

What's in Your Wallet: Unlimited Possibilities
Second in a Series on Stewardship

Matt. 6:25-34

September 26, 2021

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Intro Witness Video - Casey Redwind

Prayer - Open us, Lord, to a deeper understanding of the unlimited possibilities found in you.

Message -

Several years ago I took up wood-turning; learning how to make bowls, candle sticks, pens, even simple Christmas ornaments. While I was learning how to use my lathe and shape the wood, if I made a mistake; like gouged the wood, caught an edge, or went too deep, the gentleman teaching me would always say, “that’s o.k., there are no mistakes, only design opportunities.” That along with his comment, “don’t worry about it, this stuff grows on trees,” often kept things in perspective.

It’s the same kind of thing when you look at the world today and find all kinds of reasons to be frustrated, weary, and skeptical and then someone comes along and points out something beautiful, creative, or even good in the situation. You might say they are a “glass half full” kind of person.

Of course, the opposite of that is when you are surrounded by something beautiful, like a majestic scene in nature, witnessing something profound like a child’s first steps, and you are caught up in the moment then someone interrupts the moment and points out that nature has too many bugs. They distract you with a complaint, or comments of what isn’t instead of what is. That would be a “glass half empty” kind of person.

When it comes to living out your faith, which are you? Do you see life, work, other people, situations in our country, and experiences around the world as half-full or half-empty? Do you see mistakes, mishaps, shortcomings, faults, and missteps as failure or as a design opportunity?

Knowing the answer to that question says a great deal, I think, about how you approach your walk with God and in turn how you understand or approach your giving and service to God.

What you seek is what you find, and what you look for is what you see. If you seek a life and faith that never challenges you, lets you stay in your comfort zone, where it is easy, safe, and comfortable that is what you will find and make of your faith - that is where you will stay. If you seek a life and faith of balance, meaning, service, transformation, growth, and authenticity that is what you will find and navigate through. If you seek material things, status, and recognition that is what you will find.

If you look for the negative, critical, and pessimism in the world; in people and situations, that is what you will see. If you look for despair, dishonesty, and discouragement it's everywhere. If you look for hope, love, kindness, compassion, and justice it's there too.

The challenge of this second week of our giving campaign is to reflect on that which we seek and look for. What is it you want or expect out of your life with God? What is it God's expectes? What is it you seek in your relationship with God, and how does your giving or acts of service reflect your answer?

We continue reading in the gospel of Matthew, chapter 6. Remember from last week, chapter 6 is a series of illustrations and instructions all with the same point - align your life with Jesus and prioritize your life with God being first. The examples in chapter six were serving those in need, prayer, fasting, and the giving in of your money. In all areas of our lives, the lesson is to make God the priority.

After twenty-four verses of instruction, we read a big "therefore." Anytime you read "so that," or "therefore" in the bible, it's time to pay attention. That is the signal that what follows is the crux of all that came before. It's the heart of what is being said.

Hear then, these words, and may our hearts and minds listen - Matt. 6:25-34

There isn't anything in those words that many of us, if not all of us, don't already know. Not a word that at some point, in one way or another, we haven't already been told. Then why is the lesson just as important and timely today as it was when Jesus spoke it?

Because then and now we are pulled, pushed, and persuaded to seek just about anything and everything but God. God was and is in competition with everything else out there. Church is in competition with every other option, event, and activity out there.

Every day we make choices and decisions about how we live our lives; how we interact with others, and engage with the world around us. Every day there is another reason, cause, or problem with the potential to divide and fracture us more than we already are.

Every day some of us in this very room and on-line, spend minute after minute, hour after hour, day after day worrying. Let's be honest, we all worry. We worry about what is, what was, and what is not. We worry about what has happened, what will happen, or what won't happen. We worry about what ifs, what abouts, and if onlys. We worry about what we know and what we don't know. We worry about being right or being wrong, being smart or being a fool. Whether it is about the clothes on our backs, the money in our pockets, or what others are doing or thinking about us or anything else, we worry.

It is in the midst of all that, that Jesus says, if you are earnestly seeking God and following my example, then stop worrying about such frivolous things! Trust me. Stop being pulled in every direction and worrying about things that really don't matter. "There is far more to your life than the food you put in your stomach, or the clothes on your back." In other words, there are way more important things you could spend your time, energy, resources, ideas, and talents on than the little things you allow yourself to get caught up in or bogged down by.

Notice Jesus doesn't say, "don't worry about the homeless, those with no family, those with no food, the strangers, or your neighbor." He doesn't say, "don't worry about injustices against the marginalized and against one another, don't worry about brokenness you can no longer bear, tragedy of the heart, or cruelty to those with no voice." Jesus didn't say that.

So it's not that Jesus is telling us don't worry about anything or don't feel bad, beat yourself up, or think you have less faith if you do worry. He is saying, don't worry about such shallow, frivolous, insignificant things because there is far more to life. God has far more for your life.

The crux of it all, church, is to seek God first in all things.

Seek God with your head; study God's word, learn what the Bible says and what it means to be a disciple / follower of Jesus, ask questions, be curious about God.

Seek God with your heart - through meditation, journaling, music, emotional health and connections, nature, art, and sharing experiences with others.

Seek to serve God with who you are - you don't have to be anyone but who God made you. Seek God with what you have, and where you are at any given moment. Let God use who you are and what you have.

When we do these things, church, we will discover that our wallets - what we give, has unlimited possibilities. When we let go of fear, shame, doubt, and the worry that holds us back, keeps us stuck...we are freed up to see, do, give, experience, and receive so much more - far more than we know.

Life is found in pursuit of the One who gives life, NOT in the pursuit of that which steals life. So seek God who is life giving, not life stealing. Seek God, who is life preserving, not life defeating. Look for what is good, beautiful, and true and trust that God is in the midst of what is not.

There are unlimited possibilities waiting for all of us in our relationship with God and one another...let's not be afraid (or worried) to give of ourselves and what we have. God will provide in ways you can't even imagine.

Amen

Pastoral Prayer

Come as you are - broken, sad, lonely;
Come as you are - frustrated, disappointed, angry
Come as you are - full of joy, grateful, happy
Come as you are - strong, courageous, full of hope
Come as you are - confused, overwhelmed, anxious

Come as you are and know that God loves and accepts you just as you are

Dear God,

Find us in the chaos that surrounds us and help us see the beauty of the day we were given. Find us in the business that envelops us and help us be still in this moment with you. Find us in our own situation and circumstances that consume us and help us to have hope, gain perspective, and find peace.

Hear us as we pray for one another and for ourselves.

Hear us as we admit our faults and ask for your promise of love, forgiveness, and grace. Hear us as we bring before you the needs, pain, and sadness of many here and everywhere. Hear us as we seek your wisdom, long for your comfort, and ache for understanding. Hear us as we shout with a loud voice and cry out with a whisper. Hear us as we say the names of those who need you and ask you to stand in the gap, providing courage, healing, strength, answers, and direction.

We pray to put you first in our lives.

We pray to serve you with who we are and what we have.

We pray to let go of our worries, doubts, and fears.

We pray to give you our best and first, not our worst and leftovers.

We pray to recognize you in our midst.

We pray as many and as one in the name of Jesus who showed us the way...

Our Father...