

Sunday, November 26, 2023

First Lesson: Proverbs 3: 5-6

Gospel Lesson: Matthew 6: 25-34

Sermon Series: Questions that Move Mountains Week 3: Why do you worry?

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- We are continuing in our 8 -week sermon series called “Questions that Move Mountains?” This will be a sermon series that will prepare and usher us into the upcoming Advent Season that will begin the First Sunday of December; that will invite us to unpack the questions that Jesus either asked or inspired; with the hope that our repeating First Lesson of Focus ; Proverbs 3: 5-6 that says to *Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight.* In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths; will take root into our hearts.
- The question that I am asking us to unpack this morning is Jesus’ question to the disciples; **Why do you worry?**

- Beginning with the scriptural and traditional support for where this passage is coming from; it is important for me to name that the audience that this admonishment against worry was directed to was not just referring to rich people only;
- In other words, this message from Jesus was not just directed to those who were inclined to the arrogance that comes with wealth.
- On the contrary, this passage of scripture was also directed to the poor, who also were not exempt from the temptation to idolize what they did not have.
- These material struggles that are being named in this passage are something that people tend to struggle with, both then and similarly now.
- Therefore, the tone and message in this passage of scripture are pretty straightforward and clear.

- There is, in fact, not much exegesis needed in this passage of scripture, to get the essence of what Jesus was trying to communicate with the people.
- Nevertheless, we are witnessing the challenge to trust in God's providence among a group of people involved with sowing, reaping, storing in barns, toiling, and spinning, but who are called to see that their life is not based on these things.
- For some of my interested biblical inspiring scholars, a similar do not worry message is also found in Mark 13, where both lessons are basically informing the people that their lives are not based on the things that we have prioritized, what we will eat, or what we will drink, for such people as we are not called to become birds or lilies, but to consider God's providence for all creation, including birds, lilies, and human beings.
- Thereby making the conclusion of our gospel today, which is absent from the Markan text, an

instruction for us all not to necessarily stop planning for our future but to be reassured to address each day's problems as they come, confident that our life is in the hands of the loving Creator, who holds the whole world in God's hands and will bring it to a worthy conclusion.

- As I bring my own life experience to this passage with the hope of making a meaningful connection with your story, on the surface, this passage of scripture is comforting to me.
- I have evolved into becoming a woman who loves to be in nature.
- Furthermore, everything that this passage describes as being part of God's providence and purview, I have witnessed God taking care of it.
- **I have witnessed** the lilies being clothed.
- **I have witnessed** the birds in all of their transitions seeming to get what they need.

- **I have witnessed** leaves falling to the ground and new buds forming.
- **I have witnessed** nature and all of her creatures and living things inhabiting it going through cycles of rebirth and regeneration.
- However, I confess that **I still worry** even amid all this beauty, awareness, and observation.
- **I worry about** my children being safe and healthy.
- **I worry about** my husband being safe and healthy.
- **I worry about** our personal finances;
- **I worry about** the Church's finances;
- **I worry about things** that I try not to give voice to, but admittedly I do give voice to it in my head and my heart;
- **I worry** when I am supposed to be on vacation;
- **I worry** when I am supposed to be relaxing;
- **I worry** hence why I am choosing to preach so candidly this morning because one thing I am almost positive of is that if this is my confession, I

have a strong hunch that I am not alone in this confession.

- **For I would venture to declare that human beings tend to worry.**
- Furthermore, if this is the case then, then how are we to even attempt to answer this question of Jesus, this morning...**why do we worry?**
- Jesus, have you seen my checking account?
- Jesus, have you seen what I am going through?
- Jesus, do you see the challenges?
- Jesus, have you read the doctor's report?
- And this is when the Spirit of the Lord has taken me back to the brain we have been talking about for the past couple of weeks, to reveal another consideration concerning worry.
- It is in this PowerPoint that we will track where worry begins and how it can move through a family system.

- In defining what I mean by a family system, the Family systems theory is an approach to understanding human functioning that focuses on interactions between people in a family and between the family and the context(s) in which that family is embedded.
- A family in the sense that I am referring to could be biological and non biological.
- For wherever there are people, there are relationships;
- Therefore, we experience family systems in our homes, work, businesses, government, churches, etc.
- Therefore, I would like to demonstrate what worry looks like in these family systems within the three sections of the brain we have been examining: the reptilian, limbic/emotional, and the Neocortex.
- When operating from our reptilian brain, worry typically begins with one person (stage 1), sharing

their concern with another, and the circle gets wider. (Stage 2)

- In this reptilian process, worry tends to trigger higher levels of stress within the system (stage 3); that eventually moves the system into the limbic/emotional phase where the system becomes emotionally charged. (Stage 4)
- People begin to argue with one another, (even the trees are at odds with one another) (stage 4)
- The system gets even more emotionally charged where in (stage 5), the entire system has reached a breaking point with one another! It is a greatly distressing place to be in if you have ever been a part of this type of dynamic;
- The system stuck in this limbic/emotion phase then moves to stage 6, where the emotions are so high from this worry, that the who, what, when, where and why has been forgotten—

- Thereby leading the emotional system to stage 7, which is the most concerning stage of worry, where the system is seeking a cause in usually a deconstructive manner—
- Which then leads the emotional system to stages 8 and 9 where blame, accusations and more become the focus.
- The outcome then leaves the reptilian/limbic emotional system at a place of dissension, isolation, and irrevocable harm.
- For me Church family, this is what I believe that Jesus wants us all to be aware of in this passage when we get stuck in these places of worry in our minds.
- Furthermore, it is during the holiday seasons, when we may notice more of this type of unchanneled worry coming out simply because there are more gathered people coming together.

- Therefore the invitation from Jesus is what Peter invites us to do in 1 Peter 5:7; *Give all your worries to him (Jesus), because he (Jesus) cares for you.*
- And what Jesus does with our worries is equips us to bring our concerns back to the neo-cortex of our creative minds;
- Where in seeing the picture; our hearts and our minds are aligned;
- And we are then able to keep our worries in a healthy perspective of **differentiation** (show picture);
- Where **differentiation** is defined as being part of something bigger than us while still remaining authentic to our own identity.
- In this place of differentiation, the concerns are still there; however, there is a commitment to working through our worries and concerns in a manner that will bring forth solutions, possibilities, and hope for our future.

- For we do have a great future, this I am certain of.
- As a holiday sentiment, I can show you better than I can tell you—
- The invitation is for us to remain in a place of open hearts, open doors and open minds to see it.