

“Getting Real With Our Worries”

Matthew 6:24-34

*Speak to us O God through your word
and through the meditation of our hearts. Amen.*

What are the things that worry you most? Parents were asked four things that they think their children worried about. They answered; nuclear war, terrorism, being kidnapped and possible divorce of parents. Now children themselves were asked about four things that they are worried about. And they listed; grades at school, having friends, being teased or bullied, being embarrassed. (Work and Family Newsletter)

People of all ages have their own worries. It may not be the same and may be perceived differently but the bottom line is that all of us have our own worries. Today, is a long weekend as the nation celebrates Memorial Day and watching the news for the past days one will not fail to notice the worries of the rising price of gas and the cost of hot dogs for barbeque. So according to the news many have opted stay home rather than go on vacation.

In a research by the University of Wisconsin, they found out that an average person worries 40% of things that will never happened, 30% are things of the past that no amount of worrying can change its outcome. 22% are classified a petty and needless worries and the remaining 8% are considered legitimate worries.

Whether legitimate or not worries affect our life. William Arthur Ward describes the impact of worry this way, *“worry distorts our thinking, disrupts our work, disquiets our soul, disturbs our body, disfigure our face. It destroys our friends, demoralizes our life, defeats our faith, and debilitates our energy.*

In our gospel reading, Jesus addressed the worries of his time. Within the framework of the Sermon on the Mount, he advised people not to worry about life, about clothing and about food. Although spoken long time ago in a different context but the truth he conveyed still speaks to us today. He said:

"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 food, and the body more than clothing?"

Jesus approached the issue radically and differently. What he did was to tie our worries in the kind of God that we believe in and to examine the highest priority of our life. For him the issue has to do whether we serve God or wealth and whether we strive for God's kingdom and righteousness or not. Let us ponder on where he leads us.

First, *Jesus invites us to see God as generously gracious.*

God gives and blesses without conditions. This is hard to accept for those who consider themselves religious and who connect God's blessings with their actions. In fact, this is what most people in his time and even today believes – blessings are rewards, dependent upon our works, our actions.

But Jesus had a different view. God is gracious and generous to all. He said, *for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. (Matthew 6:45)* So if you worry that God will not provide you a good harvest or a good pay because you are not religious then soon you will discover that you can even earn more even if you do not believe in God.

Life, food, clothing are not tied up with what we do to God but rather on what God gives to us generously. God is generously gracious beyond what we expect. But Jesus also reminded us, that "we live not by bread alone" in fact life is more than food and the body is more than clothing."

Jesus had given two options to be a slave either to wealth or to God. Those who serve wealth will feel secure as long as they have the money. So their main purpose of living is to earn more and to work to their death out fear of having no money and at the end having no food to eat and clothes to wear.

Although God is generous and gracious to them but the consequence of this choice is their inability to know God because they are so busy pursuing wealth. They will be caught up in the cycle of worries that will spin out of control. Life is lived not with great expectancy and in anticipation of God's gift day after day, it is rather lived as if it is a constant battle wage to secure more and more money.

It is important to note that wealth and money itself is not the problem – it is the relentless pursuit of wealth at the sacrifice of God and even of life itself. Billy Graham puts it this way: *“If a person gets his attitude toward money straightened out, then almost all other areas in life will be straightened out.”*

The other choice is to be a slave to a generous and gracious God. Those who serve this God know by heart and acknowledge this truth in their day to day living. They are free of the worries of the basic things in life because they affirm in their daily experience that God indeed is good all the time in fact they have the time to appreciate life itself.

Dale Carnegie said: *“Some things in the world are far more important than wealth; one of them is the ability to enjoy simple things.”* Serving or being a slave to a generously gracious God gives us time to focus on the essentials of life – to that which is important.

Jesus reminds us today *“No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.”*

Second, ***Jesus calls us to trust in a God who knows our needs.***

He said, *“...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.”* Jesus then invites us to observe nature and see how God works. He said, *“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?
Psalms 8 (vs. 3-5) reminds us of this truth:

*When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars that you have established;
what are human beings that you are mindful of them,
mortals that you care for them?
Yet you have made them a little lower than God,
and crowned them with glory and honor.*

We are made a little lower than God this is how valuable we are. We are the crown of God's creation and even though we are mortals God takes care of us. So the call for us is not to dwell on the worries of the day but to trust God daily. Jesus said, *can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?*

A story was told of a woman whose husband suddenly died, leaving her to raise six children of her own, adopted twelve others. Such an unusual woman warranted a newspaper feature, and a reporter was sent to do an interview. During the course of the interview the reporter asked the widow how she managed to raise all those children and do it so gracefully. "It's very simple," the widow replied. "You see, I'm in a partnership." A partnership, I hadn't heard about that. What sort of a partnership? The woman's face broke into a sunny smile as she replied. "One day a long time ago I said to the Lord: "Lord, I'll do the work, and you do the worrying.' and I haven't had a worry since." (Harold E. Kohn in *Feeling Low?* Wm. E. Eerdman's Publishing Co.)

Finally, ***Jesus challenges us to rise above our worries.***

Jesus did not say do not work, he said do not worry. He wants us to direct our strength and our energy to a higher and greater purpose, he challenges all of us to "*seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.* (KJV)

There is more to life than fine dining and drinking vintage wines or wearing elegant clothes. Real life is not measured by these standards. At the end of the day, God will not ask each of us, what food we eat or where did we have dinner last night or whether our

jeans and bags and shoes are branded. God, however, will ask each of us to account on what we did with our lives, what we did with this wonderful gift.

Mother Teresa puts it bluntly in this manner: *I am not sure exactly what heaven will be like, but I do know that when we die and it comes time for God to judge us, He will not ask, "How many good things have you done in your life?," rather He will ask, "How much love did you put into what you did?"*

Seeking God's kingdom and righteousness is living a life of love and compassion. It is living a life of trust in God's generosity that enables us to be generous to others. It is working for truth and justice when the world distorts what is wrong and tells us that it is right. It means living like Jesus, affirming and defending the sanctity of life here on earth but knowing that our final destiny is not in the here and now. Seeking God's kingdom is not church work but God's work in the world through the church. It is making God's love visible in the world

This is where the focus of our attention should be. This is where our energies should be spent rather than worrying on the price of hot dogs or the size of the barbeque grills, or whether the color of our bags will match our shoes or whether the type of our house blend with style of our cars. There are challenges of life greater than our worries and petty concerns. We should crack our minds asking ourselves, how can we proclaim and live out day after day, the love of this of gracious and generous God, revealed to us in Jesus.

Corie Ten Boom wrote: "worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow; it empties today of its strength." God wants to live fully the 'today' of our lives full of strength because the task of seeking God's kingdom and righteousness requires our full attention.

Our worries catches us from time to time, the moment it tries to control our lives, let us remember Jesus' advice – remember that God is generously gracious, trust God who knows our every need and rise above these worries in life. This is God's word for us today – *"seek ye first God's Kingdom and righteousness and al*

these things shall be added unto you.” Amen.

May 25, 2008
2nd Sunday after Pentecost

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May 25, 2008 – 1:30 P.M.

Preacher: Rev. Reuben D. Cedino
Sermon: *"Getting Real With Our Worries"*

SCRIPTURE READING:
1st Reading: Isaiah 49: 8-16a
Gospel: Matthew 6: 24-34

Anthem: "Grace"
Fil-Am UCC Choir

Liturgist: Ms. Exuperia Mercedo
Pianist: Ms. Jean Nabong
Guest Musicians: Mr. Jeremy Stein Cushman, Violin
Dr. Karen Beluso, Piano
Organist and Choral Director: Ms. Rachel A. Dadap

Mr. Ed Olvina, *Elder-in-Charge*
Mr. Sonny Manalo, *Trustee-in-Charge*
Ms. Ellen V. Cedino & Ms. Debbie B. Villanueva, *Ushers*
Villarin & Butron Families, *Floral Offering*