

“We Thank You, Lord!” - Matthew 6:25-33 - Rev. Jeffrey B. Childs

When I first looked at this text, I thought it was an odd choice for the theme of Thanksgiving. There are so many other texts that offer thanks and praise to God, and this one did not even mention it. But digging into it, there is a glimpse of divine truth here in the context and then the conclusion. Let me illustrate with the classic philosophical question asked about a glass of water. Is the cup half full or half empty? In other words, do you focus on what you have or what you don't have? In this story Jesus implies that people are seeing what they don't see (The half of the glass that has nothing in it.) They are worrying about what they don't have. This text comes in the midst of what we know as the Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew's gospel from chapter 5-7 there is a major teaching that seemed to have happened on a hillside overlooking the Sea of Galilee at the beginning of Jesus' ministry. A similar but shorter teaching section is in the latter half of chapter 6 in the Gospel of Luke, though this story is not there but much later in Jesus' ministry in chapter 22.

Think about it. What do people worry about? What do you worry about, or think about the people around you, what do they tell you about their worries and fears? The list here from Jesus was pretty basic: What to eat and drink and what to wear? Maybe times were simpler back then as there seem to be a lot more worries these days. People worry about many things these days. In my informal poll of people this week I heard of fears of losing a job, health issues, the future, other people especially children or grandchildren, what will happen to the country...the list goes on.

So let me ask you again. What are your worries? And when do you worry most? It can happen when you wake up in the middle of the night? It can be worst in the dark, when not only can't you see the glass half empty - you can't even see the glass! If and when you find yourself worried or afraid - Pray. Instead of worrying about your next meal, pray and thank God for all the meals you have eaten. And remember what Jesus taught his followers to pray - *“Give us this day our daily bread!”*

If you find yourself or someone near you worrying, share a word of faith. The apostle Paul had discovered and believed: *We know that God works all things together for good for the ones who love God, for those who are called according to his purpose.* (Romans 8.28) Friends, faith beats worry. But worry can undermine faith. So, Jesus taught us to focus not on the problem, but the heavenly Problem Solver. This teaching ends, *Desire first and foremost God's kingdom and God's righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.* (Matthew 6.33) We pray it here each week, don't we? *“Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”* Desire that first and foremost.

What if we developed an **Attitude of Gratitude**? Instead of “Don't Worry, Be Happy” (remember Bobby McFarren's song from the 1980's?) how about, “Don't Worry, Be Thankful!” Being thankful overcomes worry. Give thanks to God for 5 things each day this week. Don't just wait until Thanksgiving to thank God. Thank God every day. You do not have to wait to be thankful. We usually give thanks after the fact. But you can and you have sometimes given thanks even before! When we say grace before a meal – we thank God for the meal not yet eaten! A classical grace goes, “For what we are about to receive,

may we be truly thankful.” Today may we be truly thankful always; before, during and after the fact! Be thankful for what you receive and be thankful for what you don’t have - yet! Don’t give thanks only for the half full half a glass, give thanks for the half empty half, too.

The apostle Paul wrote, *Give thanks in every situation because this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.* (1 Thessalonians 5.18) It might be easy to give thanks for the good things, but Paul will stretch us to give thanks for even the bad things because with a thankful heart we know some good can come out of it! Be thankful for the glass only being half full and that you have room for more blessings! This Thanksgiving give thanks for half a plate of food – cause then you will have room for pie later!!

Be truly thankful. Thank God for each person and each thing in your life. If you or someone near you gets worried, strengthen their faith and help focus their energy on being thankful. This Thanksgiving be truly thank-full not thank half-full. Each day this week smile as you contemplate all that God has given you. Alleluia and Amen.

Do You Worry of What’s Not There

Jeffrey B. Childs 11/18/2024

Do you worry of what's not there?
If your glass is half full?
Believe that God with you will share.
Don't worry, be thankful.

Don't focus on the empty half,
Don't be just thank-half-full.
Face your fears with a holy laugh.
Don't worry, be thankful.

For what we have thank God, indeed,
Thank God it is half full.
Half’s what we have, half’s all we need.
Don't worry, be thankful.

Thank God from whom all blessings flow,
That the glass is half full.
It gives us space for faith to grow.
Don't worry, be thankful.