

Finding Your Treasure
Matthew 6:19-34
November 8, 2020
First Presbyterian Church, Luling

Some of you who grew up Presbyterian may have had to memorize the Westminster Shorter Catechism. It begins with the question, “What is the chief end of man?” And the answer is “The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.” And, of course, by “man” they meant everybody. The purpose of our lives is to glorify God and enjoy God forever.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism appears in our Presbyterian Book of Confessions, along with several others, including confessions and other catechisms. One is the Heidelberg Catechism, written in 1562 as the Reformed branch of Protestant Christians and the Lutheran branch of Protestant Christians were trying to figure out their differences and how to get along in spite of them. It’s first question is: “What is your only comfort in life and death?” And the answer is “That I am not my own, but belong—body and soul, in life and in death—to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ.” It continues after a few lines about salvation, “Because I belong to him, Christ, by his Holy Spirit, assures me of eternal life and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for him.”

Taken together, those two catechisms remind us that, rooted in our belonging to God come what may, we are freed to glorify and enjoy God. I’m glad we have both of those in our Book of Confessions. Sometimes I need the comfort of belonging to God, and sometimes I’m ready to glorify and enjoy God.

I want to set that foundation, that we belong body and soul, to Jesus Christ, and our purpose is to glorify God, before I throw Jesus’s words into the mix this morning. Jesus’s words are “do not worry.” This is one of those times when I wonder if Jesus really knows what he’s asking of me. Maybe you haven’t noticed, Jesus, but there is kind of a lot to worry about right now.

More than 100,000 people are being diagnosed with Covid-19 every day in the United States. We worry about getting it any time we leave our homes. We worry about our friends and family who have it, who have had it. We worry about its long term effects, which no one knows yet, really. We worry for our doctors and nurses and aides and registration clerks and housekeeping workers in the hospitals. And we worry about so many people dying. And we worry about those

who remain isolated and what the lack of contact with their families is doing to them.

And goodness knows, most of us have lost some sleep this week, if not the past months and years, worrying about our own country. The uncertainty, the way we have seen our neighbors and friends and family react. I've worried about our increasing division, about us not being able to see a beloved child of God when we look at people who disagree with us. I've worried about what the future will bring. And I'm still worried, even if Jesus is telling me not to be. As a country we have a lot of work to do, to look honestly at ourselves, to repent of injustice, to ask for forgiveness, to reconcile. All of that is hard, and I worry that we don't have the will to do it. I worry about us in the shifting news cycles, and I worry about us as we navigate the forces that try to turn us against each other.

Those are just the two worries at the forefront of my mind. There's climate change. And how I worry about it not raining in what should have been one of our best months for rain. And I worry about y'all and your families. And I worry about school and my kids and all of the kids who are struggling, this year especially. And I worry about the people who don't have jobs and enough to eat. It's a lot. And I imagine your list of worries is similar, with some particulars added in.

I was texting with a friend a couple weeks ago. She doesn't go to church, isn't particularly religious, but she's always interested in what I'm doing. So she asked what I was going to preach the Sunday after the election. I told her I wasn't sure, but the Scripture was Jesus telling us not to worry. And that what I wanted to tell Jesus was that he didn't know what he was talking about, and that he could mind his own business.

Because sometimes we feel like it's our worrying that is somehow preventing bad things from happening. Or that if we don't worry about something enough, it will surely happen. No matter how our brains tell us this is silly, magical thinking, our worries don't let us go. Or we hang onto them pretty stubbornly. Or both. I can't imagine that the disciples were any different.

Jesus specifically tells them not to worry about what they're going to wear—and he doesn't mean the latest fashions, he means if they have anything at all to wear—they just aren't supposed to worry about that, and they aren't supposed to worry about what they'll eat—and again, he doesn't mean whether they run out of eggs, he means if they have anything at all to eat. And he tells them they don't have to worry about these things because God takes care of even the birds of the air and the lilies of the field, and how much more will God take care of us?

We belong to God, body and soul. And that is our only comfort in life or in death. We don't belong to anyone or anything else, not in that, ultimate way. We don't belong to the Republican party. We don't belong to the Democratic party. We don't belong to Texas. We don't belong to the United States of America. We belong to God. And God's got us. God takes care of us. God has surrounded us with a community who will take care of us. And we are the community who will take care of others, who also belong, body and soul, to God. And because we belong to God, we can set our worries aside, to glorify God and enjoy God forever.