

Scripture: Matthew 6:25-34

Sermon Title: "The Fleeting Moment of Now"

Rev. Josh Fitterling

In so many ways, worry feels like a given in life. We all have times in our lives when we worry - whether it be about health or financial concerns, or the well-being of a friend. Sometimes we worry about the little things and others times about the big picture. And whether we worry a little or worry a lot, we all do, at least from time to time, worry.

I remember one mission trip that my brother and I were on together out in Indiana where we were helping to rebuild after flooding had devastated many properties and impacted many more lives. And our group was staying in a home owned by a local church where we would sleep, prepare and eat our meals, relax at the end of a long hard day. It was a lovely situation.

Now one day, after a long day of work was over we were settling in for dinner. And as we were setting the table and preparing our meal, we saw that the sky outside was growing darker - the sign of an impending thunderstorm. Not a big deal other than we knew that we would be cooped up in the house all evening, not being able to go outside, at least until the storm passed. And so we continue to prepare our meal and sat down for dinner.

As we began to eat, we noticed that the sky kept getting darker and darker. This was likely to be a big storm! But we continued to eat, again not thinking much of it. And then, we noticed something different about the sky - it started to have a greenish hue to it and just as we were marveling at the emerald streaks in the sky, we heard it! The tornado siren was going off. Now, at this point, my heart started racing and I began to worry about every possible negative outcome that could possibly happen, and not just in that very moment but how this could potentially impact the rest of my entire life - the tornado could destroy this home and us, I would never get to graduate high school, or go to college, or fall in love. I was thinking about all the things that I could

potentially miss in life if this storm was devastating. And all of these spiraling worries accompanied me as our whole team got up from the dinner table, left our meals half eaten and filed down into the basement. And I kept thinking, what if this was it? What if this was the end? What are all the things in life that I would miss out on?

As we entered the basement, I found myself looking around to determine our chances of survival. I saw an exterior door and it got me thinking – what if so much rain came down that it filled the basement and we were trapped. I saw windows and was worried about breaking and flying glass. Or worse, could one of us be sucked out through a window by the force of the tornado? As you can tell, I was worrying just a bit.

And in the midst of all of my worry, my eyes fell on my brother, expecting to see a similar sense of fear and worry in his eyes, but what I saw was nowhere near what I expected. My brother, who apparently grabbed his plate of food off the table as we head down to the basement, was eating his dinner happily. It's true – in fact, somewhere we even have a photograph from our time in the basement with my brother holding his plate giving the camera a big smile and a thumbs up. And in that moment, my worry of the future washed away as I was mesmerized by my brother's ability to simply be in this moment – even amidst all the possibilities that this storm could mean, all the ways that this storm could potentially impact our lives, he was there embracing the moment and enjoying his meal.

And when I think back on that moment, my brother clearly was concerned and understood the threat of the storm – after all he was in the basement with the rest of us. But, it would seem to me, that he allowed the concern to only go so far. He allowed that concern of the storm raging to prepare for the possibilities of what the day could bring but to not worry about the possibilities of what the future could hold. He did what needed to be done to be safe as he entered the basement, but then, once he was prepared, he found a way to simply be present in the moment – a present reality that included an empty belly and so he finish his dinner and smiled.

You know, there is a big difference between being prepared and worrying. For when we worry, we lose ourselves in the thought of what could happen, of what tomorrow may hold, of what some hypothetical reality might look like – and we lose ourselves so much that we miss the fleeting moment of now. For when we worry, we live in the unknown of the future and are unable to fully embrace the reality of the present.

And that is the real problem with worry that it takes us out of the present. For as Jesus says in the sermon on the mount “do not worry about tomorrow for tomorrow will bring its own troubles. Today’s trouble is enough for today.” This reminds us to stay in the moment – to deal with today, to be fully present in the now, to not get lost in the maybes, and what-ifs of the future. For tomorrow will bring whatever tomorrow will bring, no matter how much we worry. So why not just focus on today?

Whenever I find myself worrying or being overcome by what tomorrow may look like, I will often picture my brother with a big smile and a plate of food in that basement in Indiana and ask myself, what am I missing in this very moment by being lost in the possibilities of the next? What very real smile am I missing because I’m thinking about what may bring sorrow? What very real joy am I overlooking because I’m thinking about what may be a burden?

Yes, we should prepare but we should never worry – for worry removes us from the present. Worry causes us to miss the very reality in which we are living for some possibility that may never come true. Instead of worrying about tomorrow, we focus on today by doing what Jesus commands and “striving first for the kingdom of God.” To live as Jesus calls us to live – a life that is aware of the moment, that lives in the moment, that ministers in the fleeting moment of now as we see so often in the life of Jesus.

And I know that this is not always easy to do – believe me I get it. Sometimes worry can consume us. But our faith does hold some answers, some assurances in the midst of the worry. That when we worry, we can hand that over to God, trusting that God’s

presence is with us through whatever the future will hold – even if our worry comes true. That we can trust that God’s arms of love are with us if tomorrow is easy or tough. That God’s arms of strength are with us if tomorrow we feel weak or strong. That God’s arms of comfort are with us if tomorrow brings much joy or sorrow. That we can trust that God’s guiding hand is with us, whether tomorrow bring ease or trouble. For when we look around and see God’s care for the world to which Jesus calls our attention, see how God feeds the birds, how God clothes the fields, don’t we know that God’s care for us is even greater? – when we see these things, why should we worry about the future for God’s love and care are with us always. And maybe this reality, knowing that God’s love is so great within our lives, can keep us in the present. For no matter what tomorrow brings, God will still be God. The same love that surrounds us today will be there tomorrow and the next day and the next day and into eternity.

It may not be easy, but it is our call – to resist the worry that takes us away from the present and to find relief in the presence of our God. So may we strive to not worry, so that we don’t miss on the God-given gift which is the fleeting moment of now. Amen.