

LIVING A TRUSTFUL LIFE

PREACHED: December 9, 1956

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 6:24 - 34.

LET US PRAY: Help us, Our Father, to be master of ourselves that we may become the servants of others. Take our lips and speak through them. Take our minds and think through them. And take our hearts and set them on fire. Amen.

### "LIVING A TRUSTFUL LIFE"

There's a story of a six year old boy visiting the seashore for the first time. The first day out on the beach, he received a terrible sun burn. A few days later after the sting had left his sun-burn, he noticed that he was beginning to peel. This was all very new to him. He had never been sun-burn before; he had never had the experience of having his skin peel. He stood in the bathroom before the mirror and remarked: ONLY SIX YEARS OLD....AND I'M GOING ALL TO PIECES!

His words serve to remind us of the feelings of frustration that so often come over us. The experiences of life jar us and shake us until we feel that we're going all to pieces.

Family problems may be troubling some people.....

Uncertainty and insecurity may be pressing in on the minds of others.....

Feelings of Loneliness may be tearing at the hearts of some individuals.....

Our daily pattern of living is often broken into by things we hadn't counted on.....

And while we face such problems as these, the great enemy of FEAR takes hold. It comes into our lives in the form of worry. We all know what a destructive thing worry is!

It ruins digestion and causes stomach ulcers.....

It interferes with sound sleep and forces us to face another day unrested and irritable.....

Worry and fear bring on heart disease, high blood pressure and nervous disorders....

JESUS knew well this universal plague of fear. He was witness to the effect of fear on the minds and the bodies of men. Many times he spoke on the subject. He had the only real solution to the problem of fear. It is complete trust in God.

Jesus yearned to establish the faith of men in a loving, powerful and trustworthy God so that they might escape the ill effects of worry and fear. His prescription for living a trustful life, a life free from tension, is presented to us in the ten verses of the Sermon on the Mount which was read for our scripture lesson this morning.

There are three aspects of this trustful life that Jesus surely wanted to bring to our attention.

GOD PROVIDES AND CARES FOR OUR NEEDS.

The first thought is that the TRUSTFUL LIFE is based on the recognition that God provides and cares for our needs.

Jesus understood people. He knew that the passionate desire for the goods of life often produced worry and fear in the minds of men. He also recognized that when people begin to depend on THINGS for support, their sense of need for the support of God is lessened!

A modern proof of the extent of such fear was seen in the result of a Gallup Poll held in the spring of 1952. A cross section of men and women living in all parts of the country were asked the following questions:

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY IS YOUR BIGGEST WORRY THESE DAYS?

WHAT IS IT THAT DISTURBS YOU THE MOST? .....

Nearly half of those questioned indicated that money was the source of their chief fear in life. Money was the number one cause of worry. The number two cause of worry was the threat of future war. This was listed by 21% of those polled. IN OTHER WORDS, MORE THAN TWICE AS MANY PEOPLE WERE WORRIED ABOUT MATERIAL GOODS AND MONEY THAN ABOUT WAR. And this in one of the most prosperous periods in our nations history. Taken together then, money and the future added up to 66% of our worries. It's no wonder then that Jesus sought to release men from the grip of fear.

AND HOW DID HE DO IT? He did it by assuring them of the greatness and the providence of God. God provides and cares for our needs. Jesus

Jesus pointed to the world of nature around them. The birds of the air are fed....

The flowers of the field are clothed.....

Even the perishable grass is not forgotten.....

If God takes care of these humble objects, then he surely will not fail man.

Take therefore no thought, saying,  
What shall we eat? or What shall  
we drink? or Wherewithal shall we  
be clothed? .....

IN ALL OF THIS, Jesus is making the point that God, having given the gift of life, will likewise sustain it.

Now we must be on guard not to misinterpret his words. In these passages, Jesus in no way is arguing against work or planning or saving. He isn't speaking for idleness or neglect of responsibility. I think that J. B. Phillips in his translation of the Gospels has the key to the real meaning of the words of Jesus. He interprets it in this fashion:

"So don't worry and don't keep saying,  
'What shall we eat, what shall we drink,  
or what shall we wear? That is what  
pagans are always looking for; your  
heavenly Father knows that you need  
them all. Set your heart on His King-  
dom and His goodness, and all these  
things will come to you as a matter of  
course.'....."

Jesus is saying that anxiety and worry are totally unproductive. To be sure, we must take some thought about food, clothing, health and the future, **BUT WE MUSTN'T LET THEM BECOME THE GOALS OF OUR LIVING!** If we do, they will become great burdens to our soul and we will be anxious and fearful. How then is this to be avoided?

The answer is simple and yet profound. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God....and all these things shall be added unto you." The goal of life then is to know God.

To love him.....To give ourselves in service to him....

And to trust him.....

The fact is that such a trust requires a bigger idea of God than most of us have. Our God is a great God! He is the creator and sustainer of the universe. He causes the seeds to grow and multiply.....the sun to shine....the season to roll. He has established the laws of nature and life beyond our understanding.....

This is our God, A GOD STRONG ENOUGH, AND BIG ENOUGH TO TAKE CARE OF US.....

"Shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith....."

God provides and cares for our needs!

DETACHMENT FROM THE DISTURBING  
EVENTS OF OUR TIME.

The second principle of the trustful life which Jesus would have us see is that the TRUSTFUL LIFE

REQUIRES A SENSE OF DETACHMENT FROM THE DISTURBING EVENTS OF THE TIME.

"Don't worry at all then about tomorrow. Tomorrow can take care of itself. One day's trouble is enough for one day."

Jesus here is not ignoring the existence of trouble. He admits it. What he is saying is this: THAT TROUBLES CAN BEST BE MET BY DEALING WITH THEM ONE AT A TIME. God will give us the measure of strength needed for the troubles of tomorrow when they come, just as he does for those of today. When we live with God, we can afford to live day by day, because we have a divine buffer between us and the disturbing events of today and tomorrow.

Often we wear ourselves out because we have not learned to do one thing at a time. A tennis player could never win a match if his mind were continually upon the whole match and the number of points he needed to win. No - he goes out and wins the game point by point. And yet we get restless, fatigued and worn out because we haven't learned to meet our work and our problems one by one. That was the method of Jesus -

going from task to task; doing one thing at a time, and pouring his whole energy and personality into that particular task.

"Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof....."

That is: LEARN TO MEET LIFE A DAY AT A TIME!

The man who trusts God is in the world, but not of it. He has a heavenly perspective which enables him to detach himself from the endless stream of events in order not to be hurt by them.

Now it must be insisted that this sense of detachment which is part of the trustful life, doesn't mean isolation from the responsibilities and pain of living. Jesus never interpreted life that way. He never retreated from a struggle. He did something far more spirited than that. He kept his life within the focus of the providence of God. In the midst of everchanging ways on earth, he lived life to its fullest but always within the framework of eternal values. In the words of George A. Buttrick:

"Jesus conquered worry by keeping his eyes and mind on the main business of life. In this faith, troubles can be met and mastered. Sickness can be turned into sympathy and sorrow into insight....."

Our detachment from the disturbing events of life grows out of our attachment to the things of God. When we venture to live for the things that are really important, we discover so very much that is unimportant. The angry circumstances of life cannot touch for long the person who lives a trustful life with Christ in God.

A WILLINGNESS TO FOLLOW  
THE GUIDANCE OF GOD.

Jesus, in the third place, would have us know that the TRUSTFUL LIFE IMPLIES A WILLINGNESS TO FOLLOW THE GUIDANCE OF GOD.

Having faith in God, we must then learn to trust him. Far too often we want our own way instead of being willing to SEEK and FIND and FOLLOW God's will for our lives. In this section of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus challenges us to give our lives and affairs in complete surrender

to God. This is the one sure and final cure for worry and care. It is the source of personal power and peace of mind.

This principle was put quaintly by an old Egyptian sage in these words:

"The boatman reaches the landing, partly by pulling and partly by letting go. The archer strikes the target, partly by pulling and partly by letting go."

So it is. The reason we worry so much about the future is that we ourselves push and pull too hard and too continuously. We strain and torment ourselves over our plans and our hopes.

We need to let go and let God take over.....

We need to adjust our plans to his master plan.....

We need to know that personal achievement doesn't come by human effort alone. It comes as our human powers are harnessed to the divine power.....

Carl Erskine, star pitcher for the Brooklyn Dodgers, learned this technique the hard way. After a brilliant start in the major leagues, he suddenly began to fail and soon was farmed back to the minor leagues. He came to the conclusion that his thinking had been just as much at fault as his pitching arm. He had pushed himself too hard. He had worried about success too much. When he later returned to the Dodgers, he had learned the secret of living and working with-out fear. He had learned to work in partnership with divine resources. Speaking of his experiences, he said:

"Once back in the majors, the question in my mind was, 'Could I stick?'. I began to concentrate more on positive thinking. My prayers before a game now are not for victory, but that I be in tune with God's way. If my mind gets a sense of rhythm and coordination, my body does too! Confusion and pressure then bother me less. If I neglect this meditation, call it an inside pitch, my mental conditioning is not complete....."

So often we pass over this "Mental conditioning" in our lives. When we discover its possibilities, we'll never play the game of life without it.

We find it when we pray not for what we want, but for what God wants.....

We find it when we pray not for success or health, but that God may use us for his purposes.....

we find it when we pray not for the absence of struggle, but for strength to struggle for the will of God.....

We find it when we pray not for an easy comfortable future, but that God may be our companion whatever the journey.....

When we do this, we will then be free from worry and fear. We will then be able to stand on our own feet in the confidence and assurance that God will never let us fall. We will then know that if we take care of today, God will take care of all the tomorrows.....

#### OF SUCH IS THE TRUSTFUL LIFE!

FIRST: It is based on the recognition that God provides and cares for our needs.

SECOND: It requires a sense of detachment from the disturbing events of our time.

THIRD: It implies a willingness to follow the guidance of God in all our affairs.

"When by fear my heart is daunted  
Thou dost hold me in Thy hand;

Prayerless, anxious, vainly haunted,  
Thou dost make my courage stand:

Foolish worries, fretting troubles  
Melt away at Thy command."

#### LET US PRAY:

Our Father, grant that what we have heard with our ears, we may believe in our hearts, and what we believe in our hearts, we may practice in our lives. Amen.

## "LIVING A TRUSTFUL LIFE"

There's a story of a six year old boy visiting the seashore for the first time. The first day out on the beach, he received a terrible sun-burn. A few days later after the sting had left his sun-burn, he noticed that he was beginning to peel. This was all very new to him. He had never been sun-burn before; he had never had the experience of having his skin peel. He stood in the bathroom before the mirror and remarked: ONLY SIX YEARS OLD, AND I'M GOING ALL TO PIECES!

These words serve as a reminder of the feelings of frustration that so often come over us. The experiences of life jar us and shake us until we feel that we're going all to pieces.

Family problems may be troubling some folk...

Uncertainty and insecurity may be pressing in on the minds of some people...

Our daily pattern of living is broken into by things we hadn't counted on...

And while we face problems such as these, the great enemy of FEAR takes hold. It comes into our lives in the form of WORRY. We all know what

a destructive thing worry is!

It ruins digestion and causes stomach ulcers..

It interferes with sound sleep and forces us to face another day unrested and irritable...

Worry and fear bring on heart disease, high blood pressure and nervous disorders...

Worry and fear play havoc with one's life....

JESUS KNEW WELL this universal plague of fear. He was witness to the effect of fear on the minds and bodies of men. Many times he spoke on the subject. He had the only real solution to the problem of fear. It's no psychological trick. IT IS COMPLETE TRUST IN GOD!

Jesus yearned to establish the faith of men in a loving, powerful and trustworthy God so that they might escape the ill effects of worry and fear. His prescription for living a trustful life, a life free from tension and anxiety, is presented to us in the ten verses of the Sermon on the Mount which I read for our scripture lesson this morning.

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MATERIAL GOODS AND MONEY THAN ABOUT WAR. And this in one of the most prosperous periods in our nation's history. Taken together then, money and the future added up to 66 per cent of our worries! It's no wonder then that Jesus sought to release men from the grip of this enemy fear.

AND HOW DID HE DO IT? He did it by assuring them of the greatness and the providence of God. God provides and cares for our needs. Jesus pointed to the world of nature around them. The birds of the air are fed....

The flowers of the field are clothed....

Even the perishable grass is not forgotten. If God takes care of these humble objects, then he surely will not fail man....

"Take therefore no thought saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or, 'Wherewithal shall we be clothed?'....."

IN ALL OF THIS, Jesus is making the point that God, having given the gift of life, will likewise sustain it.

We must be on guard to not misinterpret his words. In these passages, Jesus in no way is

arguing against work or planning or saving. He isn't speaking for idleness or neglect of responsibility. I think that J. B. Phillips in his translation of the Gospels has the key to the real meaning of Jesus' words....

In place of the "Take no Thought..." passages so familiar to us from the King James' Version, he says:

Page 12.

Jesus is saying that anxiety and worry are totally inproductive. To be sure, we must take some thought about food, clothing, health and the future, BUT WE MUSTN'T LET THEM BECOME THE GOALS OF OUR LIVING! If we do, they will become great burdens to our soul and we will be anxious and fearful. How then is this to be avoided...

The answer is both simple and profound.

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God....and all these things shall be added unto you." The goal of life then is to know God.....

To love him.....serve him.....and trust Him....

Possessing such a faith we can never be distracted by the cares of earthly living....

The fact is that SUCH A TRUST requires a bigger idea of God than most of us have. OUR GOD IS A GREAT GOD.....

He is the creator and sustainer of the universe..

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"Don't worry at all then about tomorrow. Tomorrow can take care of itself. One day's trouble is enough for one day."

Jesus here is not ignoring the existence of

trouble. He admits it. What he is saying is this - that troubles can best be met by dealing with them one at a time. God will give us the measure of strength needed for the troubles of tomorrow when they come, just as he does for those of today. When we live with God, we can afford to live day by day, because we have a divine buffer between us and the disturbing events of today and tomorrow.

Often we wear ourselves out because we have not learned to do one thing at a time. While vacationing last month, I was privileged to see a no-hit, no-run baseball game pitched by Mel Parnell of the Boston Red Sox. The thought came into mind that Parnell could not have pitched that perfect game had his mind been on the whole game... on the total number of batters he had to face and get out before he had a no-hit game. That would have ruined him. Instead he pitched that game - pitch by pitch - batter by batter - and inning by inning. At the end of the game, he had a no-hit, no-run game. And yet we get worn out, restless and fatigued - we go to pieces because we have not learned to meet our problems and

our tasks ONE BY ONE! That was the method of Jesus - going from task to task and pouring his whole energy and personality into the task that he was concerned with at one particular moment. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." That is, MEET LIFE A DAY AT A TIME!

The man who trusts God is in the world, but not of it. He has a heavenly perspective which enables him to detach himself from the endless stream of events in order not to be hurt by them.

It must be insisted that this sense of detachment which is part of the trustful life, doesn't mean isolation from the responsibilities and pain of living. Jesus never interpreted life that way. He never retreated from a struggle. He did something far more spirited than that. He kept his life within the focus of the providence of God. In the midst of everchanging ways on earth, he lived life to its fullest but always within the framework of eternal values. In the words of George A. Buttrick:

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troubles can be met and mastered. Sickness can be turned into sympathy and sorrow into insight."

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So it is.... The reason we worry so much about the future is that we ourselves push and pull too hard and too continuously. We strain and torment ourselves over our plan and our hopes. WE NEED TO LET GO AND LET GOD TAKE OVER.

WE NEED TO ADJUST OUR PLANS TO HIS MASTER PLAN.

WE NEED TO KNOW THAT PERSONAL ACHIEVEMENT DOESN'T COME BY HUMAN EFFORT ALONE. IT COMES AS OUR HUMAN POWERS ARE HARNESSSED TO THE DIVINE POWERS....

Carl Erskine, star pitcher for the Brooklyn Dodgers, learned this technique the hard way. After a brilliant start in the major leagues, he suddenly began to fail and soon was farmed back to the minor leagues. He came to the conclusion that his thinking had been just as much at fault as his pitching arm. He had pushed himself too hard. He had feared failure too much. He had worried about success too much. When he later

returned to the Dodgers, he had learned the secret of living and working without fear. He had learned to work in partnership with divine resources. Speaking of his experience, he said:

"Once back in the majors, the question in my mind was, 'Could I stick?'. I began to concentrate more on positive thinking. My prayers before a game now are not for victory, but that I be in tune with God's way. If my mind gets a sense of rhythm and coordination, my body does too! Confusion and pressure then bother me less. If I neglect this meditation - call it an **INSIDE PITCH** - my mental conditioning is not complete."

So often we pass over this "mental conditioning" in our lives. When we discover it possibilities, we'll never pitch a game in life without it.

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We find it when we pray not for the absence of struggle, but for strength to struggle for the will of God.....

We find it when we pray not for an easy comfortable future, but that God may be our companion whatever the journey.....

When we do this we will then be free from worry and fear.

We will then be able to stand on our own feet in the confidence and assurance that God will never let us fall. We will then know that if we take care of today, God will take care of all the tomorrows.

Of such is the trustful life!

It is based on the recognition that God provides and cares for our needs.

It requires a sense of detachment from the disturbing events of our time.

It implies a willingness to follow the guidance of God in all our affairs.

"SEEK YE FIRST THE KINGDOM  
OF GOD AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS  
AND ALL THESE SHALL BE ADDED  
UNTO YOU."

Let us Pray: