

Matthew 6:25-33

This year's stewardship campaign is called MAKE IT SIMPLE. The four themes we'll study are to help us look at our lives from the stewardship point of view. And so I'll try to keep it simple. ☺

Today we'll talk about how following Jesus affects our lives as stewards of God's blessings. We'll contemplate the words from Sermon on the Mount that talk about worry. And it makes sense that we should begin with this text. For if we want to truly follow our Lord Jesus as his disciples and as stewards of his gifts, our lives cannot be driven by worry. For worry ties our hands, it brings us down, and discourages us; it can become the biggest obstacle of our everyday lives. And the reality is that we do worry about many things. We worry about how we'll be able to pay the bills, about keeping our jobs, about getting into right schools, making right choices with raising the kids, about very trivial things like what we'll wear or cook for dinner. We constantly worry about pleasing someone, about being popular, or about trying to fit in.

If any of this sounds familiar, listen to the encouragement from Jesus today, *“Do not worry about your life for your heavenly Father knows what you need. And he will provide all these things for you. But instead of worrying seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness.”* (pause) What does this mean? Well following Jesus starts with setting our priorities right. When Jesus enters our lives, he gives them a new direction. It's a transformation of our deepest being from people who worry into people who trust, from people that are constantly on the run into people who know peace, from people that are greedy and self-centered into people that are generous and Christ-centered. All these changes happen in our lives as we start a journey with Jesus.

But this change of course doesn't happen just like that. It begins with the call of Jesus, and our answer to this call, but that's just a start of this change because it is a journey of faith. Did you realize that it took three years for the disciples to become apostles that Jesus felt he could send out to do ministry. And even then the things they did, they were able to do because of the power of the Holy Spirit. Because they were able to trust in this power and in the promise

that Jesus gave them; that he'll be with them always. Jesus speaks to all of us today as his disciples on our journey with him and he doesn't want us to worry, instead he wants us to realize that our lives are in his hands, in his care.

I remember little over three years ago, we were getting ready to leave Slovakia, flying over the ocean with our 3 month old son Jakub, settling at Camp Nawakwa, where I got a summer job of being a camp chaplain, making close to nothing, having no insurance, living in a cabin in swamp, that's how they called the part of the camp where we lived, with holes in the floor, sleeping on a damp futon with huge wolf spiders hanging out in the bathroom. I'm sure Andrea cried every evening as we weren't sure what will happen with us. I was trying to get rostered in Lower Susquehanna Synod as pastor so that I'd be able to start a call process with churches and Andrea was interviewing for different jobs, knowing that she'd have to leave our 3 month old son somewhere in daycare. Talking about worry. Looking back it was probably one of the most difficult times of our lives; with all that uncertainty not knowing what's going to happen.

And then Andrea got a job offer, a job opportunity with a great pay, and we were excited until we realized that she'd be leaving the house at 6:00 in morning and coming back at 6:00 at night. We would be taken care of, we'd be able to afford a house and a car and all the things we need, but we would not see each other. What do you do in situation like this? I remember like today, it was evening and we prayed and cried, asking God for his guidance, and then it dawned upon us. We were at the end of the rope, we hit the bare bottom when we finally realized that there is no other way then to put all of our trust into God's hands, God was merciful enough that he enabled us to give up all of our worries to him. And it wasn't easy. Andrea decided that evening to turn down the job; we were going to stay in the cabin until the weather allowed it, continuing with a candidacy process, being poor but able to spend time together with our son.

Next morning I went to the camp office and a phone rang. It was a pastor Bill from Trinity in Robesonia, with whom I had a brief conversation couple week ago when he volunteered at camp. And so Pastor Bill was on the other line and he said: I'm looking for an associate pastor would you be interested? You can only imagine my reaction as my heart leaped with joy; I said of course I'd be interested. I ran down to the swamp to tell Andrea, I just got a job offer. It just happened, just like that. Another thing that happened was that the church had a

parsonage that they were renting and the tenants were just moving out that month. And so at the end of the summer, we moved into a beautiful three bedroom house, I became a pastor of a wonderful congregation and Andrea was able to stay at home with our kids.

God waited couple months, couple very long months to show us that we were still completely in his care, and it truly took many tears and prayers for us to be able truly give up our control and put our trust in him. But when we did, when we started truly seeking his will for our lives, things started to move forward. Now of course that was just another beginning of a new and exciting journey. For in the next three years God blessed us beyond our imagination and at the same time he used us and our ministry to bless the people of our congregation.

That's what our journey with Christ is about, it's about trust and leaps of faith, taking it one step at the time, it is about our willingness to listen and to follow and then use the blessings that God provides to bless others. That's why we decorate sanctuary with harvest flowers, and pumpkins and groceries, to be reminded of God's abundant blessings, to be reminded that he calls us to be that blessing to others. We don't know the journey that lays ahead of us, we don't know where God will lead us, but if we'll be able to trust and follow our Lord Jesus, if we'll seek first his Kingdom as individuals and a congregation I have no doubt that he'll show us the way and he will bless us on this journey.

As we begin this year's stewardship season I pray that it's going to be an exciting journey of faith. That it's going to be a journey that is not driven by worry but by trust into our Lord his blessings. But most importantly I pray that it's going to be a journey that will enable us to discover the riches of the Kingdom of God.

Amen