

Scriptures:

Psalm 148

Matthew 6:25–34

Don't Worry

Is anyone out there guilty of worry? Does anyone else spend time stressing about things that they can or cannot change? Or is it just me? Who here worries about their children from time to time? You can laugh at me if you like but I spent more internal energy than I would like to admit this week on pondering who my daughter will be in class with and did I make the right decision altering the care situation for my other daughter. I didn't talk about it too much but inside - oh the worry. I love the teacher Ami will be with. I hope I will get comfortable with the preschool Malaya will be in. I know people will come tell me after service these are the easy years - your real worries come later, but in my humanity at times I worry.

And then there is the money worries. It is not that Macky and I necessarily want a lot - we try to live simple but it can be hard to get by. We have immediate and extended family financial worries. And don't get me started on the tax return I still haven't received from 2017 because they are questioning my 'clergy status.' At first I thought, well... question away I've got nothing to hide but after sending in 5 different packages of paper work attempting to prove that I am indeed a church minister I have found it a little stressful. I still worry that that money we budgeted for just might not come and it is out of my hands. Still I worry.

For many in our culture the goal of life is to accumulate and store up all the wealth you can possibly get your hands on. That even seeps into our work in the church. We can't help it, it is who we are, what we've been taught is important. We want to make sure we have as much of our 'own' stuff and money as possible. At the beginning of Matthew 6 Jesus suggests it is better to accumulate treasure in heaven rather than treasure on earth. The problem with this is that we can see our treasures on earth but we cannot see our heavenly treasures - we aren't even sure what heavenly treasures means. Human nature values the earthly treasures - the heavenly treasures - not so much.

Jesus knows we worry. He know we ponder "If I am not storing up treasures to take care of myself, what is going to happen to me and how am I going to be taken care of? If I use my wealth for the furthering of God's kingdom and to store up for myself heavenly treasures, then what is going to happen to me?"

One of the reasons we have anxiety and worry is because we do not believe that God is going to take care of us. This is why God tells us that we must not worry. Worry says that I do not trust God. I do not believe God cares for me... So we feel like we need to take matters into our own hands because God is not going to do something. I have to do something. Since I have to do

something, then I worry about what I am going to do...So people have come along and tried to provide solutions for us. The most popular solution is: don't worry, be happy! Of course, this does not work at all. Worry is not combatted by fake happiness. The most recent solution has been to "Keep Calm and Play Volleyball" or some other activity. Many respond: "I Can't Keep Calm; I Have Anxiety." So how do we fight anxiety and worry? Accumulating possessions and serving money is not going to solve our worry problems. We have all tried this and it does not work. So how can we come to this kind of peace in life that is free from the anxieties and cares of the world? In particular to our context, how can we not worry about physical things like wealth, possessions, and money?"¹

That is the creation reminder for us today. If God cares for the birds of the air how much more will the holy care for us. As far as we know birds do not worry. Birds don't store up treasures in barns and houses. They do not accumulate yet they are fed by creation (by God). The scripture uses the terms your heavenly Father feeds the birds. How much more will your heavenly Father care for you!

The United Church of Canada has added a season to its Calendar and this is the first day of that season. We are in the season of Creation. The hope found for us in today's scriptures is found in the observing of creation. If we see how God cares for creation perhaps we might have a little more faith that God will also care for us. If you believe that God will take care of you then you have nothing to worry about.

"Jesus asks if you can add a single hour to the time of your life through worry. There is an old English proverb that parallels what Jesus said. "Worrying is like sitting in a rocking chair. It gives you something to do but it doesn't get you anywhere." Worry is pointless. Even when you have a legitimate problem, worry does not solve the problem or make you feel any better. Worry and anxiety cannot solve the past and cannot change the future. Most of us know this but today is a day for a reminder. If not for you - the preacher today needs it. The night before I wrote the majority of this sermon was spent mostly sleepless worrying about some of the things happening here at work. It was useless worry because it all was solved when I was able to process better in the morning and do the work around it that needed to be done. I have a personal goal and Moto. When I find myself in a place of anxiety and worry I ask myself first and foremost "what can I do about it." If the answer is 'nothing' I work hard to 'let it go.' If the answer has an action then I work hard to do that action. That is what creation does. The birds and the Lillies do their part to survive and help the things around them survive but if they cannot they will not spend countless hours stressing about it.

In particular to our text today, Jesus' message is not worry about money. Do not worry about your possessions. Do not worry about what you will eat, or drink, or your body, or what you will wear. Your worry will not do you any good.

Jesus also reminds us not worry about what clothes we wear. Look at the flowers of the field. Just like the birds that do not sow or reap, so also the flowers do not work or make their own

¹ <https://westpalmbeachchurchofchrist.com/matthew/worldliness-of-worry.html>

clothes. Yet they are beautiful and splendid. If God covers with such beauty the short-lived grass, how will we be clothed

Why do so many make their lives an agonizing struggle for life's possessions? Many of us agonize and strive because we have so little faith and confidence in God and we allow our society and culture to dictate the things that are truly important.

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus has declared we are to think and act differently. We are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. When we stop shining as light, then we are good for nothing (5:13). When we worry about money, food, clothing, and our bodies then we look just like the world who lives with no belief in the Creator who loves and cares for them. "God knows what you need. God knows how to sustain your life. Do not think that God does not see your circumstance. God knows what you need and you are to live your life depending on him to provide what you need. This is a test of faith. God knows what I need for tomorrow so I do not need to worry about tomorrow."²

If we were to Seek God's kingdom above all else we would not worry about our own possessions and wealth. Seeking the kingdom of God means taking every thought, every idea, and every desire and making it follow the Jesus way. The way of love, welcome, inclusion, grace, hope, peace and all.

"Jesus says to not be anxious about tomorrow because tomorrow is tomorrow. It is not today. You have what you need for today. Tomorrow will worry about tomorrow. Today has enough trouble. Deal with today. Live today. Take what God has given you today. You cannot fix tomorrow. Worry will not change tomorrow. God is in control of tomorrow. You handle what God has given you today by faith. Anything could happen tomorrow. Nothing could happen tomorrow. The writer of Ecclesiastes tells us that sometimes life will just be the same tomorrow as it was today. So what are you worried about? But tomorrow may also be a day of radical change and there is nothing you or I can do about it. So do not worry about what is beyond our reach. Put your hope and trust in God for today and for whatever comes to us next. God is our heavenly Father and we are his children. Never forget the love God has for you and let that knowledge cause you to end your worries about this world and give you hope in your God who cares for you."³

On this first Sunday of the season of creation I invite you to go from here to look to the mountains, to the trees, to the flowers, to the rivers and oceans and find hope there. Remember that there is a season for everything and God cares for all in each season. At times I wish that meant life would be easy but we all know it is not. Scripture holds promises and encouragement for how to get through the struggles, worries and anxieties of life. Jesus speaks to these things because he knows we will worry, he knows how hard life is and so he hopes that in these words and through the message of creation we will find peace and hope and life in the midst. May you

² <https://westpalmbeachchurchofchrist.com/matthew/worldliness-of-worry.html>

know this day as you enter into creation and you step back into the journey of life that you are not alone the creator love and holds you in care. May we do the same for one another this day. Amen.