

**Who Told You That?**  
**Matthew 6: 19-34**  
**Don Lincoln**

Two months ago my iPhone battery ran down overnight to nothing. No charge. Not good when it's your morning alarm. Never happened before. I asked my colleagues, but none of them had experienced this, where the battery simply died overnight.

So, I went to the Apple store; the rep did some diagnostics. She said, "It checks out. Battery isn't new, but it shows no real problems. But – we can order a new battery if you'd like." Then, as if an afterthought, she asked, "Do you swipe your apps? You know, double click, and close the apps?"

I looked at her, like "HUH?" "I don't have a clue what you're talking about."

She took my phone, double clicked, and swiped away my apps. Here's how it looks. **(SHOW PHONE VIDEO)**. All 81 apps she said were open. I said, "How was I supposed to know to do that???" She just shrugged.

I went back to church. Colleagues asked about my phone. I told them I hadn't been app swiping. They looked at me incredulously. They couldn't believe I didn't know to do that! The teasing was merciless in the hallway of the church. Of course then I discovered most all of them were taught to swipe apps by someone else – one of their kids in most cases – and they did **NOT** figure it out on their own. How often we count on others for important information!

Well, as it turns out, later that evening I discovered that swiping the apps may **NOT** be necessary, and in fact according to an Apple technician, it may reduce battery life even further. Forced closing of apps is harder on the phone than just letting them sleep in the background. And **NO WHERE** on the Apple site can you find anything informing you about swiping apps. Of course I found no delight in informing my colleagues the next day they all might be misinformed, and swiping apps may not be good after all.

Where we get our information – in this age of disinformation overload – is significant. That was a reminder to me – the app swiping – even the most well-intentioned people, people who have our best interests in mind, may be misinformed. Not just people who dislike us – or have it out for us – but people we care about; people we respect; people we like. It's hard to know who to believe.

Like this recent quote I found.

*"The trouble with quotes on the internet is that you can never know if they are genuine."*  
Abraham Lincoln

Our text today is the first of three I'll preach in September – all of which have the word “treasure” in them. That should not be a surprise – it's stewardship season. But this is NOT just about turning in your pledge for the 2019 church operating budget (which, by the way, we do expect to see on Sunday, September 30<sup>th</sup> – if not before!).

Jesus is dealing with **life's** misinformation, and its subsequent impact – the power of worry. Jesus knows far too many of us are consumed by worry. People were in His day; and it's certainly no different now. But who told you and me we need to worry? Is it just human nature, the moment after we finish a great meal, to worry about where our next one is coming from?

This text, right in the middle of three chapters in Matthew known as the Sermon on the Mount, is one of those times where Jesus is really clear in saying, “Listen to me. You may have been told differently, but I'm telling you – listen to **ME**. This is the truth – straight-forward, unadulterated truth. Don't listen to those who tell you to worry. For I say unto you, get your priorities straight. Let your heart be where your treasure is. And let God be that treasure. Let God be at the center.”

For Jesus knows what is most likely to be at our center, if it's not God. It's what He preached about more than anything else. It's our wealth; our stuff. The old language of the text was God and mammon – and mammon wasn't just money – it was all the trappings of money, possessions, land, property, wealth. These are the two – God and mammon – that Jesus said would vie for our hearts; that will call us; that will beckon to us; invite our allegiance. “And it's one or the other, Jesus says, “and I'm telling you it's God you want at the center of your life – not mammon.”

“Because if it's mammon, do you know what you get,” Jesus asks? You get worry. Worry, about one's life, worry about food and drink, worry about clothing, worry about the bottom line that comes with those things, worry about having **ENOUGH**, keeping enough, protecting enough. And all that worry threatens to separate you from God and the things God intends for you and for the world through you.

You and I know this worry can take any number of forms -- too much time earning, too much time managing, too much time spent on the spendable, too much fretting over what to do with what we have.

Scholar NT Wright says it this way, “Jesus is saying that money gives orders. It bosses you around. If you have your priorities right, there is only one boss you want, only one boss that you need, and that's God Himself.” Jesus is telling us the truth. Pleading with you and me not to be misinformed, not to trust those who insist that what is temporary, what can be eaten by moths or corroded by rust, or stolen by burglars, or even destroyed by market crashes is our salvation. Because it's not. No matter how good your deadbolts or alarm systems, you can't keep it forever, and it won't save you.

Isn't it interesting how our material possessions have a way of starting out as a means to adorn our lives, and end up taking on a life of their own, becoming a beast to be fed, in competition with God.<sup>1</sup>

"In God we trust." Kinda funny where that's printed.....



Jesus reminds us that you and I consider ourselves superior creatures to the flowers of the field and the birds of the air, but **THEY** don't lay awake at night worried about how to pay the mortgage. They don't destroy their health and shorten lives through their constant striving and hoarding.

God takes care of them; don't you think God will take care of you?

Jesus in Matthew gives us a grave warning: seek the kingdom of the Almighty God, not the kingdom of the almighty dollar.

I love the twist Jesus gives his commendation about worry. In essence, He describes how when you and I worry about tomorrow – we actually miss the life we have right now. All the worry prevents us from being alive today.

There's a great exchange in the recent film, "Christopher Robin." It's a conversation between Christopher Robin and Winnie the Pooh.

Pooh asks, "Christopher Robin, what day is it?"

"It's today," he replies.

"Oh, my favorite day," say Pooh.

If only that were so for all of us. "So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own," says Jesus. Filled with worry, the worst thing that happens is you and I miss today. How often do you and I rob ourselves of the joy of being alive because we're filled with worry?

A friend recounted a story he'd heard. A passenger aboard a cruise ship came out of the cabin and emerged onto the deck. He took a look around at the dark ocean and the overcast sky. With a sour expression, he said, "Gonna be a lousy day."

A nearby deckhand, busy with a mop and bucket, overheard and replied, "Many a blind man would give his eye teeth to see what you're seeing, friend, and many a poor man would love to be standing in your shoes. It's a good day – you're ALIVE!!"

When Jesus tells us not to worry about what to eat, or drink, or wear in this text, He doesn't mean that things don't matter. He doesn't mean we should prefer to eat and drink as little as possible, and wear the most ragged and disreputable clothes, just to show we despise such things. Far from it!

Jesus liked to party as much as anyone, and when he died the soldiers so admired his tunic that they threw dice for it rather than tearing it up. Jesus' point was our priorities. Put the world first, and you'll find it gets moth-eaten and corroded with rust in your hands. Put God first, and you'll get the world thrown in.<sup>2</sup>

Who are you and I going to listen to? Who are you and I going to pay attention to in this day? Those who tell us to worry? Those who tell us to be afraid? Or the One who tells us, "Don't worry. Be Happy. You belong to God."

That's what we're about in this great congregation. Trying to live into the truth that with God at the center, the Kingdom of heaven is in our midst right now. And available to anyone. That's what we preach, that's what we teach, that's what we sing, that's what we celebrate. It's why I chose to put that "Be The Church" banner from our series last fall on the front of the bulletin again. It is such a rich collection of phrases describing who and what and how the Church ought to be in the world.

We are to be a people not filled with worry, but filled with gratitude to overflowing. Confident it is well with our soul. Confident we are safe in God's arms, even if the world is in disarray. Confident there is enough – more than enough to meet the human need we see. More than enough time to spare for a moment of hospitality or to pause to comfort someone in pain; more than enough energy for worship and thanksgiving. So much so, that you and I need not be consumed, plagued, troubled at all by worry.

That's why you and I turn in THESE (hold up pledge card). We're not worried about us; but we're concerned about sharing the good news of God's grace, love, and mercy in Jesus Christ with the world.

Tomorrow will bring its own challenges – but worrying about them can only reduce our enjoyment and good use of today. Sisters and brothers, you and I are confident that no matter what tomorrow brings, it brings God along with it. Thanks be to God. AMEN.

1. William Willimon, Pulpit Resource, May 25, 2008.
2. NT Wright, Matthew for Everyone, commentary on the passage.