

FOUNDATIONS FOR
LAITY RENEWAL

Transforming Daily Life

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Three Sermon Outlines on
Work and Faith

“Living the Will of God”

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SERMON NOTES

*The
High Calling
of Our
Daily Work*

*Making a real living connects you to a bigger picture,
a grand design, an abundant life.
Each of us has only a small part to play, but what a part!
It's the high calling of our daily work.*

– Howard Butt, Jr., of Laity Lodge
TheHighCalling.org

Three Sermons on Living the Will of God

“On Earth as It Is in Heaven...” Tod Bolsinger, M.Div., Ph.D.

A Note from the Author

At the center of the Christian faith is a distinctive sermon. In the center of that sermon is a chapter with a distinctively Christian prayer. And in the center of that prayer is a distinctively Christian petition: “*Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth...*”

For Jesus, the very heart of his mission was the proclamation and demonstration of the Kingdom of God. And bringing God’s reign and rule—God’s will—into every human heart, every earthly sphere, every location, place, position, and purpose is the mission of every follower of Jesus today. As Abraham Kuyper famously declared, “*There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry: ‘Mine!’*”

But that mission is not natural to us. We, by nature, live for ourselves. We want our will to be done, not God’s will. We wrestle with the will of God. We struggle with yielding our wills and living out God’s mission from the center of our beings. When it is done from a place of humility and openness, the wrestling with God becomes the transformation of our wills. Salvation is offered and accepted and God’s reign (and the joy and peace of living into and out of that reign) rules our lives. As beloved creatures, we are invited by Jesus to receive life and adoption, to become truly children of our Heavenly Father. When we accept that invitation and become followers of Jesus, we are given Jesus’ own Spirit to transform us so that our lives become the answer to the prayer at the center of Jesus’ own life: “Your Kingdom Come, O Father. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” That transformation is what the Sermon on the Mount and especially Matthew Chapter 6 is all about.

The three outlines presented here are as follows:

1. Closet Christians: How Secrecy Leads to Spirituality
2. The God Who Is Into Everything
3. Worrying Well

preferences, our desires. We may not seek the praise of others, but left alone we'll try to manipulate God for our own desires.

I believe this is why Jesus taught us to pray *corporately*, even in private, “*Our Father...Give us this day...forgive us our debts...*” This is why he taught his disciples together to pray in plural voice. And this is why St. Tertullian, a brilliant second century apologist wrote that we only truly learn that Jesus is the Son and God is our Father from the Church who is our Mother.¹

This is why we pray and sing the Lord's Prayer together in liturgical form, because we who desire to know God as King and Father and have his will and ways be part of every area of our lives *need each other* to accomplish it.

And I invite you at your next worship service to ask yourself: Is there any area of my life that I have not allowed the God who is both King and Father to demonstrate his love, to exercise his rule? And then open your eyes and pray—in the privacy of your own heart, surrounded by the community of disciples—to let God's Kingdom come, God's will be done in your life in that church, with those fellow believers in our Father's world.

Sermon 3 Worrying Well

Scripture

Matthew 6:19-34

¹⁹ “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; ²⁰ but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

²² “The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light; ²³ but if your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

²⁴ “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.

²⁵ “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? ²⁶ 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? ²⁷ And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? ²⁸ And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹ yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. ³⁰ 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? ³¹ Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ ³² For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³ But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

³⁴ “So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today. (NRSV)

Outline

Theme: If we learn to worry about the Kingdom of Heaven, we'll not have to worry about anything else.

How do we learn *kingdom worrying*? How do we learn to worry *well*?

1. Worrying well *starts with treasuring well.*
2. Worrying well *trusts the Fatherly love of the King.*

3. Worrying well *results* in only one worry: Living the Kingdom Today.

Conclusion: “Believers are those who act as if the gospel is true.”

Sermon Development

Sam is a successful guy who owns his own professional business. But like most dads with growing daughters, the high cost of college looming on the horizon can instantly get him running to the medicine cabinet for the BIG bottle of Tums.

At the same time he knows that his parents are pretty well off, that he’s an only child and well, frankly, they are getting up there in years. So armed with the bad news about how much of his parents’ estate would wind up being paid in taxes, he asked his Dad to make tax-free contributions to the grandkids’ college funds. Two eighty-year-olds spinning out the inheritance now in tax-free dollars so that the girls get college paid for and no one has to worry right?

But his Dad told him, to his surprise, that he couldn’t afford to do it. He needed to hang on to his money to make sure that he had enough to cover any medical costs for he and his wife in the coming years.

While certainly understanding his Dad’s concerns about living longer than his money lasts, Sam asked his Dad’s permission to review his financial arrangements. He had to be impressed by his father’s foresight, when he found that his father had indeed planned well to enough to insure that he and his wife could both stay in their own homes with round-the-clock nursing care—*until they were well over 150 years old.*

The son worries about escalating college costs, the father worries about escalating medical costs. Both worry about the uncertainty of the future. Worry is the most common human condition.

I think that Jesus really understood this. While he certainly was ministering to people who had far less material goods than we do, with a far simpler lifestyle, he must have heard so many conversations, he must have looked in so many eyes that were wide with worry. People must have looked at each other considering the call to follow him wondering if they would be able to survive.

In our text, the theme is unmistakable.

v. 25 *Do not worry about your life...*

v. 27 *Can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?*

v. 28 *Why do you worry about clothing...?*

v. 31 *Therefore do not worry.*

Four times in nine verses, He addresses their fears. But notice how he does it.

It’s *not*, “Everything will be fine. Don’t worry about the economy. You’ll always have a job.” It’s *not*, “Do not worry because there is plenty of money to go around.” It’s not that either. It’s *not*, “Stop caring about money, you really don’t need any of that stuff”... *It’s not that at all!*

Instead Jesus reassures his disciples of this *Kingdom* fact: *your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.* (v. 32). And then he says to them, *because your heavenly Father knows what you need,*

Strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

³⁴ *“So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today’s trouble is enough for today.*

Remember, Jesus taught these words to people who probably took them literally. They actually worried about what they would eat, drink, or wear. They actually didn’t know where TOMORROW’s food would come from and they meant tomorrow. What the first disciples and we have in common is not our economic status but our worries. So here in a nutshell is what Jesus does with his disciples’ worries: He folds them into God’s fatherly love.

He transforms them into Kingdom worrying. He teaches us to worry well. To worry not like the Gentiles, but to worry like those who know God as King and Father. Or to put it another way:

If we learn to worry about the Kingdom of Heaven, we'll not have to worry about anything else.

How do we learn *kingdom worrying*? How do we learn to be free from the worries of this world? How do we learn to worry *well*?

1. Worrying well starts with treasuring well.

Freedom from worry begins with whatever you invest in. Whatever you *treasure*. And frankly most of us get this one backward.

How many times have you heard a well-meaning person say, “Wherever your heart is, your money will be. Invest your heart in something and you’ll put your money there. Focus on getting your heart right and then you’ll get your finances right.”? Frankly, that is what some of us think the Bible teaches. We think it says, “Where your heart will be, there your treasure will be.” Right?

Nope. Jesus said exactly the opposite. *For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also... (v. 21).* Here’s the formula friends: *Our direction in life follows our hearts which follows our “treasures.”* Where you invest your time, money, energy, and ambition will direct your heart, the control panel, the executive function of your life. And that will guide you like the light of a car. You and I are more influenced by what we are holding onto, what we hold dear, what gives us security, what we treasure, than anything else.

This is why, for Jesus, one of the very first things Jesus talked about was their money, their livelihood, their security. Those who followed him left their fishing businesses and their livelihoods to do so. Those who welcomed him welcomed him into their homes not just their hearts. Those who sought to serve him had to be willing to trust him with not only their souls but their security.

If this was so in the first century when people lived far more simply than we do... If Jesus talked to them about their security because they were sick with worry then, in a world where people lived far more communally looking out for each other, caring for each other... If Jesus talked so much about this in the first century where most had so little, imagine what he would say today.

Jesus said that our treasure focuses our hearts and that our hearts are like the eyes that direct our path. If we are focused on the wrong things, our lives go dark. We become travelers who are careening down the road in the dead of night without headlights to illumine the way.

2. Worrying well trusts the Fatherly love of the King.

Remember this whole conversation is an invitation to live in the Kingdom. It is good news! Jesus is offering grace to people who are stressed and worried and fearful. So as he sits on that mountainside with his fledgling disciples around him, he looks at their worried faces and offers them *security*.

But not in “securities.” Not in investments either in barns or banks. Not in the stuff that you hold in your hand that can be stolen or moth eaten or rusted away. Instead he offers his Kingdom disciples the security of God’s *fatherly care*.

You know the way you feel when you look at your kids? You know the way that you would do anything, spend anything, give anything to make sure that they are cared for? That is the way God feels about you and that you can bank on.

Jesus says: “*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?*”³¹ *Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’*³² *For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.*”

Notice that Jesus doesn’t say: Why on earth do you want stuff? Why are you being so materialistic? Why do you even care about the things of this world? Notice he doesn’t say that at all? What he says is, “Your heavenly

Father knows what you need” so you don’t have to go around trying to clutch, grab, hoard, and get for yourself everything you can. All you have to do is trust the Fatherly love of the King. Trust.

This is the rub, isn’t it? This is the real issue for most of us. We DON’T trust God’s fatherly care because most of us, at some time or another, have been let down. And this is so very hard.

This is what faith is all about. Faith is not spouting out the right Sunday School answers. Faith is not saying some words or praying a prayer. Faith is so trusting the fatherly love of God that you can follow him, invest in, and dedicate your life to insuring that his “*Kingdom come, his will be done on earth...*”

For so many of us, our worries about tomorrow keep us from being faithful *today*.

Which leads us to our last and most important point:

3. Worrying well results in only one worry: Living the Kingdom Today.

For Jesus, the goal is not to become less materialistic, but to become more committed to the Kingdom. Jesus addresses our wallets and our worries because they keep us from living the Kingdom. So he concludes this whole section by trying to refocus our attention back to what we can genuinely worry about. Not tomorrow, not security, not striving to succeed but one thing and one thing only, one worry and one worry only: Living the Kingdom Today.

We will learn to worry well when all we worry about is expressing, experiencing, revealing, and furthering the Kingdom of heaven that Jesus proclaimed in our little corner of the world each and every day, one day at a time, all the while trusting that God’s fatherly care will attend to whatever we need.

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.

Conclusion:

Dr. Dallas Willard wrote in his book, the Divine Conspiracy, “Believers are those who act as if the gospel is true.”

What is the gospel? “The Kingdom of heaven has come near.” The “good news” is that Jesus is the Lord of the whole world and that the God who is King loves you like a father loves his children. God’s reign and God’s love are now present and available to us and nothing, nothing can separate us from the God who loves and will take care of it. To be a believer is to ACT as if that Gospel is true.

Do you believe it?

Do you believe Jesus when he says that what you treasure will direct your life?

Do you believe that God is a loving father who will care for you in every way?

And would anyone looking at the way you spend your money, invest your resources, and prioritize your life conclude that you believe the gospel—the good news—of Jesus when he says:

But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Tod Bolsinger has been the Senior Pastor of San Clemente Presbyterian Church in San Clemente, California, since 1997. Previously he served for ten years at First Presbyterian Church of Hollywood. He earned a Ph.D. in Theology and Master of Divinity from Fuller Theological Seminary. He teaches for Fuller Seminary and Denver Seminary, is the author of two books, *It Takes a Church to Raise a Christian* and *Showtime*, blogs at <http://bolsinger.blogs.com>, and consults for TAG Consulting. He can be emailed at todbol@me.com.