

“God Carries—Cast Your Worries!”

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The Old Testament lesson for today is taken from the book of Isaiah, chapter 46, verse 4. I’m reading from the New Revised Standard Version. “Even to your old age I am he, even when you turn gray I will carry you. I have made, and I will bear; I will carry and will save.” The gospel lesson is from Matthew, chapter 6, verses 24b through 27. “You cannot serve God and wealth. 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? 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?” This is God’s word for God’s people. Thanks be to God.

Let us pray. God touch our hearts and minds. Settle and calm us to focus on your word—that it might bring to our lives what we have need of this day. Grant understanding and draw us closer to be able to apply these Christ-like values to our living. Amen.

The verses read from the book of Matthew are a snippet from Jesus’ teaching on the Sermon on the Mount. The verses that were read today are difficult to understand, but if we focus on the first 6 words I think it makes it easier. Jesus sets us straight from the beginning and says, “You can’t serve God and wealth.” Yep, it’s either one or the other The next three verses, 25 through 27, seem like wishful thinking. The first impression I had after reading the verses was that they seemed disconnected from our lives and the American way of consumerism.

And because of this American consumerism, many of us spend too much time thinking about how we'll be able to pay our bills, get the kids through college, and so many other things that cause us to feel anxious, *but Jesus says to not worry.*

We've bought expensive homes, health care continues to go up dramatically, and our place of employment just keeps cutting back and cutting back on our salaries. Our cars breakdown, and we just spent a couple thousand dollars watching our dog die, *but Jesus says to not worry.*

When I read Jesus' words said about not worrying the words just kind of fell off the page. They seemed ridiculous and out of step with our society. I wished I could corner Jesus for a moment and share some thoughts and ask him a few questions. Like this for example. "But Jesus, don't you see, the American dream so many of us bought into said that if we worked hard we'll have a good and stable future for our families. It just hasn't panned out Jesus."

As I spent some quality time with Jesus I asked him this. "Jesus, how can I not worry about my future? My kids have their own lives and their own problems. I can't expect them to help me when they're so busy and they're having trouble making ends meet too? I'm supposed to be set in life at this point and what about the golden years Jesus? I find myself worrying whether we'll have enough."

Well, let's take a closer look at what Jesus said. First, he said not to worry. We're to live by faith and to trust God to provide for our material needs. Wait! Does that mean I don't need to work hard and live prudently and carefully? NOPE. I think we can say however that God will provide the basic things for our lives and take care of us. In verse 24, Jesus says we can't serve God and wealth at the same time. It means that as a disciple of Christ, we're to have balance in our lives. Fact is, the more we have materially the more we tend to worry. The more we borrow the more we're the slave to the lender.

When most of us got married and didn't have two dimes to rub together we were happy—really happy. It didn't take much to feel joyful. I remember Dan and me moving into our first cardboard box. For about a year our house was pretty much empty. We had a table, a couple chairs, and a stray cat. We really didn't care what we had. We were happy.

We use to walk down the block to Churches Fried Chicken and have dinner. Just not have to cook was about the best thing in the world. Life was simple and pretty much worry free, but before we knew it reality set-in. We grew up. We had kids. They needed things. They wanted things. Then . . . we get old and then older. Our kids were having kids. The economy dropped, and so on. You get the picture—life happens.

The crux of Jesus' message is about worry and anxiety. Bottom line is this. If you trust in God and value life in Christ you're called to a different set of priorities. A Christian's loyalty is to be solely to God. If it's not, then your loyalty is going to be at odds. It's going to be divided. Our human disposition may be to argue and try to find a middle way that can live for God *and wealth*, but God says it can't be done.

You can't love wealth and love God at the same time. It's one or the other. Do we trust in God or do we trust in the stock market to provide our security for the future? Having too much and allowing our kids and grandkids to want too much can have the end result of excessive worry and anxiety. And the end of that kind of a life is one that's separated from God.

The text draws an illustration about birds. Here in Monrovia every year at this time we see Canada geese flying above us. Every year God provides what they need. We know they're not worrying about food, clothes, and drink. Instinctively they seem to know that God will care for them. They don't hoard or store up for

themselves. The verses say that their heavenly Father will provide for them. Can we believe the same?

When we're challenged to obey God and not worry about tomorrow, think about this verse. Isaiah 46:4 says "Even to your old age I am he, even when you turn gray I will carry you. I have made, and I will bear; **I will carry** and will save." When times get difficult we can lean on God. When the economy drops, or we suffer a pay cut or become unemployed we can lean on God. When our kids didn't get that hoped for scholarship we can lean on God. In fact, we can do more than lean. If we know God personally, we find that God will carry us and brings us through. God said he would provide. In this passage, we're encouraged to live by faith and to trust God to provide.

I found some statistics online for us older folks. One article said there's evidence based on interviews with children and grandparents that children need their grandparents and vice-versa. The study shows that the bond between grandparents and grandchildren is second in emotional power and influence only to the relationship between parents and children. Grandparents affect the lives of their grandchildren, for good or ill, simply because they exist. Let's become the kind of people, parents, grandparents, and great grandparents that our children would look up to.

The verses we focused on this morning don't mean we shouldn't have possessions or money. We all need the necessities of life. I think this passage is talking about a life that's devoted to God and one who is *learning* to be a better disciple—one who is continuing to learn Christ-like values that God encourages. And if you're a believer, it means getting to church and worshipping God. It's one who is willing to make changes in their life.

Our goal is to trust our needs to a heavenly Father who will care and provide. Let's put our worries down. Let's cast them away from us and live with a heart and mind that's in pursuit of God. Let's give our grandchildren something to remember about us that's truly valuable and priceless—that we loved God and acted that love out.

Let's pray. We thank you for your presence here today God. Move in us and change us as we pursue you to become a better Christian disciple. Help us to show our kids and grandkids the love we have for you in all we do. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.