2009-06-06 Matthew 6:25-34 *Do not Worry* Jerry Arnold

"Father in Heaven, we have come here today to be in Your presence, to spend time with You, to be encouraged and to be strengthened by You. We pray that all these things will take place. We ask that through Your mercy and through Your grace You will teach us in Your Word. That we will hear what we are supposed to hear and experience what we are supposed to experience. But Lord we all come with experiences in life and some are very weighed down with heaviness right now, a lot of things going on; and we just want to give You all of our burdens Lord. We ask that You will take them and that we will sense You have taken them, and that for a while we will be at peace knowing You are actually the King of the universe and You do hear and answer prayer. We ask this and pray this in Jesus' name, Amen."

Camp meeting was here in the Collegedale area a week ago, and it's a fun time for pastors as we have different assignments that we are given. Mine was to work with the Earliteens. If you have any Earliteens here, any family members of Earliteens that were over at camp meeting, I want to commend the parents and grandparents, you are doing a superb job. Because we've got a crop of young people coming up that are just absolutely outstanding. And it was a pleasure to be with them through the camp meeting experience. One of the joys is getting caught up on the lives of fellow pastors as we get to work together. And so we share stories and ideas and things, and one particular pastor shared this story with me, and it fits in with the sermon today, so I'll share it with you. He said there was a man that was driving down the street, and he came to one of those intersections that has a camera. As he drove through the intersections he saw the flesh of the camera. He quickly looked at his speedometer and he said, "Oh, common, I wasn't going that fast."

In fact, it started to eat at him, it was bothering him, so he turned around and went around the block. He came through the intersection again, but this time he was driving exactly what the speed limit was, and again, there was a flesh. He said, "I can't believe that." So he went around the block again, this time five miles an hour slower than the speed limit, flash! He couldn't believe it. He ended up doing it five times and eventually he got so frustrated, he just left. About a week later, he got an envelope from the city. And when he opened the envelope, there were five tickets inside for not wearing a seat belt. Now I know someone is going to say, "Pastor, is that a true story?" I don't know? But I like it! The man was worried about the wrong thing, do you see that? Today, we are going to talk about worry. The dictionary actually defines worry this way: "A mental distress or agitation resulting from concern for something impending or anticipated."

So worry is about something that may or may not happen. Worry is what we do with the bridges that we actually never crossed. That's what worry is. In fact, worry, one author wrote, "It is the interest paid by those who borrow trouble," that is worry. It is fear about what might happen. Worry steals a person's peace and pummels him with anxiety or fear. Today, we are going to spend some time looking at a few of the things Jesus taught us about worry. Please open your Bibles to Matthew chapter 6; we'll be reading verses 25-34 as we continue our series of Jesus' teachings called, "The Sermon on the Mount." I'll be reading from the New King James version of the Bible and that's what will appear on the screen. Verse 25, "Therefore I say to you, do not worry 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. For they neither saw nor reap nor gather into barns, yet, your Heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?"

"Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field how they grow. They neither toil nor spin, and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory

was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field which today is and tomorrow is thrown to the oven, will He not much more clothe you O you of little faith? Therefore do not worry saying, 'what shall we eat or what shall we drink or what shall we wear? For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your Heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow for tomorrow will worry about its own things; sufficient for the day is its own trouble."

Worry! Six times the word 'worry' is mentioned in this passage. We begin the passage in verse 25 where it says: "Therefore I say to you." Now Jesus is concluding some remarks. This is a conclusion of some things He's been teaching us. "Therefore I say to you." Thus far in this passage, in its entirety, Jesus has spoken to us of two treasures: one on earth, one in heaven. He has spoken to us of two eyes: one that is sick and selfish and the other that is healthy and generous. He has spoken to us of two masters: one that is God, and one that is money. And now, He is speaking again and He is going to continue with the philosophy of two. And today He is going to teach us of two ways of living. One is worry and the other is faith. Look at verse 30, the very last part of verse 30 says, "…o you of little faith." So Jesus is going to talk to us today about two ways of living. One is a life of worry; the other is a life of faith.

Now when I read this passage, like you, I read it through the prism of my own experience. I live in the day in which we live right now. And when Jesus talks about the body, about food and drink, and about clothing, I think of it in the context of our day. And in our day, we are consumed with these issues. You go to the magazine rack, and everything is about the body. "Lose 10lbs in one week," "I lost 110lbs in five days," you know, on and on and on. And then, then they tell you what to wear and what to eat, and it's a billion dollar industry that we have here in the United States. It's all about our bodies, what we eat and what we wear. But Jesus did not originally speak this to us. He spoke to people who lived two thousand years ago. In our day, we are so fashion conscious that there are people who actually wait until they are told what the new style is going to be for the fall before they buy their clothes.

We can measure things by decades. We can say we are going to have a 70's party, and everybody knows what that means; how to dress and how to act. A 50's party, 80's, 90's party, whatever! Well I don't think it was that way back in the days of Jesus. There is only so much you can do with a robe. And I really think that if Abraham had shown up at the Sermon on the Mount, dressed the way that he dressed 1800 years before Jesus, if he was standing there, I don't think a couple of young people would be elbowing each other saying, "Hey dude, check out that guy. Man that went out of fashion 1800 years ago." Not likely! So what is Jesus talking about? Is he talking about this obsession that we have for our bodies? Is He talking about the obsession that we have what to put on our bodies and what to put in our bodies? No! He is talking about two ways of living.

Let me unpack this for you. Go back to verse 25. He says, "Therefore I say to you; do not worry 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?" He is talking to people that make it day by day. They don't have refrigerators and freezers, they don't can things. It's an ordeal to make it day by day. When they hear this, they are not thinking of a closet full of robes and matching sandals, and how that all coordinates together with your belt and all that type of stuff; they are not in that mode at all. They are thinking of survival. And when Jesus talks about the body, food and clothing, He is talking about the basics. That's what they hear. "Ah, He's talking to us about the basics. He is talking to us about simple survival."

And He says, “Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?” Then Jesus gives three illustrations. And these illustrations are pretty interesting. When you look at them and you study them, and you say, “I don’t know if I like these illustrations?” Let me show you why. Look at Matthew 6 verse 26: Jesus says, “Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?” So Jesus says, “All right, let me draw your attention to the bird’s gang. They do fine. God feeds them.” And yet, every person there that would have heard this, would have thought, “Yeah, but birds do starve to death, and birds freeze to death. And birds are eaten by predators. I don’t know if I like the idea of the birds? In fact, even a healthy bird is only going to live a couple of years.” What is Jesus talking about? Keep that in mind. There is a shortness of life in a bird that I don’t know that we like? In fact, birds work very, very hard for their food. I don’t know much about birds. People that watch birds know a lot more than I do.

I learned that there is a certain bird in England that it will catch insects and then will put them on thorns and come back and eat them later. It’s just kind of storing the food. I don’t know much about birds, but I did read that birds work very, very hard; from sunup to sundown. Their whole existence is trying to find food. And mother birds especially work hard when the eggs hatch. And they’ve got to provide food for them. So birds work very hard. I also read that birds, for body weight, eat a lot of food in comparison with their body weight. So today at lunch, if somebody after you are done eating, looks at you and says, “My, you eat like a bird,” you may want to ask them what they know about birds. Because they might not be saying, “O you just pack a little here and there,” they might be saying, “Compared to your body weight, man, you really pack it in. And next time you come here for lunch, we’ll prepare better.”

Birds! Well one thing is clear, the birds don’t live long. Look at His next illustration; chapter 6, verse 27, He says, “Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?” Now I remember growing up, I always wanted to be taller. Last time I measured myself, I was six foot one. I am not going to measure anymore, I am going by that. But I always wanted to be taller because I played sports and I wanted to be at least six-four, six-five, weigh about two hundred forty pounds. You could play football; you could play baseball and basketball being that size, and I wanted to be taller. I don’t know what I ever did to try to be taller, but I know I was worried about it; I wanted to be taller. Jesus says, “Look, you can’t grow a cubits height by worrying about it.” A cubit is eighteen inches. And you know, when I read that I thought, “Boy, I don’t know anybody that is saying, ‘Lord, I want to be eighteen inches taller.’”

I am sure there are people that do, but I don’t know any of them. And so I am wondering what does that really mean? And so I studied it in the Greek and actually can be translated in another direction. Not height but length. In fact, the New International Version has done that. This is what it says for that text. It says, “Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?” So Jesus is talking about worrying! You can’t worry yourself into a longer life. In fact, I am sure He knew, and we certainly know that worrying can actually shorten your life. But again, it’s a short life. So you have birds with a short life. You have man trying to worry himself into a longer life, and it won’t work, and then another illustration. Look at verses 28-30. “So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field how they grow. They neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?”

Now the flowers! The flowers are beautiful, and Jesus relates to them – apparently there where He was preaching in the regions of Galilee, there is this beautiful wild flower that shows up. And it comes on, and it is just stunning to look at; just beautiful! And He says, “It’s more beautiful than Solomon and all his glory.” “But,” He says, “It’s here for a day, then is gathered and is burned in an oven.” And I thought, ‘well it’s mild exaggeration, you know. A day

it's just a short period of time.' So I studied it and discovered, no, it's here for a day. The flower will be there for a day, maybe two at the most, and then it's dead. And what the people did is they gathered it and then dried it out. And they would use it to start their fires in their ovens when there were going to cook because it was very flammable. And so literally, Jesus is saying exactly what happened.

Now I am not comforted by these illustrations, if unless, I can understand what Jesus is saying. Here is what I believe Jesus is saying. "Look folks, don't worry! Life is too short to spend it worrying." You see! It's about the shortness of life. And it's just too short to spend it worrying; "O you of little faith!" So He is talking about a life of faith verses a life of worrying. He goes on to say in verses 31 and 32: "Therefore, do not worry saying what shall we eat or what shall we drink or what shall we wear? For all these things Gentiles seek. For your Heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things." You know, in the context of Adventism and the concerns that we are raised with; this passage kind of speaks to us. He says, being worried about what we shall eat, what we shall drink or what we shall wear?

Do you realize, do you have any idea how much energy and time we put into conversations about what we should eat, what we should drink or what we should wear, or what the girls shouldn't wear. It's time consuming. And the Bible says, yes, you know, it's okay, it's important and it will always be important on one level, but yet Paul tells us in Romans 14 verse 17, "But the Kingdom of God is not food and drink. It is peace and righteousness." There is something greater and grander. Now I recognize conversations will always continue about what we should drink, what we should eat and how we should dress. There will always be people coming in church who are not dressed properly. It's just going to happen because they haven't grown to the point where they understand that there are certain parts of the anatomy that are best left covered. In fact, it's an ongoing problem for pastors, you know.

How do you do this? How do you satisfy the folks who have been around forever and yet, not offend the new people coming because in all honesty, I'd much rather have somebody in church poorly clad than not in church at all. Wouldn't you? And we've had some complaints in our church down through the almost nine years that we have been in existence. And Karen and I have toyed around some ideas. And what we thought what we could do is find a grandmother type lady that could be kindly, and she would have a basket full of scarves that she got from the Samaritan Center. And she could meet the ladies and say, "Now, this would probably help you." In fact, we had a name for the lady. We were going to call her, "The breast wrangler." Keep everything in order. And then, we used to toy around with letters that we were going to write to everybody. "You know, as far as this breast problem, the pastors have had a 'hands off policy,'" you know, and…

But you know, but there are always going to be people in the church who are doing the best they can with their understanding. And I pray that every one of us will be kind and understanding of that. And we'll allow people a chance to grow. We'll give them an opportunity. We are just going to love them. Amen? All right, good! Well, that was kind of a side-bar sermon but it fit in nice. Let's go back to two types of life. A life of worry verses a life of faith. Let's go to Matthew 6 verse 33. Jesus says, "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." Jesus says, in life, number one, seek the kingdom of God. And that's why we are here. You may not be committed to the Lord yet, but you are here because you are seeking God. You are seeking some aspect, and that is what He has in mind. But note what He says. "Seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness." Because I want you to know that religious people can be worried about the wrong things. And Jesus is trying to teach us to have a life of faith and not a life of worry.

Religious people can get all wound up in trying to be righteous. Let's set the record straight, let's remind you. Those of you who know it already, those of you who don't know this, well then I am happy to tell you! Hey, you are

never going to be righteous. No matter how hard you try, no matter what you do, you are never ever, ever, going to be righteous. In fact, look at the person next to you, shake their hand and say, “No matter what you do, you are never going to be righteous.” Aha, some of you aren’t doing that. I noticed the married couples, none of them, no, “Not going there.” The Bible says to seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness. God is the only One that is righteous, and salvation comes by us embracing Jesus Christ as our Savior, and we are given the gift of righteousness, His righteousness. That’s what we are supposed to seek.

Unfortunately, people get very religious and they get all wrapped up in things and they forget about God. And they are so embroiled in trying to have victory; they are constantly finding defeat. What about this life of faith, the priority for a life of faith? The Apostle Paul talks about it. Let’s go there in Philippians chapter 4 as he gives us some direction how to have this life of faith. In Philippians 4 verses 6 and 7 it says this: “Be anxious for nothing!” That means “Don’t worry about anything.” “But in everything by prayer and supplication made with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.” Now, the Bible never promises a life without problems. Never! But Paul says, “Don’t be anxious about those problems. Talk to God in prayer. Give Him your concerns. Do it with thanksgiving. Let your requests be known to Him.” In verse 7 he says, “And the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

So as we face life, and we have these things coming that we are afraid of, give those to God. Do that in prayer, and God will give you peace and will guard your heart. What does that mean to guard your heart? Well, I’ll tell you, a life of worry turns us away from God. And a life of worry causes us to think that our problems are bigger than God is able to deal with. In fact, those of you who are concerned about keeping the Ten Commandments, and I hope it’s all of us. God says we are not to worship graven images and idols. Do you realize we kind of say that an idol is anything that takes the place of God? Many of us have turned our problems into an idol. We spend more time bowing down to our problem than we do to God. And so, Paul is reminding us that “No, you go to God with these problems and He will give you peace.” There is something afforded a believer. A person who is living a life of faith is given the ability to go through life, not un-scathe, not without problems, but with peace in their heart; with a guarded heart, a heart that does not bailout on God.

Because when the difficulties come, the devil comes in and he’s got a simple plan. He wants to discourage you. He wants to fill you with doubt. He wants to convince you that if this is what it’s all about. “It’s not worth it. I am out of here God. You can torment other people but You are not tormenting me. In fact, I don’t even believe in You anymore.” But God will guard your heart if you go to Him in prayer with your problems. So Paul, a man of great faith! What about the life he had? Look at verse 10, same chapter, it says: “But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again. Though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity.” So he is writing to the church at Philippi and he is saying, “Thanks for the care package. I needed it. And I know you would have sent more before but you didn’t have opportunity.”

He goes on to say, “Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am to be content.” Wow! “…whatever state I am, to be content!” Verse 12, he says: “I know how to be abased…” that means, “I know what it’s like to have nothing,” “…and I know how to abound!” “I know what is like to have a lot.” “Everywhere and it all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry.” “I know what it’s like to be full; I know what it’s like to be empty. Both to abound and to suffer need. I know what it’s like to be wealthy; I know what it’s like to have poverty. I know the extremes.” And he said this, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Now that’s a passage most of you are familiar with. But we take it out of context. We say, “Oh man, I’ve got a final exam coming. Oh well, ‘I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.’”

Well, that's true! "O, I've got a piano recital I've got to do, I am scared to death, but 'I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.'" And that's true, but that's taken out of context. This is put in the context of having the peace of God and a heart that is guarded by God, learning to be content in every situation. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Whether I have a lot, whether I have little; pretty amazing, isn't it? The life of faith is a life of peace; peace that is provided by God. I want to show you an amazing passage. Look at John 14 verse 27. Jesus is speaking at the Last Supper. It's Thursday night, He is talking to eleven men because Judas has left already. He says, "Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled neither let it be afraid."

Jesus says, "I have peace. My peace I am going to give to you. The world does not have that peace." And the good news is: the world can't take it away! Now Jesus' peace, what is Jesus' peace? When Jesus is being bitten, He is at peace. When Jesus has his beard being ripped from His face, He is at peace. When Jesus is being spat upon, He is at peace. When Jesus is being lied about and accused of all kinds of things, He is at peace. When Jesus is tortured on the cross, He is at peace! What an amazing picture of peace. Jesus is promising us here that if we live a life of faith, that if we seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, He will give us a peace that it's unlike anything in this world. It's indescribable! You can't understand it. You can only experience it, and if you got it, you can get through life's crises and you can live a life of faith and not be overwhelmed with worry.

Now I want to talk a minute to the very young people that are here. Ten to fourteen years of age. I heard a radio interview from a man that has been studying for sometime why people leave church. And it was Christianity in general here in America. Do you realize that twenty to twenty nine year olds, seventy percent are leaving the Christian church in that age group? It's not just our denomination, it's cross-denominationally. So they did the series of studies to try to figure out why that happens, because a lot of people thought it was the challenges that they were faced with when they got in college. No! What they discovered after interviewing a thousand people who had left and finally came back, what they discovered is that at the age ten through fourteen, in that time period, in school they were asked questions that they couldn't answer about God. The age of the earth was their number one concern.

Now folks, a casual reading of the Book of Genesis will allow for this earth to be billions of years old. I'll tell you how. When you read the first part of the Book of Revelation, God begins a creative work, but it doesn't say when matter began. So this earth could have been here in pre-created state billions of years, that's not a problem! So ten year olds, remember that when that becomes an issue. But here is what I really want to say to you, and this is it. There are a lot of questions I can't answer, no one can answer. You'll not be able to answer. But there is one thing you can be assured of, if you will seek after God's kingdom and after His righteousness, He will make Himself so real to you by the peace He gives you that even in the midst of all the doubts and accusations and laughter and mocking that may come your way, you'll be able to say: "Now, I still believe in God. I know He is real. I can't explain it; I can't explain all the issues in the Bible, but I do know God. He is real in my heart."

Ten year olds, fourteen year olds, that age group, let's make a deal today that you will make the kingdom of God your first priority. You will have much, a much happier life if you do. Jesus says, "Do not worry!" Let's go back to that. Matthew chapter 6 verse 34: "Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble." Live in today! But that doesn't mean you don't plan for retirement, you don't get an education, all that stuff is balanced in the Scriptures. But Jesus is saying; don't live a life of worry. Live a life of faith. Worry creates selfishness. You'll live with somebody who is a worrywart, and by the way, that's an actual phrase in the dictionary. Do you know what it means? Someone who worries a lot,

worrywart! If you live with a worrywart, you'll discover you are living with a very selfish person. And they'll get upset when you are not worried about the things they are worried about.

Worry causes sorrow, anxiety, impatience, unkindness, evil actions, rudeness and it's a life without God! It is a life of turmoil. A life of faith creates love and joy, even in the midst of difficult times. Paul says, "I've learned to be content." It's a life of peace, it's a life of patience, it's a life of kindness, it's a life of goodness. It's a life of faith and faithfulness. It's a life of gentleness; it's a life of self-control. Now contrast that with the people you know that leave in the realm of worry. They are in a panic mode. They are running quickly and they are making mistakes, and they are doing foolish and awful things. But a life of faith is a life of control. Jesus told a story one day about a man who had seed. He is called a sewer. And he was casting the seed everywhere he went, out in the fields. Some of the seed landed on the paths. And He said, "…and the birds of the air came and ate it." Some of the seed landed in stony ground. But there was no root, and when the sun came up it dried it up.

Some of the seed landed among the thorns, and it was choked out. And others of that seed landed in good soil and it grew and brought forth a beautiful harvest. The disciples didn't get the story, so afterwards they said, "Jesus, what do you mean by that story?" And He said, "Well, the seed is the word of God. And as the word of God is being sawn, some of it falls on the wayside. That's a heart," He says, "that when it hears the truth, it understands the truth," and Jesus uses this word, "And Satan comes along and takes it away." It's gone! "Then, some of the seed falls on stony ground; it doesn't have much root. And when tribulation or persecution," His words, "when they come, it's gone." Then He said, "You know about the good soil," of course He does that fourth. But the third one is the one that I want to talk to you about, the thorns.

In Mark chapter 4 He talks about seed in the thorns. Do you know what Jesus identifies the thorns to be? The worries of the world! The worries of the world! He is saying that sincere people who hear the word of God, who want the word of God in their lives, who want to serve God, who want to go to heaven. And there are roots that take place in their life and they want them to grow, and they want all that God wants them to be! But one of the problems they have is the cares and worries of life come in and they begin to choke out their faith, choke out their life, and to destroy their hope and confidence in God. Jesus says there is a way to beat that. Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Everything will be added to you, everything you need to get through life will be added to you.

Folks, our lives are short enough. Let's not live them worried, let's live them in faith. Well, I have a question for you. Only you really know! Are you living a life of worry or are you living a life of faith? If you would like to live a life of faith, and you want God to know that, I invite you to stand. "Father in Heaven, we want to live a life of faith. Help us by Your grace to seek Your kingdom and Your righteousness. And Lord, we pray, that You will fill us with Yourself and ours will truly be a life of faith. We ask this in Jesus Name, Amen."