

LUKE 12:27-40

²⁷ “Consider how the wild flowers grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ²⁸ If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you—you of little faith! ²⁹ And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. ³⁰ For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. ³¹ But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.

³² “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. ³³ Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. ³⁴ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

³⁵ “Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, ³⁶ like servants waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him. ³⁷ It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. Truly I tell you, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them. ³⁸ It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the middle of the night or toward daybreak.

³⁹ But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁰ You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.”

MANY YEARS AGO I READ A SHORT STORY ABOUT AN INDUSTRIALIST WHOSE WORK TOOK HIM NEAR THE HARBOR ONE DAY.

HE WAS VERY SURPRISED TO SEE A FISHERMAN LYING LAZILY IN HIS BOAT IN THE MIDDLE OF A BEAUTIFUL DAY.

THE INDUSTRIALIST WENT OVER TO ASK HIM WHY HE WAS NOT OUT FISHING. THE MAN REPLIED THAT HE HAD CAUGHT ENOUGH FISH THAT DAY SO HE CAME BACK TO PORT.

THE OTHER MAN PRESSED HIM TO EXPLAIN WHY HE DID NOT GO BACK OUT TO CATCH MORE FISH.

WHEN ASKED WHY HE SHOULD DO THAT BY THE FISHERMAN THE OTHER GAVE WHAT HE THOUGHT WAS THE OBVIOUS REPLY.

“YOU COULD EARN MORE MONEY, AND THEN BUY A LARGER BOAT, BUY BETTER NETS, AND GO OUT INTO DEEPER WATER.

THEN, IF YOU WORKED HARD ENOUGH, YOU COULD HAVE A FLEET OF BOATS AND MANY EMPLOYEES, AND YOU COULD BECOME RICH LIKE ME.”

“THEN WHAT WOULD I DO?” ASKED THE FISHERMAN. THE INDUSTRIALIST TOLD HIM—“IF YOU WERE RICH ENOUGH YOU COULD RELAX AND ENJOY LIFE.”

THE FISHERMAN LOOKED UP AT HIM AND RESPONDED: “WHAT DO YOU THINK I AM DOING NOW?”

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TWO MEN WAS THAT THE INDUSTRIALIST WAS DRIVEN NOT BY NECESSITY BUT THE DESIRE FOR MORE AND MORE WEALTH.

BUT THE FISHERMAN, AFTER EARNING ENOUGH TO SATISFY HIS DAILY NEEDS, RELAXED AND ENJOYED THE REST OF THE DAY.

THE ONE SEEMED TO BE ANXIOUS THAT HE SHOULD EARN MORE AND MORE UNTIL HE FELT HE EARNED ENOUGH, OTHER WAS CONTENT WITH WHAT HE HAD, AND WAS NOT WORRIED ABOUT BECOMING RICHER AND RICHER.

THIS BRINGS US TO THE GOSPEL READING AND WHAT JESUS SAID IS THE MAIN GOAL IN LIFE HIS FOLLOWERS SHOULD PURSUE.

AND WE BEGIN BY CONSIDERING TWO OF THE MOST DIFFICULT COMMANDS JESUS GAVE: "DO NOT BE AFRAID" AND "DO NOT WORRY".

WHILE THOSE TWO COMMANDS CAN STAND ON THEIR OWN, LIKE SHOELACES THEY ARE OFTEN TIED TOGETHER.

YET, WHEN IT COMES TO FEAR- IT IS SOMETIMES INSTINCTUAL AND THEREFORE NOT PREVENTABLE.

AND THE KIND OF FEAR WHICH WE MIGHT SAY IS UNIQUELY HUMAN IS ALSO NOT SO EASY TO AVOID.

EVEN THE FAMOUS SAYING BY PRESIDENT FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT: "WE HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR BUT FEAR ITSELF", IMPLIES THAT FEAR IS SOMETHING HE WORRIED ABOUT.

AND SINCE WORRY IS ONE WAY FEAR IS EXHIBITED WITHIN OUR THOUGHTS, IT IS NOT POSSIBLE FOR US TO NEVER EXPERIENCE WORRY.

WHEN IT COMES TO WORRY MANY OF US SEEM TO HOLD ONTO IT LIKE A POSSESSION, WE THINK WE CANNOT LIVE WITHOUT.

IN FACT, ONE JOKE ON THE SUBJECT OF WORRY SAYS: "90% OF WHAT PEOPLE WORRY ABOUT NEVER HAPPENS, WHICH PROVES WORRYING WORKS".

CONSEQUENTLY, FOR JESUS TO TELL US TO NOT BE AFRAID OR TO NOT WORRY IS LIKE TELLING US NOT TO BREATHE.

WHILE EVERYONE CAN HOLD THEIR BREATH, AND SOME CAN HOLD IT LONGER THAN OTHERS, IF ONE IS ALIVE ONE WILL EVENTUALLY HAVE TO LET GO AND BREATHE.

SIMILARLY, WHILE WE ALL MAY HAVE DIFFERENT THINGS THAT CAUSE US TO FEEL FEAR OR BECOME WORRIED, IT EVENTUALLY WILL HAPPEN TO US ALL.

HOW THEN ARE CHRISTIANS SUPPOSED TO UNDERSTAND JESUS' STATEMENTS TO FEAR NOT AND DON'T WORRY?

ONE WAY TO APPROACH HIS MESSAGE IS TO LOOK AT WHAT JESUS DID NOT SAY.

JESUS NEVER SAID THERE IS NOTHING IN LIFE TO BE AFRAID OF, OR NOTHING THAT SHOULD CAUSE US TO WORRY.

INSTEAD, TODAY'S READING FROM LUKE RECORDS WHY JESUS SAID WE CAN TRUST GOD, AND STRIVE FOR THE THINGS THAT PLEASE GOD, INSTEAD OF STRESSING ABOUT WORLDLY CARES.

FIRST, JESUS SAYS THAT GOD OUR HEAVENLY FATHER ALREADY KNOWS OUR NEEDS, AND WILL CARE FOR US.

NEXT THE SAVIORS GIVES US A GOOD REASON TO NOT GIVE INTO FEAR, BY TELLING US ABOUT GOD'S LOVE FOR US, WHICH IS WHY WE DO NOT NEED TO LIVE IN FEAR.

HE SPOKE ABOUT GOD FEEDING THE BIRDS AND CLOTHING THE FLOWERS.

THEN IN LUKE 12:32 JESUS SAID: "IT IS YOUR FATHER'S GOOD PLEASURE TO GIVE YOU THE KINGDOM."

THE GOOD NEWS OF THIS DECLARATION IS THAT WE DO NOT NEED TO TRY TO EARN THE BLESSING OF GOD'S KINGDOM.

NOR DO WE NEED TO WORRY ABOUT TRYING TO CONVINCING GOD WE SHOULD RECEIVE THE KINGDOM, OR BE AFRAID HE WILL SAY NO TO THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN JESUS.

INSTEAD, JESUS ASSURES US THAT GIVING HIS KINGDOM TO US IS WHAT PLEASES GOD.

IN FACT, IT IS SOMETHING GOD REALLY WANTS TO DO, AND FINDS JOY IN DOING.

THE LAYMAN'S COMMENTARY ON LUKE EXPLAINS JESUS TAUGHT THAT HAVING FAITH IN GOD MEANS WE ACKNOWLEDGE LIFE IS IN GOD'S HANDS.

AND IF WE BELIEVE THIS IS TRUE, WE WILL REALIZE THAT FEAR AND ANXIETY ARE USELESS AND UNCONSTRUCTIVE.

THIS IS WHY, IF WE LET IT, FAITH IN GOD CAN FREE US FROM COVETING WORLDLY TREASURES AND FLEETING DESIRES.

FAITH ALSO CAN FREE US FROM LIVING UNDER THE WEIGHT OF FEAR AND WORRY, WHEN WE TO TURN TO GOD.

JESUS OFFERS US AN EXAMPLE OF THIS. IF WE LOOK AT JESUS HIMSELF, AND ASK “WAS JESUS EVER AFRAID OR WORRIED?” THE ANSWER TO BOTH QUESTIONS IS: “YES, HE WAS”

WE CAN SURMISE HE WORRIED ABOUT HOW HIS DISCIPLES WOULD COPE WITH HIS CRUCIFIXION, BY THE FACT HE WARNED THEM OVER AND OVER AGAIN ABOUT IT.

AND, ACCORDING TO THE GOSPEL OF JOHN, JESUS SPENT A LOT OF TIME PRIOR TO HIS ARREST, PRAYING FOR HIS DISCIPLES.

THE FACT JESUS FELT FEAR IS HIGHLIGHTED IN THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE, WHEN SAID HE WAS TROUBLED, AND WANTED THE DISCIPLES TO WATCH AND PRAY WITH HIM.

THE GOSPELS ALSO SAY “IN HIS ANGUISH” JESUS FELL DOWN TO PRAY. SO SURELY THE STORIES FROM THE GOSPELS REVEAL THAT JESUS EXPERIENCED BOTH FEAR AND WORRY.

SO WHY WOULD HE COMMAND NOT, ONLY HIS FOLLOWERS, BUT THE CROWD AS WELL:

“DO NOT KEEP WORRYING” AND ‘DO NOT BE AFRAID’- WHEN HE, HIMSELF FELT SUCH THINGS?

THE SAVIOR’S PURPOSE WAS NOT TO MAKE US FEEL BAD ABOUT EXPERIENCING FEAR OR WORRY, BUT RATHER TEACH US TO NOT GIVE THEM POWER OVER US.

CONSIDER HOW JESUS HANDLED THESE HUMAN THOUGHTS AND EMOTIONS- HE DID SO BY TRUSTING IN GOD HIS FATHER.

JESUS ALSO TURNED TO PRAYER, AND HE CALLS US TO HAVE THE FAITH AND DISCIPLINE TO DO THE SAME.

THINK AGAIN ABOUT HIS TIME IN THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE- WHERE JESUS ENGAGED IN THREE SEPARATE TIMES OF PRAYER.

BY THE TIME HE FINISHED THE LAST PRAYER SESSION, JESUS WAS READY TO FACE HIS ARREST AND EXECUTION.

SURELY, IT WAS THROUGH PRAYER AND HIS CONFIDENCE IN HIS FATHER, JESUS VANQUISHED THE POWER OF FEAR AND WORRY.

THUS, HE CALLS ALL OF US TO FOLLOW HIS EXAMPLE TO LET FAITH- AND NOT FEAR, TRUST IN GOD- AND NOT WORRY TO DOMINATE OUR THOUGHTS AND WORDS AND ACTIONS.

IN THIS WAY WE CAN UNDERSTAND CHRIST’S COMMANDS TO NOT GIVE INTO FEAR OR WORRY, BUT TO GIVE THEM TO GOD INSTEAD.

PHILIPPIANS 4:6 AFFIRMS THE VALUE TO TAKING OUR FEARS AND WORRIES TO THE LORD.

“DO NOT BE ANXIOUS ABOUT ANYTHING, BUT IN EVERYTHING BY PRAYER AND SUPPLICATION WITH THANKSGIVING LET YOUR REQUESTS BE MADE KNOWN TO GOD.”

I HAD A CLASSMATE IN SEMINARY WHO TURNED TO GOD WHEN ANXIOUS BY HUMMING “BLESSED ASSURANCE.”

DOING SO HELPED HIM REFOCUS HIS MIND AND CALM HIS FEARS, IT WAS HIS WAY TO PRAY AND TO BE EMPOWERED BY THE ASSURANCE JESUS PROMISED.

“BLESSED ASSURANCE, JESUS IS MINE! OH, WHAT A FORETASTE OF GLORY DIVINE. HEIR OF SALVATION PURCHASE OF GOD, BORN OF HIS SPIRIT WASHED IN HIS BLOOD.

THIS IS MY STORY, THIS IS MY SONG PRAISING MY SAVIOR ALL THE DAY LONG. THIS IS MY STORY THIS IS MY SONG, PRAISING MY SAVIOR ALL THE DAY LONG.”

NOTICE THE WORDS DIRECT US TOWARDS OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LORD, AND GOD'S FAITHFUL PROMISES SEALED IN THE BLOOD OF JESUS HIS SON OUR SAVIOR.

THOSE THOUGHTS CAN HELP US GRASP HOLD OF FREEDOM FROM FEAR AND ANXIETY ABOUT LIFE.

THE WORDS AND THE MESSAGE JESUS SPOKE ALSO APPLY TO HOW WE APPROACH THE PROMISE OF CHRIST'S RETURN.

MANY CHRISTIANS WORRY A LOT ABOUT THIS. AND THROUGHOUT THE CENTURIES DURING EVERY MAJOR WORLD CRISIS SOME WERE CONVINCED THE END WAS NEAR.

THEN, WHEN THE END DID NOT COME MANY OF THEM WORRIED ABOUT WHY NOT.

JESUS' MESSAGE IN THE SECOND PART OF THE GOSPEL READING TELLS HIS FOLLOWERS WE DO NOT NEED TO WORRY ABOUT WHEN, OR EVEN EXACTLY HOW HE WILL RETURN.

INSTEAD OF BEING ANXIOUS ABOUT WHAT IS SOLELY IN GOD'S CONTROL AND TIMING- WE ARE TOLD TO BE READY.

BEING READY IS ANOTHER WAY OF SAYING CHRISTIANS ARE ALWAYS "ON CALL".

THIS MEANS WHEN AT WORK OR LEISURE JESUS ASKS US TO BE PREPARED FOR HIM COME TO US SPIRITUALLY, AND TO COME BACK TO THE WORLD PHYSICALLY.

AND THE WAY TO BE PREPARED TO FACE BOTH THE ORDINARY THINGS OF LIFE, AS WELL AS THE PROMISED RETURN OF CHRIST IS TO REMEMBER AND LIVE BY GOD'S PROMISE.

WE ARE PROMISED THAT OUR TRUE IDENTITY AS CHRISTIANS IS FOUND IN OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD-WHO IS A PERFECT AND LOVING FATHER.

THIS MEANS WE ARE MEMBERS OF GOD'S FAMILY, AND ALSO CALLED SHEEP OF GOD'S FOLD. TRUSTING IN GOD'S PROMISES AND CARE IS WHAT MOTIVATES US TO MAKE THE KINGDOM OF GOD OUR PRIORITY.

THIS IS ANOTHER WAY WE CAN BREAK THE CHAINS OF FEAR AND WORRY.

LET US TRUST THAT THE PROMISE OF GOD IS NOT ONLY FOR THE LIFE TO COME, BUT ITS BENEFITS ARE FOR OUR EARTHLY LIFE AS WELL.

WE, LIKE JESUS, HAVE REASON TO TRUST IN GOD'S PRESENCE AND AID, ESPECIALLY WHEN IT COMES TO THE FORCES OF SIN AND EVIL THAT PLAGUE THE WORLD AND THOSE IN IT.

THERE IS AN ENGRAVING BY A MAN NAMED ALBRECHT DUERER THAT PRESENTS AN IMAGE OF HOW TO TRUST IN GOD.

THE TITLE OF THE ARTWORK IS: "KNIGHT, DEATH, AND THE DEVIL", AND IT IS MEANT TO SHOW THE COURAGE AND CONFIDENCE IN GOD CHRISTIANS CAN LIVE BY.

A KNIGHT IN FULL ARMOR IS SHOWN RIDING THROUGH A DARK VALLEY.

ON ONE SIDE OF THE KNIGHT IS A RIDER THAT REPRESENTS DEATH AND ON THE OTHER SIDE IS THE DEVIL. BUT RATHER THAN LOOKING AT EITHER OF HIS UNWANTED COMPANIONS, THE KNIGHT LOOKS AHEAD.

THE MESSAGE OF THE ENGRAVING IS THAT FEARLESS AND CONFIDENT THE KNIGHT HAS CAST ALL HIS WORRIES ON GOD.

THE KNIGHT IS ALONE IN THE MIDST OF THE DANGER ON EACH SIDE, AND YET NOT LONELY BECAUSE GOD'S PRESENCE AND POWER IS WORKING IN HIM, AND RIDING WITH HIM.

WITH THIS IN MIND, LISTEN TO HOW OSWALD CHAMBERS, DESCRIBED THE BLESSED ASSURANCE WE HAVE IN JESUS.

"THE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECT OF CHRISTIANITY IS NOT THE WORK WE DO, BUT THE RELATIONSHIP WE MAINTAIN WITH GOD, AND THE SURROUNDING INFLUENCES AND QUALITIES PRODUCED BY THAT RELATIONSHIP."

MAY WE BE AMONG THOSE WHO TURN TO JESUS, AND LIVE BY FOCUSING ON OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM. AMEN

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