First Presbyterian Church of Soda Springs

November 20, 2022

Thanks?

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?”**26**Look 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? **27**And which of you by worrying can add a single hour to your span of life? **28**And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, **29**yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed 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 oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? **31**Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ **32**For it is the gentiles who seek all these things, and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. **33**But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Do y’all remember the Bobby McFerrin song “Don’t Worry, Be Happy?” It’s one of those catchy pop tunes that, when you hear it, gets stuck in your head and can drive you absolutely crazy if you let it. That said, there are things in this song that point to something deeper. Some of the lyrics go like this:

*Ain't got no place to lay your head, Somebody came and took your bed. Don’t worry, be happy. The landlord say your rent is late, He may have to litigate, Don’t worry, be happy. Ain't got no cash, ain't got no style, Ain’t got no gal to make you smile, Don’t worry, be happy.*

Now, take a moment, and compare Bobby McFerrin's words with our reading today, and you’ll see, at least in my opinion, some similarities. The Matthew passage is part of the Sermon on the Mount, which takes up two whole chapters of the book of Matthew, and is Jesus’ best known sermon. In this sermon, we hear Jesus preaching about everything from the Beatitudes, to offering lessons concerning anger and divorce, lessons about adultery and prayer, which is were the Lord’s Prayer first makes an appearance and, of course, this particular lesson about worry.

Where our text and Bobby McFerrin’s lyrics converge, is in verse 27, which reads, *“And which of you by worrying can add a single hour to your span of life?”* Now, I understand this isn’t a typical text for a Thanksgiving sermon, and I imagine some of you are wondering how I’m going to be able to connect the dots; I get it, but hang in there, because there are indeed dots to be connected and I’ll do my best to make that happen.

When I read the Matthew passage or hear this song on the radio, the big question, for me, is “HOW?” How do we get past the seemingly superficial nature of both this passage and the lyrics of this song? How can we simply not worry and be happy? How, in a world that seems to have gone completely insane; a world where everything seems topsy turvy; how can we *not* be concerned or worried?

When I lived in Palm Springs, I attended a church where the Pastor was a bit of a one note wonder, when it came to his preaching. It seemed that every single sermon this pastor would preach, boiled down to “trust God and everything will be OK.” Frankly, this used to drive me absolutely nuts, because these sermons never, ever, seemed to answer the question of HOW.

“Great,” “I’d think to myself,” as I listened week after week, “I get it, trusting God is important, but give me something more, preacher, tell me how to make that happen.” So, let me see if I can answer the question of how to make that happen, for you because I’m pretty sure you may be asking the same question of me.

Author Mike Query offers these tips on how to stop worrying and start trusting God:

* Stop waiting for the world to help you.
* Stop trying to impress everyone.
* Let yourself hope in God.
* Get advice when you’re stuck.
* Be humble.
* Get some encouragement.
* Be patient and stop comparing yourself to others.
* Forget the past and embrace the future.

This is good advice, but you’ll have noticed that all of these tips require some sort of action on our part. And while these tips can be helpful, this list may seem a bit simplistic, on the surface. But, think about it for a moment. What exactly do we gain by being worried? Frankly, the only thing we get from worry is being stuck. Jesus knew this, when he asked the rhetorical question we find in verse 27. Let me read that verse again, *“And which of you by worrying can add a single hour to your span of life?”* Jesus knew that nothing is gained by worrying and that it doesn’t add a single day to our lives.

Query’s tips call us to take action, and that’s the point. We have a choice. We can wallow in worry and be the guest of honor at a pity party, or we can take action and move forward. So, perhaps, these tips aren’t as simplistic as they first appear.

Gratitude is a choice, and being thankful is also a choice, full stop. And while we specifically focus on thanksgiving and gratitude, at this time of the year, should’t we always be working towards an attitude of gratitude and thanksgiving?

For many of us, this week will be filled with good food, reconnecting with family and friends and, for some of us, quite a bit of worry. Will the pumpkin pie turn out? What if the turkey is dry? What if there’s not enough dressing? What if Uncle Ed gets drunk again?

I’ve certainly experienced my fair share of disastrous family Thanksgiving dinners, as I’m sure many of you have, as well. There have been times when the turkey was too dry, or when the pumpkin pie did indeed get burned and there have been times when there hasn’t been enough dressing (my favorite part of the Thanksgiving meal, by the way), and yes, there have been times when good ol’ Uncle Ed showed up and caused a scene.

The challenge I always face, at this time of the year, is to rise above the things that can distract me from having an attitude of gratitude. So what if the turkey is dry, or the pie didn’t turn out exactly right? I can wallow in the worry, or I can be grateful that I have turkey and pie, while others go hungry. So what if Uncle Ed causes a bit of a scene. I can let someone else’s actions ruin the experience, or I can be grateful that I have family, when so many are alone.

At the end of the day, God wants us to be happy. God knows what we need and is ready willing and able to provide for all of our wants and needs. Here’s the thing, though, while God is ready willing and able, God won’t force us to be happy; God doesn’t work that way. We have to choose to let go of worry; we have to choose to be happy, we have to choose to be grateful and thankful.

Maybe, Matthew and Bobby McFerrin are on to something. It’s really simple, when it comes right down to it. If we are grounded in an attitude of gratitude; if we truly are able to be in a place where giving thanks to God for everything we have, becomes our default attitude; even when we don’t have much, how much better do our lives become?

So, sisters and brothers, it’s our choice. Are we going to see the glass as half empty or half full? Is gratitude for all of the things God has done for us going to be our default attitude or not?

It’s a choice that each and every one of us get to make, every single day. Choose wisely. AMEN