

# *A Spiritual Spring for the Week*

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Sermon Text: Matthew 6:19-34

Sermon Title: "It Is Foolish to Conjure Woe Where None Exist" (A Journey through Matthew)

Morrow Presbyterian Church, Morrow, GA

April 28, 2013

This message is for the worrywarts. You know who you are. If you can't go to sleep at night because you have something on your mind, you could be a worrywart. If the doctor calls you to make an unexpected appointment, and you don't want to go, you could be a worrywart. If you get a bill in the mail that looks official, and you don't want to open it, you could be a worrywart. Who is a worrywart? We all are. Every one of us worries about something. Maybe not the same thing that the other person worries about, but put us in a certain situation in which we cannot get out of, and we will panic. We will quake. We will worry.

Why do we worry? We tell people not to worry with bold confidence, and yet we will worry over something in the next minute, so why do we do it? I once read an article that said worry is directly linked to pride and arrogance. Pride and arrogance are sure of themselves. They say, "I'm good enough, I'm smart enough, and doggone it, people like me." Pride and

arrogance boast at having the right answer all the time. They boast at coming up with plans when nobody else can, and they may rub it in the face of those who just cannot think quickly on their feet. Pride and arrogance have it made – smooth sailing is what they love to do – but not everything is well mapped out. Not all things in the future can be seen. Not all future things can be saved up for or prepared for. Pride and arrogance see the problem, and they panic. They feel the need to correct the problem, but they cannot fix it right now, so they go into overload. That overload is worry. Worry is pride and arrogance beating their heads against the wall, trying to force the answers to come, trying to gain control over the situation like they always have before.

We cannot be full of pride and arrogance. It is not in our make-up to be prideful and arrogant. We don't trust in ourselves to come up with the plans and to solve everything. We need help. We are Christians who choose to trust in God our Father. We give up control by giving our lives over to our God. He takes controls of us. Pride and arrogance don't like that from the start. They want to be in control. They want to be superior and confident. We know better. We give superiority to our God, for God alone is able to

make the impossible possible. Our confidence is in the Lord, who made heaven and earth and all living creatures, and who is intimately involved with everything that goes on. Pride and arrogance have no place with God, so they have to go. We cannot entertain them anymore. When pride and arrogance are no longer around, worry is no longer around either. Worry gives way to trust. Worry gives way to understanding that our God reigns and lives and takes care of us always. If we could always put of faith in God, and believe that all things work out for our good, we would never worry again.

But we are sinful human beings, aren't we? Pride and arrogance will take over once in awhile. Worry will find its way to terrorize our hearts and minds.

Jesus knows this. He tells us not to worry in Matthew 6, and then he gives examples of things we might worry over. Jesus spends some time on the topic in Chapter 6, so we may understand how to face worry head-on and overcome it with God's help.

I would like for us to start not at verse 25 but at verse 19. I could have gone all the way back to the beginning of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, but we don't want to get out of here at 2:00pm, so let's just go as far back as Matthew 6:19. Jesus says, "Do not lay

up treasures for yourselves on earth... but rather lay up treasures for yourselves in heaven.” We are presented with two ends of the spectrum: treasures on earth, treasures in heaven. Never shall the two meet. Never shall the two be put together. The treasures on earth, apparently, are under threat. They do not last very long. People might come in and take them away, never to be seen again. The treasures in heaven, however, are not under threat. They last forever. Nobody can ever steal them away, not even God. God preserves those treasures for all eternity. But where do we place our focus? In which treasures do we put the most trust? We tend to focus way too much on those treasures that will disappear or break or fail. We hold so tightly to those things that are temporary. No wonder we worry so much.

I have a friend on Facebook who said that she lost her smartphone. It was lost forever. That would bother any of us if we lost our phones, but there are people who are so married to their smartphones that the world would come crashing down if they lost them. Some people go into an all-out panic, if a few dollars went missing, or the car received a mysterious scratch in the parking lot, or if certain clothes got dirty or torn.

Treasures on earth do not last. “Fame is fickle. Last Saturday’s hero is next season’s nobody. This

year's financial success is next year's bankruptcy."<sup>1</sup> It is not that Jesus wants to discourage us. He wants us to shift our focus. Much of our worry comes from trusting in the wrong things. Trust in God. Store us big investments in heaven that are valuable to us: compassion, grace, faith, ministry, worship, kindness, humility, salvation. They will last forever. We don't have to worry about them.

Then there is the issue of the eye being the lamp of the body. One of my commentaries says that the exact definition of *body* and *eye* are elusive – we are not sure what is being said – although Jesus seems to compare the eye with a person's goals, and the body with life itself. So what we get is, "The lamp of one's life is one's goal."<sup>2</sup>

What are our goals? What do we look forward to? Maybe that is a point of contention for us: we don't have anything to look forward to, so we worry. We worry about what's going to happen to us. We worry about what is happening to us today, and how we seem to be less happy, less positive, less hopeful about life. Everybody needs a goal, everybody. If we share anything as human beings, it is the ability to look forward, and to look forward to what is to come. We

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<sup>1</sup> Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: Volume 1, The Christbook, Matthew 1-12*, 259.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 262.

all need goals, because they help us to move ahead and bring meaning to our lives.

Yet, our goals might not be the goals that God wants us to have. Maybe we look forward to the wrong things, and that causes us to worry. How many times do I hear people looking forward to getting a job and making all sorts of money, and then they get into the work world and they hate it. They hate the people, hate the company, hate the hours. What happen? Their goals were altogether wrong. "If the eye is bad," Jesus says, "your whole body is full of darkness." The goal is to go out and work, but what is God's goal for us in finding work? We cannot just throw ourselves out there without asking what God's goals are for us. Do we ever ask God that: what job do you want me to taken on, whether I get paid or not?

My wife Tamara and I moved to PA 15 years ago, and she was looking for a job. She had just come from being the executive assistant to the CFO of a large corporation. She was making some fine money, a lot more money than I was, and we greatly depended on it. When we moved back to PA, Tamara could have gone all the way down to Pittsburgh, an hour drive, and found the same kind of job, maybe. That is one goal to shoot for. Or, she could take on a job in little ole Butler, PA, only 10-15 miles away, and be an

ordinary secretary for the American Red Cross. In that job, she would make way less than I was, and we would have to keep a sharp eye on our finances. The American Red Cross was the best place for her to be. It was God's purpose for her life and for that Red Cross chapter. We worried little about the money – we missed her big salary, but we didn't worry over it – and God took care of us. Tamara found her work to be fulfilling – she will tell you that it was one of the best jobs she ever had. It was definitely ministry she carried out for about two years.

“If your eye is good” – if those goals, whatever they are (school, sports, politics, business, family) have first come from God – “your whole body will be full of light.” Light brings hope, courage, a positive outlook, a joyful contentment. Light burns away the worry. We cannot find worry in a life that is full of light.

And we have heard Jesus say this many times before: “No one can serve two masters.”<sup>3</sup> We might not know where that passage is, but we know we've heard it at some time in the past. “You will hate the one [lord] and love the other.” Then Jesus tells us who those two lords are: God and money. We cannot serve the one and also the other. No matter how many

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<sup>3</sup> Matthew 6:24.

dollar bills say, "In God we trust," we would rather trust those dollar bills and all their \$20 and \$50 friends. Money as a god adds much worry to us.

There was a man who wanted to have it all. He didn't have it all to begin with, so he decided to work hard. The only way he could have it all, he thought, was to have money, big money. He worked legitimately to gain that money, but he worked long and unusual hours to gain it. He wore the nice watch. He had the perfect dimple in his tie. He pointed to his fine threads to everybody. He was cocky as he talked, and his conversation centered mostly on making money. Getting more money. Finding that next job that will help him raking in the money. Where was God in all of this? God's name was written on the money he carried in his pocket, but God was not written on his mind.

Serving money as his lord brought much stress and worry. The man dated women here and there, but none of those relationships lasted long. The women like that money he had, but they soon realized he would sooner be married to the money than to them. Parents added concern, when they kept bugging him about settling down and having children. The parents worried that they would never play with grandchildren. The man worried about the people who wanted to



borrow money from him, since his pockets seems to be so deep. He worried about the next big break, the next great job, so he could make mo'money. Where was God? God's name was on the money, but not in the man's heart. He seemed happy with the money, but underneath the cheery smile was hidden worry.

We might have a little money or we might have a lot, but it should never be our lord. Having little money or big money brings worry: worry that we don't have enough, worry that we might lose it. Money is meant to serve us. Money is meant to serve the Lord. We are meant to serve the Lord, and in serving our Lord, the stress is less. The worry becomes non-existent. Our service is meaningful, joyful, complete.

One of the greatest quotes I ever came across comes from Christopher Paolini's novel, *Eragon*. Eragon is a boy who must learn how to train a dragon, and then bond with that dragon. Along the way a teacher tries to show the boy how to work with the dragon, with little success. The boy gets angry and frustrated. He becomes worried about his future, and believes he can do nothing right. The teacher wisely quotes this line, "It is foolish to conjure woe where none exist." Do not look for worry to haunt you, when there is nothing to worry about.

Here is another great line from Jesus himself, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and God’s righteousness, and then all these things shall be added unto you.”<sup>4</sup> The earthly treasures, the badly-planned goals, the brainwashing wealth, the clothes, the food, the inch we want to add to our height: They do not come first. God does. God is our focus. God is our treasures, our goals, our masters, and our cares.<sup>5</sup> We ain’t got no time to worry, while we are living for the Lord.

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<sup>4</sup> Matthew 6:33.

<sup>5</sup> Bruner, *Matthew*, cf. 271.