

## **“Don’t worry!”**

**February 27, 2011**

*Text: Isaiah 49:8-16, Matthew 6:24-34*

### I.

We live in complex and challenging times, particularly with regard to financial matters. Even though the economy seems to be showing signs of recovery, still, unemployment (and underemployment) loom as possible, long-term problems. Given how we (now) outsource everything, we wonder: where are these jobs going to come from?

High tech? The service industry? I don’t think we know ... and it makes us anxious.

But the BIG ONE hovering over us is the **deficit**. As a nation, as states, we’re broke. And how to get our national debt and deficit under control is not something we’re finding easy agreement on as we move along.

All around our country, people are anxious about how all of this is going to play out. As Americans, what kind of a future are any of us going to have, to say nothing of our children and our children’s children? And we haven’t even mentioned education ... and health care and a host of other issues.

With the economy sputtering along ... with no agreement in Washington in sight—on solutions to the deficit—these are anxious times.

- Look at what’s been going on in Wisconsin this past week ... around budget resolution and workers’ rights; and similar waves of protest are rising up in other states as well.
- And then, around the world, we have the grass roots national protests—protests for freedom and for a more participatory form of government. It all started in Tunisia and Egypt and is now sweeping across the Arab world. We’re on the edge of our seats with expectation, for sure, but also with anxiety.

What’s happening? Where is all of this going to end? Again, we’re living in uneasy and unsettling times.

### II.

The word from God this morning, in response to all of this, is ... **Don’t worry!** Imagine that! **Don’t worry**, Jesus says.

This reminds me of the popular song, back in the late 80’s: **Don’t Worry, Be Happy**, by Bobby McFerrin. It won the 1989 Grammy Awards for *Song of the Year*, *Record of the*

Year, and Best Male Pop Vocal Performance.

*Here's a little song I wrote ...  
Might want to sing it note for note ...  
Don't worry! Be happy ...*

***Don't worry, be happy.*** On the surface, this sounds trite and simplistic and, of course, not at all realistic.

Yet, these are Jesus' words 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 (they do virtually nothing) ... 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 Solomon in all 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?

So, ***Don't worry,*** says Jesus, but strive first for the kingdom of God, for the realm of God's love and tender mercies.

### III.

What this is all about, friends, is trust. At some point in our lives, we have to give ourselves to *life* and to *the creative process* in trust. In spite of anything about us (i.e., power, wealth, wisdom—you name it), 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.

We have to trust in love ... mercy ... compassion ... forgiveness ... generosity of spirit. In part, this is what Jesus means when he urges us: ***Don't worry but strive first for the kingdom of God.***

In his famous book, ***The Art of Loving***, psychologist **Eric Fromm** says that *loving relationships* are the necessary ingredient for a FUFILLED life. (Well, we all know that.) Yet, he observes that too often in our everyday lives, we take this for granted (And, no doubt, we do).

Going on and taking it a little deeper, he says, *But the gospel truth is: love and loving relationships are everything. We either love or we die.* In a real sense, Fromm is right.

And to this, Jesus might add, *we have to trust the love*. This is good advice for us in all of our relationships: *trust the love*. And of course, there are many faces of love: *mercy, compassion, forgiveness, generosity, kindness, patience, unconditional acceptance*. Trust the love!

Trust, friends, is a decision. There comes a point in relationships or in life-situations where we either *trust* or we don't. And it makes a difference. It's a decision we have to make.

#### IV.

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 decide whether or not to cross over the bridge to the other side.

*I knew the bridge had supported thousands of people over many years, he said, and even as I stood there I could see people confidently passing over. Still, there was something in me that held me back.*

- *The engineer in me wanted to weigh all the factors; measure the stress tolerance of the vines ...test the wood for termites; 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 cross to the other side, I had to take a step of faith and trust.*

And when I finally put my weight on the bridge and, indeed, 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's an ascent of the soul.

Still, in the face of so much global and national and local turmoil, it's hard to trust. We feel overwhelmed, out of control. Sometimes, too, we feel forgotten and invisible.

#### V.

Think of all the thousands, even millions who have lost so much in the crashing housing market of these past few years—people who have lost their equity, their life-savings they were counting on for retirement; others have lost their pension—their health care, too.

And then we hear about the obscene bonuses that so many executives have received—

and continue to receive—in corporate America and on Wall Street. We see the widening gap between the rich and the poor spiraling ridiculously out of control; and we feel invisible ... like no one sees us ... like the forces of the world—of greed and looking out for #1—have overtaken us and shoved us to the margins of life.

Easily, we feel forgotten and invisible ...

Our reading from Second Isaiah has a word of hope for us. Second Isaiah, of course, was the great prophet of the Exile, the period of immense suffering and deprivation when the Israelites were off in Babylonian exile for close to fifty years. They'd lost everything. Darkness and despair were everywhere. How, indeed, would they ever have a life again?

At times, we feel like this, too, don't we? Will we ever get our life back? In countless ways, the Exile is a metaphor for our times; although, from all we know, they had it much worse.

The prophet is reminding his people that they are NOT forgotten. To his people, he says:

***Come out! Show yourselves!*** Do not despair!

*Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth;  
Break forth, O mountains, into singing!  
For the Lord has comforted his people,  
and will show compassion on his suffering ones.*

In other words, God remembers God's people. A new day is on the horizon.

## VI.

And so—therefore—says the prophet—to Israel, but also to us: *Don't hide ... don't retreat from life; don't become a prisoner to the gloom that at times seems to be all about us.*

Check it out, says Isaiah: *Can a woman forget her nursing-child? Of course not! Or show no compassion for the child of her womb?* No way!

For *our lives are inscribed*, the prophet assures us, *on the palms of God's hands*. God cannot forget us.

So, ***Don't worry***, says Jesus. ***Strive only for the kingdom of God and for the realm of God's love and tender mercies.***

So, what are we to do? For sure, it's hard not to worry under the shadow of these uncertain times. Still, doesn't Jesus have a point? About not worrying and placing our ultimate trust in God?

In a sense, friends, that's all there is ... to seek the best ... aim for the highest; in other words: to give ourselves to the Spirit, to the sheer goodness of life, in TRUST that there's an ultimate goodness to the universe that will prevail.

## VII.

Standing outside a K-Mart, amidst a pouring rain, a six-year old little girl—beautiful brown skin, full of innocence and life—suddenly cries out to her mother:

**Mom, let's run through the rain!**

Mom was caught a little off guard, it turns out ... as memories of rain and childhood began to dance through her imagination—rain, splashing freely against the windows and on the sidewalk.

**Come on, mom, let's run through the rain!** her daughter cried out again.

*But we'll get soaked ... it's raining too hard. Let's wait til it lightens up a bit.*

**Come on, mom, let's go for it! We can do it! We'll be alright! Remember, that's what you said this morning.**

Pausing, reflectively, the mother asked, *When did I say that?*

**Remember, when you were talking to daddy about his cancer, you said if God can get us through this, God can get us through anything. Come on, mom!**

The young mother paused again, realizing this was an important moment for her little girl—a moment of affirmation and reassurance. It was a time when innocent trust can be nurtured so it can burst into faith.

*Okay, honey, you're absolutely right, the mom said. Let's run through the rain!*

Again, trust is a decision. It's a decision of faith; of faith in the goodness of Creation, in God's creative hand and in the transforming power of LOVE.

Trust the love, friends ... trust the love ...

**All praise be unto God! Amen!**

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