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Live in the Present with Eyes Wide Open

Matthew 6:19-34

I stood at the kitchen counter, grinding coffee to brew a fresh pot for my family. My mind whirled with the grinder. In the midst of an already full schedule, I was managing the care of our ninety-seven-year-old widowed friend, and her needs were in a rapid state of change. My mind was spinning, trying to anticipate what to do, when to do it, how to find the resources. My mind came up blank. I couldn't figure it out. And the coffee? It turned out weak and undrinkable.

My whirling brain produced nothing but anxiety. And the work of my hands was abandoned as I left the present moment and visited the imaginary "Land of the Worry-filled Future." We are all acquainted with this land. We live there too much of the time. This accounts for a great deal of the stress and the distress we experience in life.

It turns out that no matter how worthy the cause we are worrying about, the worry is not only a waste of time and energy, it is worse. It is an activity that robs us of the awareness of God-with-us here, now, in this present moment. It blocks us from resting in God's presence and from receiving the many gifts of God's loving care and provision each moment of each day.

My whirling mind was the result of my forgetting that God can be trusted to provide and guide. My work was not to figure everything out but to entrust myself and our widowed friend to God's care, thanking God that the Spirit would show me what to do one day at a time.

GROUP DISCUSSION. What happens to you physically, spiritually and relationally when you worry?

PERSONAL REFLECTION. What makes it difficult to trust God's care for you?

What helps you trust God's care for you?

In the text for this study we will listen as Jesus instructs us to live with eyes wide open to what matters most, and as Jesus calls us out of our anxiety, back to the present where we can learn to rest and trust in God's loving care for us, one amazing day at a time. *Read Matthew 6:19-34.*

1. What wisdom does Jesus offer about the priorities of those who follow him?

2. What contrast does Jesus make between riches (treasures) on earth and in heaven in verses 19-21?

3. What comes to your mind when you think of “riches on earth” and “riches in heaven”?

4. Jesus changes metaphors and talks about our ability to see in verses 22-23. What is Jesus suggesting that we need to be able to see?

5. Once again, Jesus changes metaphors and talks about servants and masters in verse 24. What point is he making with this metaphor?

6. What are the subtle and not-so-subtle attractions of pursuing earthly riches, of keeping our spiritual eyes closed and of serving money?

7. Jesus then turns to nature to offer us a new perspective. What is he saying as he talks about the birds and the flowers (vv. 26-30)?

8. How do Jesus’ comments in verses 25-34 relate to the what Jesus said in verses 19-24?

9. In verses 25-34 Jesus talks about anxiety and trust. In your busyness what anxiety do you experience?

What happens to you when you worry about the future rather than staying present to God’s care in the present moment?

10. How do Jesus’ words speak to your anxieties?

11. What might it be like to live one day at a time, with your eyes open to see what matters most while trusting the promise of God's love and care?

Thank God for calling you to move beyond pursuing false securities to valuing the kingdom of justice, mercy and love. Thank God, as well, for calling you to live one day at a time, letting go of anxiety about the future as you remember that God knows your needs and will provide for you.

Now or Later

For many of us, there are worries that lie beneath the worries of “figuring things out” or “getting everything done.” These worries might be fears that God is not pleased with us, that we have to get everything right, that we are failures, that we are on our own, that we have to strive hard to earn God's favor. In a time of quiet, invite God to show you what some of your deeper fears might be. Invite God to bring healing to these fears and to deepen your capacity to trust God's love and care for you.

Daily prayer: May I live one precious day at a time with my eyes open to what matters most and my heart open to your presence with me.