

Don't Worry: Thy Will Be Done

Matthew 6

Intro

So as I went looking for a passage that would fit into what we have going on in this morning's service (re: ordinations and installations), I ended up being drawn to a few verses toward the end of Matthew 6.

Then I read before it and I thought, 'well, that would work.'

And then I read after it and I thought, 'well, that'll work too!'

And that is why we are reading as much as we are!

Now mind you, I could have selected the chapter before and the chapter after as well...but then you wouldn't get to hear my illuminating thoughts, so I decided to pass on that (Nothing? Seriously? Anyone? That was an attempt at a bad joke!).

In any case, what we are about to hear is the middle portion of what we affectionately refer to as the Sermon on the Mount. This is, as Matthew describes the timeline of Jesus, right toward the beginning of his ministry and it is, as the reader, the first time that we have the opportunity to hear what this man from Nazareth wants us to learn about ourselves, as well as our connection to other people and to God.

The reason that it is absolutely appropriate for today?

Because it reminds us, through a variety of examples, where our focus should be as we live out a life of faith: may God's will be done.

The scripture reads this way. **Matthew 6**

6 'Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

2 'So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. ³But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

5 'And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. ⁶But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

7 'When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. ⁸Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

9 'Pray then in this way: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. ¹⁰Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹Give us this day our daily bread. ¹²And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one.

¹⁴For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; ¹⁵but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

16 'And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. ¹⁷But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

19 'Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; ²⁰but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

22 'The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light; ²³but if your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

24 'No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

25 'Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?

²⁸And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. ³⁰But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith?

³¹Therefore do not worry, saying, "What will we eat?" or "What will we drink?" or "What will we wear?" ³²For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

34 'So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today.

'Don't Worry: Thy Will Be Done'

We worry.

In preparation for this morning's sermon, I found a highly unscientific list (from I'm guessing around 10 years ago) documenting what this one website's readership felt were the Top 10 things to worry about.

Enjoy!

1.The country. 2 Getting to Heaven 3 Money/Economy 4. What Comes After Death 5. Your Health 6. Relationship with Significant Other 7. Terrorism 8. Health of Family Member(s) 9. Job 10. (which is the one that made me want to bring this list up!) Bird Flu.

As I said, utterly unscientific.

And yet, I think that it leads us to the point that that we just heard speaks to: we worry.

Some of the things that we worry about are legitimate: health, money, relationships, even the state of our country are things that should cause us to have more than a moment of pause (imagine that!). If they didn't, then we are living in a way that is completely closed off from the world of which we are a part.

But worry, worry is something else.

Worry is defined as, to 'give way to anxiety or unease; allow one's mind to dwell on difficulty or troubles.'

We give way. We dwell. We become preoccupied, which means that those difficulties and troubles have taken up center stage in your life, they have become the driving influence in how you respond to everything else that happens around you. This is something that almost all people do in one way or another.

How does that sound to you? Taking a look at that sort of 'life' from an impassive, outsider perspective, how does that look?

Exactly: there isn't a single one of us who thinks that it's a positive either in the short term, let alone in the long term.

Our passage this morning is able to point toward some of those things that, generally speaking, make us worry. From being good enough, to being 'religious' enough, to praying the 'right' way, to having enough money, to 'am I really doing what God wants me to do?', there are all sorts of on-ramps to that place of giving way and dwelling on a difficulty, of worrying. The things of this world that will cause us to worry have always been there...and (until we are in the closer presence of God Almighty) they always will be.

How are we going to deal with those stimuli? Will we allow it to drive us? Will we ignore it? Will we 'take control' and dominate the worry into submission?

Or will we instead lean upon the gift of faith that we have been blessed with and actively turn our lives (and yes, those things that can cause us to worry), turn them over to God?

This doesn't mean that we become passive!

It means that we dig into the presence of God, trusting that the Creator will not only hold us up, but will provide the pathway. The thing that might cause the worry does not disappear! It's still there!

But instead of dwelling on it, we instead trust in the promises of God, trusting that God will hold us up, even when the circumstances of life our life are legitimately difficult. Do you hear the difference?

More than that though, do you actually believe that this is true for you and your life? For the worries that, at times, begin to take center stage? Do you believe in the promises of God? Hear them again.

Matthew 6:25-33

25 'Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?

²⁶Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? ²⁸And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. ³⁰But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith?

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God is not saying that the things that could cause us worry evaporate when we are led to a place of faith.

Instead, we allow those things that we elevate to worry to be lifted to God and we actively ask for God’s direction and guidance, not so that we get what we want but so that God’s will might be done.

Remember, this life of faith that we are called to is not so that the spotlight is able to shine upon us, bringing glory to us: it’s about recognizing (and trusting) that God will support us, even when the world looks at us and wonders how we were able to move at all because the stuff that is there in the midst of our life feels that debilitating.

Jesus guided those who were listening how to pray and as he did, he showed them that it’s not about getting what you want, it’s about receiving what you need from God: not our will, but God’s will be done.

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. ¹⁰Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹Give us this day our daily bread.

In a couple of minutes 4 individuals will stand before you so as to make promises to serve and help lead this congregation. My hunch is each of them has had at least a moment or two of contemplation (and I feel comfortable in also saying, at the very least a seed of worry) in regard to what saying ‘yes’ to these positions would mean for their lives. ‘How much time will it take?’, ‘when does consistory meet?’, and ‘what do you want me to do as an elder (or deacon)?’, were asked by each and every one.

What I want them to hear is what we have all be chatting about here this morning: It’s not about having it all figured out and being free from those discomforts that we could elevate to worry.

We all know what life can bring, and all of us know that there have been more than a few days that have been that are anything but kicking back and living a land of ease.

And, despite all that, it will still be blessed...when we lean into the Lord God (instead of dwelling on our very real troubles). God can bless. God will bless...when we actually allow God...to be God. The ‘Thank You’ video that we watched about St. Thomas very much feels like a reflection of that truth. Very real troubles were abundantly present and the people of God actively leaned upon their Lord in how they cared for the community...and they were blessed. The troubles didn’t necessarily go away, but they found the faith to believe in the promises that God made and they were able to become the hands and feet of Christ.

Allow God to be God. Troubles will come but don't let them become the driving influence in your life: don't worry! Lean on the Lord, asking that His will might be done and you will receive what you need.

God promised that all of that is true. Let us exhibit a faith that shows to all those around us that the world can be the world, and we are blessed to stand upon the rock that will never be moved!

God, may Your will be done!

After Sermon Prayer

God, the world can throw so much at us. So much! And through Your son, You remind us that You are God and that because of that fact, we don't have to worry. Yes, we do have to actively lean into you...but we don't need to worry. Lord, help us to trust You a little more each day actively seeking that Your will, Your will God, might be done, this day and every day. Lord, hear our prayer. Amen.