

“Don’t Worry ‘bout a Thing”

October 28, 2018

Treasure series

SHOW MEDIA: *Treasure Week 4*

A waterfall of worry. What can I do?

Jesus’ answer: a don’t worry song. Birds. Lilies. Living Water.

We are God’s treasure.

A waterfall of worry sounds about right today. A shooting at a Pittsburgh synagogue during a Shabbat service, racist violence that has claimed lives, mail bombs. Worry for those who are leaving dangerous places and traveling north to find refuge. Worry about our own stuff: family, finances, health, and everything else. Whatever our struggles, God calls us to care for one another, so where are we today? Jesus says, “don’t worry,” and my response is “Too late!” What are we to make of that today?

I don’t remember the issue. don’t remember the situation. But I do remember a moment when I was worried about something and sharing it with Ivan. Luka must have heard me, and all of a sudden, a little boy’s voice started singing, “Don’t worry ‘bout a thing...because every little thing’s gonna be alright.”

I’ve never forgotten it, and it comes back now and then. I consider it a “God moment” when the Holy Spirit spoke clearly through Luka to remind me of what I’d said so many times before to him. I had been the one to say “don’t worry,” but this time I needed to hear it. When have you had someone you loved offer those words to you when you needed to hear them?

I’ll admit that “don’t worry” sounds like a platitude today. Thinking about families who are crying out to God and asking “why” and “how” someone could disrupt a Shabbat service – a time of worship, prayer, and rest for our Jewish friends. Wondering about how hatred and evil works its way into the human heart and becomes the motivation for unspeakable things like hate crimes and racist rants. Trying to figure out what the answers are to stop gun violence – and to work for the day when we’re not saying “another shooting” and “more victims of gun violence.” Praying for the day when the sin of racism is undone in our world and even in our lives.

Friends, I’ll be honest. Jesus’ words come at a time when I feel worried about the future. Maybe pastors aren’t supposed to worry; we’re just supposed to trust, but we worry. That’s really the message that Jesus offers all of us

because he's addressing issues around having enough. He calls us to trust. But it's hard not to worry about our lives and all of the details that sometimes make us anxious.

If you ask my parents, I'm a seasoned worrier. I'm pretty good at it. I've been good at it since I was young. They'll tell you that I practiced walking down our driveway to the road to make sure I was ready for when the bus came. Now keep in mind that our driveway wasn't that long, and I wasn't alone – my sisters were with me – and yet, I was worried.

I've been able to hold my worrying at bay somewhat, but there are times when I worry. I don't necessarily worry a lot about what Jesus addresses – what I'll eat, drink, or wear - though I also want to be clear that I've never experienced being without those basics. I can only imagine the worry I'd have if I didn't have what I needed or if I couldn't provide them for my kids.

I worry about how we're all going to make it in the midst of what feels like such a chaotic and anxious time in the world and in the church. I worry about what life will be like for Ana and Luka and for their families. Even saying that, I can't imagine the worries – much more legitimate than mine – of those who are grieving right now. I can't fathom the worries of people who are walking north because of violence and so many other issues plaguing their homelands.

And I know that money is a worry for many people – even many of us. Jesus knew that any discussion about money included worry. How will I afford groceries and gas? Staying in my home? Paying the bills? Medical care? Prescriptions? Care when I'm older? Caring for my parents? Making sure my kids are OK? What will happen? Can you hear yourself?

No doubt you heard about the lottery this week and maybe even bought a ticket. The Mega Millions jackpot was \$1.5 billion. The Powerball jackpot was only \$620 million. I can't even imagine how many million tickets were sold. But the hype was real – lines and pools and hopes high for cashing in and then living worry-free (or at least that's the hope!).

Take a look at a couple of cartoons that ring true:

SHOW SLIDES:

- Angels' "I still worry" cartoon
- Why worry about the future when the present is more than most of us can handle! - Linus cartoon
- Time is more valuable than money. You can get more money, but you cannot get more time. - Jim Rohn

We've been talking about treasure, remembering that Jesus connects our relationship to faith and money constantly. Being a steward of God's gifts has everything to do with our relationship to God – starting with God's love for us, remembering that everything belongs to God, celebrating God's partnership in giving, and growing on God's hope. As we offer faith commitments today, we're responding to God's love and grace in our lives, and it's a meaningful thing.

It's a witness to our part of the relationship – our decision to seek God's Kingdom and work for it here and now. This isn't about a reward we wait for and a place in heaven; this is about who we are and how we live because of God's love for us in Jesus Christ! To make a faith commitment - prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness - is to invest in what God is doing in our lives and in the world. It's a stand for God and all that God is about - steadfast love, redemption, justice, hope, and grace.

And it's what I need today in the midst of all that I see and hear. I need to know that I can be a part of something bigger that stands against hate in every form. I need to remember that I'm a beloved (even treasured!) child of God who loves me and loves everyone. I'm named and claimed by God who saves through the love of Jesus Christ shown on the cross. I'm filled with the power of the Holy Spirit to do God's work in the world. Everything I said about me is true for you, too. We're a part of something bigger, and our witness matters.

Jesus' words are a challenge, especially because he goes deep right away – reminding us that this is really about our hearts. *Don't store up treasure on earth, but store up in heaven* because *where you treasure is, there your heart will be also*. He warns us to *be careful* and expects a sense of humility in giving because it's not about getting attention for ourselves, but giving glory to God.

And remember Jesus says that we *can't serve two masters*. *You can't serve both God and money*. We know that money itself isn't the problem, but our attitude about it and our relationship to it can quickly become the problem. When money becomes the object of our worship, then we're on the wrong track. So it's right after that when Jesus says, *"Do not worry."*

Worrying puts the focus on us. Of course we need to consider how we care for ourselves, but we can get very inward-focused really quickly without remembering that God is Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer. Jesus tells us to seek God's Kingdom first and allow everything else to fall into place. This isn't a magic trick, but it's about serving God first and allowing God to shape our priorities and our whole lives - how we spend our time, energy, and money.

John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement, said *earn all of you can, save all you can, and give all you can*. When we turn our worry to God, then we grow in trusting God and knowing that God provides. We have responsibility to use the gifts we have, but we live knowing that we matter to God. Jesus tells us not to worry because he knows we do! And worry affects our heart - our motivation.

Worry affects us physically, too. How many of us have laid awake in the middle of the night worrying? Did anyone feel better after that? Worry doesn't help us gain anything, but just draws us away from trusting God.

God cares deeply for us and takes care of us. Jacob Armstrong says that Jesus sang a "don't worry song" over the people gathered when he spoke to remind them (and us) that God wants to give all that we need. God wants to *be* all that we need, but worry can rob us of joy and peace that God wants to give. Our true treasure is found in God's presence with us in Jesus.

As we offer faith commitments today and invest our time, energy, and money with God, we're seeking God first, remembering that God cares for us, and knowing that we can trust God. We can be generous because God is generous. I want to share a poem by Max Lucado called "Contagious Generosity"

SHOW SLIDE:

You have a ticket to heaven no thief can take.
You have an eternal home no divorce can break.
Every sin of your life has been cast into the sea.
Every mistake you've made is nailed to the tree.
You are blood-bought and heaven-made.
A child of God – forever saved.
So be grateful, joyful – for isn't it true?
What you don't have is much less than what you do.

- Max Lucado

What you don't have is much less than what you do. It's so easy to focus on what we don't have instead of remembering and giving thanks for what we do have.

Don't worry...trust God. I know it's easy to say and difficult to do, but I'd invite us to consider how faithful God is. In the midst of our personal struggles, God is with us. As we face the reality of our human struggles, we trust that God is with us, too, but we also hear the call to be a part of God's work to bring hope and healing. God calls us to invest in building a Kingdom of peace, joy, hope, and

love that is a clear witness to God whose love stronger than hate or violence and whose desire for justice and peace requires us to stand up, speak out, and live the Good News of Jesus. Friends, it matters. Our words and our actions matter. Our witness matters.

If you didn't bring your card or haven't filled one out yet, I encourage you to take the time this week to do it. How will we invest in God's Kingdom? How will we move from worry to trust?

I invite us into a time of prayer, and I offer words from Eugene Peterson, creator of *The Message*, who died this week:

"Prayer is the way we work our way out of the comfortable but cramped world of self and into the spacious world of God."

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE: O Lord, we worry, but we hear Jesus' call to trust you because you provide what we need.