

Sermon: God Will Take Care of You (Matthew 6:25-33)

Scripture: Matthew 6:25-33

I heard a song growing up in the church (not in my house and not in my church, but in churches across the land) that says "If you're gonna pray, don't worry/ and if you're gonna worry, don't pray." I think the song was designed to tell believers that if you pray, then you should do as another song says, "Take it to the Lord and leave it there," don't get up and continue to drag it on your back. And I can understand proper teaching that tells believers to take their problems to the Lord and not look to our families, friends, neighbors, closest associates, and most trusted confidants for ultimate counsel. The Lord is the greatest friend that we have, and He's one that you can be 100% sure won't tell your troubles to everyone else. The song "I Must Tell Jesus" says that "Jesus can help me, Jesus alone." Yes, no matter how much we look to others to listen, give us affirmative nods, and be there to provide a listening ear and a shoulder to cry on, only Jesus can help us, Jesus alone.

And yet, there are times when life brings us a wide measure of uncertainty, and life's uncertainties cause us to worry, to fret, to be anxious about the future, the next hour, the next day, next week, next month, and next year. You may have been making plans to move into your new home with your spouse when suddenly, your job or your spouse's job went up in smoke and you found yourselves in the unemployment line. You may have been planning to have a baby when you discovered that you have cervical cancer. You may have been on the verge of celebrating your 50th birthday, laughing about the start of your "golden" years when you lost a loved one in a car accident, in the surgery room, or in some senseless tragedy such as a mass school shooting. I witnessed things take a turn for the worse in the life of my mother (Lord, rest her soul). I was in my senior year of college when my mother had something to tell me. That night I came home, and she broke the news to me that she had breast cancer. My parents divorced when I was smaller, so mom was all I had. And just at the time in her life when her twin daughters were getting grown and on their own, Mom was diagnosed with breast cancer. Over the next three years, Mom would battle not only breast cancer but also lung cancer and then, brain cancer. And brain cancer would take her home to be with the Lord on February 3, 2009.

And when she died, I felt as though I'd died. I wanted to be with her, I wanted to go home to be with my Lord and Savior as well because I couldn't imagine life here without her. Mom had been to me what John the Baptist had been to the Jews, as Jesus had told them: Mom had been a "light" in my life, and for 24

years, I had rejoiced in that light. But now, that light was gone home to be with the Lord, to rest from her labor, to receive her reward from her Lord --- and I was left here to carry on in her absence. I think that's when I realized how sheltered my life had been. Mom was always a strong lady (she managed to live through a painful divorce and still keep her sanity, by the grace of God), but I realized how strong she was after she left me. Every day, she'd get up and go to work with a smile on her face, waking up with a song in her heart that would have her singing through the house. She'd always tell me to pray for her as she was getting ready to head out the door, to pray that she'd be an employee whose work glorified God, that the Lord would smile on her and let her keep her job so that she'd never have to know what it was like to live in the unemployment line.

Yes, she was fearful, always fearful, of the unemployment line. Every time the security guards would escort someone out the door, she'd always clutch her chest and pray that she wasn't the next in line. She'd come home during those times and say, "You know, they're letting employees go this week; pray your mom isn't next." And I'd look at her and say, "Mom, you can do your job; you're more than qualified; why are you so worried about losing it?" And she'd say, "Because being qualified has nothing to do with it. If they want you gone to save money or reduce their financial cost, then you're as good as gone."

She'd tell me that, with a look that says, "Deidre, I'm so scared," and I would hug her and tell her that I loved her and that the Lord loved her, too, but I didn't quite understand her fear until she died. That's when I finally understood what her fear was all about, as I would work for clients and then receive an email telling me that the client no longer needed my services and I had to find some other way to make ends meet. I remember being home over Christmas one holiday and being told that the client didn't have the budget to support me anymore, so my job was gone. I remember thinking, "How am I supposed to come back from this? What about my bills? How will my bills be paid? How will I keep all these adult responsibilities together?" I had a \$700 rent bill hanging over my head, not to mention other expenses such as life insurance, tuition, books, food, clothing, health, the whole nine. Only when I had to walk a mile in my mother's shoes did I realize how hard it truly is to be an adult, to have adult responsibilities, to be responsible for yourself and bear the weight of your own bills on your own shoulders.

I remember the first time after mom died when the bills came to the house and they were in my name instead of hers. That's when I finally realized, to use the words that matched the condition of Dorothy in

"The Wizard of Oz," I wasn't in Kansas anymore. Life would never be the same; passing the bills to mom to pay them was no longer an option for me. I couldn't find myself with a problem and sit down and call mom's number and say, "Hey mom, how would you solve this problem?" For once, I found myself feeling alone and scared in the world, as though the one human compass on this earth the Lord had given me had been taken from me --- and I was devastated, and scared, and worried, and tired, and frustrated, and angry, all at once. For once, I was truly on my own. I wasn't just "left" on my own as though I could call mom for help, but I was truly on my own: no one around me could pay my bills, supplement my finances, and assure me that everything would be alright.

Even when mom was alive, she'd always told me to trust in the Lord. "Deidre, my child, God will take care of you," she'd say. "The Lord will never leave you, nor forsake you." "He'll be with you, just trust Him." I'd always heard that and I believed it, but I hadn't faced a circumstance where I had to step out on faith and trust that God would never leave me.

And I imagine you've been down a similar road where you had to learn how to trust God and walk by faith without the help of family and friends. We've all been there a time or two, or dozen. We've all been at a place in our lives where we just wish we could run home, sit on mommy or daddy's knee, cry on their shoulder, and they hug us and promise to "make it all better." But life has a way of testing your faith. Life has a way of making you think about what you believe about it all, what you know is true, and showing you that, regardless of how much you know, you don't know all you think you do. 21 and 22-year-olds graduate college with their sights set on seeing the world and finding their place in it, but as 31 and 32-year-olds, they finally come to terms with the idea that good intentions and optimism aren't enough to make it in life. You've got to have more than just a big heart, big smile, and lots of willingness to learn. There are many who set out in life with the same mindset who didn't make it and aren't here today to tell their stories.

Today's text in Matthew 6:25-33 pertains to the words of our Lord. Jesus is here preaching in His famous sermon on the Mount (or the mountain, for those of you who may not know), and He's giving words of wisdom and instruction for everyday life. He's already talked about now storing up treasure on earth where moth and dust corrupts and thieves break through and steal, and encourages the crowds to "store up your treasures in Heaven." Jesus ends the section on treasure by saying, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" in Matthew 6:21. In verse 24, Jesus tells the crowd that they cannot pledge allegiance to both God and "mammon" or wealth; they must love one and hate the other, as there can be no divided

allegiances in heart and mind. If a person loves wealth and the treasures of the world, then that's where his or her heart will be: on the treasures and riches of the world. And if that's where the person's heart is, then he or she will spend untold amounts of time pursuing the world's riches and treasures, a lifetime wasted on things that are temporary and have no lasting value.

And yet, that's not where some of us find ourselves. We're believers, born again Christians, those who love the Lord and desire to serve Him fully. So, we've set our hearts and minds on Jesus and the things of the Kingdom of God. We're disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, and we're on our way to that land where there are no more goodbyes. We've put the riches of the world aside and decided to follow Jesus. We've chosen God over mammon, over wealth, and made Him our everything. And yet, though we're not part of the world, we sure do live in it, don't we? And in this world, money is important. We can't do anything in this world in terms of possession, eating, drinking, and so on without money: if you don't work and make money, then you can't afford groceries. If you don't work for your paycheck, you can't afford a vehicle to transport you to and from your job, to and from church, to and from the grocery store, and to and from anywhere else.

Money is important; a car and apartment or home is important. Money is necessary to live in this world, as are food and clothing, and without them, it's nearly impossible (if not downright impossible) to survive. "I have faith in God, Pastor," you'd say to me, "But I have to live in this world, too --- and faith isn't gonna pay my bills or buy me things to survive." I know, I know. I too, live in the world, and, though I cherish my faith, and you cherish your faith, we can't just tell Verizon every month, "I don't owe my smartphone bill because 'Jesus paid it all,'" and expect to get away with it.

Well, today, in the text, the Lord speaks to those who are His own, those who belong to Him, those who seek to follow Him and enter into the Kingdom of God, and He tells us that the key to it all is to not worry, to trust in the Lord, that He is able, that He will provide, that God will take care of His own.

In verse 25, the Lord says after speaking of God and riches, says "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will point on. Is not

life more than food and the body more than clothing?" The Lord tells us not to worry about our lives, the food we'll eat, the liquid we'll drink, or the clothes we'll put on. The word "worry" here deserves a definition; after all, it's the central word of what our Lord is saying here in Matthew 6. What does it mean to "worry"? It means to be troubled with cares, to be anxious, to obsess over provision, to live in a continual state of fear about the future and what one can lose. It is the person who lives in fear every hour that his or her food, drink, and clothing will be taken, that such an individual would lose his or her job.

Now, Matthew 6:25 is not telling us to not think about these things, to not plan to keep our home, car or vehicle, food, and clothing, that we shouldn't make these things a priority. After all, the Apostle Paul told the Thessalonians that some of them were lazy and stealing the food of others while not working for their own bread, that, "If a man doesn't work, he doesn't eat," that "let him who stole steal no more, but let him work with his hands," in so many words. Work is good, and work is necessary so that we have provisions for ourselves as well as others who are in more dependent circumstances that we can bless in their time of need. We can't earn money unless we work with our hands and minds, and there's something good about work. Work has the blessing of God, for He created man in the Garden of Eden to work and keep the Garden. Adam had to till the soil.

Work is good, work is of God, for it yields character, cultivates character, instills and builds discipline, and gives the person doing it a sense of accomplishment. I remember when I first started working for the first time (my mother was with the Lord by then) and I remember telling my mom's parents that "there's a dimension work adds to life." After 7 years in the workforce, I still stand by that statement. Work is rewarding, before and after the paycheck. And yet, it's one thing to work for the things you want, to work for the dreams and goals you have, and quite another to spend every waking moment living in fear of "what if, what if, what if." The Lord tells us in verse 25 not to worry because life and the body are more than food and clothing, that, by worrying, believers harm their health and their mental and emotional state. Worrying is not good for two reasons, Jesus says: first, it harms the body and health, and second, it denies the Lord's provision.

Have you ever heard the expression, "Don't make a mountain out of a mole hill?" It means to not take something of normal size and make it so huge that it only drives you to focus on it and obsess over it even more than usual. I remember a humorous episode of "The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air" starring Will Smith (yes, I'm talking about the Will Smith in the movie "Men In Black") where Hillary, Will's sister in the show, was dating one of Will's high school teachers and the man was charming, funny, smart, and sophisticated, except there was one problem: he had a mole or zit on his face. She mentioned it to Will on set during their time alone, and Will tried to tell her to "give the guy a chance" because the guy was Will's teacher (and Will

was hoping to keep his teacher occupied with his sister so that he'd have easy tests or no tests at all at school). Hillary obsessed over the teacher's mole or zit so much that, while they were out at an opera performance, she told Will that "I think it's growing." Now, the mole or zit wasn't growing, but she obsessed over it, she thought about it, she looked at it so much that Hillary began to exaggerate the size of it. She gave the mole or zit primary place in her thoughts, and the mole or zit settled into her mind, occupied her thoughts, and sat on the mental throne of Hillary. Pretty soon, the mole or zit was all she could think about.

Have you ever had this happen to you? You're tired, and one day, your heart skips a beat or beats irregularly, and you start to panic. "Could this be the start of something serious?" You ask. The next thing you know, you're looking on WebMD.com to test your symptoms and see how serious it is. I can testify that WebMD will not help you feel better about yourself, but rather, worse. I once read WebMD for every health situation I had, until it had me thinking I had diabetes, could have cancer, and was one skipped beat short of a heart attack. That was a few years ago now when WebMD fed my panic mode because I stopped giving WebMD and panic control in my life. My family tells me that I'm not "medically-inclined enough," that I should go see the doctor more and have more physical exams done to make sure I'm okay, but I've always told them that, if I were to do that, it would only feed my panic and worry. I refuse to spend my life panicking and worrying about things because I realize that my life is in the hands of a sovereign God and that I'm here on earth to do His will until He comes for me. Now, we are not to worry about food and clothing, but we should work, we should be productive, we should earn an honest day's wages. But, in earning them, we should praise the Lord for blessing us to earn our wages, use them to take care of ourselves, give God His ten percent, His tithe, and go forward in the joy of the Lord, not give the stuff we work for and labor for control over us.

The Lord Jesus says something here that's worth emphasis: that is, that we should remember that we, humans, are more important than food and clothing, that our lives and bodies are more important than what we put IN our bodies or what we put ON our bodies. When we worry and obsess over stuff, food and clothing, we give the food and clothing preeminence over our lives and bodies, we make food and clothing more important than ourselves, and the priorities become wrongly ordered. Think about it like this: The Lord is saying, "If you worry yourself to death, don't you know that you could REALLY get sick, be hospitalized for months, and then lose the job you've spent every waking moment thinking about? To not be concerned about your job is foolish, but to worry about it is just as foolish if not more. At least the person unconcerned about their job will still be here to talk about it; if you worry about it, you could have a heart attack, get sick and permanently disabled, and eventually, die." He's telling us today that we should put our lives and physical, emotional, and spiritual health above food and clothing, which profit the body but do little else. The Lord is saying today in the familiar words of a familiar song, "Be not dismayed, whate'er be tide, God will take care of you."

The Lord then gives an example to remind us of His love, provision, and care for us in verse 26: "Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?" Jesus tells us in so many words, "Take the birds that fly in the air, let's use them as an example. They do no work, they don't sow corn, peas, or beans, they don't sow crops, and they don't gather crops into barns, and yet, God our Father provides for them. You're more important than they are to the Father, so what are you worried about? If God provides for the birds, who do no work, then surely, He'll provide for humans who do work, He'll provide for you." The Lord provides for defenseless creatures such as the birds, and the birds are no more important than us in the sight of God. Take note, those who believe that animals and humans are equal, that animals are more cherished than humans. In the eyes of God, man is more significant than the birds of the air, the birds being representative of flying creatures as a whole.

In verse 27, Jesus gets to the heart of the matter about worrying and its relation to human life: "Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his life?" The word "cubit" here refers to a forearm, so Jesus is saying that you can't add a small amount of days to your life by worrying and obsessing over your needs -- therefore, why worry if it can't help you, can't enhance your life, but diminish your life and decrease your days? Worrying can only decrease your days; you CAN worry yourself to death; you CAN decrease your days on this earth by panicking and obsessing, and living in constant fear of the worst. Would you drink poison, cut yourself with a knife, throw yourself in water and not know how to swim, take too much medication? Of course not. If you wouldn't do these things because you choose to live, then choose to live by choosing not to worry and stress over food and clothing. "Be not dismayed, whate'er be tide, God will take care of you."

The Lord Jesus has told us that God the Father feeds the birds of the air, who do no labor comparable to humans, and yet, they are provided for. Now, He focuses on clothing in verses 28 and 29: "So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." Jesus says, "Look at the lilies that are in the fields, mere flowers. They don't do any work, they don't even spin in the fields, they just sit there --- and yet, not even Solomon, in all his attire and apparel splendor, could match the beauty of any of the lilies." In other words, the Lord provides for the lilies, the flowers, that do nothing to merit it, and they're dressed so well that they're more magnificent than Solomon was."

The Lord Jesus mentions Solomon, a Jewish example that would've been familiar to His audience. Jesus taught using everyday examples that many could understand: He once spoke about keeping oil in lamps and virgin brides preparing to meet the bridegroom for a marriage supper; He talked about a farmer going forth to sow seed and the different places the seed can fall when a farmer sows it; He talked about fish nets and how they draw all kinds of fish in the nets; He spoke about servants and money, called talents, that the servants were to invest for their Master who went away and returned at a later date; He talked about a woman who troubled a judge so much that the judge gave the woman what she wanted; He talked about someone finding a pearl of great price and selling all he has to buy that pearl. He talked about many other parables but these are some examples to show that Jesus was no stranger to using everyday objects and events to communicate truth about the Kingdom of God. Parables are "earthly stories with heavenly meaning."

Here in verses 28 and 29, the Lord says that Solomon's wardrobe couldn't even match that of the lilies and flowers in the fields. Solomon was the son of King David and Bathsheba, the woman with whom David committed adultery, afterward murdering her then husband Uriah the Hittite, one of his most loyal soldiers, by placing him on the front lines and killing him with the sword of the Ammonites (an ungodly people). The Lord struck the adulterous child David had with Bathsheba, but He loved Solomon, we're told in 2 Samuel 12:24. And yet, Solomon became King in his father's absence, and went on to become one of the wealthiest men alive in his day. From 1 Kings 10, alone, when Solomon visits the Queen of Sheba, we're told that Solomon's servants were so well-dressed that even the wealthy Queen of Sheba took notice:

4 And when the queen of Sheba had seen all the wisdom of Solomon, the house that he had built, 5 the food on his table, the seating of his servants, the service of his waiters and their apparel, his cupbearers, and his entryway by which he went up to the house of the Lord, there was no more spirit in her. 6 Then she said to the king: "It was a true report which I heard in my own land about your words and your wisdom. 7 However I did not believe the words until I came and saw with my own eyes; and indeed the half was not told me. Your wisdom and prosperity exceed the fame of which I heard. 8 Happy are your men and happy are these your servants, who stand continually before you and hear your wisdom! 9 Blessed be the Lord your God, who delighted in you, setting you on the throne of Israel! Because the Lord has loved Israel forever, therefore He made you king, to do justice and righteousness." (1 Kings 10:4-9)

In 1 Kings 10:24-25, we're told that the inhabitants of the earth came to see King Solomon each year because his wisdom was unmatched on earth, and those who sought his wisdom also brought articles of clothing:

24 Now all the earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart. 25 Each man brought his present: articles of silver and gold, garments, armor, spices, horses, and mules, at a set rate year by year. (1 Kings 10:24-25)

Solomon had lots of apparel, and owned lots of gold and spices (he owned no silver because it was considered to be "common" and ordinary in his day), as well as horses, chariots, servants, and so on. And yet, even in all his glory, in all his splendor, the lilies were better-dressed than King Solomon.

In verse 30, Jesus asks another heart question: "Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow will be thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?" In other words, if God takes care of the grass and the flowers, which are here today and gone tomorrow, why would He take care of man, who will outlive the lilies and grass of the field? If God will take care of the lesser, why wouldn't He take care of the greater? If we are the greater (and we are), why wouldn't He care for us?

Why do we worry? Why do we fret? Why do we consume so much time with mental, physical, and emotional stress over things when our Father, the One who made the world and everything in it, has told us in His Word that we've read today that He knows what we need before we ask Him and that, if He takes care of the birds and lilies, He'll take care of us? The answer is found in that we, like those to whom Jesus preached, are people of little faith. So what we really need is greater faith to trust in the Lord, greater faith to look to Him when we don't have the answers, to look to Him, when, like the prophet Elijah, we find ourselves in a famine land where there is no bread or water --- trusting that, as He fed Elijah by the ravens, He'll feed us. This is why we should spend more time praying "The Lord's Prayer" and saying to the Lord, "Give us this day our daily bread."

And yet, every day, the Lord continues to remind us in His Word that He'll take care of us. Songwriter, musician, and preacher Walter Hawkins wrote a revised version of the song "God Will Take Care of You," and the lyric is fitting for the Word of the Lord today:

"Be not dismayed, whate'er betide, God will take care of you,
Beneath his wings of love abide, God will take care of you.

I know God will take care of you, through every day, come what may, He'll see you through. God will take care of you, God will take care of you."

Church, be not dismayed, whate'er betide, God will take care of you.

