

TITLE: "Stop Worrying? Not without Verse 33"

TEXT: Matthew 6:25-34 (NT p.6)

25 'Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? <sup>26</sup>Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? <sup>27</sup>And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? <sup>28</sup>And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, <sup>29</sup>yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. <sup>30</sup>But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? <sup>31</sup>Therefore do not worry, saying, "What will we eat?" or "What will we drink?" or "What will we wear?" <sup>32</sup>For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. <sup>33</sup>But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. ...<sup>34</sup> 'So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today.

#### Introduction – Don't worry

There are 10 verses in this morning's text. The message from Jesus in 9 of those 10 verses is simple ...Don't worry.

Don't worry about the things you need in life.

Don't worry about how you look to others.

Enjoy today and don't worry about tomorrow.

I want to share three stories with you this morning that reflect these 9 verses.

#### **1. TO ALL WHO SURVIVED THE 1930's, 40's, 50's, 60's and 70's!!**

First, we survived being born to mothers who smoked and/or drank while they were Pregnant. They took aspirin, ate blue cheese dressing, tuna from a can and didn't get tested for diabetes. Then after that trauma, we were put to sleep on our tummies in baby cribs covered with bright colored lead-base paints.

We had no childproof lids on medicine bottles, locks on doors or cabinets and when we rode our bikes, we had baseball caps not helmets on our heads. As infants & children, we would ride in cars with no car seats, no booster seats, no seat belts, no air bags,

bald tires and sometimes no brakes. Riding in the back of a pick-up truck on a warm day was always a special treat.

We drank water from the garden hose and not from a bottle. We shared one soft drink with four friends, from one bottle and no one actually died from this. We ate cupcakes, white bread, real butter and bacon. We drank Kool-Aid made with real white sugar. And, we weren't overweight. WHY?

Because we were always outside playing...that's why! We would leave home in the morning and play all day, as long as we were back when the streetlights came on. No one was able to reach us all day. And, we were O.K.

We would spend hours building our go-carts out of scraps and then ride them down the hill, only to find out we forgot the brakes. After running into the bushes a few times, we learned to solve the problem.

WE HAD FRIENDS and we went outside and found them! We fell out of trees, got cut, broke bones and teeth and there were no lawsuits from these accidents. We ate worms and mud pies made from dirt, and the worms did not live in us forever.

We were given BB guns for our 10th birthdays, made up games with sticks and tennis balls and, although we were told it would happen, we did not put out very many eyes.

We rode bikes or walked to a friend's house and knocked on the door or rang the bell, or just walked in and talked to them.

Little League had tryouts and not everyone made the team. Those who didn't had to learn to deal with disappointment. Imagine that!!

The idea of a parent arguing with a school teacher over their child's discipline was unheard of. They actually sided with the teacher!

These generations have produced some of the best risk-takers, problem solvers and inventors ever. The past 50 years have been an explosion of innovation and new ideas. We had freedom, failure, success and responsibility, and we learned how to deal with it all. If YOU are one of them? ...CONGRATULATIONS!

I can, at times, idealize the past. Perhaps you can too. Although it's fun to imagine riding around in bikes wearing baseball caps, or no cap at all, I have know some kids

over the years whose lives changed forever because they did NOT wear a bike helmet.

On radio 870 AM, the announcers say: “The WORLD is changing. ...Are you listening?” Some of us aren’t. For some of us, pulling away from the past is like extracting our feet from deep viscous mud. But we need to do it if the past, or how we imagined the past, is keeping us from enjoying the wonderful opportunities the Lord has for us today.

## 2. “The Woodcutter’s Advice” by Max Lucado.

Once there was an old man who lived in a tiny village. Although poor, he was envied by all, for he owned a beautiful white horse. Even the king coveted his treasure. A horse like this had never been seen before – such was its splendor, its majesty, its strength....People offered fabulous prices for the steed, but the old man always refused.

One morning he found that the horse was not in the stable. All the village came to see him. “You old fool,” they scoffed, “we told you that someone would steal your horse. We warned you that you would be robbed....You could have gotten whatever price you wanted. No amount would have been too high. Now the horse is gone, and you’ve been cursed with misfortune.”

The old man responded, “Don’t speak too quickly. Say only that the horse is not in the stable. That is all we know; the rest is judgment. If I’ve been cursed or not, how can you know? How can you judge?”...

The people of the village laughed....They had always thought he was a fool; if he wasn’t, he would have sold the horse and lived off the money. But instead, he was a poor woodcutter, an old man still cutting firewood and dragging it out of the forest and selling it...

After 15 days, the horse returned. He hadn’t been stolen; he had run away into the forest. Not only had he returned, he had brought a dozen wild horses with him. Once again the village people gathered around the woodcutter and spoke. “Old man, you were right and we were wrong. What we thought was a curse was a blessing. Please forgive us.”

The man responded, “Once again, you go too far. Say only that the horse is back. State only that a dozen horses returned with him, but don’t judge. How do you know if this is a blessing or not? You see only a fragment....Don’t say that this is a blessing. No one knows. I am content with what I know. I am not perturbed by what I don’t.”

“Maybe the old man is right,” they said to one another. So they said little. But deep down, they knew he was wrong. They knew it was a blessing. Twelve wild horses had returned with one horse. With a little bit of work, the animals could be broken and trained for much money.

The old man had a son, an only son. The young man began to break the wild horses. After a few days, he fell from one of the horses and broke both legs. Once again the villagers gathered around the old man and cast their judgments.

“You were right,” they said. “You proved you were right. The dozen horses were not a blessing. They were a curse. Your only son has broken his legs, and now in your old age you have no one to help you. Now you are poorer than ever.”

The old man spoke again. “You people are obsessed with judging. Don’t go so far. Say only that my son broke his legs. Who knows if it is a blessing or a curse? No one knows. We only have a fragment. Life comes in fragments.”

It so happened that a few weeks later the country engaged in a war against a neighboring country. All the young men of the village were required to join the army. Only the son of the old man was excluded, because he was injured. ...The enemy was strong, and the war would be a losing struggle. They would never see their sons again.

Once again the people of the village gathered around the old man, “You were right, old man,” they wept. “God knows you were right. This proved it. Your son’s accident was a blessing. His legs may be broken, but at least he is with you. Our sons are gone forever.”

The old man spoke again, “It is impossible to talk with you. You always draw conclusions. No one knows. Say only this: Your sons had to go to war, and mine did not. No one knows if it is a blessing or a curse. No one is wise enough to know. Only God knows.” (Filed under “Easter”)

The old man is right. We imagine all kinds of scenarios in the future and some of them are the worst possible scenarios. One of the reasons we fear the future is because we tend to imagine having to deal with those scenarios without God. But, if we look back over our lives, we will see how God got us through all kinds of things in the past. And if we have faith in Jesus, we know that in life and in death we belong to God and God WILL give us what we need to face each and every situation.

### 3. "Katie's Book of Proverbs" by Katherine N. Barton

"When Katie was about 12 she started collecting sayings. She would place them on 3 X 5 cards or post-its and put them up on the wall in her room. These were more than a collection of different sayings; they were her philosophy of life, a value base for her."

Katie's father is John Barton, Doug Barton's brother. John is a Presbyterian pastor and we have done a few services together over the years. John recently wrote this book about his daughter and Doug gave it to me to read this week. I want to share four of her sayings with you, because they reflect this morning's text:

"Yesterday ended last night....MOVE ON!

"Tomorrow is not promised to us. So take today and make the most OF IT!"

"All the flowers of tomorrow are in the seeds of today."

"Yesterday is the PAST, Tomorrow is the FUTURE, and today is a GIFT! That's why it's called THE PRESENT!"

#### Conclusion –

There are 10 verses in this morning's text. The message from Jesus in 9 of those verses is simple ...Don't worry.

Don't worry about the things you need in life.

Don't worry about how you look to others.

Enjoy today and don't worry about tomorrow.

Good advice. All those people I quoted earlier would surely agree. But we cannot do it unless we live verse 33. In that verse, Jesus says: "Strive first for the kingdom of God and God's righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

It's only when we invite Jesus into our lives and stay in touch with Jesus stay in touch with Jesus that we are able to

trust God and NOT worry about the things we need in life;

trust God and NOT worry about how we look to others; and

trust God for tomorrow so that we can enjoy today.

Amen.