

The Life of Jesus
Sermon 11: Teaching on the Mountain
"When will you stop worrying?"

Passages: Philippians 4:10-13
 Matthew 6:25-34

Let's pray.

Have you ever heard the song, *"Don't worry, be happy!"* by Bobby McFerlin.
 Listen:

In every life we have some trouble, but when you worry you make it
 double
 Don't Worry, Be Happy
 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 not cash, ain't got no style, ain't got no gal to make you smile
 Don't Worry, Be Happy
 Cause when you worry your face will frown and that will bring
 everybody down
 Don't Worry, Be Happy

I think the basic message of the song is, *"Relax. Stop stressing! Why? Because
 stressing only makes other people stress."*

Some people think that these were basically the same sentiments that Jesus
 was trying to get across in today's passage from Matthew 6. *Don't worry, be
 happy.* But, as we will soon see, that assumption is very far from the truth.
 Jesus' words weren't spoken just to make His audience feel happy and stop
 stressing. **Jesus was a revolutionary, out to change the way this fallen human
 race sees the world.** In other words, Jesus was out to refocus our minds on the
 cosmic reality of God's Heavenly Kingdom... a reality that is near at hand and
 which can be a source of great comfort and strength for those who allow God
 to open their eyes to see it!

Last week, we looked at two key verses which (I believe) described the heart of a large part of Jesus' ministry. In Matthew 6:22-23, Jesus says, ***"The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness."***

Jesus came to be *the healer of our fallen eyesight!* He came to anoint our eyes with a healing eye-salve, that we might see the Kingdom of heaven!

Indeed, happiness is intrinsically linked to this; ...to seeing the invisible reality of God and His love. If you can consistently keep a focus on the Kingdom of Heaven, then you will be happy!

Has it ever struck you what a basically happy person Jesus was?

Of course, we know that, according to Isaiah 53, he was ***"a man of sorrow, and acquainted with grief"***. We know how He wept over Jerusalem. We know how, in Gethsemane, He wrestled in prayer, agonizing over whether He had misunderstood His Father's plan. We know how the sadness of all the world descended on him as he went to the cross. And, of course, we know how the brutal pain of His crucifixion forced Jesus to utter those bitter words of Psalm 22, ***"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"***

But these were the exceptions. For the most part, **Jesus was happy**. Why? Because **Jesus had good eyes!** He could see the Kingdom of Heaven all around Him! Thus, He had a strong and lively sense of the presence of His Father. He had no doubt that His Father was with Him, filling His life with good things. Indeed, this is what enabled Jesus to live life to the full, totally in the present, giving full attention to the present task, and celebrating the goodness of God in the here and now.

Moreover, He wanted His followers to **see** what he could see. He wanted them to join Him in this way of happiness.

This is why, in the very first verse of today's passage, Jesus refers back these two verses from last week's text. In verse 25, Jesus says, **"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."**

“For this reason...”. For what reason? For the reason of *healthy eyes*! Those who have healthy eyes will have no reason to be worried about their life, as to what they will eat or what they will drink; nor for their body, as to what they will put on! Those who have healthy eyes will have no reason to worry because they constantly see the presence of the Father’s love in their life! Those who have healthy eyes are able to see the ever-present hand of the Father and know that He will meet their basic material needs.

In 2012, Macquarie University's *Centre for Emotional Health* surveyed almost 300 young people (under 30), asking them about their everyday worries. They found that more than **80 per cent** were *moderately* worried about *work and study*. Nearly **70 per cent** stressed about their *image*, including looks and achievements. More than **50 per cent** were worried about *social interactions*.

Lucian Tan, who was studying for a double degree in arts and law at the University of Sydney, candidly remarked; *"I feel worry has become a part of my daily experience. I think all of us worry about future and career and how to get there, but my friends studying things like commerce and business, for example, are more worried about where to get a job, rather than how."*

Generally, the survey found under-30s worried about *relationships* the most. Mr Tan's own experience reflected the results - he was concerned about offending people or saying the wrong thing. Organising social events and waiting for responses also caused anxiety. *"So I worry about things where I don't have much control, where you rely on the responses of other people,"* he said. Another big area of worry was *health and fitness*.

Why do young people worry? Well, Jesus would say that the essence of their problem comes from having **bad eyes**. They worry about their present relationships and future plans because they can’t see that God is good! They worry because they can’t see that His Kingdom (although invisible) is very near. They worry because they haven’t allowed Jesus to heal their eyes to see **“the goodness of God in the land of the living!”**

Now, at this point, I need to inject two correctives into our discussion. **First, when Jesus says, “Don’t worry”, He doesn’t mean “Don’t plan”**. Nor is Jesus

against financial planning, life insurance or achieving certain goals. Jesus wants us to work hard and plan for our future. But he wants us to do this with the Kingdom of Heaven always at the forefront of our thinking.

Second, when Jesus says, “Don’t worry”, He doesn’t mean “Don’t be concerned”. If you’re not concerned about your children playing near the road, you’re a terrible parent. If you’re not concerned about what you eat, you could easily become a fast-food junkie. You need to have some degree of *healthy* concern for your life. Otherwise you won’t brush your teeth or go in for medical checkups.

There’s a difference between concern and worry. *Concern* is when you can do something to help a situation. You’re concerned about your bank balance, so you go out and look for a job. *Worry*, however, is when you can’t do something (like persuade a certain employer to hire you) but you still try to carry the burden as if you can! It’s as if, by worrying, you can change the situation.

Once again, it all goes back to having **good eyes**! You need to be able to see the difference between your responsibility and God’s responsibility. That’s why, in the next few verses, Jesus asks **4 questions** of his followers in a bid to improve their eyesight.

First, Jesus asks, **“Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?” (6:25b)** Well, the answer is, “Of course!” Life is about everything from birth to death. It’s about mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, loving relationships, wonderful experiences, good friends. Life is about nature; the stars at night and a beautiful sunrise over the ocean. Life is about *every good gift* that has been given to us from above. Jesus’ point is simple: Since God gave us this good life, don’t you think that He’s capable of sustaining it? But, of course, you need good eyes to see this reality.

In the second question, Jesus becomes more specific about “seeing”. He asks, **“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?” (6:26)** The word translated **“look”** might better be translated as *“take a good look at.”* Open your eyes! Since humankind is created in the image of God, men and women are far more valuable to God than birds. But you need *good eyes* to see this truth!

Third, Jesus asks, **“And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life?” (6:27)**. This is a ‘no-brainer’ type question! We all know that worrying can actually shorten your life. Are you worrying so much that you’re losing sleep? God stays up all night, so why should you? You’re the one who needs to sleep! (You’ve probably heard this story: There was a man who began to worry that he would get cancer. The disease had been prevalent in his family, so he began to worry about it. He worried about it for thirty years... and then died of a heart attack!)

Worrying is such a waste of time. Should you be concerned about your health? Absolutely. Should you do the best you can to stay healthy? Absolutely. But after you’ve done all that you can do, don’t worry. To worry is to insult the God who has your life under control.

Finally, Jesus asks, **“And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. 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!” (6:28–30)** The verb **“observe”** is a strong word. It means more than just a mere casual glance. It means to *study* the beauty of the flowers.

Of course, we might react, saying: *“These words about the lilies and birds are lovely, but they are not very convincing. After all, birds and lilies don’t have mortgages, car payments, grocery bills, and school tuitions to keep them awake at night.”*

Once again, it’s a matter of eyesight. If you really *study* the flowers and the birds, you’ll realise that they could have lots to worry about-- flowers are so transient and birds have such short lives. (While you and I were under shelter during the recent hailstorm, the flowers and birds had lots to worry about!) In the West, at least, most of us live quite comfortably for 60, 70, 80 even 90 years! What does that mean? It means that God has been faithful. Did God take care of you yesterday? What about the day before? What about the day before that? Then, how come you’re worried today? I mean, what kind of God do you have?

And, of course, **that is the crux of the issue**-- What kind of God do you have? How do you see Him?

In Jesus' day, the pagans had many gods. In fact, they were tormented by anxiety because they believed their future was in the hands of Fate and Fortune. That's why they pursued food, drink, and clothing with such vigour and pride! They had no idea if their gods were for them or against them. They were merely pawns in the chess game of the gods. That's why, in verse 32, Jesus raises the issue by saying, ***"the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things..."*** Because they have no idea if the gods are for them or against them, they are forced to worry.

But, then, Jesus quickly adds; ***"... and your heavenly Father knows that you need them"***. That, in a nutshell, is the difference! In the end, the only question that really matters is *"what sort of God do you believe in?"* Is your God near or is he distant? Is He good or is He ambivalent? Is He on your side, moving towards you in love, or is he a tyrant who demands blind loyalty and unquestioning obedience?

According to Jesus, **we have a God who is our *Father!* There is no greater "Good News" than this! Indeed, this is what makes the Gospel so revolutionary, for if God truly is my Father, then I can always trust Him...always rely on Him...always believe that He is near to protect and guide me.**

Think about it this way: If I, as a father, had children who were worried about whether I was going to feed and clothe them, I would feel pretty bad about the way they thought of me as a father. Their worries would indict me; their worries would be a public testimony that they couldn't trust me...that I wasn't living up to my title as *father*.

When we worry in life, we are saying, *"God, I don't really know about You. I'm not sure You are a caring God. I'm not sure You are a providing God. You may be good for church on Sunday, but I'm not sure about You the rest of the time. So I've decided that I'm going to take care of this myself."*

Friends, for the love of God, allow Jesus to open your eyes! As Jesus exhorts the disciples in verse 33: **"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness**

and all these things will be given to you as well.” The word “seek” (*zeteo*) was a word often used to describe the activity of a hunter who is hunting for food. He focuses his whole mind on his prey. His eyes always look for them. He keeps his bow and arrows ready. He is constantly alert. Similarly, you and I are to make God’s kingdom our focus. Keep it always in our sights! Be alert to its presence in our lives! As we do, we will see the hand of God providing for all our needs. Indeed, we will often see Him providing more than we need!

So, does this mean that God will miraculously keep us from experiencing difficulties in life? Does this mean that we will have a trouble free existence? The very last verse of today’s passage dispels any such notion!

³⁴ ***Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.***

Interesting verse? Trouble, says Jesus, is unavoidable. It’s a part of living in a broken world. Indeed, every day we encounter some form trouble, whether it be sickness or financial pressures, or relational difficulties or basic technological complications and breakdowns. Troubles come in many shapes and sizes. And so, the point is not that, because God is our Father, He will somehow carry us over all these troubles and not let them affect us. Not at all! Each day has trouble of its own. However, the one advantage that we have is that our Father stays with us and holds our hand *through the trouble*. Having good eyes means that, *despite the troubles*, we see Him...near to us, present with us. We see the Kingdom of Heaven all around us!

We really have nothing to worry about!

Indeed, more than that, **we have something to offer to others!** For the fact is that *worry is on the increase in the Western world*—Why? Because people’s eyesight is growing dimmer. In our Western world, fewer and fewer people have eyes to see the Kingdom of Heaven because fewer people know the balm and the healing that Jesus can bring to our eyes.

The fact that we don’t worry means that **we have a great gift to offer to our worrying world. It’s our privilege to share what we ‘see’ with others.** The fact of the ongoing healing of our eyes will surely be an enticement to the world to come to Jesus.

This is the revolution that Jesus is leading us in! Not just a revolution for us to enjoy personally, but one that can actually change the world!

Don't worry. Be happy!

Let's pray.