

Giving Away, Not Giving Up: Do Not Worry About Your Life  
Philippians 4:1-9 & Matthew 6:25-34  
March 21, 2021

I heard of QAnon here and there in news but never paid attention to it because it sounded a total non-sense that Democrats run child sex-trafficking rings or Satan worshipping, until one of our members told me his concern about one of his cousins who was sucked in QAnon conspiracy theories. She is a smart computer data management person but since the pandemic started, she has stayed home and spent most time in front of computers reading those QAnon theories. She was sucked into them and they began to frame her mind, life, and perspectives. Those conspiracy theories became her reality and truth. She now believes that the tragic end time is coming, she needs to store life essentials in her basement, and whoever do not believe and follow it will be turned into zombies. She constantly shares these theories with her family members and friends. Her family is heartbroken for her but don't know what to do with her and for her. It's impossible to argue with her. Then, one day the wife of our member who told me this story, said to him, "what burden and stress she carries with! She lives in total fear and worries. Thanking of her stress, I feel sorry for her." That changed his perspective about this matter from how wrong and crazy these conspiracy theories were to how lonely, difficult, stressed out, and burdened those people who believe in them were. The conversation with him made me think of all worries and anxieties we normal people experience in daily life. The sure thing is not only QAnon theory believers, but we also worry about our life: What to eat, drink, wear, where to live, what to drive, where and when to invest our money, elderly parents' health, job security, our children's future and safety, and on and on and on. All these worries are real to us. Otherwise, we don't worry about them. But are they really real and true? Maybe, our minds are framed by false theories of life that produces lots of worries. Maybe, we live like the cousin of our member who is smart, kind, and wanting to do right things for others, such as helping those children who are sold to sex trafficking, but in real reality who is just trapped in conspiracy theories with delusions. All her worries are real to her as real as all our worries are to us. This morning, I dare to ask myself and you that whether we are trapped in the delusions of life or not. If our worries are delusions what is true and real? Do we have a courage and faith to break the false frames of life and to be set free from worries?

During Lent we look at Jesus' sermon on the Mountain. In Matthew, his sermon goes on chapter 5, 6, and 7. Chapter 5 is Beatitude, 6 is the means of grace, and 7 is the conclusion of his sermon. This Lent we read chapter 6, about the means of grace. The means of grace is through which God's grace flows in and out to us. They are helping the poor, praying, fasting, storing treasures in heaven and not worrying about life. When we do not worry about our life, God's grace flows through us to our community. Here, Jesus doesn't teach us some technics of how to stop worrying, such as meditation, mindfulness, bird watching, nature walking, or silent prayer. They are good and I do all of them. But Jesus's teaching is different from them. Jesus invites us to see the frame of our mind and where we get that frame of mind. One frame of

mind is that we study, get a job, earn money, buy house, get married, and have children. In the process of that frame we constantly worry about success, security, and having enough everything. The other frame of mind is God is the giver and creator. We are born naked with empty hands, raised by others' love and care, eating and drinking what other people grow and harvest, so, rejoicing in every moment of life in gratitude and when the time comes for us, we go back to the Creator. That's the other frame of mind. If one of these two is a conspiracy theory of life and the other is the truth of life which one is true and which one is delusional? Jesus describes the first frame of mind as full of worry and anxiety and desires for things that gentiles long for. Here, "gentiles" doesn't mean any race or ethnicity but simply means people who don't believe in God and don't live by God's grace. The second frame of mind is looking at the birds, trees, sunrise, sunset, or wildflowers and stay in awe and gratitude for the truth that God creates them, feeds them, clothes them, and paints them beautifully and gloriously continually. But the real punch or real point of his teaching is this: Jesus says, "Who among you by worrying can add an hour or a single moment to your life?" Nothing can be truer than this about our life. We cannot add a moment to our life by worrying. It's so obvious that which frame of mind is true. Life is a gift from God and our response to the gift is being grateful for life itself and being gracious and merciful to others. Jesus simply says, "Your heavenly Father knows you need them. Instead, desire first and foremost God's kingdom and God's righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

What is God's Kingdom and God's righteousness? In the Lenten study group, we are reading Diana Butler Bass' book, Grateful. She says, "gratitude is justice. True gratitude, real gratefulness cannot be quiet in the face of injustice." We often think being grateful is a personal feeling which comes and goes. Then, how a feeling of being grateful or thankful can be or should be justice? At the group discussion we struggled with it. Then, one member clearly explained it. She said, if and once we know and believe that God is the Creator and everything is a gift, we realize that it is injustice that some children go to be hungry, some people live in the car or on the street, don't have clean water, or die on simple diseases. Gratitude cannot stop as counting our blessings." She perfectly described what is God's righteousness. Not to worry about our life and seeking for God's righteousness doesn't mean we sacrifice what we have, get poor and miserable, or lose all fortunes we have. When we seek God's Kingdom and righteousness first and foremost, all these things will be given to us as well. I believe the conspiracy theory of life is that we better keep worrying and worrying about everything because bad things happen all the time and we need to prepare for the worst. But the truth of life according to the gospel of Jesus is that we better not to worry about life because by worrying we cannot add even one hour to our life. We need to desire and seek for God's righteousness first and all these things will be given to us as well. Once we live in and by that frame of mind, we understand what Paul says to Philippian Christians in today's New Testament reading.

Paul says, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." This is the true frame of mind of life. It is not just our crazy uncles or cousins who are fooled by conspiracy theories. We may be fooled by the false theories of life that the world constantly teaches us. We need a humility and courage to reflect ourselves in this season of Lent. In trust and faith let God guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Thanks be to God.