

Preface:

In Matthew chapter 6 Jesus addresses our human tendency to worry. This is different from anxiety, particularly anxiety that requires professional care. In this sermon, Rev. Sharon Smith is not addressing anxiety, but more general worry. If you are looking for information on anxiety, here is one resource that might be helpful: <http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/self-help-resources/your-results?mental-health-resources=anxiety-disorders>.

Objectives of Sermon:

- To grapple with our human tendency to independence and worry;
 - To consider hunger as a global crisis that seems beyond our capability to solve; and
 - To learn from plants, and pay attention to what is before us to do in love, participating in the Kingdom of God.
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“Do not worry”

It is hard not to. Isn't it?

“Do not worry, about what you will eat or what you will wear”

I you are anything like me, you have:

Daily worries – did I pack my lunch in my bag, do I have enough money in the bank before someone cashes their cheque, will I get the job I have been waiting for, or will my body be ok?

There are seasonal worries – did I overcook the turkey or will there be enough food for my guests; will I be able to get out into the community when it snows, or how I am going to pay off that last vacation?

Not to mention the global worries when we turn on the television.

And we realize that we are living in an incredibly imbalanced world.

There is enough food to go around.

But because of the disparity of wealth, poor people do not have enough money to buy food that is available.

And 1 in 9 people in our world do not have enough food to live a healthy life.

“Do not worry”. Seems like an impossible invitation.

Matthew's original audience would have felt the same way.

Stewards of small things, together.

Rev. Sharon Smith

There were under Roman rule, it was a time of religious upheaval, and growing poverty –

- People were without land to produce their own food
- Widowed women were without homes
- Foreigners were unable to find work
- And those who were economically poor were often without family support

These folks are intermingled in the audience as Jesus addresses the crowd in his well-known Sermon on the Mount.

How would they have heard his words?

Do not worry about what you will eat?

- These were among the 1 in 9 who live hand to mouth.
- Finding their next meal **was** their biggest worry.

One Biblical scholar was curious to understand how Jesus' invitation would be understood in a poorer community.

So he visited a small African village. And spoke Jesus' words via an interpreter.

One woman who had never heard this saying of Jesus before, while carrying her child on her back said honestly: 'It would be better if somebody would tell me how I could manage my life in order to get the things I need and not to say: "Do not worry"'.
(Research by AGVA FESTSCHRIFT)

Worrying is part of our human condition.

When we are faced with dilemmas, we tend to not ask for help.

Instead we worry. We get into a cycle of thoughts that circulate in our mind to try and solve something often outside of our ability to change.

Significant worries... make our minds spin and we try to find the ultimate solution by thinking and over thinking. Often making grand plans that are unobtainable.

What has intrigued me all week (while I worried about a sermon on not worrying)...

- Is the way Jesus invites us to look at the small things.

Stewards of small things, together.

Rev. Sharon Smith

Look at the birds. Consider the lilies.

Instead of making grand plans for the future to solve big worries.

Jesus invites us to the present. To stop, to breathe, to notice what is before us.

It is the small things that we are called to notice and act on:

- A man puts out his hand and asks for food on the corner of the street
- A woman needs help applying for her disability pension
- A colleague is overwhelmed by his workload and afraid of being let go.

It is these things that are in our capacity to act on – this is what meets human need.

And this is actually a way of trust.

I show up, I notice what is before me to do, I pray and God mysteriously holds the bigger picture.

So, let us consider the lilies of the field, what do they tell us to do?

Well, as I run and walk the trails of the North Shore, it is not lilies that catch my eye for consideration, but moss.

I know, compared to a lily, moss seems like such a disappointment.

But stay with me.

For I wonder if I walked with Jesus through Mosquito Creek, if he were to say, "Sharon do not worry, consider the moss of the creek..."

And I would look down at these most ancient of land plants and pay attention.

Moss lives with wonderful **simplicity**, there is something about the power of being small.

Mosses have become so successful all over the world by living in small spaces when they are made available. They are superb teachers about living within our means.

Mosses have very **low competitive** ability, because they're small, they don't grab resources very efficiently. Or push other plants out.

Yet it is estimated that they have persisted for 350 million years.

Because of their ability to **cooperate** with other plants, to **share limited resources** they give more than they take.

Mosses build soil, they purify water, they are like the coral reefs of the forest,

They are engines of biodiversity and yet, they're only one centimeter tall.

(Ideas from botanist Robin Wall Kimmerer. She writes books that join new scientific and ancient indigenous knowledge, including Gathering Moss and Braiding Sweetgrass.)

Stewards of small things, together.

Rev. Sharon Smith

Consider the mosses of the creek.

What a picture they give us of the Kingdom of God.

Marcus Borg describes the "Kingdom of God: as imagining what life would be like on earth if God was king or leader or President or Prime Minister"

For so many Christians, Kingdom of God had been reduced to going to heaven after you die. Yet we pray in the Lord's Prayer "may your kingdom come, may your will be done down here on earth."

Living, loving, giving, praying, being present to what is before us to do.

I wonder if we **took time to stop, to breathe,**

To consider the way of moss: simplicity, non-competitiveness, cooperation, sharing -
Maybe our worries would diminish.

Our worries are usually in the future.

When we pay attention to that which calls us in the here and now.

We are transformed by meeting Christ in what is around us.

Living by paying attention to the small things.

I show up, I do what is before me to do, and God mysteriously holds the bigger picture.

This does not let us off the hook when it comes to meeting the needs of my neighbour, neither does it load us with all the responsibility.

At last night's Thanksgiving meal, I was privileged to sit at the tables with our guests. To listen to stories of gratitude, hardship, perseverance and resilience.

I couldn't have done what was before me to do, if Brenda, Vivian, Susanne, Shirley, Joe or Elaine and many others weren't doing their part also.

For it is when we, as Jesus followers, cooperate and function as a family-like community, that we do not have to worry.

When I get drawn into big issues that are more than what I can handle on my own, when I obsess about world issues that I cannot realistically attend to. It is then that I worry.

Consider the lilies, consider the moss.

Stewards of small things, together.

Rev. Sharon Smith

Jean Vanier founded the L'arche communities where people with and without intellectual disabilities live, work, learn, and grow together.

He reflected in an interview about our concerns about the bigger needs of our world:

He said we have to come down to the small because small is where we really are. When we are confronted by global issues like hunger, we are also confronted by our own incapacity.

But if there was a hungry child in front of you, you could take that child in your arms. And give her food to eat. So, let's come back to the reality of the small. There, we can meet people with real needs.

He says that the future of our poor world, with all its ecological and financial difficulties, may be that the big thing that's going to happen is that little lights of love will spread over the country.

Little places where people love each other, and welcome people who are poor and are broken.

And if there are sufficient number of little, little lamps in each village or each city and parts of the city, well then the glow will be a little bit greater.

Consider the lilies of the field, the moss of Mosquito Creek.

**What small part is the Spirit of Christ inviting you to play?
How will you steward what you have been entrusted with?
So that our collective worry can subside.**

For if we all play our little part, and trust, the little bit will become greater, in the mystery of God's kingdom.

So, pray with me that:

**God, would grant us peace when we face things that we cannot change.
That God would also grant us courage to change the little things that we can change,
And that in God's mercy we would have the wisdom to know the difference.
And not to worry.**

(based on the Serenity Prayer - Reinhold Niebuhr wrote in the late 1800's)

Amen.