

Text: Matthew 6:24-34  
Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A  
26 February 2017  
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*This* day once was tomorrow. Think about that. Today once was tomorrow. We never arrive at tomorrow. All we ever have is today - *this* day of our lives. Jesus recognizes us when he says to us, today - ‘Do not worry about tomorrow; tomorrow will take care of itself’ – because we never have tomorrow. We only have today.

It’s one thing to *prepare* for tomorrow – that’s putting our lives to good use *today*, so that we have something fruitful, something ready, when tomorrow becomes today. After all, our entire lives as Christians is spent preparing ourselves today for the arrival of that day that *has* no earthly tomorrow - the day we die and are brought into heaven. We develop our friendship with Jesus today, so that we may enjoy his friendship forever when our last tomorrow becomes today. But it would be a waste of our lives to worry about *when* that last tomorrow will become today, or to have anxiety about what that unknown last tomorrow will be like when it becomes today. And daily worry – worry day by day is even more destructive of ourselves. Worry is useless fretting, useless fear, a pouring out of our energy into nothingness, like pouring water into sand – how much water is left? Nothing. As the famous Christian activist Corrie Ten Boom famously said: “Worry does not rob tomorrow of its sorrow. Worry robs today of its strength.”

Jesus does not want Christians to waste the energy of our life worrying about a tomorrow we may or may not have, because when we worry that way we are putting our trust in something other than God. Worse – Jesus indicates that worrying about tomorrow is despising God, because we are serving something other than God, giving our lives to something other than God – we are serving mammon, which usually we think of as material things, relying on possessions rather than on God, but the *mammon* we are serving can be our relying on our own strengths, or abilities, or projects, or our own control, without God – doing life by ourselves, alone. Then that self-reliance, created by our worry about a tomorrow that we can never control, or even arrive at, becomes our master. A life in which we have turned our back on God, and turned to serve ourselves, by our worry. Jesus lays it out today:

No one can serve two masters. He will either hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life.

It's not as if today won't have its problems. Jesus says, 'Sufficient for a day is its own evil.' Today's challenges and problems are enough - are sufficient - for us to seek God's help to deal with, without adding to them the burden of the challenges and problems of a tomorrow we never know about until it becomes today - *if* tomorrow ever becomes our today, which it might not. And God already knows our needs - Jesus assures us, saying 'Your heavenly Father' - his heavenly Father - 'already knows you need' essentials like food, clothing, shelter, and so much more. Yes, St Paul says in his letter to the Philippian Christians, 'Make your needs known to God in prayer,' but Paul begins that sentence with the words 'The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything'. Do not worry about anything, but make your needs known to God in prayer. Worry is wasted time. Taking our needs and concerns to God in prayer is telling God what He already knows, but it changes our focus. It reorients us. Taking our needs and concerns to God in prayer points us to God and reminds us of the one is holding our lives in his hands and is active in our lives - and that is doing something useful with our time, rather than worrying, which is the waste of time. St Paul says that if we make that good use of our time, God's peace will fill our hearts and minds. Last Monday we celebrated the funeral of one of our parishioners, Hans Olsen, at Oak Harbor Lutheran Church and we got to sing that hymn *What a Friend We Have in Jesus* that says it perfectly:

O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear, All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.

Every night before dinner, my youngest dog - Spencer - grabs a toy in his mouth, and paces, paces, paces around the kitchen, like a great white shark. He's never gone without a meal a day in his life, but a dog can't know he will be fed and taken care of. We can, because we've experienced the faithfulness of God in our lives, and we - unlike my dog - can learn from that.

Everyone is going to arrive at a day without a tomorrow - the day we die. The day we die and wake to the endless day of heaven, where there *are* no tomorrows to worry about. What will we do? Jesus is telling us to start practicing now, and experience a taste of the life of heaven while still on earth. If we're looking for something to give up for Lent, I suggest giving up worry.