

Nov 18th 2012 Sermon on the Mount #8 Philippians 4:1-9

"The Power Of Matthew 6:34"

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

Matthew chapter 6 verse 34 is I believe a most powerful verse for easing troubled hearts. Over the years I have often quoted it to people . It talks about Ultimate Trust in a Heavenly Father who has Ultimate control over our lives.

We need to note that this is the verse that closes a section of the sermon on the mount in which Jesus has mainly been speaking about His command for His followers not to worry, and it comes right after the verse that goes a long way towards summing up our lives as Christians on this earth. Verse 33

³³ But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Jesus doesn't command us here, not to be involved in other pursuits in life, be they material or otherwise, but He calls us to prioritize what we do for Him and His Kingdom. To be available for Him to use us whenever, and wherever, and however, He wants.

In the late 19th century John Wanamaker, a Christian, opened a department store in Philadelphia. Within a few years that enterprise had become one of the most successful businesses in the country. But operating his store wasn't Wanamaker's only responsibility. He was also named Postmaster General of the United States, and he served as superintendent for what was then the largest Sunday school in the world at Bethany Presbyterian Church. When someone asked him how he could hold all those positions at once, he explained. "Early in life I read, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.' The Sunday school is my business, all the rest are the things."

One evidence of Wanamaker's desire to keep the Lord's work first in his life was a specially constructed soundproof room in his store. Every day he spent 30 minutes there praying and meditating upon God's Word. He had his priorities straight!

H. G. Bosch, a Christian Author wrote:-

God gives His best blessings to those who put Christ first.

But Jesus doesn't finish what He has to say about living for Him and not worrying with that verse. He then adds verse 34 which begins with that joining word, THEREFORE.

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

Jesus knew the human heart so well and He knew there would be those listening to Him then, and reading His words today, who would be thinking, “but I’m not sure I can do that. What about the big troubles. The life and death issues. The ones that I can predict and the ones I can’t.

What about my children who are going down a pathway that I can’t agree with, and I’m desperately worried about what will happen to them one day.

What about my health and the pains that scare me, or the tests that I’m dreading taking.

What about this terrible situation that I or someone I love, are in right now, which I fear will never improve but only get worse.

So Jesus speaks to their hearts and ours and says, therefore... because you are trying to live for God and you are seeking His kingdom and righteousness, then you can trust Him for all things and especially for those big things that you dread so much but have not happened yet.

You don’t have to be constantly anxious about tomorrow and all the things in the near and far future that you dread, because God has it all in hand and you can trust His love for you. That’s what makes this verse so powerful.

Be concerned about today’s trouble and deal with those concerns through prayer and trust, and when tomorrow comes deal with that day’s troubles then.

That does not mean that we don’t pray about future concerns, but to constantly worry about things that may not happen achieves nothing and insults the God who has promised to care for us.

I often think about that old Gospel song—One Day at a time, for surely that is what Jesus is talking about here. Look at the lyrics with me:-

***I'm only human; I'm just a man
Help me believe in what I could be and all that I am
Show me the stairway
I have to climb
Lord for my sake
Teach me to take
One day at a time***

***One day at a time, sweet Jesus
That's all I'm asking from you
Give me the strength to do everything that I have to do
Yesterday's gone sweet Jesus
And tomorrow may never be mine
Help me today
Show me the way***

One day at a time.

A Theologian from the past by the name of Ironside wrote concerning this verse:-

the thrust of Jesus' exhortation is to leave tomorrow with God while seeking to please Him today. When tomorrow comes He will provide all needed grace for whatever problems we have to face.

A preacher called David McCasland wrote

The thread of living "one day at a time" is woven throughout the fabric of Scripture. God supplied the Israelites with manna daily (Ex. 16:4). Our heavenly Father's mercies are new every morning (Lam. 3:22-23). Jesus taught His followers to ask for their "daily bread" (Mt. 6:11) and to refuse to worry about tomorrow (v.34).

But even when we manage to stop being constantly anxious about future things that may or may not happen, we still have the daily anxiety about the troubles that afflict or threaten us to deal with, and we need to know how to handle them.

And I feel that what Jesus is saying here is that we must handle today's worries in God's strength and in God's way today, and trust God to strengthen us and enable us to handle tomorrow's anxieties when they arise

And thankfully there are two specific scriptures that help us to do so.

The first is Philippians chapter 4:6

⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

Immediately Paul makes it clear that anxiety without prayer is not only foolish but wrong. God has made His throne of Grace available to us for all our cares and concerns and not only the spiritual ones or the critical ones. We turn away with arrogance and rudeness when we do not take our worries and concerns to God in prayer.

But Paul also makes it clear that the prayers we pray out of our anxiety must have the characteristic of thankfulness about them. A little earlier he commanded them to

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

Now once again he says here, present your anxious prayers to God with thankfulness. Don't be so consumed with your fears that you are unrealistic about your present position. Even though gloom may seem to abound there are always things for which you can rejoice and be thankful. Count your blessings and praise God for them even as you bring before Him your trials.

He also talks about prayer and petition. Prayer is the normal word used for addressing God, so Paul is encouraging us here to remember that the God we address is already waiting and ready to hear us. We don't have to pound at the door of His heart to get His attention. He loves us and is all loving and gracious towards us.

Petition refers to the prayer of want or need and encourages us to be specific in our requests. Think about the things you want God to do most in this situation and petition Him for those things.

And when we pray out of our anxiety and worry in such a way there is a wonderful promise that is ours that needs no further explanation.

⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

A special peace given to guard your heart.

But maybe you are thinking about times when you have prayed in that way but that special peace has not come.

Well that may be because you haven't followed the instructions that follow this verse.

⁸ Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. ⁹ Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

After praying where have you allowed your thoughts to go? Towards all the bad things that you can imagine as still happening. Or towards thanksgiving to God who you know has heard your prayer and loves you.

And what about your actions? Paul says, what you have learned from God's Word and have heard from God's Spirit through His servants, now put into action, and the God of peace will be with you.

But then, your lack of peace may also be due to a failure on your part to follow the instructions contained in that other scripture about anxiety which is found in 1 Peter 5:7

⁷ Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

Peter says 'cast all your anxieties upon Him' and that word cast is used of throwing a garment unto a chair or a bed. You cast your cares upon God and leave them with Him. Don't take them back and dwell upon them until it's worry that consumes you and not God's peace.

The warning about the prowling devil that follows in the very next verse is surely apt here. He does not mind you taking your cares to God if only he can then convince you to take them back again.

Roger was telling me about an anti-noise device that they were taking away to use on the plane journey. It seems that whereas Noise is basically a pressure wave travelling through the air, anti-noise is the mirror image of that wave made up of an equal and opposite vibration exactly 180 degrees out of phase with the noise to be blocked. When noise and anti-noise collide they cancel each other out. So when you turn on the anti-noise source you get peace. The noise is ongoing but it doesn't bother you.

So with anxiety. When you turn on God and keep Him turned on, then His peace takes over.

Martin Luther, when talking about anxiety wrote: "I have one preacher I love better than any other; it is my little tame robin, who preaches to me daily. I put his crumbs upon my window sill, especially at night. He hops onto the sill when he wants his supply, and takes as much as he desires to satisfy his need. From thence he always hops to a little tree close by, and lifts up his wings to God, and sings his carol of praise and gratitude, tucks his little head under his wings, and goes fast to sleep, to leave tomorrow to look after itself."

So next time you find yourself worrying constantly about the troubles of tomorrow think of Matthew 6:34 and also of Martin Luther's robin.

