

# Do Not Worry about Tomorrow

April 22, 2020

Dear friends in Christ:

I don't usually include the date on which I write a Pastor's article for The Chimes, but it seems like a necessary step to include that date today. As we have learned, our reality can change very much very quickly. For instance, on Thursday, March 12, the kids were still in school, our church building was still open for ministry, and I was preparing to preach and preside at three weekend worship services. Within 24 hours, everything changed. Now, weeks later, our school buildings sit empty, the dining rooms of our restaurants sit empty, and our church sanctuaries sit empty. Grocery stores and doctor's offices are filled with people donning a variety of homemade masks. And our homes have become fortresses where we "shelter in place" and practice social distancing. Jesus reminds us in the Sermon on the Mount not to worry because our heavenly Father will provide for us. "Therefore I tell you," Jesus says, "do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear... do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today." (Matthew 6:25-34)

It would be easy for us in these days to be consumed by worry for what tomorrow will bring. How many of you, like me, have gotten into the habit of checking online each day for the latest numbers... how many cases in Illinois? How many deaths? Which counties are affected the worst? We check every day because we know that every day, it will change. And for a while yet to come, the virus will grow. With each tomorrow that comes, the numbers will increase. So how can we not worry?

A global pandemic and the worry it brings might be new to us, but we would be mistaken to think that the type of worry that we are experiencing was foreign to Jesus'

contemporaries. Those who would have been listening to his words as he preached the Sermon on the Mount knew all about uncertainty. We may look at empty grocery store shelves and worry about running out of food; Jesus' followers lived with chronic hunger. We may wonder what will happen if our hospitals run out of ventilators; Jesus' followers lived in fear of the violence of Roman soldiers. The specific worry may be different, but the magnitude of worry is similarly significant. And just as Jesus said to his followers way back then, he says to us now, "Do not worry."

From the mouth of anyone else, these words sound ridiculous in our situation. But, from the lips of the One who is the source of life itself, these words are comforting and assuring. So, we will work together, each doing what we can, what we must, to stop the spread of this disease, to tend to the sick and dying, and to help those who are in need – in other words, sharing Christ's love with a hurting, worrying world.

Right now, "doing what we can" includes staying at home as much as we're able. It means worshipping from home, since we can't gather right now in our church building. We hope that the YouTube & Facebook videos, the Worship in the Home resource from the ELCA, and the Zoom worship experiences are helping provide you with meaningful worship in this time. But even if you don't have internet access or a computer at home, you can still read your Bible, sing God's praises, and pray.

And, for the moments when you do worry, hear Jesus say to you: God loves you. God never lets you out of God's care. God is caring for our whole hurting world right now. God promises each of us abundant life – life that includes visits and hugs and gathering in community. That's the kind of life that Jesus is bringing. Come, Lord Jesus.

Amen.

—Pastor Laura