

**Walking in Hope; Finding a New Way
Remaining Steady: One Day at a Time
Matthew 6:25-35
Rev. Susan Bresser
January 24/25, 2009**

*Hold the pickles, hold the lettuce, special orders don't upset us
all we ask is that you let us serve it your way
have it your way
have it your way
have it your way at Burger King*

I've been singing it all week ... thanks to Scott ... his sermon last week was my inspiration ...

Advertising works. We buy into it. And products with good marketing strategies seem to sell very well. We are a society of consumerism. Our spending habits reflect marketing ploys and marketing ploys, they hope, increase our spending.

How come we know that Tide laundry detergent can get out the toughest stains? Why do we know that? We understand that Tide is a reputable product because it says so on TV. It's a part of our lives.

Let's take a little test. I'll say the tagline for a product and you tell me the company that made it famous.

Don't leave home without it. *American Express*
Melts in your mouth, not in your hands. *M & M's*
The San Francisco Treat. *Rice a Roni*
Because I'm worth it. *L'Oreal*
Think outside the bun. *Taco Bell*
The quicker picker-upper. *Bounty*
What can Brown do for you? *UPS*

Tastes Great, Less Filling *Miller Lite*
Good to the last drop. *Maxwell House - 1926*
Like a good neighbor ... *State Farm Insurance*
You're in good hands *Allstate Insurance*

You're in good hands with Allstate. You're in Good Hands... That could be the tagline for the 5-6-7th chapters of Matthew, but Allstate Insurance has already registered it. It's also a part of their print logo ... hands that are reaching out, ready to serve. It's been their motto since 1956. It works. They sell protection and assurance. And we have bought into that.

Most of us, if not all of us, have insurance ... some kind of insurance... car, life, medical, dental, homeowners. We have it for protection. Having **insurance** gives us a sense of **assurance** against some of the disaster and chaos that happens in life and the worry that goes along with it.

All insurance companies – all of them – tell us: “Don't worry. You're covered.” As we go through life we are bombarded with worry, fear and anxiety ... and having someone say to us “you're covered” helps us breathe a little bit easier.

Where else have you heard this? “Don't worried ... you're covered.” ?? In the scripture. The Holy Scripture. Please hear these words from the Gospel of Jesus Christ according to Matthew, the 6th chapter:

If you decide for God, living a life of God-worship, it follows that you don't fuss about what's on the table at mealtimes or whether the clothes in your closet are in fashion. There is far more to your life than the food you put in your stomach, more to your outer appearance than the clothes you hang on your body. Look at the birds, free and

unfettered, not tied down to a job description, careless in the care of God. And you count far more to him than birds.

Has anyone by fussing in front of the mirror ever gotten taller by so much as an inch? All this time and money wasted on fashion—do you think it makes that much difference? Instead of looking at the fashions, walk out into the fields and look at the wildflowers. They never primp or shop, but have you ever seen color and design quite like it? The ten best-dressed men and women in the country look shabby alongside them.

If God gives such attention to the appearance of wildflowers—most of which are never even seen—don't you think he'll attend to you, take pride in you, do his best for you? What I'm trying to do here is to get you to relax, to not be so preoccupied with *getting*, so you can respond to God's *giving*. People who don't know God and the way he works fuss over these things, but you know both God and how he works. Steep your life in God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions. Don't worry about missing out. You'll find all your everyday human concerns will be met.

Give your entire attention to what God is doing right now, and don't get worked up about what may or may not happen tomorrow. God will help you deal with whatever hard things come up when the time comes.

How are we at marketing that? How are we at marketing the Word of God?
Have we bought into it?

Jesus says, “Give your entire attention to what God is doing right now, and don't get worked up about what may or may not happen tomorrow. Don't worry. God will help you deal with whatever hard things come up when the time comes.” Jesus is saying, “You're in good hands; God's hands.”
Shouldn't that help us breathe a little bit easier?

Anxiety and worry seem to be a part of who we are. We worry about the clothes we wear and we fret over the hair products we put on our head. We're afraid to go to the dentist. We worry about being audited by the IRS. In this place today, there are some of you who are afraid of these things, in this order: public speaking, flying, spiders, bats, and being alone. We worry about our credit, our mortgage, the college funds for our children. We worry

about our furniture and wonder if it's fashionable for our home. We're anxious about the weather: too hot, too cold, too dry, too wet. A lot of these things are not major life and death issues, but they can become monumental to us. The more we fret and stew, the more upsetting life becomes.

The solution? Don't worry. You're in God's hands. Hmmm ... how much do we believe that? How much do I have to pay for that kind of coverage?

Please hear these words of a modern day parable: On a recent weekend in Las Vegas a woman won a bucketful of quarters at a slot machine. She took a break from the slots for dinner with her husband in the hotel dining room. But first she wanted to stash the quarters in her room.

"I'll be right back and then we'll go eat," she told her husband and she carried the heavy coin bucket to the elevator. As she was about to walk into the elevator she noticed two men already aboard. Both were black. One of them was big... very big. The woman froze.

Her first thought was: These two are going to rob me. Her next thought was: Don't be a bigot; they look like perfectly nice gentlemen. But racial stereotypes are powerful, and fear immobilized her. She stood and stared at the two men.

She felt anxious, flustered, ashamed. She hoped they didn't read her mind, but knew they surely did; her hesitation about joining them on the elevator was all too obvious. She couldn't just stand there, so with a mighty effort of will she picked up one foot and stepped forward and followed with the other foot and entered the elevator.

Avoiding eye contact, she turned around stiffly and faced the elevator doors as they closed. A second passed, and then another second, and then another. Her fear increased!

The elevator didn't move. Panic consumed her. My God, she thought, I'm trapped and about to be robbed! Her heart pounded. She could feel herself begin to sweat.

Then one of the men said, "Hit the floor." Instinct told her: Do what they say. The bucket of quarters flew upwards as she threw out her arms and collapsed on the elevator floor. Quarters rolled this way and that ... all over the elevator. Take my money and spare me, she prayed. More seconds passed.

She heard one of the men say politely, "Ma'am, if you'll just tell us what floor you're going to, we'll push the button." The one who said it had a little trouble getting the words out. He was trying hard to hold back his laugh.

She lifted her head and looked up at the two men. They reached down to help her up. Confused, she struggled to her feet. "When I told my man here to hit the floor," said the smaller of the two men, "I meant that he should hit the elevator button for our floor. I didn't mean for you to hit the floor. I'm sorry." He spoke warmly.

She thought: What a spectacle I've made of myself out of worry that I would be robbed. She was so humiliated. She wanted to blurt out an apology, but words failed her. How do you apologize to two perfectly respectable gentlemen for behaving as though they were going to rob you? She didn't

know what to say. The 3 of them gathered up the quarters and refilled her bucket. When the elevator arrived at her floor, they insisted on walking her to her room. She seemed a little unsteady on her feet, and they were afraid she might not make it down the hallway. At her door they bid her a good evening.

The next morning flowers were delivered to her room - a dozen roses. Attached to EACH rose was a crisp one hundred dollar bill. The card said: "Thanks for the best laugh we've had in years." It was signed, Eddie Murphy and Bodyguard.

I think this is an urban legend, but regardless, it puts in perspective that fears and worries affect people of all ages and in all types of situations.

It's easy to find all sorts of things to worry about. We run the risk of being so overwhelmed by the number of problems we face that we never solve any of them. It's easy to get distracted. When you worry about how you're going to get everything done tomorrow, you lose your ability to get anything done today. You can get so preoccupied with tomorrow that today loses its power.

I speak for myself here. When I worry and fret and I'm unable to focus, I have a tendency to see all the chaos and anxiety first and put God second. I need to hear Jesus tell me again and again and again not to worry. When worry and fear and anxiety take over, that is a true indicator of how much I trust God and how much I believe in God's word: Not very much.

When that happens, and I know when it happens, I have to be very intentional about regrouping and prioritizing those things that come first. The scripture lesson today says to give my entire attention to what God is doing now.

I need to hear Jesus tell me to worry less and focus more on God. I need to be reassured that God loves the birds and the wildflowers ... and me and you.

I need to buy into those words. What I mean: I need to trust God and believe in the power and in the grace that God provides.

I think, maybe, this goes for all of us.

Have you heard this?

God is like General Electric ... bringing good things to life.

God is like the Energizer bunny ... just keeps going and going and going.

God is like Hallmark Greeting Cards ... cares enough to send the very best.

God is like Timex ... takes a licking and keeps on ticking

God is like Dial Soap ... Aren't you glad you use God? Don't you wish everybody did?

We can only live one day at a time, because, really, that's all that God has given us: one day at a time. Let us do so knowing that God will bless us and will provide for us. Let us remember that God is greater than our needs ... today, tomorrow and forever. We're in good hands with God. Rest easy ... we're covered. Amen.