



Matthew 6:25-34
Believe
Peaceful

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Today, we are continuing our sermon series called, “Believe.” Part 3 of the series is centered around the question, “Who am I becoming?” For those of you reading each week in the Believe books, I want to let you know that the sermon schedule will veer off from the order in the book before long. So today is “Peace” next week for Palm Sunday is the next chapter on “Self-Control” then for Maundy Thursday we skip ahead one chapter to “Patience” (so an extra chapter that week) and then Easter Sunday will be backwards in the book to “Hope.” So those two chapters will be out of order.

So today, we’re looking at the peace that Jesus gives us, which stands in contrast to the worry and anxiety that so many people experience. Paul famously writes in Philippians, **“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-7).** These two verses are ones that many of us know, especially the second one “And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your heart and minds in Christ Jesus.” Many of us may not know every word of it, but we know the idea of it, that God gives us a peace that passes all understanding.

And yet so many people don’t live into that kind of peace. Instead, we have all kinds of inner turmoil: worry, anxiety, stress, and so forth. In fact, I’m going to step out on a limb and guess that most of us here this morning have things in life that cause us a lack of peace. If not right now, then we have experienced it in the past and we will again in the future. This includes me. Just this last week, I had a lack of peace about writing this sermon on being peaceful. Just kidding... Of course, if you really want to test God in this area of having peace that passes understanding, the best thing you can do is raise children. Raising kids will test your sense of peace...and patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, self-control and a host of other things...because some of the things our children do are seriously beyond understanding. It’s like the little girl who one day was sitting and watching her mother do the dishes at

the kitchen sink. She suddenly noticed that her mom had several strands of white hair sticking out in contrast to the rest that were brown. She looked at her mother and asked, “Why are some of your hairs white, Mom?”

She replied, “Well, every time that you do something wrong and make me cry, unhappy, or worry one of my hairs turns white.” The little girl thought about this for a while and then said, “Mom, how come ALL of grandma's hairs are white?” I had a full head of blonde hair until my kids were born – and now look!

But, whether you’re raising children or not, there is plenty in life that causes us to worry and seeks to steal the peace that God gives us. But there is a peace we can have in the midst of the challenges we face in life, and this morning’s statement of faith puts it well: **“I am free from anxiety because I have found peace with God, peace with others and peace with myself.”**

Today’s passage begins with a “Therefore...” which tells us that Jesus is summarizing something he’s just taught on. Perhaps it is summarizing everything in the Sermon on the Mount – but this “therefore” comes about 2/3 of the way through it, so it’s a little early to call this a conclusion to the whole thing. More likely it’s simply connected to the more immediate previous teaching, part of which was on money. Isn’t money the source of an awful lot of worry and anxiety? Even people who have a lot are often stressed out, because they don’t always spend it wisely. Money causes a serious lack of peace in a lot of people’s lives.

So let’s touch base on this briefly, since today’s passage flows right out of this topic. If you back up to verse 19, Jesus says, **“Do not to store up treasures on earth...but rather treasures in heaven...For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Mathew 6:19-21)**. The treasures of earth are only temporal. They don’t last. And you can’t take them with you. We touched on that some last week as well when we talked about joy. So what is “treasure in heaven?” In some ways, Jesus doesn’t explicitly say.

Then, in verses 22 and 23, he uses a metaphor of a lamp and the light that we see as a metaphor about who or what lights our way in life. And then: **In**

verse 24 Jesus returns to the money theme: You can't serve two masters; and He specifically points to people's efforts to serve God and money.

Now in our day, this loses some of its power. We don't use the word "master" a whole lot. Perhaps the closest thing most of us will ever have to a "master" here on earth is our boss. Or if you have or had kids in the home and things got turned upside down to where they're ruling the roost, maybe you've felt like the kids were your boss. It's like the two kids who were talking to each other on their way home from school. One says, "I'm really worried. My dad works twelve hours a day to give me a nice home and good food. My mom spends the whole day cleaning and cooking for me. I'm worried sick!" The other kid says, "What have you got to worry about? Sounds to me like you've got it made!" The first kid says, "What if they try to escape?" Who's the boss in that house, right? Maybe that's your home, and it's causing you anxiety.

Now, it's perfectly possible to work for one boss at one job, and another boss at another job. People do it all the time. Sometimes more than two jobs even. So some people do have multiple bosses. But in *their* day, if a person became a slave or a servant to someone, it wasn't a part-time gig or even full-time 40 hours a week. It was 24/7. You literally could not serve one master, and also serve another. You simply did not have the time to do that.

The point of all this is that we can't serve both God as our "master" and serve money – or anything else for that matter. If God is our master and has command of our time, our talent, our wealth...if our treasures are stored in heaven with him rather than on earth...It is *impossible* to serve something else as well. And if money becomes our master, and we're living for it, then we can't live fully for God. That's what the Bible calls idolatry. And then Jesus sums it up in verse 25, when he says, "Therefore" – "in light of what I just said to you" – **"Therefore, I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear."** Have peace about this stuff, because God will take care of you.

Birds don't worry about that stuff. Flowers don't worry. And oh, by the way, you can't add even an hour to your life by worrying anyway (in fact, you take time off of your life), so what's the point in worrying? So how do we do have peace? By running after everything that the world values and claims will

bring peace? No! **In contrast to running after all the things that the world has to offer, (verses 26-32), Jesus says to instead first seek our Heavenly Father's Kingdom and his righteousness...and then the rest of the stuff that we need for daily living will be given to us (Mt. 6:33).**

When we keep our focus on God, and not on earthly stuff such as our wealth, our possessions, and so forth...then first, those things simply don't matter as much. And second, God will provide it and take care of us. So, if there's anything worth worrying about, it's our relationship with God...but Jesus doesn't want us to do that either, so don't worry at all.

Now, it does beg the question, "Having peace' is nice, but it's hard to do." I agree. So, what do we do? I mean should we just throw in the towel and call it quits, because worrying and anxiety are just too difficult to escape? Absolutely not. **Your worry and anxiety can either consume you, or it can be the catalyst God uses to draw you closer to Him, trusting Him even more.** Let your anxiety and worry draw you close to God, and remind you that He cares for you.

There was once a little old lady who is a great example of turning to God in times of stress and anxiety. She would come out every morning on the steps of her front porch, raise her arms to the sky and shout, "Praise the Lord!" Well, one day an atheist moved into the house next door. Over time, he became irritated at the little old lady. So every morning he would step out onto his front porch and yell after her, "There is no God!"

Time passed with the two of them carrying on this way every day. Then one morning in the middle of winter, the little old lady stepped onto her front porch and shouted, "Praise the Lord! Lord, I have no food and I am hungry. Please provide for me, oh Lord!"

The next morning she stepped onto her porch and there were two huge bags of groceries sitting there. "Praise the Lord!" she cried out. "He has provided groceries for me!" The atheist jumped out of the hedges and shouted, "There is no Lord. I bought those groceries!" The little old lady threw her arms into the air and shouted, "Praise the Lord! He has provided me with groceries and

He made the devil pay for them!" What could have been stressful and causing anxiety kept her turning to the Lord, praising Him in the midst of difficulty, and trusting for His provision of her earthly needs.

Rather than worrying about all this stuff, Jesus invites us to trust in God. God will take care of you. You need not worry about these things. Lean into God and all that He has to offer – which by the way, is from Creation to eternity. He provides for us in ways that we can't even begin to, so why not trust Him?

The final question becomes, then, “Do we trust God to provide?” Do you and I believe that God is good, and that God will in fact take care of us? Clearly, Jesus doesn't mean we can lay around all day and do nothing and try to abuse the grace of God – the birds and flowers illustration show us that because they're working; it's not that they idly wait around. This is not an invitation to be lazy. But none-the-less, God is above it all and over it all and in it all, and ultimately is our provider – including providing what we cannot provide ourselves: a doorway into eternity.

And so do we trust Him not only for eternity, but for our daily needs as well – physical, relational and emotional? Do we trust that what we have is enough? Do we trust Him enough to turn to him when stress and anxiety start to creep in? Do we trust Him to lead us in our relationships with others? Do we trust God enough to have peace with ourselves? If we trust him, there's no need to worry.

One way to let our anxiety and worry push us closer to God is coming to worship. Being in community with others in worship encourages us in our faith; it deepens our relationship with God; we are reminded of God's grace – which sometimes we lose sight of in the midst of the anxiety-inducing events of life throughout the week. God will meet you here. And our faith and trust in God then grows as God speaks to us through the sermon or a song or a prayer or somehow else. Maybe God will work some miracle in you in the midst of a worship service: like that you stay awake through the entire sermon. ☺ Or He heals you, or opens your eyes to something new God has been doing and you previously were missing it. And then there are

opportunities beyond the worship service to deepen our faith and trust more in God as well: Sunday classes, mid-week Bible Studies and small groups, our own personal devotional time, serving others during the week...there are a host of ways that God gets through to us to remind us that He has overcome the things that cause us stress and anxiety – including death – and we can find peace in the midst of those things when we trust in Him.

And so Jesus is calling us to trust God in all facets of life, because the one who gave you life and created everything seen and unseen is trustworthy. But don't wait until life gets stressful and anxious. In fact: **Life has a lot less anxiety, and a much greater sense of peace, when we turn to God in “the beginning” – instead of waiting until the end when things get anxious.** Why go through life without a deep sense of peace, when you don't have to?

Let me give you an example: Let's say a person has a decision to make. It could be any kind of decision, small or large...but let's go with a large one here. Let's say a family is in the market to buy a house. Mom and dad know their family's needs, and they know what they can afford. But as they shop for the house, they become tempted to buy the larger house with more bells and whistles that also costs more. And, they end up buying that home, or maybe even building it from scratch. And after living in it for a little while, it becomes clear that the mortgage is stretching the finances too thin. Food can't be sacrificed...clothes are needed...the car needs repair. So what happens? They start to worry and get anxious. Shortcuts are taken where they can, such as in giving to God, and in so-called optional spending such as vacations, kids programs, date nights for the husband and wife, and so forth. As a result, relationships are strained, stress mounts, and guess what? They start to experience more anxiety and stress in the home, it carries over to work, and into other relationships. And we might say, “They should trust God to provide!” True. But it would have been much less stressful if they had trusted God at the start that a smaller house, or one without so many bells and whistles, that fit their budget, would be sufficient. **Trusting God's provision at “the beginning” makes for a much greater sense of peace at “the end.”**

And if you want to know God at the end of your life, and on the other side of the grave...if you want peace about eternity as well as peace in the midst of

this temporal life, Jesus invites us to begin trusting him now. **There's no time like the present to begin, or deepen, our trust in Jesus.** There is a peace that Jesus offers, and it passes all understanding. It is far beyond any sense of peace that we are able to provide for ourselves, and it spreads to our other relationships bringing peace into them as well, as we live into the peace that Jesus offers. And we can have that peace starting today, and we can continue to live and grow into it as our anxiety and worry are the catalysts to push us closer to God to trust Him more, and have peace.

Let's join together in our statement of belief about the peace that God offers: **"I am free from anxiety because I have found peace with God, peace with others and peace with myself."** Let's pray...Amen.