

Jonathan Mark

FMC Reedley

Matthew 6:24-34

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Are we there yet?

Over the past few weeks, we have been going through some of the more favorably interpreted passages of the sermon on the mount. I mean, the beatitudes are almost universally loved, and “love your enemies” can be found on virtually any Mennonite bumper sticker. These are beloved passages. But this week, we will be focusing on a more difficult reading. Jesus’s command to not worry has been interpreted as naive, has been used to minimize the authentic worries that people have, and can be seen as a direct contradiction to the Lord’s prayer, where we ask God to “give us this day our daily bread.” I hope that with some creative thinking, I can open up these scriptures so show how not worrying about the things we cannot change can empower us to be the church in this strange present. Though, I will take a winding route to that conclusion.

Please pray with me. Lord, may the words of my mouth, and the meditations of all of our hearts are pleasing to you, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

Have you ever heard your children say, “are we there yet?” I know that I said that a lot when I was a kid. I was, and still am a rather impatient person. I’m always

interested in the destination. I remember the time I most wanted to reach my destination during a car ride with my brother when we drove across the country from Oregon to Indiana so that I could go to Seminary. This trip took 34 hours, and I do not think we stopped at all except for food and gas. We drove in shifts, one would drive for 4-6 hours, and the other would sleep. Or maybe we'd talk theology since I was heading to seminary. I watched the high mountains of the Rockies, flatten to the great plains, and all the while, I could not wait for this long journey to end. But still, we pressed on chasing that sunrise across the nation.

Sunrise is a mysterious thing. It is the end of the night, and it begins when the sun is at the horizon, but during twilight, we begin to see the first rays of light. Twilight starts when the sun is 18 degrees below the horizon, at that time you may not notice the difference, but astronomers with their huge telescopes pointed into the sky notice the faintest stars disappear. And we too may not know when the time of our great dark is about to end. But over time, by the will of God, the earth rotates, and the sun appears over the horizon.

Many of us are going through dark times; some are squinting our eyes to keep awake as we continue down this endless road we call life. I'm sure some of us are looking forward to the coming sunrise when stores, restaurants, and churches open. But for now, we are all together driving down a dusty road at night.

Jesus is driving down the road at night with his followers. His followers ask him when the day will come, and the Son will rise. They want to know when they can pull over at a truck stop to get some food to eat. And he tells them, don't worry, the Son will come. But driving ten miles over the speed limit is not going to make the sun won't rise any faster. No, what they need to worry about is making it through the night. And that means taking shifts, bearing the load together, being church together.

When my brother and I were driving at night, my brother was exhausted. He had gotten better sleep before our journey, so he did most of the driving for the first day, but he was at his limit. And so at 2 am, he passed the wheel to me. And so I drove for those critical hours of the night. The night is difficult to drive. For one, I was exhausted not just from lack of sleep, but because I was tired of driving. The problem is the night does not care how tired we are, it will last as long as it lasts, so I had better drive on.

And so to cope with the night, we change our ways of thinking. We gaze out at the flowers on the side of the road, and think, these flowers do not need to worry about their destination, they only need to worry about getting sun on their leaves and water on their roots. They take one day at a time, they open their flowers for bees in the spring, and spread seeds in the fall. But you'd never hear a flower say, "I

cannot wait till I get to close this flower.” No, each event will come when it comes, no amount of hoping and worrying will move the seasons forward.

And we gaze out at the birds of the air how they flock together, how they depend on each other to find food. So should we depend on each other and worry about each other. If any of us is hungry, then the whole body of this church is hungry. What good does it do to only worry about our futures when there are others in need in the present. We can act on the worries of today, but future concerns only fill us with dread.

Remember the mana that fell from heaven back in Exodus, how the Israelites could only collect enough for that day, and the rest would rot away. They did this so that God’s provision would be enough daily bread for all. Even today, we can see examples of daily bread, how in Maracco, when people bring grain to the bakers, they bring more than they need so that when others come seeking their daily bread, there is enough to go around for everyone.

And so while we all drive through the night. As we wait till we can meet again in person, let us live in the present. Let us live like the church today. This is not an interruption, it is a new way of being a church. And so during this long night, what are ways we can be the church, doing the work of sharing acts of kindness, extending hospitality, and bearing each other’s burdens.

We can still meet in small groups and Sunday School through a screen. We can worship God together on zoom. The young adults can still play games together on Sunday afternoons. Juan can still give pastoral care over the phone. It is not the same, but no one said driving at night is easy. So what other possibilities await. How can we eat together in virtual potlucks, or maybe small outdoor potlucks? How can we sing together using technology to sync up our voices? Recording is difficult, but the result is worshipful. Maybe it is time to embrace new forms of worship acts to replace the hole left by singing together, like communion or communal prayer?

Church I know many of you are tired. I know the temptation to fall asleep at the wheel, I know because I've felt it myself. But this scripture is tugging me, kicking and screaming, to pronounce hope in our ability to still be the church.

Therefore, I see no reason why we should worry about when the sun will rise or when we can sit together in safety. Instead, let us worry about today for today is full of possibilities of its own.