

Sermon 27 September 2026 'Putting ourselves in God's hands'

1 Peter 5:6-11 Matthew 6:25-34

'Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear.' Matthew 6:25. On the surface, this gospel passage is certainly about worry. Worry is something we all indulge in; it is very much part of being human. But, of course, ultimately, it doesn't really get us anywhere, it is not a productive activity to indulge in. There is an English proverb which says, *'Worry is like sitting in a rocking chair. It gives us something to do, but doesn't get us anywhere.'*

In the end, I think we have to say that worry is really a lack of faith. If we have the faith to put ourselves completely in God's hands, then there really is no need for worry. I quote from our first reading, *'Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.'* 1 Peter 5:6.

I think we can approach this issue of worry on two different levels. Firstly, there is the issue of worrying about everyday life. Again, a very human trait to worry when we are not actually faced with an impending challenge, but we just worry that things are not going to go our way or turn out the way we would like. And again, a deficiency of faith. The Rabbis of old had a saying, *'He who has a loaf in his basket, and says, "What will I eat tomorrow?" is a man of little faith.'* Jesus alludes to this in that first verse – *'.....do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink.'* Matthew 6:25. I go back to that word we referred to last week, 'attitude'.

I have yet to come across someone who has achieved their goals in life and who doesn't have a positive attitude. Winston Churchill said, *'Attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference.'* We are drawn to people who have a positive attitude. And the point I want to stress is that faith can and does cultivate a positive attitude.

The other level on which we need to consider the issue of worry is when we are indeed facing one of those inevitable challenges in our lives. Putting ourselves in God's hands takes on a heightened significance. Let me relate a story.

A minister tells of one of the most frightening, yet thought-provoking experiences of his life. His ministry took him to all parts of the United States, necessitating countless flights. On this particular occasion, he had been on a long flight when the sign flashed on, 'Fasten your seatbelts.' Then after a short while, a calm voice said, 'We will not be serving beverages at this time as we are expecting a little turbulence. Please be sure your seatbelt is fastened.'

As he looked around the aircraft, it became obvious that many of the passengers were becoming apprehensive. A little later, the announcer said, 'We are so sorry that we are unable to serve the meal at this time. The turbulence is still ahead of us.'

Then the storm broke. The ominous cracks of thunder could be heard even above the roar of the engines. Lightning lit up the darkening skies and within moments the plane was tossed around like a cork tossed around on a celestial ocean. One moment the plane was lifted on terrific currents of air, the next it dropped as if it were to plummet earthwards.

The minister confessed that he shared the discomfort and fear of all those around him. He looked around the plane and he could see that nearly all the passengers were alarmed and upset. Some were praying. Many were obviously wondering if they were going to make it through the storm.

Then he noticed this little girl. Apparently, the storm meant nothing to her. She had her feet tucked beneath her as she sat on her seat. She was reading a book and everything in her world was calm and orderly. Sometimes she would close her eyes, then she would read again. Worry and fear were simply not part of her world. When the plane was being buffeted by the terrible storm, when it lurched this and that way, as it rose and fell, when all the adults were obviously scared out of their wits, this little girl was completely composed. The minister could not believe his eyes.

When the plane finally and safely landed, all the passengers were relieved to disembark. The minister found himself walking beside the little girl and he couldn't help commenting to her that she appeared to be so calm throughout what was a frightening ordeal. He asked her why she had not been afraid.

The little girl replied, 'Because my daddy's the pilot, and he's taking me home.'

What a wonderful image that is. What a wonderful illustration of faith. Life is not easy, but just as you wouldn't contemplate climbing Mt Everest without a Sherpa guide, so do we need a guide, a helping hand, if we are to conquer those mountains that are inclined to pop up in our journey of life. There is no better guide or helping hand than God. We just need the faith to reach out for his hand, just as Peter did when he began to sink when attempting to emulate Jesus walking on the water.

I repeat that first line from our first reading, *'Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.'* 1 Peter 5:6. Martin Luther said, *'Faith is a living, daring confidence in God's grace, so sure and certain that a man could stake his life on it a thousand times.'*