

LOOKING FOR JESUS
Matthew 6:24-34, 17:1-9
Feast of the Transfiguration, 2017
Sunrise Presbyterian Church
Martha Murchison

I started making a list of everything I've worried about since the first of the year:

- I've worried about the break in we had at Sunrise
- about replacing what we lost
- about how we can better secure this building.
- I've worried about our families who have lost loved ones these past few months
- I've worried about getting sick - and then I got sick
- I've also worried about increasing incidents of hate speech in our country - I worried about the people

whose ancestor's headstones were overturned this week in the Jewish cemetery in Missouri. - I worried about Kansas following the shooting in Olathe Wednesday night.

- I worried about Sunrise and Salina and Salina schools as incidents of hate speech were targeted at one of our youth
- I've worried about the health of the oceans
- and about the melting glaciers and the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere
- and about the state of the planet my granddaughter will inherit

- I worry constantly about refugees - and I really worry about the boys and girls still stuck in Aleppo - sometimes I cry for them
- I've worried about frightened immigrants in our country - sometimes I cry for them also.
- I worried and worried and worried and then I stopped making my list.

I'm much like my Biblical namesake, Martha, who, Luke tells us, worried and fretted about many things.

In our morning reading we've read some of the more meddlesome things Jesus says in Matthew. "Do not worry," he says. "Do not worry about what you will eat or drink. Do not worry about the clothes you need to wear." Jesus -

actually says, "Do not worry!" Come, on. I was just getting started on my worry list. That's not going to happen - we have got lists and lists of things to worry about. It's far, far easier to keep worrying. In fact, I worry about NOT listening to Jesus when he says, "Do not worry."

As we've worked through the Sermon on the Mount, we've discovered that there's much Jesus says in that gospel which speaks to our lives. It's important to note that Jesus does NOT say that food is unimportant - he's told his followers to pray for their "daily bread" - the Lord's Prayer is part of the Sermon on the Mount. He is well aware that for many people daily life in "the first century was a challenge to acquire the necessities of food and clothing -

life was hard." Life is difficult in the 21st Century, also.

Jesus is not denying this crucial fact of life.

Yet, Jesus tells us, "Life is more than food and clothing." That's something those of us who don't need to worry about our next meal or whether we will be cold tonight need to repeat often -- Life is more than food."ⁱ

Jesus says life is about more than getting and spending - is more than worrying about our stock portfolio or what will happen next week - tomorrow will bring worries of its own.

Jesus says we have plenty to do today! He insists we live in the present moment. "Today's trouble is enough for today."

Jesus insists that we live each day in the Kingdom of God. He tells us that if we place all our effort into getting

more stuff we will be distracted from seeking righteousness and justice around us. If we get distracted - we can't let our lights shine - we can't be good citizens of the Kingdom of God. Instead, Jesus tells us to do what we can to make the Kingdom a reality. Instead of worrying about what we "can't" do - Jesus calls us to worry about what we "can" do - Mother Theresa once said, "If we can't feed a hundred people, then we can feed just one." Jesus calls us to put our worries into action - to do what we can do.ⁱⁱ

Commentator Emerson Powery put it this way: "God will take care of us . . . so we can take care of God's justice in the world. There is more to life than concern for daily needs. Jesus expects his followers to put forward energy

into things that give more meaning to life. We must strive to discern how God is working in the world and how to participate in acts of justice on God's behalf." God will take care of the rest.

Of course, we are often so busy - taking care of daily life - that we have no idea what God is doing in our world - or where we can participate in God's Kingdom. So often - we wish we could, but, well, we are busy. Or perhaps we are like Peter in our other morning reading from Matthew about Jesus' transfiguration. Our reading is about the afternoon on a mountain when Peter, James and John realize that Jesus is not just another human being - they see him full on as God - but in that moment, Peter is overwhelmed with his

experience - and he blurts out ideas about doing something like building a tent - Peter has difficulty stopping and experiencing God.

We often have difficulty stopping and experiencing God. For instance, we seldom ponder when we see one another being the hands and feet of Jesus - many times we do not realize someone is offering us a cup of cold water as part of the body Christ. Recall Father Flanigan's observation of a small boy carrying his even smaller brother: "He ain't heavy, he's my brother." The poet Naomi Shihab Nye helps us see similar grace with a father shouldering his small son: *A man crosses the street in rain,/stepping gently, looking two times north and south,/because his son is asleep*

on his shoulder./This man carries the world's most sensitive
cargo

The poet sees his care - his tenderness - and then she
reminds us: We're not going to be able/to live in this
world/if we're not willing to do what he's doing/with one
another.ⁱⁱⁱ Nye reminds us that each of us can touch other
people with the gentleness and grace of God - each of us
can stop and take note of other people who are caring for
our world - each of us must participate as if we are part of
Christ's body because the Kingdom of God needs us. The
Kingdom of God does not need us to be so distracted in our
worrying about stuff that we cannot tend to the poor in
spirit. The Kingdom of God does not need for us to be so

caught up in what we are going to eat - that we do not help feed the poor. The Kingdom of God needs for us to seek God's righteousness - which is justice - the Kingdom of God needs us - right now.

Our task is to seek out the Kingdom of God - to look for that Kingdom each and every day. I propose a challenge for us: Can we look out on the world around us and find images of the Kingdom of God among us? Can we find Jesus in our world? My challenge to all of us to look for him - to look for God's Kingdom and to take a picture - take an image and send it to me. Let's start collecting images of the Kingdom of God - Let's start realizing that Jesus and his Kingdom are really all around us. Since we know he's there -

we might just lend a hand. We might just help. We might reach out and help one another. And when we do that - we will stop worrying and start dealing with our present moment. Alleluia! Amen.

ⁱ Emerson Powery, Working Preacher, Commentary on Matt. 6:24-34.

ⁱⁱ Ibid.

ⁱⁱⁱ Naomi Shihab Nye, "Shoulders"