

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

Sunday March 22, 2020 "Breaking Chains: Worry."

I Intro.

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work through from the message this past Sunday. Whether you were able to attend the worship service or not, this devotional is free-standing and you can still use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk. Take as long as you need to dive into this material and feel free to share it.

Obviously, things have changed a bit since last week, and I don't even want to imagine what next week will be like. But we're still church, and we still have things to do. So we will be here making sure we all stay connected, and be church, even though we may be meeting and hanging out remotely, virtually, for a while.

II Recap.

Sunday was our third and final in our short series "***Breaking Chains***". Being freed from the external things the world tries to tell us brings contentment, meaning and happiness. It feels like the Constitutionally promised "*pursuit of happiness*" is such a desirable life goal. But we all eventually discover that the endless pursuit of this elusive life of happiness, soon becomes chains that bind us to the belief that something of the world can bring us contentment.

Jesus said he came to set us free, to break the chains that bind us. This not only included restrictive law-based religion, which we've talked about at length, but also the things of the world that entice us to pursue them, only to find that what felt like freedom soon becomes prison.

We've covered the topics of busyness, the relentless exhausting 'chasing the wind' search for happiness that destroys our relationship with God. And this past week the chains of depression, discouragement and despair. We waded into the waters of depression, affirming those who battle it are fighting a real significant battle, but a lot of what we feel isn't actually depression, just the difficulties of life. It was a long in depth conversation that is available online along with a study guide.

III Sunday.

Please stay tuned to our social media streams to stay up on what the latest is at NCC.

We finished our "***Breaking Chains***" series with an oddly, but timely, topic of worry. We planned this series out months ago, and this one just happened to fall on our first Sunday not meeting publically.

Our first passage was the meat of The Sermon on the Mount, and THE classic passage when it comes to worry. So read **Matthew 6:25-34** and we'll unpack it.

What jumped out to you about this passage?

Of course it talked about worry and anxiety, but how did it address those specifically for you?

This passage addresses two specific worries we have.

1. Scarcity vs abundance. (Food, basic necessities).

“Why do you worry about whether you have enough food, drink or clothes?”

This battle is what drives nearly all of politics and economics today and trips to the store apparently. The fear here that causes us to worry is; *“there is only so much to go around, and you have to fight, scrap, and battle for yours because others want to get it.”* This battle is also what fuels; hatred, racism, sexism, ageism, crime, wars, military build up, gang activity, EVERYTHING. And this is not new. This is why all through scriptures God continually tries to remind and encourage his people he is the God of everything. Our thoughts and actions will be driven by the fear that what we need won't be available, because there is not enough. And we will fall into the bottomless pit of worry.

So, a little self-inventory. Which I talk about all the time.

Where deep within you are some fears of scarcity, there might not be enough for you and the people close to you?

2. Rejection vs acceptance. (Clothing, fitting in).

“Why do you worry about your clothing and how you look?”

This is what drives our insecurities. The way we view ourselves, and think how others view us. Our value, worth, ability to belong, be loved, be accepted is based on how we ‘feel’ we are perceived, (notice I said *“how we **feel** we’re perceived”*). We let the world define what is beautiful and has value, (it's constantly changing so we have to stay on top of it or we get left behind). This was bad before but, now we've exponentially multiplied that with social media to heighten our sense of non-acceptance.

Both of these are the fuel that drives worry and anxiety.

So, do a little self-inventory. Which I talk about all the time.

Where deep within you are some fears of; “I will never....”

Have enough. Be enough. Fit in, belong. Be accepted. Be loved. And so I will fret, stew, be anxious, ruminate....worry.

And then contained within the passage is the super verse spelling out God's will. So read **Matthew 6:33** again, and we'll unpack how God gives us a great look into his desire for our lives.

1. See and pursue what God is doing.

This is the day to day work in the world creating the planet God wanted. Our top priority is to be about what Jesus was about, doing this work. We see this in The Lord's Prayer also. We focus our attention on the work of building this kingdom. It's been God's plan from the very beginning for his people to do this great work. This is what we need to be doing now even more than ever.

In your world around you, what can you do, how can you use your skills and passions to grow the kingdom, (God's desire for what community should look like), around you?

2. Live like you know you need to.

There is a morality, (I know this is a loaded word), in how we should live. As much as we may disagree on some issues, (because they get politicized), we have a baseline understanding of how we are to live, what it means to be in community. Rules, whether written or understood, of how **we're** supposed to be in the world. Notice how I keep emphasizing the personal aspect about this. It's not about being the church police and making sure others live moral lives. This is focusing on how we live. Jesus said this is another important thing to pursue, as we build the kingdom. To live a life that promotes inner spiritual growth, maturity, and builds this kingdom.

So, in your life, what can you do to build practices, habits, routines, that can shape and mold you into a person who lives a righteous life?

3. And the rest will take care of itself.

THIS IS A STATEMENT OF REALITY. Not a promise or even a command. This is just how life works. This is difficult because this is where we live, and so our concerns and often our prayer life starts with our needs. Most of us just aren't living a; *"build the kingdom, pursue being a righteous dude/dudette"* life. Once we get those in place then, all that stuff we worry, fret, ruminate, have anxiety about **Will there be enough? Am I loved, accepted, enough?** will be taken care of. All the things we worry about will be taken care of, if we can get those first two right. We get those first two right when we practice the lifestyle habits Jesus talked about before this specific teaching. Generosity. Prayer. Spiritual disciplines. How you handle your money. And through this we find the opposite of worry and anxiety....peace.

So, in your life, what are the things that consume you and cause you to worry?

How can devoting your life to this kingdom work of building a healthy, Christ-centered community, and a personal life ethic that grows you to do this well-formed mature relationship with God, reprioritize "rest of these things"?

IV Challenge.

We're in unusual times. And it's about to get even more unusual. New real word...just added to my dictionary. And in order to be the presence of Christ, a calming hopeful voice, and make it through this, we have to learn to manage and conquer our own worries and anxiety. Honestly this battle will never completely be won, but we can grow and learn to live through it.

How?

Don't buy into the world's valuation of things. Don't try to find meaning, purpose, contentment from the things of the world. Put to memory the 'God's will' passage of Matthew 6:33, and you'll find all of the stuff we all worry and fret about will be replaced over time with a powerful trust in God.

And we as a church, want to encourage you during this time of separation and isolation to find important connections. Build networks of support with others near you, and those you have established relationships with. Check on neighbors and people around you. Be wise, and bring hope. And in the name of everything holy and sacred...WASH YOUR HANDS!!