

Keep it Simple

Stewardship Week One: Oct.4 2009

Don't Worry – Follow Jesus

Matthew 6: 25-33

We began this service with a short video available at this link:

<http://www2.elca.org/stewardship/makeitsimple/>

Click on “videos” in the upper menu and select “What's Enough”

One of the more difficult times in my life was my freshman year of college. I was in a bad spot of confusion, doubt and depression. I was in the middle of Lincoln NE, where pavement covered most of the earth and street lights painted the night sky purple and hid the stars I had gazed at growing up on the farm

I soon discovered a place of escape. There was a small lake outside of the city that had virtually no development. It was home to beavers, birds, and perhaps even a few lilies. I went there to think, and sometimes to cry, amid the creation that offered clarity the bright lights of the city did not.

The answers I sought at the lake where in many ways, a matter of life and death for me. Why was I here? Did God really exist? Why do people have to suffer? Would I ever feel happy again? Somehow sitting at that lake, listening to the birds, looking at the trees, and immersed in the aroma of fallen leaves created a space for me to hear the still small voice of the God. “Do not worry. Look at what is around you. Will I not care for you as well?” The mystery of God experienced by countless millions of people is that somehow, in some way, **God cares for us and carries us when we cannot.**

And we, as beings created in the image of God, are called and commanded to care for others in the same way. God has given us charge over the creation - to protect and to serve it. God has given us to one another to live in relationships of mutual love and faithfulness. God has filled our lives with blessing and abundance to share with others. Yet somehow, we cannot shake the worries that drive us away from God's intention for us. **God calls us to live simply** in faith and trust – to live simple lives free of worry about tomorrow and a future out of our control.

But the simple life is not an easy task. We live in a complex and complicated world but then so did the people of Jesus' day. Technology was supposed to make life "simpler" but humans seem to have an urge to complicate, so worries remain. Like Murray, we have a hard time figuring out what's enough even when we have more. Oh we may start out with good intentions. We "want to get it right" and so we go over and over every possible scenario. We don't want to "forget anything" or appear unprepared and so we keep more and more for ourselves *just in case*. And perhaps most importantly, we don't want anyone "to not like us" which easily turns into "I want everyone to like me" which subtly morphs into "I want everyone to **be** like me". All of a sudden we find ourselves weighed down by two backpacks full of stress and anxiety with no ability to get ourselves out of the mess.

To this predicament, Jesus points to the birds and the lilies of creation as a down payment on the faithfulness of God. **We do not have to make our own way in the world.** We do not have to fear the future for God has already made our future secure through the grace shown to us in Jesus Christ. We are freed up to live and love in the present. We are free to "strive for the kingdom of God" so that all people and all creation may experience having "enough".

This good news helps us in our struggle to determine just "what's enough" for us and in doing so, we discover just "how much" we are able to share with others. **Most of the time, that is a lot more than we ever imagined.** God calls us to share in a work bigger than ourselves and bigger than the worry that presses all around us. God calls us to the joy of giving because there is nothing closer to the heart of God than giving.

As we move forward in the coming weeks and continue to ponder our responsibilities as caretakers of God's creation and workers in God's mission field, I hope we will remember the **lilies**. **They are the flowers of Easter**, signs of new life and hope in a world that desperately needs to be reminded of the power of life over death. **Let ministry be the replacement for fear** and worry as together we shift from concern over our needs to the needs of others. Let us go forth, living what we believe and following in the way of Jesus.