

March 18, 2011

“Echoes of the Heart”

Reflections on Life and Community Living

Don't worry! In the incredibly fast-pace world we live in, it's hard *not* to let the events that swirl around us make us anxious and unsettled. In our current economic climate, will our deficits—both national and with our states—ever be brought under control? Add to this the still-frightening levels of unemployment and underemployment and we can't help but wonder, where is all of this heading? Will we ever *get our life back*?

Daunting questions, with no easy answers.

A biblical response to this, from Jesus' *Sermon on the Mount* (Matthew 5-7) is, very simply, *Don't worry!*

Imagine that! *Don't worry*, says the text.

This calls to mind the popular song of the late 80's, by Bobby McFerrin, *Don't Worry, Be Happy*. It won the 1989 Grammy Awards for Song of the Year, Record of the Year, and Best Male Pop Vocal Performance.

On the surface, *don't worry, be happy* sounds trite and simplistic; not at all realistic. Yet, these are the words of Jesus to the gathered throngs on the hillside that day.

Don't worry about your life, he says; what you will eat or drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Look at the birds of the air! They neither sow nor reap; and yet, look how God looks after them.

And consider the lilies of the field; how they grow, without either toiling or spinning. And yet, even King Solomon in all of his glory was not clothed like one of these.

The point is, if God cares this much for these *birds of the air* and the *grass of the fields*, how much more will God care for us?

Trusting the love. What this is about is *trust*. At some point in our lives, we have to *give ourselves* to life and to our life's unfolding in trust. In spite of anything about us—status, wealth, wisdom, whatever it is—we can't control all the variables of our lives. At some point we have to let go and *trust*—in the sheer goodness of creation and in the goodness of the Creator.

In his famous book, *The Art of Loving*, psychologist Eric Fromm says that *loving relationships* are the necessary ingredient for a fulfilled life. On some level, we all know this and yet, Fromm adds, too often in our everyday lives, we take it for granted.

Taking it a little deeper, Fromm notes, *The truth is: loving relationships are*

everything. We either love or we die.

That's a powerful affirmation—almost too simple and, yet, transparently true. And to this, the *voice from the hillside* that day might add: *trust the love.*

Trust is a decision. If we think about it, *trust* is a decision. We either trust or we don't. And it makes all the difference.

There is a bridge in South America made of interlocking vines which support a precariously-swinging wooden walkway hundreds of feet above a river. Author Philip Yancey once stood at the edge of the chasm trying to muster up the courage to cross over to the other side.

I knew the bridge had supported thousands of people over the years, he said. Still, there was something in me holding me back.

The engineer in me wanted to weigh all the factors: measure the stress tolerance of the vines, test the wood for termites, and survey all the bridges in the area for one that might be stronger.

Of course, I could have spent a lifetime determining whether or not the bridge was trustworthy. But eventually, if I wanted to get to the other side, I had to take that first step of faith and trust.

And when I finally put my weight on the bridge and walked across, even though my heart was pounding and my knees were shaking, I was making a statement—to myself, to be sure. I was turning my life over, in trust.

Again, trust is a decision of the mind; it is an ascent of the heart. It is what we must do to make it to the other side of the many challenges that come our way in life.

At the end of the day, all any of us can do is trust in the goodness that surrounds us and in the transforming power of love.