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Senior Sermon
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Those of you who know me know I'm a planner. I plan out everything, what I'm going to do each day and when. I preplan the order in which I will get things done and when, so I have everything with me when I need it. When I leave my room in the morning I take not only my books for the day's classes but other homework I can do during the breaks in my classes so I don't have to go back to my room but can stay in one place-usually the religion hallway-from my first class in the morning until after my evening class each night. I like to be prepared.

My friends will tell you I have a tendency to over plan our activities. I want to plan things weeks in advance which seriously irritates my more spontaneous friends. Whenever it's mentioned that we should hang out I would get out my planner and look for weeks to see which days would work best, what times, and what kind of activities we want to do during that time.

I wanted to do Matthew chapter 6 or the "Lilies of the Valley" verse because it is my favorite. It also is very pertinent to my own life. I have a tendency to worry and because I worry I plan. I try to be prepared for anything. I worry that I will not be prepared enough. I worry that I will not bring enough homework to do between classes and waste time that I could be spending getting things done. I worry about what I will do when I graduate or what kind of career I will have because I don't want to miss out on an opportunity now that I might have wanted later. I don't want to regret that I didn't do something or missed an opportunity. However, while I was worrying I now realize I missed many opportunities.

It's easy to read this section in Matthew on the surface level. This scripture talks about not worrying. However, there is a deeper meaning in these verses beyond a simple command not to worry. These verses talk about birds and lilies but what does it all mean? I was reading a number of translations of these verses and found one from the biblical translation called The Message which I found very interesting and enlightening. It says:

"If you decide for God, living a life of God-worship, it follows that you don't fuss about what's on the table at mealtimes or whether the clothes in your closet are in fashion. There is far more to your life than the food you put in your stomach, more to your outer appearance than the clothes you hang on your body. Look at the birds, free and unfettered, not tied down to a job description, careless in the care of God. And you count far more to him than birds.

"Has anyone by fussing in front of the mirror ever gotten taller by so much as an inch? All this time and money wasted on fashion-do you think it makes that much difference? Instead of looking at the fashions, walk out into the fields and look at the wildflowers. They never primp or shop, but have you ever seen color and design quite like it? The ten best-dressed men and women in the country look shabby alongside them.

"If God gives such attention to the appearance of wildflowers-most of which are never even seen-don't you think he'll attend to you, take pride in you, do his best for you? What I'm trying to do here is to get you to relax, to not be so preoccupied with 'getting,' so you can respond to God's 'giving.' People who don't know God and the way he works fuss over these things, but you know both God and how he works. Steep your life in God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions. Don't worry about missing out. You'll find all your everyday human concerns will be met.

"Give your entire attention to what God is doing right now, and don't get worked up about what may or may not happen tomorrow. God will help you deal with whatever hard things come up when the time comes."

This translation is not literal but meant to help the reader understand the underlying messages in the text. This reading urges us to put our attention towards things that really matter rather than if our clothes are fashionable enough. It says we should be grateful we have food on the table at all and to not be picky because many people around the world will not be able to put food on the table tonight-if they even have a table.

The best line in this translation is don't "be so preoccupied with 'getting,' so you can respond to God's 'giving.'" That I think is an important message to take away from this. It's not just that you shouldn't worry over much but don't worry about things that are not really important, especially if the worry is directed at whether or not you will have the best clothing, throw the best parties, get the coolest new gadget, or even get that raise. God knows what you need and this message is saying not to worry because it won't do you any good.

A wise man once said "Today is a gift, that is why they call it the present." Remember this. Plan for tomorrow but live today. Worry comes from thinking too much about the future and it can eat you up inside if it is all you focus on. Worry also thrives in inactivity. Instead of sitting and worrying about what will be, go out, be active, live today and worry will not control you.

I am sure I will always struggle with worry but God will not give up on me or anyone else. There will always be the unexpected and unplanned for. Instead of worrying about the unexpected, think of it as a gift from God. A reminder to live today, right now, not only in your head thinking of tomorrow.

"So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today."