

2016 Summer series Matthew 6:24-34
16-05-22 1st Sunday after Pentecost

God's beloved people, grace and peace to you in the name of our crucified and risen Savior, Jesus Christ.....Amen.....

The musical Aladdin is being put on right now by Kitsap Children's Musical Theater. Today is the last day of the show – 2 and 6pm. And we have one member from our congregation in each show.

Anyway.... In Aladdin we are confronted with the age old questions of social order and upper and lower classes. There is the question of how one's worth is determined, and who can associate with whom.

So Aladdin is a food-insecure street kid –
always scrambling and stealing his food where he can get it,
and he meets the princess.

They fall in love,
but cannot marry because the law says that she has to marry a prince.

Aladdin is obviously not a prince, just look at his tattered rags for clothes.
But that's where the Genie comes in – Aladdin's lamp!!

The Genie makes him a prince,
he goes to Jasmine,

she eventually recognizes him, even in his get up of Prince's clothing.

And the ultimate question is, "what is most important?" "Like so many things it's not what's on the outside, but what's on the inside that counts."

Tattered rags or prince's clothing is immaterial.

In our story today – from the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus sat down on a hillside to teach while his disciples and the crowds gathered to listen – we might compare the tattered rags of worry VS. Kingdom clothing of God.

It's a challenging lesson that we have.....

there's the injunction that we cannot serve BOTH God and wealth
(mammon).....

There's the command, "Do not worry about your life... what you will eat, drink, or wear...."

And there's the accusing name calling, "You of little faith...."

There's a lot of tough stuff being thrown at us here.....

Jesus' teachings in the sermon on the mount are all designed to show how the way of Jesus and seeking after God is different than the ways of the Gentiles and the ways of the scribes and Pharisees.

"Will we serve God or will we serve wealth?" These teachings give us the framework for how faithful people of God live.

And faithful people of God don't serve wealth and mammon. Evidently, Faithful people of God don't worry about their life, they don't rush after food, water, and clothing..... and devote their lives to accumulating things and wealth.... It's the Gentiles who strive after these things.

But there's still a rub for us..... does that mean that we are to sit around and wait for God to come out with food on a tray, towel over the forearm, and serve us? Without any effort on our part at all??? Just lie around like useless pots waiting to be filled? Is the opposite of not worrying a posture of inaction? Will food, water, and clothing just drop out of the sky for us?

All kinds of people worry about food. There are the food-insecure of our world to be sure – those who wonder where the next meal is coming from..... but also anyone who struggles with weight issues or eating disorders. When I was on a strict diet, I usually found my thoughts drifting back toward my next meal – when was I going to be able to eat again and what would it be!????!

“You of little faith....” Maybe this is what scares us the most in this text. Do I have faith to believe that God will take care of my needs?? And what if I don't have that faith??

Because it really comes down to this for us, doesn't it? When it comes to worrying, we wonder if we have “big faith.” Because we also know that if we just sit around and wait for someone to drop food in our laps, we aren't doing our part. We are being a draw on those around us and THAT isn't fair.

Worry is a problem, if not about food, water, or clothing, then something else. There are all kinds of things to worry about: presidential elections, the weather, and what about the old standbys of crime....., drugs....., retirement accounts....., family matters....., school....., relationships....., environmental issues....., war.....?? All of these basically relate to the protection, proliferation, and pursuit of our physical wants and needs.

All these thoughts dress us up in the tattered rags of worry.

But what of the kingdom clothing of God?? It must be something other than suits and gowns, because King Solomon was famous for his wardrobe, and he doesn't fare well in this teaching on the Mountain. Jesus said, “*Strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*”

Not the righteousness of the Gentiles which is to accumulate as much wealth and mammon as possible.

Not the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees which is to make following the rules to look good on the outside the most important thing.

BUT Seeking righteousness and the kingdom of God is about what matters on the inside, not on the outside.

Which is all easy to say, not so easy to do,

which is why Jesus talks about it here...

which is why Jesus, through his death and resurrection, makes you righteous to begin with so that to strive for the kingdom and his righteousness is not to work... to obtain it....., but to work... on behalf of it.

To cast away your worries about mammon and to strive for the kingdom is not to sit idly by.... waiting to be served....., it's to grasp the righteousness that is yours in Jesus..... and to jump up.... and get out there in the world to work and to serve. Jesus said, "*The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve.*" And you are Jesus' righteous hands and feet in this world.

But if worry still plagues you, and it can be debilitating, two things: first of all, there is good help out there – plenty of techniques that are helpful when it comes to coping with worry, from going to God with it all.... to scheduling time in your day to worry.... to problem solving techniques. AND you can ask me later for more information about that.....

The command "Do not worry..." is as much a promise to you from God that you are not alone..... as it is Jesus telling you to "just let it go."

AAAANNNDDDDD, Just when we think we have it all figured out for ourselves, we realize that in this Mountain top sermon, Jesus is addressing a people who is terminally communal – their culture is one of families and clans, not individuals....., fierce, timid or otherwise. And to claim God as Lord is to alienate themselves from their support system. So Jesus says, "God's kingdom, God's people, God's righteousness gives you a new family – and this family acts in righteousness. It's what we do, because of whose we are.

We give to ministry, because God cares for his people through our service – God's kingdom cares for the orphan..., widow....., street kid....., and "the others".... We give of our lives....., our wealth....., our time....., we support the ministry of the church..., // because that's what God's people do.....

Bishop Eaton, in her latest address to the members of the ELCA said, "We are the body of Christ, not a social service organization with sacraments. Together we are church for the sake of the world." Do not worry.....
Amen.....