

## Thanksgiving Sunday

Joel 2:21-27

Psalm 126

1 Timothy 2:1-7

Matthew 6:25-33

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October 7, 2018

Grace and peace to you.

If there was ever a Sunday that I felt that Jesus was out of touch with reality it might be today. The call to *not worry* comes across like an arrogant motivational speaker who has more privilege than commonsense.

Worry, with a capital "W" is not our middle name, but our *first* these days. I asked you to write down some of the things that worry you this morning, here's some of what you shared:

Thank you for your willingness to be vulnerable and name these things. Here's an interesting note: We are not alone in our concerns. For example, did you ever imagine that dirt has things to worry about? Or animals? God speaks even to the dirt in the book of Joel – "do not fear, O soil!" "Do not fear, you animals!" Recognizing that the earth and all her creatures are part of the whole – and included in the worries we name. What does your garden worry about? Or a wheat field or a crow cackling in the morning? Bet you've never asked and neither have I. Isn't it interesting to imagine that while we worry, so do dirt and dogs and insects and water? Who would have thought.

Worry then is not uniquely human, but part of the life of all Creation. And the worries are many and pervasive. Still, to each and every one of those troubles Jesus' response is the same: "do not worry."

The idea here isn't some sort of new "self-help" program, but to awaken us that we might reassess what is important and life giving. Many of the things we worry about will never change. We will never have as much money as others. We will always have bills to pay. We will never understand US politics. But really, are those the things that determine your happiness anyway? Are those the pieces that bring you deep joy in this life?

A life story:

Some children were playing beside a river. They made castles of sand, and each child defended his castle and said, "This one is mine." They kept their castles separate and would not allow any mistakes about which was whose. When the castles were finished, one child kicked over someone else's castle and completely destroyed it. The owner of the castle pulled the other child's hair.

Soon everyone was guarding their castle with great care, not wanting it to be toppled by another." They went on playing in their sand castles, each saying, "This is mine; no one else may have it. Keep away! Don't touch my castle!" But when evening came; and it began to get dark, they all thought they ought to be going home. The day was done, the children were tired and now no one cared what became of their sand castle. One child stamped on his own, another pushed hers over with both hands. One by one they turned and went away, and each went on their way home.

*from the **Yogacara Bhumi Sutra** translated by Arthur Waley.*  
<http://www.geocities.com/SoHo/5705/sandcastles.html>

The worries and troubles of this world are fleeting. In the moment they seem enormous and formidable and it seems ill advise to simply "not worry." But Jesus says exactly that, because he already knows, what we so often forget, that we are safe, secure, beloved, cared for, planned for, held in the radical love of God. That is a place of profound peace. That is an untouchable place. That is a sacred breath. No one can change it or steal it. And when we hold on to that instead of the false affirmations of this world we find a radical new shalom no matter what life tosses our way.

Our lives are filled with shalom when we begin to view the world through the lens of faith, kicking over our own sand castle or whatever it is that holds us captive to believing that we are not enough, don't have enough and will never be enough. Shalom comes at the end of the day when we look homeward with longing and begin to make our way. Shalom is saying "no" to lives built of sand and water and reaching for the building blocks that God sets before us.

It seems like a long time ago now, but the lesson has stuck with me. It was my first year of seminary and in one of our classes we were introduced to a labyrinth. A Labyrinth is different than a maze, encouraging prayer and reflection rather than leaving one to guess about the path ahead. I was rather skeptical about the claims that walking a labyrinth could be an effective mode of prayer, but I was soon to learn otherwise.

As I dutifully walked (after all it was a class assignment!) I thought I'd take the time to mentally go through the list of all the things I needed to do. As I took each step papers and assignments came to mind, worship duties, bills to pay, and then my mind wandered off to wonder about the upcoming years of school, where would we be placed for internship, what classes would I take in the years to come, what church would eventually call me, should I even be a pastor...

You can see how one thing led to another and my anxiety became this colossal beast I knew I was unable to tame.

And then it happened. I didn't even realize I was actually praying, but that is what it was – *and God answered*. Isn't that amazing! God did answer with a loving response "why do you worry about this paper or the next, about your classes or about your call? All you have to do is keep putting one foot in front of the other and I'll look after tomorrow.

It taught me to stay in the moment, it gave me perspective and most importantly, it taught me to trust in the One who created us in the first place. As you can tell by this story, it's not that God gave me the detailed plan of all that was to come, but helped me to trust that things would work.

We have a lot of worries. They are thrust into our lives without invitation in every moment. As our access to information increases we are finding it challenging to cope and make sense of, or find solutions for the mounting problems we see.

Yet, God invites us to just put one foot in front of the other or to look and see in the faces of family and friends, in the earth in its beauty, in the sky, or even at your feet – and keep walking knowing that God is with you every step of the way.

Amen.