

## ***“Don’t worry about tomorrow!”***

**November 22, 2009**

*Text: Psalm 126, Matthew 6:25-33*

### I.

Thanksgiving is the best of times. I hear all the time from people how it’s—straight away—their favorite holiday. I tend to agree; there’s more of a purity to Thanksgiving, a simplicity. It’s not so commercialized.

With the traditional gathering of family and friends and the Thanksgiving meal, definitely, it’s good times! And meaningful, celebrative times as well. It’s hard to beat the Thanksgiving feast.

After our worship here this morning, we’ll be sharing a wonderful Thanksgiving meal over in Fellowship Hall. All I can tell you is that we’ve been working on it all week.

According to Andy Rooney, the two biggest sellers in any bookstore are the cookbooks and the diet books. Interesting, don’t you think?

- The cookbooks tell you how to prepare the food ...
- and the diet books tell you how *not* to eat any of it.

### II.

Anyway, in the face of whatever motivational contradictions, Thanksgiving is special—with our traditions that go way back to the Pilgrims, whom we are remembering today in our worship.

However, that’s not to say that we don’t have our worries.

1. Certainly, those early Pilgrims had their worries—much of the time centered around their mere survival.
2. And the reading of **Lincoln’s Thanksgiving Proclamation** reminds us of the Civil War period that tore at our nation’s soul.
3. And today, it’s the economy and climate change and the future direction of our country in an increasingly complex and interdependent world.

And yet, for people of faith, Thanksgiving is a time when gratitude trumps all of our worries and preoccupations. It’s a time, with the four-day weekend, when we can all step back from our hurried lives, take pause, and give thanks. And with our thanksgiving, it’s a season that invites a deepening of faith, a journey to a higher purpose.

### III.

In our reading from Matthew 6, portions of Jesus' much-heralded *Sermon on the Mount*, what Jesus is urging is an element of perspective on our lives. In other words, *step back from it all*, he is saying, *and take a look at the BIG PICTURE of your lives*.

***Don't worry about your lives ... what you will eat and drink, or what you will wear. Isn't LIFE more than food, and the body more than clothing?***

And then he goes on: ***Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet God feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?***

***And why do you worry about your clothing? Consider the lilies of the field ... how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these.***

***But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive to day and gone tomorrow, how much more will God clothe you?***

In other words: ***Have a little faith!***

Part of what this is about is that, in the deepest sense, our lives are not about our worries and our anxieties and our fears.

- Our lives are about our faith in the fundamental goodness of creation, in the essential goodness of life.
- They're about our relationships and the love that overflows from our hearts and spirit.
- Our lives are about our commitments and passions; they're about our hopes and dreams.

Yet, it's certainly human to worry, isn't it? Sometimes, we wonder: will I have enough? Will I be able to pay the mortgage, pay the credit card and still keep my health care insurance?

Still, sometimes our worrying becomes exaggerated, almost obsessive, to where it is not good for our spirit. It brings us down, saps our energy, diverts our attention and prevents us from focusing our energy and attention where they need to be focused.

### IV.

And so, Jesus exhorts us not to worry: ***Don't worry about tomorrow. Strive first***, he says, ***for the kingdom of God and for God's righteousness***. In other words, again, ***have a little faith***. What it comes down to is this, friends: work hard, pray fervently, and keep putting love out there. That's it! And then, hold fast to hope, don't back off from your

dreams, and dare to imagine a better day.

As Christians and as human beings, we must never lose the capacity to dream and to hope. With God, and certainly in our Christian faith—always—the Spirit is on the move and Good News is on the way.

And what we have to do is stay positive ... and live our lives with a sense of expectation—beyond our worries, our anxieties, and our fears.

On NPR (National Public Radio) the other day, there was a segment featuring contributions to a special project called *This I Believe*. The idea is to really think through *what* we believe and put it into words.

Sixteen year-old Josh spoke of an unwavering belief in optimism. He had learned it, he said, from his father; and his father, in turn, from his father. Actually, as I think about it, my own father was that way: always optimistic.

Anyway, 16 year-old Josh remembered, as a little boy, when things were tough and discouragement filled the air, he would talk to his father. And every time, after listening intently, his father would reassure him, *tomorrow will be a better day*.

No matter what had happened, it seemed, every time: *tomorrow will be a better day*.

***But how do you know?*** Josh would always respond. ***How do you know, dad?***

*Trust me, son, trust me: tomorrow will be a better day.* Of course, what his father was really talking about was as life style, an attitude.

And as his young life evolved, Josh adopted this mantra as a motto to live by: *tomorrow will be a better day*. And why not? Indeed, tomorrow can be a better day and often times it is. But we have to do our part. We can't become complacent, ducking behind our worries and fears. We have to live towards our expectations and hopes.

## V.

If you get nothing else from the sermon this morning, get this: friends, as Christians, as people of faith, we live towards our expectations—towards what we expect, what we hope for. That's why it's so important to be people of faith and hope.

In the Parable of the Talents, from Matthew's gospel, the three servants are given *talents*, a sizeable portion of money to do with as they will. As you'll remember, the first two servants invest the talents entrusted to them and are rewarded at the end. However, the notorious *third servant*, out of fear, takes his talent and, rather than invest it and do something with it to inspire hope and promise, takes his lone talent out to the back yard and buries it, ostensibly to keep it safe.

He buries it out of fear—fear that he might lose it or somehow not use it wisely. How sad; how utterly empty of expectation. Where's the hope and where's the faith?

As you'll recall, this *third servant* is raked over the coals for his low expectation, his lack of faith. And in fact, the little that he had was taken from him and given to one of the other servants.

To those unfamiliar with this story and its implications for the Christian life, this might seem like a harsh outcome. But there's a larger lesson here: that we are to live towards expectation, towards something larger than ourselves. Our lives are always about more than just one more day of status quo ... one more day *the same 'ole thing*.

Check it out: *if you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always gotten*. Where's the hope? Where's the faith? Where's the living Christ?

And so Jesus prompts us: ***Don't worry about tomorrow!*** Rather, *seek the kingdom of God*. Put another way, live your lives towards expectation.

## VI.

Think about your lives, friends. Don't we, in fact, *live towards expectation* all the time? In our families, our careers ... in every aspect of our lives??

When our children are little, don't we hold great expectations for them? And, accordingly, we expose them to all kinds of experiences and activities—in sports and the arts and, of course, in academics, hoping that they will somehow find themselves ... find their niche, their area where they can use the gifts God has given them and realize their potential in life.

Day after day, in our home life, we live towards expectation ... reaching for something more, striving to improve ourselves ... taking risks ... trying new things ...

We live toward expectation in our relationships every day—hoping that our marriages will continue to be a mutual blessing for us and our spouses.

In our careers, where would we be without our expectations ... expectations for continued learning and growth ... expectations for advancement and the success that comes from hard work and dedication?

## VII.

As people of faith, we are not oriented to live lives of fear. Fear cripples the human spirit. It keeps us from taking risks and discovering who we are. And it crushes any sense of hope that the Spirit might give.

As Paul wrote to the **Philippians**,

*Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say rejoice.*

*Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.*

And so, no matter our life situation, friends, hold fast to your hopes and hold fast to your dreams. Live always, like the **Psalmist**, with gratitude in our hearts and towards the high expectations of tomorrow.

*When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream.  
Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy;*

*Then it was said among nations, **The Lord has done great things for them.**  
The Lord has done great things for us, and we rejoiced.*

**All praise be unto God! Amen!**

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