



April 5, 2020
Pastor Megan Hackman

Defiant Hope: Our Attitude Matthew 6:25 ff

Good morning, Chapel Hill and new virtual friends alike! I'm Megan, I'm one of the pastors here. And four weeks ago, we were planning for this to be the Sunday that I preached in Gig Harbor as you sent me out to begin weekend services in Port Orchard. We were going to be calling forward our launch team praying for them. Next weekend for Easter we had planned to be in the auditorium of South Kitsap High School.

Now, well, it's different. Everything's different. Pastor Mark talked last week about his leisurely walks with his beloved and the space he has had to call hundreds of you in the past weeks. Meanwhile, our house looks a little different. We have a four-year-old, Larry and I are both working from home, and we're doing our best to honor one another by giving each other time to work without splitting our attention between Zoom and parenting. Hand-raise emoji if you're with me?

So Sabbath for us is not a 7-day event now, but once a week, it is our lifeline. Please comment to us if you tried taking a day of rest – what worked for you? What didn't? I shared on Facebook that my close friends said, "We love Sabbath Megan." I'm cheery and quieter on Sabbath which, for me, is Friday. Every other day of the week, well, let's just say I wish I carried more of Sabbath Megan with me.

Instead, there were several mornings this week where my opening conversation with Larry was, "I'm stressed." Do I need to mention how much things have changed? Every day one more thing I've never done, one more "I don't know when that'll happen." Heart rate up. Anxiety. Yeah, maybe that's you, too. And so I'm glad that I was asked to preach on this passage because I needed God to preach Good News to me about stress. So let us—you and me—hear the word of the Lord, from Matthew 6, beginning with verse 25:

Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God who so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, "What shall we eat?" or "what shall we drink?" or "what shall we wear?" For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

So, just don't be anxious. Are we done here? Got that? Stop it. Don't be anxious. Whenever I read this passage, I can't help but hear in my own head: "Megan, just stop it." What's your problem? You worried about your stock market portfolio? Don't be anxious! Can't figure out how to homeschool your kids while keeping the house clean and cooking three, five, eight meals including all the snacks in a day? Stop it! Afraid you're going to lose your job or get COVID at your job? Don't be anxious, look at the birds, consider the lilies. They're fine, you will be, too.

Is anybody familiar with the Bob Newhart sketch, Stop it? It's worth watching because we need to laugh and because this is what it looks like when we oversimplify anxiety and think it's okay to just preach stop it. I've got [a link](#) in the comments to pin for your amusement later, but due to copyright, I can't share it now. The moral of it is, don't we wish that "Stop it!" was enough to end our anxiety?

Unfortunately, my own soul just doesn't work with a Stop it! mentality. We've got to talk about how Jesus addresses our anxiety. Just to be clear, I'm not going to be able to address clinical anxiety. Gunnar spoke thoroughly about that last year, and to listen to his message, you'll find a link in the description. Today, I want to talk about daily anxieties and what I am learning as I live out these very strange days with Jesus. He is so good. His presence with us is such good news. My anxiety was down this week because I worked on trusting Jesus and seeing the world his way. My attitude has been different. I hope the same for you, so let's dive in.

Grab a Bible and open it up to Matthew 6. I want you to see the headings of what is around this passage. Jesus didn't tell us "Do not be anxious" out of nowhere. "Do not be anxious" is the one of the first takeaways in his "Sermon on the Mount" which starts in Matthew 5.

Jesus explains in this sermon how different his way is than the way of first century Rome, and it's different than 21st century America. God is setting up a new way of life in Jesus, and that way is his Kingdom. It's God's version of your best life, and it's great even if it isn't the suburban, American dream. For instance, Matthew 5 begins by turning upside down the idea of who is living their best life. Jesus says those who are grieving experience blessing because they know the comfort of God. We don't think of those who are grieving right now or who are sick as blessed, but when God has his way, those who grieve are more blessed because they know more of God's comfort. Do you see how this is upside down?

Flip through the pages from Matthew 5 to Matthew 6 in your LifeGroups later and talk about this best life, this way of God, his kingdom.

In Matthew 6, Jesus begins giving his takeaway points from the sermon he's preached. Give. Pray. Fast. And then—oh no, Jesus starts talking about money. Everybody starts squirming, Look at verse 24, "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money." What's the next word? "Therefore—do not be anxious." Jesus went and tied anxiety and money together.

In God's way, in his Kingdom, he knows our hearts can only be tethered to one source. Is it God or money? Which tells you that you're okay? Your financial situation or God? I feel tethered in this moment. I can move to here, or about here, but beyond it, you wouldn't see me anymore. This camera is dictating how far I can move. When our hearts are tethered to money, our anxiety goes up and down with how secure our money is. Jesus knows us so well. He knows the stock market right now is soaring

anxiety right through those who live month to month on its dividends. He knows that the fear of being told your work is unessential is going to mean many weeks of not getting paid. It's like that tether point is on the move, and so is our anxiety. When you're anxious, what's your heart strapped to that's jerking you around?

Jesus invites us to consider the alternative to being tethered to our fickle finances. It's not "Stop it." It's a two-fold alternative. First, Trust the Father. This is your clip in point. Being tethered to God, you're tethered to someone who does not move, who does not change. So even life changes around you, your soul is less moveable. Your emotional range is less dramatic. Assuming you've chosen to tether your heart to God and *not* money, Jesus says to us, "Do not be anxious." You're with God. Trust the Father.

To see what trusting God looks like, Matthew 6 says look at the birds and consider the lilies. Why them? Because in them we see WHO we are choosing to trust -- our heavenly Father. Verse 26 says that the heavenly Father feeds the birds of the air. Verse 30, The heavenly father, makes the grass something good to look at. If the heavenly father treats such insignificant glimpses of his creation with such love, how much more does he not love you?

To begin to Trust the Father, I encourage you to start where you would start, or re-start any relationship where you want to build trust. Start talking. We call talking to God prayer. But it's really just talking or journaling and then waiting for him to talk back. Most often, God speaks to us through the Bible—it's his words written down. Because he doesn't change, his word doesn't change. So we can read his word and ask for guidance. I love how Pastor Ellis is leading during the 6am prayer times on FaceBook Live (it is recorded if you're not up at 6). If talking to God is new for you, start with Ellis tomorrow morning. Get to know the Father.

Praying is also the place to start if you feel like your trust in God has been broken for some reason. The way we get back into human relationships where trust is broken is we go to them and say, Hey—this hurt. Where were you? I encourage you to do the same with God. Start talking to him, start listening in his word and see if any of the things you're reading sound like they were written for you.

Trust takes time, and it takes going through hard stuff together to rebuild trust. Well guess what? We're in hard stuff. Today definitely has enough trouble of its own, and so I'd invite you to start a relationship with God. I believe you'll find his anchor point is secure. That doesn't always mean the trouble's gone, but God can make you more unmovable.

I've watched my friend Ashleigh build trust with the Father. Ashleigh lost her husband this past year and yet was so encouraging to another friend in her crazy new reality of mom and homeschool teacher to three with husband now working at home. With a genuine smile on her face she said, "You're doing amazing, and it's okay. They're going to survive, we're going to be survive. It's all okay... I love you, you're an amazing mom, I'm so impressed with you every day." We talked about doing life 10 minutes at a time. Later, Ashleigh shared about how she still has hope. Watch this. ["I like the 10-minute thing. It's been my mantra for the last year, especially right after Terry died. My friend Amber would remind me to make it through the next 15 minutes, and the next 15 minutes after that, and that's a start. Truly what we experienced over the last year has helped prepare me for what the world is experiencing now, so much. It's given me, like, hope that doesn't make sense, which is great. I was talking with someone the other night, and they were like, 'Wow, You have a great perspective on all this!' And it was like, 'I went

through the worst thing I could possibly imagine, and I still have hope, so we'll get through this too; it'll be fine.'"']

She's tested that tether point 15 minutes at a time, and found God to still be the source of hope. It's okay to begin to trust God with prayer, just 10 or 15 minutes at a time. Jesus called his followers in this passage "little faiths" because they're *learning* trust. Life trusting God leads to a life without anxiety because it's a life fully secured in the unchanging, heavenly Father. Trust the Father.

The second alternative is Jesus telling us to seek first the kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you. As Pastor Larry said two weeks ago, the kingdom is everywhere we see God's way. So when we seek *first* the kingdom, we're seeking to understand the way he sees the world *first*, how God is interpreting everything in our world *first*, and then everything else follows. For the other half of Jesus' way out of anxiety, I really *like The Message* because it created a picture for me. Here's Matthew 6:33: "Steep your life in God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions." Seek first the kingdom – or steep your life in God-reality. Trust the Father. Steep your life.

Steep your life. There are 2 things doing a lot of steeping in my house—coffee and tea. Let's call coffee the quick hit—it's taking the "Do not be anxious" as a quick-hit, STOP IT, command. When you smack talk yourself out of anxiety it sounds like—"Ah, I believe God! So, Megan Ann, stop worrying about not being able to get everything done tomorrow! Stop working about whether or not your church – or for you, your business—is going to exist in 3 months. Just keep going and do not be anxious!" To me that demanding "Do not be anxious" is like pouring positive self-talk over the coffee grounds of your circumstances. We expect instant results. Instant caffeine. Instant peace. But does this face look like a peaceful face? Yeah, no. Stop it expects you to find the strength within yourself to be free from anxiety.

Jesus' way expects you to find the strength outside of yourself to not be anxious. Outside of yourself, through Jesus, you'll find God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions. It's more like pouring hot water over tea. How long is it going to take before you can see the color of this tea? Before you want to drink it? This is my favorite tea, lemon chiffon. The directions say, "Allow tea to steep for 7 to 10 minutes. A longer steeping time will not increase bitterness, but rather make the cup more flavorful." When we steep our life, we take our individual stresses and like tea, immerse our life outside of ourselves in God's way. The command of Jesus here to seek the kingdom is not a quick hit. It's a long, life-filled steeping in God's reality, in his Kingdom, his way, in his peace. We're tethered to the heavenly father, learning to trust him, and where we live around that clip in point is his kingdom, his way.

How are you going to know God's way? How will your attitude shift? We want everything changed in an instant, but a lot of God's way is like the 7-10-minute wait. God has shown us in the Bible how he operates in the world. There are loads of stories of people experiencing hard things, like we are. And each time, the story leads to a moment of rescue and revelation of just how much God loves his people. The story culminates when Jesus, God in person, shows up to walk among his people and shows exactly what kind of freedom he intends for everyone to experience—healing, resurrection, understanding, belonging—and he says—this! This is the way it will be forever. This is what my Kingdom looks like. Go and spread the Good News that belonging to this Kingdom is now possible! And it's possible for you. When we steep our life in God-reality, we are reading the stories of God and finding our life in them.

I invite you, jump in now with Larry and me studying Luke at 1:00 pm on FaceBook Live. We're looking at who King Jesus is and what's his Good News. Tomorrow will be Luke 12, which has this same story from

Matthew in it! Steep in it. God's way is not a quick fix. But Jesus' peace seeps in, his reality, his initiative to give us his peace, his provision. I needed to steep this week in the story of Jesus feeding 5000 people with 5 loaves of bread and two fish. It snapped me right out of a scarcity mentality.

Back to the beginning – Therefore do not be anxious. How? Trust the Father. Steep your life. Therefore, do not be anxious. Because you're going to tether your heart to God and not to money, therefore, it naturally follows that, you don't have to be anxious about tomorrow. Why? Because tomorrow's going to be awesome? That's not what he's promising. YET when you trust the heavenly Father, when you're steeped in God's way, it will naturally follow that you'll discover one of the greatest promises of Jesus.

Jesus said, "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart, I have overcome the world. (John 16:33)" When you trust Jesus, you've entrusted your heart to the one who in his death and resurrection already proclaimed his victory over our greatest fear, death, and gifted us with eternal life. That's his way. Death to life. That's his kingdom, trust to freedom. That's life with Jesus, seeping, increasingly the hope of his promises diluting the anxiety into nonexistence.

Hear one more time from the Message: Therefore, if you decide for God, living a life of God-worship, it follows that you are not anxious... God will help you deal with whatever hard things come up when the time comes.

Do you want to a life tethered to God? Let me invite you now to tell him you want to trust him. Pray with me.