

Wesley United Methodist Church

April 15, 2018

“Why Are You Troubled?”

Luke 24:36-49

Some people are worriers. Have you ever noticed that? It's like the patient in the mental hospital. He was holding his ear close to a wall, listening intently. This went on for some time before an attendant finally came up and asked him what he was doing. “Sh! whispered the patient, motioning him over to listen as well. The attendant pressed his ear to the wall and listened carefully. “I can't hear a thing,” he said. “That's right,” replied the patient with a troubled look on his face. “It's been like that all day!”

I heard that some people are elevating worrying to an art form and keep lists of their worries so they won't forget some. Someone once said, “Worry is an old man. With a bended head carrying a load of feathers which he thinks is lead.” Someone else said, “We used to take life with a grain of salt. Now we take it with 5 milligrams of valium.”

Studies show that a lot of people in our land are troubled. Unhappy and worried; and some with good reason. Jesus asked his disciples, “Why are you troubled?” That's a good question for many of us.

Is it the future that troubles you? People are being laid off. Small businesses are failing. It's said that our children will not have the same standard of living that we enjoy. How about Social Security? Or, what about our health? There is lots to think about.

The disciples were troubled about their future, too. After all, they were confronted by powerful opponents in both the temple and the state. Their leader had been crucified. Now it's one thing to talk about faith in the abstract, but where was God when they needed him?

You've been there, haven't you? We all have. Hannah was living through one of those winters when every calamity descends on a family: like illness, accidents, and hunger. She was a buoyant soul, but when her mother broke her hip, Hannah expressed her bitterness in a manner that has since become a family legend. She said, “I know the Lord won't send me more trouble than I have strength to bear, but I do wish he didn't have quite such good opinion of me.”

That's exactly where the disciples were. Things looked pretty bleak. What could the future hold for them? Can you relate to that? If you can, I have some good news for you. Do you know how many times the scriptures say, “Fear not” or “Do not be afraid?” It's a very curious number, three hundred and sixty-five times. One for each day of the year.

There is one ‘Fear not’ for every day of the year. A coincidence? Perhaps. Perhaps not. But God does not want his people to be afraid. “Why are you troubled?” Jesus asked his disciples, “and why do doubts arise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.” When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet.” Jesus wanted his disciples to know that he was real. He was alive. Death has been conquered. The Gospel is true.

Notice what comes next, though. Luke tells us, “...they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement...” Their reaction was the same as yours and mine would be. It seems just too good to be true. We want to believe. We want to trust. But we can't let ourselves go. After all, we haven't seen his feet, his hands and his side. And so, we are troubled about the future.

Some of us are troubled about the past. We may not even be aware of it. After all, we are a liberated society. Everything is permitted to us. But some of us still don't sleep well, and we're moody and depressed and we don't even know why. The problem is as old as Adam & Eve. It's called guilt. We don't always deal well with guilt. Guilt is a very potent force in our lives. Someone in this room this morning has a great need to be relieved of guilt. And here again our Gospel for the day speaks to our needs. Jesus taught his disciples that it was necessary that he be put to death “that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning in Jerusalem.”

We do have one way of dealing with guilt. It is called confession and repentance and acceptance of Christ's forgiveness. What is it that's troubling you? Is it the future? Is it the past? Believe in the Gospel. That is Christ's answer to your need. Why are you troubled? The future is in his hands. The past has been wiped away with his blood. Why are you troubled?

Perhaps it's because you feel powerless to deal with the present. Some of us are not troubled so much about the past or the future. We're overwhelmed with the here and now. Many people feel that way in dealing with life. They feel overwhelmed, defeated, powerless. They are troubled by their inability to get control over their own lives. Here again the scripture for the day brings us good news. Jesus says, “I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

“Power from on high” is exactly what we need. And here is the grandest discovery of all, Power is available to us. In just a few weeks we will be celebrating the Day of Pentecost. The day when God poured out his power on his disciples. Jesus made a promise that power would come, and it did. And Jesus makes the same promise to us.

Someone back Edward Bennet William lay near to death. Someone was teasing him about all the power and influence he had in Washington. And he said, “Power? I’m about to meet real power.” Williams was right.

Our power is little indeed compared to the circumstances we sometimes find ourselves in. But our circumstances have no strength at all compared to God’s power. And God’s power is available to us. All we have to do is to open ourselves to that power. “Ask and you will receive,” Christ promised. Of course, the greatest victory that the Spirit can give is victory over ourselves.

Dwight L. Moody once demonstrated the principle like this: “Tell me,” he said to his audience, “how can I get the air out of the tumbler I have in my hand?” One man said, “Suck it out with a pump.” The evangelist replied, “That would create a vacuum and shatter it.” Finally, after many suggestions, Moody picked up a pitcher and filled the glass with water. “There,” he said, “all the air is now removed.” He then explained that victory for the child of God does not come by working hard to eliminate destructive thoughts and habits, but rather by allowing the Holy Spirit to take full possession.

So, what are you troubled about? The future? God has it under control. The past? Our sins have been paid by the death of Christ. The present? There is a power that is available to all who would call on his name.