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 Matthew 6:25-34  
 Hudson  
 6-1-08

*SCRIPTURE: Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? And why do you worry about 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 today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you – you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, “What will we eat?” or “What will we drink?” or “What will we wear?” For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today’s trouble is enough for today.*

**SERMON:** I have a friend who’s a bird watcher. She’ll stand in a frigid field for hours hoping to catch a glimpse of a “Yellow-Crowned Wood Warbler” or a “White-Throated Finch.” That’s the way she starts every year. She’s out in the wild well before dawn on New Year’s Day, watching and counting . . . great blue herons, goshawks, brown creepers, merlins, and snowy owls. She says she does it because she loves nature – because she loves birds. But I see something more in it than that. It starts her year right with that reminder that if God watches over a silly little sparrow – clothes it with feathers and feeds it with worms – certainly God watches over us. My friend always comes back from her bird watches with a wonderful sense of calm, like all the worries of the previous year had slipped away in a single night.

Do you worry much? I think we all do. I worry. I worry about fires. Sometimes I’m pulling out of our driveway and I wonder if I unplugged the toaster oven. And I remember getting a call late one Saturday evening telling me that a parishioner’s house was on fire. The fire started because of a short in their toaster. Now I always unplug my toaster. I never ever forget . . . but sometimes I worry that I will and I turn around the car and go back and check. And sure enough, it’s already unplugged. But I can picture it plugged in right now . . . just waiting to turn itself on and start a fire.

I check coffee pots around the church to make sure they’re off and unplugged, too . . . because I had a friend whose church’s fellowship hall caught fire when one of those was left on over night. So if you ever try to brew a pot of coffee at church and find nothing happening only to discover it’s unplugged – you know the culprit. I unplugged it. But if it’s unplugged it

won't cause a fire. And if it's unplugged you don't have to *worry* about it causing that fire. Except that we worry anyhow . . . even if we checked it and rechecked it three times.

I worry about my kids, too. Some nights I sleep the whole night through without a single worry. Other nights I check them once an hour and still can't sleep. Do you ever do that? Even if they've long since moved out? It's not like there's much we can do for them in the middle of the night. But we worry anyway.

I'm actually not really a big worrier – but I worry anyway. I think we all do. I worry over my family and friends. I worry about all of you. I worry about the state of our country, the upcoming election, the world and the environment. I wonder about my health and yours, over missed obligations and conflicts of timing. And I worry about whether or not I'm doing the right thing and saying what I should when there's no real clarity in how I should respond. It's easy to worry.

But Jesus says: Stop it. He says tomorrow will bring its own worries and that today brings enough troubles of its own without heaping worries about tomorrow on top.

Jesus says to stop worrying about what you're going to eat.

What you're going to drink.

What you're going to wear.

God knows you need all those things. Just look at the birds of the air - - God takes care of them, don't you think God will do at least as much for us? Aren't we worth more than a couple of birds?

But, we protest. There really is a lot we ought to worry about. Maybe some of our worries are trivial, but some are not. There are real problems:

- A job is lost.
- The bank is foreclosing.
- A cancer rears its ugly head a second time.
- A relationship sours and crumbles.
- Children lose their way.
- Debt consumes.
- Memory begins to slip.
- A loved one dies.

How can you *not* worry about things like that?

Jesus never tells us these concerns don't matter. He says stop worrying about it and do something or let it go. That's what the birds of the air do. If they're hungry, they find food. If they're cold, they head south. And they don't worry about that which they can't control. They live the need of the moment and let tomorrow's worries wait until tomorrow, because there are plenty of troubles today.

I like that. But we're not birds. I just can't fathom a God who wants us to live only in the moment and let tomorrow worry for itself. But what I do think Jesus was trying desperately

to get into our heads is to care for the needs of the moment and let go of the worries over which we have no control. He wasn't saying we should abandon any preparations for tomorrow – that would be horrible stewardship.

But most of us don't have the problem of not preparing for tomorrow. More of us become so consumed with the possible troubles of the next day that we lose sight of living the day we're in. We so build up the potential for future trouble, that we make it bigger and worse than if the problem actually occurred.

Jesus offers another way. He says instead of worrying all night, “Strive for the kingdom of God.” Instead of worrying over what bad might come, seek to be a part of the good that will be.

- If you're worried about your health – eat a balanced diet and get to the gym . . . and even more, care for a neighbor whose ill.
- If you're worried about a relationship – make it better by changing your behavior . . . and even more, make amends in a relationship long abandoned.
- If you're worried about the state of the world – start recycling and cut down on your own consumption . . . and even more, make peace with your own neighbor.
- If you're worried about your children, your spouse, parents or friends – pray for their well being . . . and even more, just love them right now.

A nice idea . . . but it doesn't work so well when you wake up in a terror in the dead of the night. What do you do then? Sometimes the best thing to do is imagine that which we fear comes true – envision it. And you'll typically find that the reality isn't nearly as bad as the fear makes it out to be. And sometimes the best thing to do is picture those silly birds of the air and their carefree lives. If God would care for them . . . God certainly would care for you and me. And no matter what comes our way, we are reminded that we do have a safe haven, a place where we are always welcome, a God who will always offer us a gracious embrace.