



WEEK 4 – DON'T WHAT?!

CHECK-IN

How are you? What's one cool thing God has done in your life in the last week? And... today, our scripture references birds and flowers. So... are you a gardener? Do you have perfectly manicured perennial beds and always-full feeders to draw in the hummingbirds? Or are you like Pastor Mike, your yard is where even cacti would go to die? Share!

OPENING PRAYER

Loving God, help us to lay our worry at your feet.

INTRODUCTION

Well, folks, you've made it to the last week of "Flipped"! "Wait! What???" We've only covered 3 small sections!" Exactly. That's why it's so important for you to read through the rest of The Sermon on the Mount on your own. And maybe we'll bring it back with "Flipped... Again." (Except that would flip it back to the way it was, so it would

have to be “Flipped... Again... Again.” Tell you what, let’s let Pastor Mike worry about the math and marketing.) For now, go read what we’ve skipped on your own. There’s great stuff in there we just didn’t have time to cover! For today, let’s review. Jesus starts with the uplifting stuff, the “Blesseds.” And once he’s got their attention, he gives them a little mission statement, “you’re the salt of the Earth.” And then he goes into the convicting stuff, “you’ve heard it said... but I tell you.” (The things we’ve talked about the last 2 weeks.) The first half of chapter 6 is about prayer, fasting, and forgiveness. But then, for the rest of chapter 6, Jesus goes into the longest single teaching of the entire sermon...so it must be important. It’s important enough that it’s going to get our last week of this series.

Warm-up Question: What “flipped” teaching of Jesus from the Sermon on the Mount has stood out most to you in this series and why? Was it convicting and challenging? Was it something comforting and encouraging? Is there one in the parts we skipped that stands out?

SCRIPTURE

Jesus begins chapter 6 by teaching on prayer, (it’s where we get The Lord’s Prayer,) fasting, and forgiveness, with a very strong undercurrent of, “don’t be like the hypocritical Pharisees.” The crowd had to be pointing and whispering to him, “Jesus... they’re sitting right there.” He didn’t seem to care. But when we get to the second half of chapter 6, Jesus isn’t flipping Jewish Law anymore, like he was in our passages from last week. He wasn’t critiquing the Pharisees... maybe

he feels like they've had enough for now. Instead, he transitions into this "flipped" teaching on how we seem to operate when it comes to trusting God: namely, that we don't seem to do it well. Let's take a look.

Read Matthew, chapter 6, verses 25 through 34.

Jesus knew that the people sitting with him that day, and the people who would be reading this 2000 years later, all suffer from the same common human tendency... worry. Maybe you worry about your teenager who just got her permit? Maybe facing that co-worker with whom you have the beef is causing you anxiety? Perhaps you're concerned about whether or not the Bears will screw up an awesome draft? Regardless of the source, it's in our nature to worry, and Jesus takes the topic head-on.

Question 1: What do you worry about the most? What keeps you up at night? Is there a specific person or situation that causes your anxiety level to skyrocket? What is it about this person or situation that raises the worry-meter? Deep breaths, we'll get through it together.

REFLECTION

Jesus spends the first part of this section flipping our human tendency to worry. "Don't store up treasure on Earth." Flip. "Store up treasure in heaven." (v.19-20.) "Why do worry about what you'll eat?" Flip. "Even birds have enough to eat." (v.26-27) "Why do you worry about

what you'll wear?" Flip. "Even Solomon was not clothed as well as the lilies of the field." (v.28-29.) And then, Jesus sums the whole section up with a drop-the-mic verse that we should all memorize:

³⁴ "So don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's trouble is enough for today."

That's a good line. That's a tweetable line. Jesus would have crushed the social influencer game. He knew that it is simply our human tendency to worry. It's in our nature to want to make sure we (and our loved ones) are taken care of, that we're secure and safe, that we have enough, that we don't want for anything. We long to know that tomorrow will be okay, and if there's any hint that tomorrow *won't* be okay, we start to worry. And so, we do what the people who were listening to Jesus's sermon did. We fret over where our "treasure" is stored. We hold on tightly to things because we fear losing them. We *control* (yeah, there's that word) whatever we can, so that our future is secure. And if there's any doubt that it will be, we worry. The challenge Jesus is making to his listeners (and therefore to us) is... trust. "God feeds the birds and clothes the lilies. So why are you worried? Do you not trust God?" Ouch, right? And we find ourselves going, "uh yeah, sure, I trust God... but... but..." And Jesus says, "don't worry... God's got you."

Question 2: What makes it difficult for you to trust that God has it worked out? What challenges your ability to give your worries over

to God? Or, do you have a bird-and-lily faith, rolling with the punches because you know God has it covered?

“But Jesus, I *do* trust you... I *know* you’ve got my back. *And* I still worry.” Yeah. The folks who have the kind of faith that puts aside all worry... they seem to be few and far between. So, for those of us who still struggle with this, Jesus gives us a clue that will help us worry less. Jesus gives us the *reason* we can trust God. And it’s not because God is All-Powerful. Just knowing that God is omnipotent isn’t enough to quell our fears, because an all-powerful God could still choose not to take care of us. But at the end of each paragraph, Jesus reminds us that God isn’t just omnipotent, God is also All-Loving. “Are you not more valuable to Him than birds?” (v.26) “Does God not care more about you than about the flowers of the field?” (v.30*para*) You can trust God to care for you, to provide for you, to handle the things you worry about, because God loves you. We don’t just believe in God. We believe in a *loving* God. And because God loves you, you can trust God to care for you.

Question 3: Take your answers to question 1 and 2, (ie. 1) what worries you and 2) why it’s hard to trust God,) and flip it: what would trusting God in that situation look like? What would it take to lay your worries at God’s feet and give that situation to God to worry about? Is that impossible for you? What can you do to make it a reality?

CLOSING

The Greek of verse 34 reads a little more like this: “Don’t be anxious about the things of tomorrow. Let tomorrow be anxious about itself. Today’s troubles are sufficient for today.” One of the ways Jesus seems to suggest that we can begin to let go of our worry comes from that last verse. “Today’s troubles are sufficient for today.” (v.34) Jesus is suggesting we focus on what we can focus on. That doesn’t mean we quit working, or stop saving money, or no longer plan for the future. That’s all okay to do. He’s suggesting we take care of today what we can take care of today. And let tomorrow be anxious about itself. Hang on to this verse. Memorize it. Make it a mantra when you feel yourself starting to be overwhelmed by worry. And whatever it is that you’re worried about, lay it at God’s feet, knowing that you can trust God because God loves you.

Take some time to share prayer requests or celebrations.

Close in prayer.