

**Sunday, October 4, 2009**

**Matthew 6.19-34  
Seeking First His Kingdom  
SWCOB 10.4.09**

A farmer needed some help,  
So he put an ad in the Waterloo Courier.

When the first applicant called about the job,  
The farmer asked him about his qualifications,

The man said over the phone,  
“I can sleep on a windy night.”

“What!?” thought the farmer to himself,  
“Someone bragging on how well he can sleep?  
What’s this world come to?”

So he thanked the man for calling,  
And waited for another phone call.

The problem was,  
The harder the farmer looked,  
The fewer his options got,

So that he finally ended up calling the first man that had called,  
And hired him.

He seemed to be a pretty-good worker.

Later, a storm blew up.

The wind picked up during the day,  
And then the rains started,  
And towards nightfall, things got to be a bit worrisome.

The farmer tossed and turned,  
Couldn’t sleep a wink,  
Worrying about what was going on outside.  
He feared all his gates were banging in the wind,  
Cattle scattered throughout the countryside,  
Roofs torn off all the buildings.  
So after tossing and turning for several hours,  
He got up, dressed himself,  
And went out to find his hired man.

He banged and he beat on the door of the hired man’s house,  
But to no avail,

He couldn't wake the hired man.

“How in the world can he sleep through all this?”  
And after trying for several minutes,  
He gave up in complete disgust.

“One thing for sure,” the farmer shouted above the wind,  
“He sure can sleep through the night!”

So the farmer got in his pickup  
And went out to see how much damage was occurring,  
And to his amazement;

No gates or doors were swinging in the wind,  
All of them were securely fastened.

No roofs were rattling,  
All had been nailed down tight.

Everything that could be put in out of the rain,  
Was put in out of the rain.

Checking in to see his cattle,  
He noticed all the dead timber,  
Had been cut back away from the fences,  
And all the cattle safely behind them.

Now the farmer realized what the hired man meant,  
When he said he could sleep on a windy night.

The hired man knew that if he did his work,  
And did it right,

Well, he wouldn't be bothered and anxious when a bad storm hit.

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Corrie Ten Bloom,  
The Dutch citizen who hid Jewish refugees,  
During Nazi's Holocaust,  
Made the remark,

“Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow,  
It empties today of its strength.”

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Jesus, in our lesson today,  
Tells his disciples,

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

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Jesus continues to preach his Sermon on the Mount.

I imagine Jesus is sitting on a rock;  
With his closest followers next to him.

And I see crowds surrounding Jesus,  
Listening intently to his every word.

I can imagine long about now,  
The look on their faces.

I can see looks of consternation on their faces.

What Jesus was saying was baffling to them!

These teachings went way beyond  
Any of their previous religious teachings!

How in the world could Jesus be serious?  
But serious he was.

How could any of them,  
Ever achieve the kind of disciplined lives,  
Jesus was calling them to live?

Don't live with anger in your hearts,  
Don't lust,

Don't ever think about divorce.  
Don't make an oath,

Don't resist evil,  
When someone strikes you,  
Turn the other cheek.

When someone sues you,  
Give him more than he asks.

Not only should we love our neighbors,  
We need to love our enemies.

Don't be a hypocrite.

And now today,  
Jesus tells them not to worry about their material possessions.

Earthly blessings corrode and rust,

You cannot serve two masters,  
You cannot serve both money and God.

I'm thinking if I was a disciple,  
I'd be wishing I was back on my boat.  
This religious stuff was just too much!!

Perhaps Jesus sees disappointment on their faces,  
Perhaps Jesus knows his words are too challenging.

Jesus turns and changes the tone of his voice,  
And gently and quietly says,

God has seen to it,  
That the birds of the air don't worry about life,

God has seen to it that the lilies of the field,  
Aren't concerned about tomorrow,  
God has seen to it that the grass is clothed,  
Will he not much more take care of you?

~~

Today's lesson focuses on two things;

Wealth and worry,  
Both distractions that take us away from God.

Wealth and worry . . .  
When is enough too much?

When do necessities turn into luxuries?

When do concerns turn to worry?

When does having too much interfere,  
With one's relationship with God?

We struggle between the two adages;  
"You can't take it with you" with,  
"In the end, the one with the most toys wins."

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There was once a man, who declared in his will,  
That in the event of his death,  
His wife was to put all of his money alongside of him,  
In his coffin, and bury him with it.

He had amassed quite a sum of money.

And he didn't mind telling everyone,  
That he was taking all of his wealth with him to the grave.

So the day they had the viewing,  
A friend of the widow was there.  
She noted that the coffin,  
    Was actually quite small,  
    Too small to hold even a small part of this man' wealth.

After the burial she walked with the widow,  
Back from the grave to the church.

She just had to ask her,  
    "I know your husband wanted all of his money,  
Buried with him;  
Frankly, I just don't see how it all fit?"

"Oh, that was no problem," the widow stated,  
"I just wrote him a check."

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We have to admit,  
That we do accumulate a lot of stuff!

I mean, look at our garage sale . . .  
I have never seen so much stuff!

But maybe the garage sale is a sign that we Brethren  
    Have started doing away with our material things,  
    And focusing more on Godly things!

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Wealth and worry . . .  
We spend a lot of energy worrying about our material possessions.  
Jesus knows this,  
And challenges us to rethink our priorities.

Rather than worrying ourselves sick over all the issues,  
    One can worry themselves sick over,

Jesus says to try this strategy instead.

Don't try to squeeze God in after you have done everything else,  
    Try, instead to put God first!

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When is enough too much?  
When it places God in second place!

Jesus says,  
Try putting God first,

Seek his kingdom first and then see what happens.

Jesus says, all these things will be added unto you.

That's what Jesus says!

~~

Jesus says,  
All these things I have been teaching you are hard stuff.

It is close to impossible to live the kind of life,  
I have been teaching you,  
By your own will,

What you need to do is to build a relationship with God,  
Up close and personal,

And then these teaching will begin to make more sense to you,  
And as time goes you will get it,  
And the Holy Spirit will make it easier for you to follow.

That is what I think Jesus is saying here.  
Wealth and worry,  
When is enough, enough?

When we compare ourselves to our neighbors,  
We never seem to have enough of the good things in life.

But when we compare ourselves to the rest of the world,  
We look at all our stuff with a new perspective

A perspective that begs to make the statement,  
There is just too much stuff,  
And it's choking the life out of me.

And truly all this stuff,  
Does it add a single real joy in life?

We worry too much about earthly things,  
And never enough about heavenly things.

Perhaps you think it a bit simplistic,  
The teaching Jesus gives us today.

Perhaps you think the analogy of looking at the birds in the air,  
And the lilies in the field,  
And how it is that God clothes them a bit simplistic;

The point is this:

Worrying about these things,  
What you will wear,

What you will eat, what you will drink,

There really are more important things in life than this.

Nor will worrying about anything add a single hour to life.

Let's put our worries in perspective;

Sometimes the things we worry about,  
In the larger scope of things,  
Just aren't worth worrying about.

For instance:

A father passed his son's room,  
And noticed the bed made,  
And everything looking nice and tidy.

He then saw an envelope on the bed addressed, "Dad."

He opened the letter and read it.

"Dear Dad,  
It is with regret and sorrow that I'm writing you.

I had to elope with my new girlfriend,  
Because I wanted to avoid a scene with you and Mom.

I've been finding real passion with Joan,  
And she is so nice.

I knew you would not approve of her,  
Because of all her piercings, tattoos, tight motorcycle clothes,  
And the fact she is so much older than I am.

It's not just her passion, Dad, she really gets me.

Joan says we are going to be very happy.

She owns a trailer in the woods,  
And has a stack of firewood,  
Just enough for the whole winter.

We both share a dream of having many children.  
Please don't worry, Dad.

I'm fifteen and I know how to take care of myself.

I'm sure we'll be back to visit,

So you can get to know all of your grandchildren.

Your son, George.

P.S. Dad, none of this is true.

I'm over at Tommy's house.

I just wanted to remind you there are worse things in life,  
Than my report card that is in my desk drawer.

I love you.

Call when it's safe for me to come home.”  
(Charles Kimball, Allen, Texas)

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

Putting things in proper perspective,  
Can help get your life turned around.

First things first:  
Seek God above all things,  
And everything will fall into place,  
Now and forevermore. Amen.