

Order of Service for February 27, 2011

WE GATHER AS GOD'S PEOPLE

Musical Prelude:

Welcome:

Announcements:

Opening Hymn: *Oh, A Song Must Rise #142 (More Voices)*

Call to Worship:

L: Like an infant quieted at its mother's breast, like a child holding the hand of a trusted grandparent,

P: We are calm and quiet in Love's presence.

L: Like a farmer at the end of a fruitful day, like a kitten purring over a bowl of milk,

P: we are calm and quiet in Love's presence.

L: Like the wet stillness after a thunderstorm, like a deep breath after a cleansing cry,

P: we are calm and quiet in Love's presence.

L: Like a community of faith gathered for worship, like the smell of a candle lit and burning,

P: we are calm and quiet in Love's presence.

L: Let us worship God together.

Opening Prayer: *(in unison)*

Bountiful and generous God, increase our joy in the unlimited riches you provide. When worry and anxiety overwhelm our hearts, enliven us with your Spirit to trust in your ways, which always put love first. In Christ. Amen.

Hymn: *"Joyful, Joyful" #232 Voices United*

Candle-lighting:

L: We light this candle in the name of the Holy Spirit,

P: The Holy Spirit flows through us all like a wind, and fills us with energy and life.

Congregational Story-time:

**Children's Hymn: Jesus' Hands Were Kind Hands
#570 Voices United**

Prayer for Grace:

L: O God, at times our minds are scattered and preoccupied. We can hardly think of what comes next in our own lives much less think of the needs of others. In our self-absorption, we miss opportunities to care, to extend ourselves for the greater good and for justice. Forgive us as we pray;

P: may love come first.

L: Life can be complicated and the way of love for all is not easily seen and even harder to achieve. In the midst of complexities, we sometimes withdraw into easy comforts or we accept solutions that are tried in the world but not necessarily true to the deeper values of faith. Forgive us as we pray;

P: may love come first.

L: At times we give ourselves over to worries and anxieties that are unfounded. We play out the worst scenario in our minds and rehearse negativity and hopelessness in our hearts. In these times, our faith waivers and falters. Forgive us as we pray,

P: may love come first.

Assurance of Grace:

Breathe deeply the Spirit of Love within and among us.

(pause)

Breathe deeply and receive forgiveness. *(pause)*

So that God's love may flow in your words and actions filling the world with goodness. Amen

Listen to the Silence: Be still and know that God is in this place. Let us listen to God. Come and listen to the silence...

Hymn: "God Says" vs. 1 #172 More Voices

SHARING THE STORY

Scripture: Isaiah 49:8-16a

Psalm 131

1 Corinthians 4:1-5

Matthew 6:24-34

Sermon: “Don’t Worry, Be Happy”

Hymn: “Take Time to Be Holy” #672 Voices United

Minute for Mission:
WE RESPOND TO GOD’S WORD

Offertory Invitation:

Offering Hymn: “What Can I Do?” #191 (More Voices)

Offertory Prayer: *(in unison)*

Loving God, these gifts which we give are gifts to us in return, for in giving we become what you long for us to be: generous and compassionate people. Amen.

Prayers of the People:

Merciful Creator, we breathe in your Spirit and fill our nostrils with the smells of your creation. We fill our eyes and ears with the sights and sounds of your beauty. We give thanks for the gift of our Earth home and are mindful of the destruction that our lack of connection has caused. (pause)

God of community and care, we touch the tenderness of those with whom we share life. We give thanks with our breath, our senses, our singing, and our silence for the gifts of loving relationships. Secure in this love, we bring our fears, our worries, our anxieties about those we love and those with whom we interact on a daily basis. (pause)

God of joy and abundance, we wake up in the night worried about our health, our finances, our children, and ailing friends and family members. But we are also deeply concerned for those whose stories are known through the words of others and for whom justice is a far flung hope.

Hear us as we offer all of our concerns to you now. We pray for _____ and others who we hold in our hearts at this time. (pause) These things we pray in the name of Jesus the Christ. Amen.

Parting Hymn: “Touch the Earth Lightly #307 Voices

United

Commissioning and Benediction:

L: We have been illumined by the extraordinary and wise teachings of the Christ. Now live as Christ's body at work, at home, at school, at play, wherever your days take you. Seek the way of right-ness, put love first, and may Love's presence surround you on all sides.

P: Amen.

Sing: *"Love Us into Fullness" #81 (More Voices)*

THEME CONVERSATION IN CHURCH (or assembly time)

Child's Faith Question: **How does God provide for us?**

Materials Needed: *a bun in a brown paper bag*

In today's story from Matthew's gospel we hear Jesus telling the disciples not to worry but to trust that God will provide all their needs. And sometimes we wonder how God, whom we can't see, can provide for us. I think this story that I am about to tell you explains that very well.

There were 2 young boys who lived along the coast of France. Pierre came from a family that had lots of things but Jean came from a very poor family. They both came to play along the beach and in the caves, and one day they met. From then on they began to meet and play together every day. Pierre's mother sent him with a special crusty bun to enjoy as a snack while he was playing. But Jean's family didn't have any extras. One day Pierre asked Jean if his mother did not love him since she didn't pack him a little lunch to enjoy. Jean shared how things were in his family with very little money and a lot of children. Pierre, who went to church regularly, had an idea. He and Jean would pray and ask God to send a bun for Jean. He knew God would hear their prayer and God provides for our needs.

The next day, Pierre hurried to the beach a little earlier than usual. He wanted to reach the cave and see the bun that God had sent for Jean. When he reached the cave he looked every- where—but there was no bun. Didn't God care? He looked down the beach and saw Jean coming. He felt very

sad.

Then he realized what God was really saying to him. He took his bun from his satchel and set it on a ledge. (*Open your bag and bring out the bun.*) When Jean arrived there was great excitement over the bun that God had sent.

Suddenly Jean's face went very solemn. "Where is your bun?" he asked Pierre. "This is your bun isn't it? God didn't send me a bun after all."

"Yes God did"! said Pierre. "God filled our world with good things—enough for everyone. God meant that we all share these gifts. God told me I was to share my bun with you. God sent this bun to you through me."

(Perhaps you might share the bun from your bag with the children and suggest that they share part of their pieces with someone else in the congregation. It is interesting to see just how far one bun can go!)

“Don’t Worry, Be Happy”
Sharon McRann, Lesser Slave, High Prairie and
McLennan

Feb. 27, 2011

Isaiah 49:8-16a

Psalm 131

1 Corinthians 4:1-5

Matthew 6:24-34

*(Play the song, “Don’t Worry, Be Happy,” by Bobby McFerrin
if you have it.)*

(Lyrics on last page)

At first glance this passage is warm and comforting. It sounds wonderful...God will provide...we don’t have to worry about a thing. It reminds me of that song they sometimes play on the radio... “Don’t Worry, Be Happy...” a joyful little tune that makes life seem so simple.

However, life’s experience has taught many of us who have often had to struggle to make ends meet to stop and say, “Whoa, just a moment here...life isn’t quite like that, if I don’t worry about where my next meal is coming from or how I’m going to clothe my children, then who will?

There are many things that we tend to worry about these days...we worry about the future of the church, about the many natural disasters that have occurred...especially if we have loved ones living in some of these areas. We worry about the economy and the crime rate.

When we were young we didn’t have as many worries...or at least now as we look back on them, they don’t seem very significant...concerns about when to play and what toys, friends or games we would play with. In our teenage years we worried about how we looked, about dating and relationships and about getting good grades in school.

As the years slowly evolve and transform, we worry about job security, providing for our families, our children’s schooling and their future. We don’t stop worrying about our children when they leave home either...we simply take on a new set of worries.

Then, as we approach retirement, we worry about our health, how we will survive, if we have enough savings to

see us through, where we will live, if anyone will visit us and care for us, what will happen if our spouse dies etc.

But hey...don't worry, be happy...consider the lilies...look at the birds...why worry about clothes...the birds don't gather seeds or plant a harvest and yet God takes care of them!

Aren't you worth much more than birds?

At this point let us consider one truth...worry doesn't help anything. One's problems simply begin sooner and are more intense with worry. Many times we worry, only to find that the thing we were worried about didn't happen anyway!

What a waste of time all that worrying caused!

Parents of teenagers often get little or no sleep until their teen returns home from that date or that party. Why?

Because they lay awake worrying about them! And what good did the worrying do? Absolutely none! Whether we worry or not, our child will either return safely...or as some have sadly experienced...not. But either way, worrying about it does no good. We might as well get some sleep and be better off to deal with whatever the next day brings.

The alternative to worrying is faith, or trust (not belief) but faith...faith in God or the Holy...faith that things will work out...that there will be enough...that compassion and kindness abound. As far as the Gospel passage goes...it's true God has provided for all our needs. Everything is there for us to live on...the challenge is, what we do with what is provided.

Years ago, our ancestors knew how to live on the gifts God gave. They weren't afraid to work hard...gardening...sowing...raising animals for food... sewing, even playing, with the things that God provided.

As time marched on...we began to see changes...motorized vehicles...trains, ocean liners, airplanes. People from various parts of the world put their heads together. It was the dawning of a new age...technological ideas spring forth at an ever increasing pace. You'd think there would be less worry about...but not so!!

It's no longer quite so easy to live on God's provisions because they're now being bought up, used and manipulated by large companies and those who would take

care of their own needs at the expense of those who have fewer resources. And...so we worry!!

As the song says, "Ain't got no place to lay your head, somebody came and took your bed. Don't worry, be happy.

The landlord say your rent is late, he may have to litigate.

Don't worry, be happy! Surrerre!!

However, worrying, as I said, doesn't really help anything.

God enters our lives...in various ways...with inspirational nudges, with the power to cope, and with comforting and healing grace. God creates us in God's image and in so doing gives us the responsibility to make our own decisions...as to how we make and spend our money...who we have compassion for and how we respond...who our friends are and the influence they will have upon us.

Today's gospel passage is from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount.

This sermon, as I see it, is designed to open our eyes to what love can mean when God's will is fully lived. This passage does not give us an excuse for taking little or no responsibility for our lives, for sitting back and expecting that God will provide everything. As one commentator says, "The challenge to trust in God does not exclude working and having property. The words are directed to people involved with sowing, reaping, storing in barns, toiling, and spinning, but who are called to see that their life is not based on these things."

Today, we all...rich and poor, are filled with anxieties and a mind set that the best possible life is for those who have the most control and the most stuff. Remember the bumper sticker... "He who dies with the most toys wins."? Sadly, however, the more worried we are, the less loving we can be; the less loving we are, the less satisfied and thankful we'll be for what we already have and who we already are.

Jesus teaches us to move away from those things that create and support severe, habitual worrying. Instead we are invited to set our basic priorities on our relationship with God, our neighbors and ourselves.

Worry stems from fear. We worry about those things we fear. Jesus was encouraging us to see and live God's passion

and desire...God's will...and to move beyond our fears and worry and serve. In other words, life is not about striving for material goods or gain, but rather it's about working for God's reign of justice, peace, love and compassion. It's about seeing the world as God intended it to be and then living that way. It is then that we can live from an attitude of abundance rather than a fear of scarcity.

The Serenity Prayer helps us to put our worries and concerns into perspective. It says, "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can; and the wisdom to know the difference. We can't pick and choose what happens to us and we can't remedy all the world's troubles, but we can choose how we respond to troubles: as grumpy, guilt-ridden, frenzied, worried individuals or with the realistic boundaries implied by the Serenity Prayer. In so doing we will find less to worry about, more to care about and a challenge to change the things we can. We will learn to care about and for those who might be justified in having much to worry about.

"Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today."
Jesus is fitting us with 'spirit glasses,' so that we can see the world as God sees it...so that we can calm our troubled souls, move beyond fear, and live with hope in a trusting relationship with the God who loves and provides. Amen.

Lyrics to "Don't Worry, Be Happy":

*Here's a little song I wrote
You might want to sing it note for note
Don't worry, be happy
In every life we have some trouble
When you worry you make it double
Don't worry, be happy
Don't worry, be happy now*

*Ain't got no place to lay your head
Somebody came and took your bed
Don't worry, be happy
The landlord say your rent is late
He may have to litigate*

*Don't worry, be happy
Look at me, I'm happy*

*Here I give you my phone number
When you worry, call me,
I make you happy
Ain't got no gal to make you smile
But don't worry, be happy
'Cause when you worry, your face will frown
And that will bring everybody down
So don't worry, be happy
Don't worry, be happy (now)*

*Now there, is this song I wrote
I hope you learned it note for note
Like good little children
Don't worry, be happy
Listen to what I say
In your life expect some trouble
When you worry you make it double
Don't worry, be happy, be happy now.*

*Don't worry, don't do it, be happy
Put a smile on your face
Don't bring everybody down like this
Don't worry, it will soon pass
Whatever it is
Don't worry, Be Happy.*