

Sermon Text – Sunday, March 15, 2026 – Pastor Paula Kraus

**1st Reading: Isaiah 49:8-16; 2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 4:1-5
Scripture: Matthew 6:19-34 “Security”**

I want to remind you that Jesus' Sermon on the Mount is teaching a way of life and teaching his followers how he wants them to “see” the world. “Seeing” is not just what we perceive with our eyes, but our outlook and interpretation of what is going on around us. If we go back through the earlier parts of his message, we know that Jesus has already reminded his followers to consider their priorities – in their deeds, in their prayer, and in their religious practices. So now he again reminds his followers to consider their priorities not only in the accumulation of wealth and treasures, but also in service of self. Furthermore, he tells us not to worry about tomorrow for tomorrow will worry about itself. Why are we looking for trouble when trouble will surely find us?

Some of Jesus' most popular sayings are within this passage. Jesus says, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” You can tell a lot about a person by what they covet, what they value in life. Look at the things you accumulate over time - are you storing for yourself eternal treasures? I don't think Jesus talks only about material possessions, nor does he encourage delayed gratification – as if that is how his followers can live righteously. But he does encourage his followers to free themselves enough to recognize the abundance of living in the kingdom now rather than in the scarcity of this world.

Jesus' words liberate us from the worry of “not enough.” It is a sad truth that in some parts of our world there is famine and poverty, not because there isn't enough food or wealth but because food and wealth are not equitably distributed. I wonder if there is an inherent mistrust in the provisions of God when God's abundance cannot be distributed among all of humanity. Do we hold back our treasures because we think God is not steadfast in loving and caring for creation? Christians must trust that God gives us what we need so we can use it to further God's purpose.

What Jesus forbids is the selfish accumulation of goods and the hard-heartedness that ignores the needs of the world's under-privileged people. Jesus forbids the covetousness that leads to a materialistic lifestyle, “the foolish fantasy that a person's life consists in the abundance of his possessions.”¹ Jesus presents the alternative of two treasures, worldly or eternal.

¹ Stott, John R. W. *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*. Inter-varsity Press. 1978. Print. 155

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“Store up for yourself treasures in heaven.” So, what are treasures in heaven? They could be anything done on earth that is done for God’s glory and not our own – like development of a Christlike character, using our gifts and talents for a Christian cause, growing in our knowledge of Christ by studying his Word, and introducing others to Christ.

Jesus continues his message with, “The eye is the lamp of the body” we often hear that the eyes are windows to the soul whether it be full of light or darkness. Jesus is talking about a way of “seeing” the world. Scarcity, worry, hoarding – these are things which close us off from God and from God’s blessings. They close us off from one another causing suspicion and a lack of hospitality – as does an “unhealthy” eye that is full of darkness. Healthy eyes are a way of seeing life with light and as a gift of God’s grace. Healthy and unhealthy eyes mentioned here by Jesus are probably not whether you have eye diseases or are near-sighted, myopic, or needing glasses. Jesus is referring to our “outlook” on life whether bad or good. He presents us with two ways of seeing the world.

“No one can serve two masters . . . you cannot serve both God and money.” It’s as if he knows that one or the other is going to steal our loyalty. To me this goes back to his telling his followers to store up treasures in heaven, “for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Paul writes in his first letter to Timothy, “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs” (1 Timothy 6:10). One of the strongest detractors from the Christian faith is the pursuit of wealth, it takes time and leads to the sins of greed and hoarding. Jesus does not say we should not work to make a living, in fact that is one thing God required of humanity at the start. “By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground,” (Genesis 3:19a). In this section of his “Sermon,” Jesus places before us two masters choose one or the other.

Jesus presents us with these alternatives so we can be different, and they are presented in such a way as to help us choose well. With all that in mind, once we have chosen the better treasure, the better outlook, and the better master Jesus tells us how it should affect our behavior. “Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. . . each day has trouble of its own.” Maybe we, in these modern times, don’t worry so much about tomorrow – not like the people Jesus spoke to. They were living under Roman oppression and the threat that the slightest misstep could have tragic consequences. We live in well-ordered middle-income societies relatively free from those consequences.

We do, however, worry and sometimes our worry is over the most foolish things, like the price of the latest fashions or how much eating out

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will cost. But we've seen it happen, natural or man-made disasters that destroy entire communities. Illnesses that come with burdensome medical bills, job lay-offs that can turn lives upside down. We know that God won't make all that go away but when we trust God, and seek first God's kingdom, we will find a calmness that overcomes the anxiety and worries even when we stand in the Valley of Shadows. Jesus tells us, his followers, to not worry and to trust that God will comfort and care for us.

Sometimes our understanding of what we read from this passage gets tangled up in our "modern" culture. Jesus' words are sometimes used as excuses for neglect, for abuse, and for freeloading. Yes, Jesus tells us "Do not worry about your life" it is not, however, a promise that God will plop food, shelter, medical care, and clothing on us or swoop down and take all our cares away. Jesus tells us to look at the birds for our example. Birds do not sow or reap yet neither does their food automatically appear, they actively search for and find food. Birds build their own nests for shelter and they fight off predators. In other words, even though God provides what is needed, one must work and take the effort to "find" what God has provided. We must use whatever means God gives us to accomplish God's purposes.

Seek first God's kingdom and God's righteousness and all these things will be given to you. Paul, in his first letter to the Corinthians, reminds us that the Lord "will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart" therefore we should wait on the Lord. Our reading of Psalm 131 reminds us of that as well. Trust that God does provide the means for us to obtain what we need – maybe not by placing the solutions to our problems and woes at our feet but by bringing us to a place of calmness as we seek God's face. Calmness that helps us "find" the solution and "find" what God provides in this world for our survival.

I often tell myself and others to not "buy" trouble by worrying about things that haven't yet happened. We cannot predict the future, what will happen tomorrow or even what will happen in the next ten minutes! "Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself." If you have chosen the better of the two alternatives Jesus presents in his "Sermon" then you have prepared yourself for whatever "trouble" that comes around.

This is how Jesus wants us to live, free from the anxieties of the world because we know that God knows what we need and that God is with us and able to fulfill our needs. Jesus instructs his followers how to be different from the "pagans" and the non-believers – live as if the kingdom of God is already here. Show, with your life, that you believe God's promises, that

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you believe God is with you, that you believe God will comfort and care for you.

That is the role of the church to help guide people into God's eternal presence, God's everlasting love, and providential care. We are to show the world what it looks like to trust God in all things. Maybe that is even more significant now as this church contemplates the financial obligations that go along with caring for our over one hundred-year-old building, and the condition of our parking lot. Trust that God knows our needs and will provide for our needs according to his good and perfect will. That does not mean the solution is going to suddenly present itself, but that we should prayerfully ask for the Lord's guidance. The church must be an example of patiently waiting for God in all things, prayerfully considering what God's will is. In addition to using the resources God blesses us with to fulfill our purpose and mission.

Jesus isn't asking his followers to give up on the things of this world. He does not ask the church to neglect its own needs, only that if we look to God first the troubles of the world and our worries about need will not overwhelm us. Seek God and find peace, seek God, and find security, seek God and the worries of this world will pass away. Jesus taught us in his prayer, "lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil" – trust that is exactly what God is doing as we seek God first. May it be so!