrolling,” the practice of constantly paying attention to the news or social media where we are now worried about absolutely everything all at once.

So, in response to the worries of the world, we have returned to our ongoing study of the Sermon on the Mount (in Matthew 6), where Jesus addresses the issue of anxiety. The passage is Matthew 6:25-34 (p. 1510). last week, we noted that this paragraph is based on what has come before it. ***“For this reason,”*** Jesus says; and he has just warned us about laying up for ourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, and he has told us to lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven. And then he spoke of keeping our eyes focused on what is truly important and warned that we cannot serve both God and wealth, but we must choose between one or the other. This, then, brings us back to Matthew 6:25-34. Let’s look at the whole paragraph again, we’ll do a brief review of what we studied last week, and then we’ll continue with several more very practical lessons from the second half of the text. But we start by looking together (once again) at Matthew 6:25-34. Jesus says,

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.

- Last week, we noted, first of all (in verse 25), that we overcome worry (in part) by **REALIZING WHAT IS TRULY IMPORTANT**. Life is more than food and clothing. As much as we have to worry about, most of us still have food, and clothing; and for this, we are thankful.
- Secondly, we also noted last week (in verse 26) that **WE ARE IMPORTANT TO GOD**. And this is where we come to the first reference to *"birds."* Birds aren't worried, *"and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?"* Of course!
- And then finally, we noted last week (in verse 27) that **WORRY DOES NOT WORK**. We can worry all we want, but worry is powerless to make us live even a single hour longer; and, in fact, now we know that worry even has a way of shortening our time on this earth! Nothing good comes from worrying.

With all of this by way of review, we continue this morning with the rest of this paragraph...

- I. **...and we start today in verses 28-32, where Jesus explains that OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN KNOWS WHAT WE NEED AND HE PROVIDES FOR US.**

Jesus is asking the question, *"And why are you worried about clothing?"* And he responds by inviting us to *"observe how the lilies of the field grow."* He's talking about wildflowers here, and I wouldn't be surprised at all to learn someday that Jesus actually pointed or gestured at this point! After all, this is the "Sermon on the Mount." Look around you and observe! Open your eyes! Look and learn! After last year's trip to see my sister out in Washington, I know I told you about a hike to Iceberg Lake out in Glacier National Park, one of the most challenging hikes I've ever done. And I remember telling you that when I came around a corner, I just blurted out, "Dear God, this is amazing!" or something like that. I was overwhelmed with the beauty of God's creation. And I think that's what Jesus is doing here: Open your eyes and observe! Look at something as simple as a flower, and understand that even King Solomon in all his glory failed to clothe himself like one of these simple flowers out here. King Solomon, of course, had the wealth of Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos combined. He had a thousand women in his life. He had vast resources and massive armies. But, King Solomon's glory paled in comparison to those flowers that grew on their own out in a field somewhere.

Closer to home, I think about the peony that's been surviving here on our property for the past 20 years or so. I don't know whether it came with the building or whether Patsy planted it here, but for a while it was out here by the back door until we had to put a shed there. As I remember it, we dug it up and moved it over a bit, but then it was where we needed to put the trash cans. It got squashed and stepped on for a few years, but it kept coming back. It would grow back from under the shed or from under a pile of rocks or from under the trash can! And then a few years ago we moved it to right behind the church sign. And the thing continues to do so well. We are amazed at the resilience and the absolute beauty of something as simple as a flower.

And Jesus makes the point that if God cares for the grass in some random field (this grass is burned for fuel), if God cares for a bush that gets stepped on and moved from place to place, will God not much more take care of you? And the answer is: Of course he will, because God knows what we need, and he provides for us.

And to doubt this, Jesus says, is a lack of faith. To worry about clothing, and food, and drink is to live like the pagans (like the Gentiles). To worry is to live like those people out there who do not have a Father like we do. And that's quite the insult, isn't it? To worry, to be desperately seeking food and clothing all the time, is to live like the Gentiles, because we expect them to worry. The Gentiles were known for putting their trust in kings and nations. Not so with God's people, though. We live in a different kingdom.

So, with this in mind, I would just ask: Do we think that the flowers and the birds have been stressed out by the election this week? Do we think that nature itself is worried about the economy? Do we think that the flowers in the world are doomscrolling? Of course not! So Jesus is saying, then, that with God as our Father, we have even less to worry about than they do! ***"Do not worry then,"*** Jesus says; because, to worry, is to live with ***"little faith."*** To worry is to live like the Gentiles. To worry is to live as if God doesn't care, as if God doesn't know, as if God doesn't have the power or the resources to take care of us. Like a good doctor or therapist, Jesus diagnoses the problem here: To worry about these things indicates a lack of faith on our part. And this is why we have come together this morning – to study God's word! In Romans 10:17, Paul tells us that ***"...faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ."*** If we want greater faith, if we want to know that God cares, if we want to know that God is eager to provide for us, we study his word, which is what we are doing. Today, then, first of all, Jesus reminds us that as our Father, God knows what we need, and he provides for us.

II. This brings us to verse 33, where Jesus explains that IF WE PUT GOD FIRST, HE WILL TAKE CARE OF US.

Jesus says, ***"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."*** To ***"seek first"*** is to "pursue." It's a reference to an "unceasing quest, not an occasional endeavor" [D.A. Carson]. And we are to seek first ***"His kingdom and His righteousness,"*** Jesus says. The ***"kingdom"*** is a reference to God's rule. When we obey the gospel, we are transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light (Colossians 1:13). This means that God's kingdom comes first from here on out. And so, as we are tempted to worry about this or that, maybe we need to be asking: Does my worry over this issue strengthen God's kingdom, or does this worry weaken God's rule in my life?

But Jesus also tells us to ***"seek first...His righteousness."*** To seek first God's righteousness is to overcome sin in our lives, replacing sin with the fruit of God's Spirit. When God rules in my heart, I pursue ***"love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, and self-control."*** We speak up for the fatherless (both born and yet to be born). We provide for the poor and the homeless. We ***"seek first"*** God's righteousness. This is who we are.

And when we do, Jesus says that ***"all of these things will be added to you,"*** and ***"all of these things"*** are the basic necessities – the food, and drink, and clothing. The answer to worry, then, is not to get rid of food, and drink, and clothing, but the answer to worry is to pursue God first, and God will take care of the rest.

Over the past few years as I've done some thinking about my dad's life, I think I can summarize his life (and my mom's as well) with the statement Abraham made to Isaac on their way up the mountain to make a sacrifice. Isaac was concerned that they didn't have anything to sacrifice, and Abraham said (in Genesis 22:14), ***"The Lord will provide."*** Abraham put God first, even before his only son, and God did, in fact, provide. And I have seen the same thing, looking back at our family history. God's kingdom came first, and God has taken care of

the rest. One of dad's favorite verses is Psalm 37:25, where King David observed (as an old man looking back on life), ***"I have been young and now I am old, yet I have not see the righteous forsaken or his descendants begging bread."*** Now, that doesn't mean that all poverty is the direct result of personal sin. Not at all, but as an old man David looks back and realizes that God has a way of taking care of his people.

On the other hand, if we make a point of pursuing the things of this life, and if God's kingdom is in anything other than first place, we can't have both. We cannot serve two masters. So, instead of being anxious about food, and drink, and clothing, the Lord is encouraging us here to seek God first; we are to pursue his kingdom and his righteousness. God first, then food. God first, then drink. God first, then clothing. The alternative is that we seek food first. Food, though, is a terrible master. The same goes for drink, and clothing, and pleasure, and wealth, and family, and power, and knowledge, and on and on. God first, and everything else will follow, ***"Seek first His kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."***

III. This brings us to the end of this passage, where Jesus tells us to TAKE ONE DAY AT A TIME.

In verse 34, he says, ***"So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."*** Isn't it interesting how nearly all of our worry is about things that'll happen in the future? I've been thinking about it this week, and generally speaking, I'm not too worried about what I'm doing right now. Of course, yesterday I was somewhat concerned about getting everything done for today. But right now I'm doing what I worried about yesterday, and I'm not worried about it right at this moment. I'm doing it. And maybe that's the way it is with you as well.

I've read that an average person's anxiety is focused 40% of the time on things that'll never happen, 30% of the time on things from the past that cannot be changed, 12% of the time on criticism from others (with most of it being untrue), 10% of the time about health (which only gets worse as a result of worry), and only 8% of the time do we worry about real problems that we will actually encounter. I don't know whether those percentages will hold up to scientific scrutiny, but the numbers make sense to me and fit in with my experience, indicating that only 8% of our worrying even has the potential to do any good whatsoever. Perhaps some of you are familiar with Mark Twain's comment, where he said that, "I'm an old man and I've known a great many troubles, but most of them have never happened." The problem with worrying about tomorrow is that we fail to live for today, and when we fail to live for today, it almost guarantees us a reason to worry about tomorrow. Someone has described worry as the interest we pay when we borrow from tomorrow's problems. Most of us hate paying interest on a loan, but worry is like that. It's as if we are borrowing from tomorrow's troubles by worrying about those troubles today. It does no good. Jesus, then, tells us to take it one day at a time.

As of this moment, God has taken care of me personally for 19,162 days (and really for 274 days before that). But he has cared for me for at least 19,162 days. Why, then, would I ever think that tomorrow would be any different? As it is, today has enough trouble of its own. And what I love about this is that Jesus recognizes that today does have trouble! He's not telling us to pretend that everything is always fine. Everything is not fine. We do have troubles. Bad things do happen. Bad things happen to good people. Bad things happen to God's people. In John 16:33, Jesus said to his disciples, ***"In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."*** God's people will have trouble. We get sick. We have flat tires. We may fail a test. We may have stress at work. But if it's tomorrow, I can't worry about that. My job, according to Jesus, is to live one day at a time.

Have we ever wondered, though, why God promises to help us today and not tomorrow? I think it's tied to why we pray for our daily bread (earlier in the Sermon on the Mount). I think it's tied to why the people could

only collect enough manna for a single day. If God provided our food a year at a time, some of us might not think about God until this time next year! As it is, though, God really wants us to live one day at a time – thanking him for our daily bread and not obsessing over tomorrow. So, are we having trouble at home? Jesus would encourage us to love our spouse and children today. Are we facing some financial crisis? Let's work on earning a living and keeping our spending under control today. Do we have a difficult supervisor at work? We have no idea what this person may do tomorrow, but right now (today) I can do my work heartily as if I am working for the Lord himself, and so on. We are not to worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. Or, as King David sang in Psalm 68:19, *"Blessed be the Lord, who daily bears our burden, the God who is our salvation."*

Conclusion:

For two weeks now, we've heard from Jesus, *"Do not worry!"* And we've now looked at a number of big ideas under that heading: 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, 3.) Worry doesn't work; nothing good ever comes from worrying; in fact, worry only causes trouble, 4.) God knows what we need, and he provides for us – if he provides such magnificent clothing for the grass of the field, he can definitely handle any needs that we may have, 5.) Jesus tells us to put God first, and he will take care of us, and 6.) Jesus simply tells us to take one day at a time – we are not to worry about tomorrow, because tomorrow will care for itself.

This morning, we have read a proclamation from the King, haven't we? Jesus came to this earth personally to establish his kingdom, the church. And today, we have heard a message from the King himself concerning his rule in our lives, and he has told us three times in this passage, *"Do not worry."*

Let's close our study today by going to God in prayer:

Our Father in Heaven,

We praise you this morning for being our loving and all-powerful Eternal Father. You have promised to care for us, and so today we pray for your help, that we would trust you to carry our burdens. We pray for those who are struggling with the stress and anxiety of this life. 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 pray for those in prison. We pray for those in positions of authority. We pray for our nation.

We ask all of this in Jesus' name. AMEN.

To comment on this lesson: foullakeschurch@gmail.com