

Worwy is what bwings us together today. Worwy...that cursed awangement. That nightmare wifin a nightmare. And worwy, true worwy, would fowow you fowevea. Jesus bwing us out of this nightmawe called worwy.

Church family, we are winding down our sermon series, You Don't Say. As I said of the Lord's prayer last week, I will say of the Sermon on the Mount. Even with an 8 week sermon series, we've barely scratched the surface of all this first discourse of Jesus has to say to us. So long after the ink has dried on this series, I hope you will take time to read and re-read Matthew chapters 5, 6, & 7.

Today we are going to talk about the last section of Matthew chapter 6. It does indeed end with the topic of Worwy. But I also want us to look at the few verses before our passage today.

I want to take us back a bit farther to chapter 6:19 - 24. I know we read these verses last week but humor me a moment. "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

The eye is the lamp of the body. So if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, but if your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If, then, the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

"No one can serve two masters, for a slave will either hate the one and love the other or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

When we take these verses, along with what was read today, we find that Jesus is offering us even more goals to strive for in this life. Goals around treasures, our Lords, and our Anxieties.

Treasure on earth or treasure in heaven. Jesus first temptation involved being offered bread from Satan. Remember what Jesus said? 4:4 “one does not live by bread alone.” We certainly need bread just as much as we need other “stuff”. Things like shelter, transportation, clothing. But all of our stuff, our possessions, our wealth, our “mammon”, are no more sufficient than bread.

Stuff can't save us. But it can and does draw us in. How many of you are going through garages, closets, drawers to find stuff you can give away. I do that too. When I look through a cluttered part of my house, I realize that it sure seems to be easier to take things in than to give them away.

It's especially easy for anyone who's gone through a time of lack to get caught in the store up everything. We never want to be in a position of lack again! No matter where you've come from though there's something universally true for all of us. We can never have enough stuff.

No matter how many vacations, how many cars, how many homes, paintings, coins, or anything else you might collect, it just won't ever be satisfying. Jesus uses some very graphic examples to describe what tears at the things we try to store up on this earth. Moths or natural corrosion. Rust or time corrosion. Thieves or human corrosion.

Jesus isn't saying we should just jettison desire all together. Instead, as so often in this discourse, he redirects us. Collect for yourselves treasures in heaven. Jesus elevates desire.

How do we do this? Jesus will hint of this later in Matthew when he talks to the rich young ruler. But the most concrete and practical way to have treasure in heaven is to try to pursue economic divestment for the sake of investment in the poor.

Yes, we should have goals. Yes, we should have desires. But if our goals and desires aren't rooted by a right relationship with God, at one point or another we will encounter moths, or rust, or thievery.

Jesus goes on to talk about serving masters. The NRSV uses the word wealth, but the Aramaic word that Matthew uses is mammon. Mammon...sounds like a foreign power or a deity of some sort. The Aramaic root of this word means trust or reliance. Jesus is saying again, in a slightly different way. You can't rely on, you cannot trust stuff.

Jesus is refocusing the question of stuff from earth to heaven. He sets the stage by his model prayer. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. This is yet another link between heaven. (the ideal) and earth (the actual). His lofty assertion? The ideal and the actual can be harmonized.

Stuff can be destroyed. We cannot ultimately protect stuff. Think about the parable of the man who found a treasure in a field and then goes home and sells all he has to buy that field. How did that treasure get in that field?

There's the story of the rich young man who wanted to follow Jesus. When Jesus advises that the young man follow the commandments, the young man asks Jesus which one he should follow. Jesus ticks off a list of commandments that make up the second part of the Decalogue "Love your neighbor as yourself". Jesus only leaves off one. You shall not covet. Perhaps because he knew that this was not a command the young man could follow. He would not be able to give up his possessions.

Jesus is not saying that all of the rich are damned. What he is saying is that those who come to realize that life is more than stuff get a heavenly reward. And they don't have to wait for heaven to get those rewards. On earth they will have the peace with a heart inclined on doing God's will.

Ok, so this has been enlightening Pastor Amy, but what about worry. Why haven't we talked about worry yet.

Well, as I see it, we have. Jesus has been talking about worry this whole time. Because we've been talking a whole lot about the sources of worry. What our true treasures are. Who our true masters are. I think we can all agree that these are things that cause us a lot of worry.

When Jesus tackles the topic of worry, where does he begin? With nature. "Look at the birds of the air...consider the lilies of the field." Elements that know they are a gift to the earth. Elements that know how to rely on God for what they need.

Now Jesus is not saying that we should be like the birds or the lilies. We shouldn't be abandoning our jobs. Let's continue sowing, reaping, harvesting, textile manufacturing, car sales, waitressing, farming, selling insurance, auto body work.

What Jesus wants us to see is the simplicity of the birds and the lilies. Jesus is not just asking us to look...that is passive. Jesus is asking us to consider. That is active...that demands action. We are asked to learn.

And it all points back to Jesus model prayer. The Lord's Prayer. We are called to be disciples who share bread and forgive debts. We are called to be disciples who seek peaceful solutions instead of judicial or military ones. These words of Jesus should take us back to the part of this sermon where he says, "if someone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well."

Towards the end of his life, Jesus will expound on this further. The disciples will learn they will be judged on how they fed and clothed others. (We will too and are doing very well here, btw)

This part of the discourse closes with words that are simply ridiculous. Jesus says "do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today." Jesus...you nuts? You crazy? Do you have the faintest clue about today's worries?

A professor at a seminary counseled many students. As a seminary student they would worry about whether the very act of worrying would be seen as a sin. But they had real worries, like exams. Worries that were so heavy that it kept them from studying. This led to worries about being sinful because they were worrying. And then so worried about being sinful that they needed to stop studying to pray for forgiveness about worrying. This wise counselor would try to ease their worries with these insightful words. “If you’ve striven first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and you’ve done the reading. You will be fine.”

I would be lying if I told you that I never worried about anything. But I will leave you with this thought. One of the best lessons I learned about dealing with worry came from what I learned about biking while training for a half-Ironman. (which I never completed btw) When you are biking, you are always going to encounter rocks. Especially in Arizona. The biggest fear about hitting rocks is that it will cause you to fall. A fair worry. Falling off of a bike is bad. Really, really bad. Here was their advice. The best way to avoid hitting the rock? Aim for the rock. You’re guaranteed to miss the rock.

So when your life seems to be faced with a rock big enough to cause you worry let me give you this advice. It has served me well. I sit on the other side of heeding this advice. Knowing God is on your side, aim for the rock.

Today’s troubles are big enough. I think we can all agree to that.

Let us
pray.