



WEEKLY STUDY February 12 – February 18, 2023

(Use this guide to individually or with a group dive deeper into this week's sermon.)

Our sermon series for February is: "Fear Not"

Let's talk about fear! Is it something that's just an expected part of life? Does fear always stand in the way of our doing what we need to do? What place does fear have for us as followers of Jesus? How do we follow Jesus words to 'fear not' when it seems as if there is much to fear in our world?

Our scripture this week is Luke 12: 22-34 (CEB)

"Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'Therefore, I say to you, don't worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. There is more to life than food and more to the body than clothing. Consider the ravens, the neither plant nor harvest, they have no silo or barn, yet God feeds them. You are worth so much more than birds! Who among you by worrying can add a single moment to your life? If you can't do such a small thing, why worry about the rest? Notice how the lilies grow. They don't wear themselves out with work and they don't spin cloth. But I say to you that even Solomon in all his splendor wasn't dressed like one of these. If God dresses grass in the field so beautifully, even though it's alive today and tomorrow it's thrown into the furnace, how much more will God do for you, you people of weak faith! Don't chase after what you will eat and what you will drink. Stop worrying. All the nations of the world long for these things. Your Father knows that you need them. Instead, desire his kingdom and these things will be given to you as well.

'Don't be afraid, little flock, because your Father delights in giving you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to those in need. Make for yourselves wallets that don't wear out – a treasure in heaven that never runs out. No thief comes near there, and no moth destroys. Where your treasure is, there your heart will be too.'"

- 1)** In our second week on "Fear Not" our focus was on Worry as a form of fear. Pastor Sam reminded us that worry is universal. It's natural and expected to worry over things that are happening and will happen. At the same time, Pastor Sam reminded us that we worry over things that have not happened and likely will not happen. The sermon led us to considering how to put worry into it's correct place if we practice shifting our perspective and leaning into the abundance of Jesus.

Question: What comes to mind for you when you consider worry? What for you are examples of appropriate worry? What examples do you think about that fall into the category of worry over things that have not happened and likely will not happen.

2) Years ago I was in a workshop where we were encouraged to enter in to a time of recalling Bible stories. The leader gave one simple sentence from the story, then we were to add details and plot points. We had to use the phrases “but before that” and “after that.” It was helpful to me to begin to see the linkage between a selected scripture passage and what came before and after to more fully understand what was happening. Pastor Sam on Sunday provided for us an explanation of the “But before that” story that set the context for our Sunday reading. Jesus tells the story of the rich man who produces more and builds more storage for what he has produced and then suddenly dies. Jesus turns from that story to say, “Therefore I tell you do not worry about your life, what you will eat or wear.” Jesus calls us to look to nature to see what God has provided. Jesus us calls us to “stop and consider” what is before us. I find this particularly difficult to remember because our culture is one of “storing up.” I think about all the lectures regarding saving enough for retirement. But old age is not guaranteed and so often even when we spend our life saving & hoarding instead of giving away, we still never feel we have “enough.” The “storing up” is based on the fear of scarcity. And it negates the evidence of abundance given by Jesus in our scripture today.

Question: What are the stories of scarcity told in our culture? What behaviors are encouraged when we have a fear of scarcity? What behaviors are encouraged when we live out of the evidence of abundance?

3) One technique Pastor Sam talked about to help us manage our worry was to stop and ask, “Is this fact? Or is this feeling?” She introduced us to the image (included in this guide) that helps us separate what is in our control and what is out of our control. Worry about what is in our control leads us to actions and plans that help. Worry about what is out of our control leads us into spiraling worry that paralyzes us.

Question: What is something worrying you? When you look at the image included here, is it helpful in separating out where you can make plans or take actions to address the worry - and where the worry is out of your control and thus will only make you more anxious?

4) Pastor Sam shared how talking with her friend, and our fellow church member, Laura Lee Gilliland Paha, helped her I thinking about worry. Laura Lee told Sam the important thing is to remain in the present . We cannot worry about the past. It is over. We cannot worry about the future. We don’t know how it will unfold. In the present, we combat worry with the gratitude and blessing that is right in front of us.

Question: What are the practices, the prayers, the meditations, the settings that help you stay in the present? For what are you grateful right now that enables you put aside your worry for this day?

Prayer: (Our prayer this week is The Serenity Prayer by Reinhold Niebuhr which we used as our Affirmation of Faith in Sunday worship.)

“Grant us the serenity to accept the things we cannot change,

**Courage to change the things we can,
 And wisdom to know the difference.
 Living one day at a time,
 Enjoying one moment at a time,
 Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace.
 Taking, as God did, this sinful world as it is, not as we would like it.
 Trusting that God will make all things right, if we surrender to God's will.
 That we may be reasonable happy in this world and supremely happy in the next. AMEN"**

Weekly Challenge: Use the Serenity Prayer each day in your time of study, meditation, and prayer. Reflect on the moments of the day that you were able to enjoy.

(Weekly study guide prepared by Rev. MaryJane Pierce Norton)

