

NATIONAL COMMUNITY CHURCH

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The Way of the Sparrow

Campus Pastors

Joel Schmidgall - Capitol Hill Campus Pastor:

I was putting my eight year old to bed the other night and just asking her how she was doing with everything going on and she said, "Dad, I think I have the corona". I said what? What are you talking about? She said, "Dad, my, my fingers are tingling." I said, "No, Renzi, you're laying on your hand. Your hand just fell asleep. You're okay." "Okay, okay." I said, "Renzi, what are we going to do about all this stuff?" And she said, "Dad its okay. We just got to keep washing our hands and trust in God, okay. I love you now, good night." She rolls over said, "Oh, so we're good here? You're okay? Okay." And I walked out of the room actually feeling better about myself than I was when I went into the room. I went into encourage her, but her confidence and her awareness actually helped me out. Wash our hands right here and trust in God right here.

It reminds me of one of our core values that Pastor Mark just referenced. Let's pray like it depends on God and let's work like it depends on us. But we allow our minds to start racing, don't we? And we engage and we start thinking, okay, is my business going to make it through all this? Am I going to have a job after all this? Am I gonna be able to get a job through all this? What about my grandpa or that child? Are they going to make it? And how can I work at home and then home school my kids at the same time? Am I going to survive? And if I do, are they going to survive? And our mind gets racing every one of us so much, and we say we hope for the best and prepare for the worst when in reality, it's the opposite. We hope very little and we worry a whole lot, don't we?

Well we continue our series 'The Jesus Way' today. And today we talk about 'The Way of the Sparrow.' It's Jesus in Matthew chapter six, saying God cares so much about everything in this world even to the very smallest of the birds. I wonder if I could read it for us today and then let our campus pastors unpack this for us. It's Matthew chapter six says this: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by ad by worrying at a single hour to your life? And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon and all of a splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not even much more clothe you-you of little faith. So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek ye first his kingdom

and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

Jesus doesn't say if you were, he doesn't say when you were, he knows you're going to worry. So he says do not worry. He knows our minds are going to race. He knows our hearts are going to palpitate. He knows we're going to allow ourselves to engage. I think the word rumination is a great word for this right here. Rumination describes a cow chewing it's cud and he chews and then he swallows and regurgitates and chews and swallows and it's this process over and over this rumination. And just like our minds, we get this information in our minds mull over and over not doing anything about it but worrying so much. We ruminate. But let me ask you this, when's the last time that you ruminating on the scripture that you meditated on God's Word? You say, "I don't know how to meditate". Well, you know how to meditate if you know how to worry. Worry is just negative meditation. And we get caught in these loops but the scriptures say don't be anxious about anything but in everything, bring your prayer and petition to God. Think about such things what is right and noble and praiseworthy, and Jesus four different times in this passage He calls us, do not worry. He says it again and again. He uses repetition to teach us. We are seeing the problems in our world, bigger than the Creator of the world when we worry. So let me just remind us of something today and that's this, God is present. He is a Emmanuel. He is God with us. Find comfort in him. Do not worry.

Jenni Clayville - Ballston Quarter Campus Pastor:

Do not worry. We're navigating through something that we have never seen in our lifetime before. I went from having a somewhat predictable weekly schedule of getting up, driving into work through traffic and then focusing on a scheduled day of work and planning from nine to five, drive home in the same traffic to cook dinner from my family, and then maybe go to small group to my new normal today, which is I get up to feed school and entertain my children while I work a full time job in this new parameters of social distancing from home. These days are definitely not what any of us are used to. And as Pastor Joel said, it's hard to not let our mind run in seasons like this, to ruminate in the fears of the cycle inside our heads. My body always betrays me when it comes to stress. I don't know why but somehow my body gathers up every single worry molecule in my being and it manifests into this glory of painful cold sore right on my face. Guys don't zoom in, it's really embarrassing. So anyway, that's just my real life. So let's see what Jesus says about this. Worry, not my cold sore just to clarify. *"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothes."* The word worry here in Greek is "Merimnao". It means anxious, to care for, to be concerned over. The verb "merimnao" doesn't suggest anxiety of the future, but it means and it implies anxiety of today.

Jesus' command "Do not be merimnao" is actually a promise. A promise that we can live in the tension of a worry free life, in a worry filled world. When Jesus commands us not to worry about our life, it can

come off two ways. The first is what we're already doing. We're worrying about life. And the second is almost, you know, uncaring. It sounds like Jesus doesn't understand, but he does. This command is about selflessness. Jesus commands us each individually, not to worry about our own life because we're trusting God to provide for us so that we can better do the work of justice. We're now free to care for those that the majority has forgotten.

But let me confess this real quick. Even as I say that to you right now, I'm worried. I'm worried about my 98 year old grandmother who is alone in a nursing home and I'm worried of my family that is in the Pacific Northwest their just so far away. I'm worried about failing my kids as a home school mom in this season, I am worried that I will somehow pass the Covid-19 virus off to somebody else. I am worried. But Jesus said don't be. Because He created us and he knew from the beginning that we're able to live and lean into this. He's not just saying it because life was easier back then. In fact, they were living in a time that the conditions were much harsher than what we're experiencing even today. They were living in the most oppressive culture in time in history.

This teaching my friends is not easy. If we're honest, it's really uncomfortable. But God did not call us to live a life of comfort, did he? So how do we exude empathy and confidence to not worry? How do we balance in a worry free life in a worry filled world? Do not be merimnao.

Robb Schmidgall - Gainesville, VA Campus Pastor:

No, God did not call us to live a life of comfort just like Pastor Jenni said. But it seems like not worrying should make life comfortable, right? I think that's because we have a misconception of what a worry free life is. I think that a worry free life does not necessarily mean a life free from worry. It doesn't mean that we don't have worry, like Pastor Joel said. Being worried free is not about letting worry chain itself to you, being worry free is about not letting worry, attach itself to you and hang on. Worry is normal, you can't avoid it coming. The question here is, how do you dance with it? How do you live in such a way as to not let it attach itself to you? I think it starts with having the right mindset, having the right understanding of worry in context of a God who does care for you. Not a God who fixes stuff, but a God who cares about your stuff. And Jesus goes into three metaphors here that He gives us. He gives us three examples of the birds or the sparrows, of the flowers or the lilies of the field and of the grass. And each of these communicates a very important point that Jesus understands, that are Father understands and cares about what we care about. The sparrows represent that God sees our necessities. The lilies or the flowers represent that God sees our desire for quality of life or for beauty and experiencing beauty in life. And the grass represents that God sees our concern for life and death.

But he's making a point here, in saying that he sees what we care about. He's saying this, he's saying, "I see you. I see you." Right as you sit in your living room or wherever you're sitting right now he's saying to you, I see you, I see the anxiety, I see the worry. I see the sense that you feel that you are drowning. I

see you, I see you and I care about what you care about. The question that we need to ask ourselves is, are we willing to let God see us where we are?

I've been locked in my house with a two and a four year old for the last seven days. And they love my name. I've heard my name called hundreds of times, Dad, Dad, Dad, Dad, Dad, Daddy, Dad, Dad. You know, you know how it goes. And sometimes I deserve it because there are times definitely where, where I'm not paying attention, and I need to be pulled out of my zone. But there are many times where when they call my name, I look at them but they're not looking at me. They're looking at their problem, whatever they're focused on. And they keep calling my name, Dad, Dad, Dad all the while I'm sitting there looking at them, but because they're so focused on what they care about, and on their problem, they don't realize that I'm here, that I'm waiting, that I'm wanting to pay attention. And I think this is such a beautiful picture of what the Father wants us to understand and what Jesus wants us to understand in this moment.

Did you know that viruses like Covid-19, are actually not even alive? They are viruses that only live and can reproduce by attaching themselves to something else that is alive. And by hacking that thing and hijacking that living cell to the point that it overtakes it, and begins to reproduce itself. I think worry is very much the same thing in and of itself, it is not alive, but when it attaches itself to us to something that is living it begins to then reproduce. If it can hang on long enough to reproduce itself that is the only way it can live. And so the challenge for us is how do we allow these how do we get rid of these things of this worry in our lives? Guess what, just like we wash our hands so in the spirit, we need to be washed. We need to be cleansed of these things by the washing of the word by all these different opportunities. I think greater than the pandemic of Covid-19 is the pandemic of worry 2020. But God's invitation, God's invitation here is to live a worry free life in a worry filled world.

Marion Mason - Kingstowne Campus Pastor:

One of the ways that we live a worry free life in a worry filled world is to recognize the value that God has for each one of us, it's also to recognize the tools that he gives us. In this passage in verse 26, Jesus reminds us of our value to God. When speaking of the birds, Jesus says, aren't you more valuable than they that your Father in heaven, He feeds them? Aren't you more valuable than they? For each one of us today is recognizing the value that God gives us.

You know, I have the privilege of serving as a track and field coach for numerous as years. And as a coach, one of the things that I consistently have to do, particularly in anxious moments, is to remind each athlete of their value, that you belong here in this moment that I value for who you are not for anything else that you do but for you. The message is for you to go out here and do your very best, right in this moment. And isn't it wonderful that we have a God that values us in that same type of way? I love what Max Lucado says, He says, "You are valuable because you exist, not because of who you are or what you've done, but simply because you are." National Community, we have a God that values us. We

have a God that loves us, a God that knows each one of our challenges, a God that knows everything that we're going through.

In the Mason home this week, we kind of had some tools that God has given us like this tool of worship and this tool of thanksgiving that we had to utilize this week because we were feeling a little anxious. We were feeling a little worn down and in the midst of our NCC online services, we were singing and we were worshipping and we heard some giggles from my kids because we were dancing around the room. But it's okay in those moments to allow the tools that God has given you and recognizing the value that he has on each one of our lives, to be utilized in those anxious moments, not allowing worry to take control over us.

I'm reminded of another tool that Jesus gives us he mentions it right before this passage, he talks about this tool of prayer. For each one of us it's to utilize prayer without ceasing. The apostle Paul in Philippians four reminds us, *"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."* Paul says in every situation, that when we're to pray that we're praying when we're tired, we're praying when we have energy. We're praying when we're anxious. And we're praying when we're worn down. But as we're praying that we're giving everything over to God, that we're not having to take these problems on to ourselves. The problems they're going to worry about themselves, but for us is to give it over to God so that in the midst of that, that he will guard our hearts, and that he will guard our minds as he gives us peace. In his commentary of Matthew Frederick Dale Bruner writes, to read the Sermon on the Mount is to discover what it means to be Jesus' disciples. To read it with faith is to receive power to be Jesus' disciples. As we navigate this text and as we navigate this season in our life remember that God has called us to be disciples that tap in and to utilize his power, particularly in a worry filled world when we need to be worry free.

Jon Vaughn - Potomac Yard Campus Pastor:

Hey NCC family I wanted to invite you into a practice that has been a part of my life that has been so helpful in dealing with worry. But first disclaimer, I have not overcome worry. I'm in process but I find this practice of the Lord's Prayer been ministering to my spirit. But I want to start with a question. What if we look at the natural anxieties of our life as triggers into prayer instead of worrying? This thought came to my mind when I was listening to a podcast by Dr. Caroline Leaf. She writes this, we are humans facing the human condition, and that is we are in life, and life is full of challenges. Anxiety is a natural response we go through when we face challenges. It signifies a lot of things going on in our mind in response to life. Mismanaged anxiety can grow, managed anxiety can go away.

First, let's be clear. Jesus is not telling us to suppress our anxiety. He's calling us into the Jesus way to look at the flowers, to look at the birds this new way of seeing life that communicates who he is and who we are in him. Right before Jesus' teaching on do not worry he teaches on how to pray. And I believe that his teaching on prayer is a precursor to his teaching on worry, because it's our posture that allows us to see the ordinary things of life as ways in which God is trying to speak to us. And so we need the posture to listen. And so to me, this is how I start this practice. I invite the Holy Spirit just to help me stay present to the moment and to guide me through Jesus' teaching on prayer. And so when we pray "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name", do you know what we're praying? We're praying as children of God with a perfect Heavenly Father. And so as I take a moment and commune not in a script, but commune with the non anxious presence of God in that moment in perfect love, I start to feel my fears, which are the root of my worries start to be cast away. And this posture, this childlike posture enters us into praying "*Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven*" and my soul breathes because I let go of control. I hope God to lead, allow my will to be his will and I take a step forward into the day that he has for me. And so this posture of allowing God to take control of our lives allows us to pray, "Give us this day, our daily bread."

It reminds me that God cares for our basic needs, flour and water, that he cares for us enough to allow us to pray to him about any necessities we have for the day. And it's this posture of asking for our needs that leans us and it brings us into a place where we can ask God to forgive us of our sins as we forgive others. .This daily reminder to me serves this in a way to remind me that God is not surprised by our sin, He gives us a daily reminder that we'll need forgiveness and a daily reminder that people will sin against us. And so the anxieties that are wrapped up in my own sin, and the sin of others, I can allow those things, to be met by communion with God. And so this posture of praying for forgiveness of sins, leads us into a place of asking God, to deliver us from evil, deliver us from this cultural moment of evil. And I can trust him through this prayer that he's going to deliver us from the evil of our cultural moment. And this is both systematic, but it's not just about us, it's about our neighbors. And I believe that we have a God who's restoring all things and all people, even in this time. And so church may we take on this posture of being in relationship with our non anxious presence God, the presence of God. And walk out the way of love during this time and during this season and allow the ordinary things of our life, to speak about who he is and who we are in him.

Lyle Tard - Barracks Row Campus Pastor:

It's easy to say don't be anxious, as Pastor Jon stated through Caroline Leaf, anxiety is a natural response we go through when we face challenges. But if Jesus doesn't want us to suppress our worries, what are we to do? We place it in the kingdom. Matthew 6:33 says, "*But seek first His kingdom and his righteousness.*" Firstly, this isn't just a statement of direction; this is a statement of replacement. The same way Jesus replaced our sin with his salvation, our shame, with his significance and our guilt with his grace, we ought to replace our anxiety with his kingdom. When we walk in anxiousness, our

response to anxiety is worry. And when we worry, all of our thoughts are consumed with this feeling of worry, and then our behavior flows out of worry. Worry becomes our identity. But what would life look like if we were to respond to all of life's challenges by seeking His kingdom? I think it would look like the second part of verse 33, "All things being given to us." *When we look to Jesus, our trust, and our reliance on him becomes* our identifying factor. Worry turns into hope and it makes following verse 34, a way of life, not a strain and a stress. Verse 34 says, *"Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow for tomorrow has worries about itself. Each day has trouble of its own."* Better isn't always easy. Pastor Jenni and Pastor Rob talked about that a little bit earlier. Doing what is easy is seldom what's best.

Listen, right now my family and I we live with my momma. First of all, Momma, if you're watching this, I love you. Thank you for letting my family squeeze into that little itty bitty room that I had when I was 15 years old. I appreciate that. You can be sure that the challenge for me and my family is to not worry about our tomorrow. There are things that we desire for our tomorrow. First of all, it's getting about that little itty bitty room. But we also want to be with the community that God has entrusted us to help lead. But remaining in this mode of seeking God and His righteousness, which is less about what we think is right and more about his perspective of rightness. Trading that for worry about what we're going to do tomorrow and what it's looked like and what it's had an effect on us, it's allowed us to walk in the simple joy of us being careful. Yes, by my momma, but also for God by a God who loves us and knows what's best for us.

It seems like all our world right now all the thing they're thinking about is despair and for some would say, rightly so. But as we think about this exchange, this replacement from our worry to his wonder, this seek thing this is not just a sight word. This is a word of discovery. Seeking isn't just about looking away from the things that we could be worrying about, but it's looking towards and finding hopeful things. Jesus is being really practical here in verse 34 by denoting that we will look to the future. But as we look and as we seek don't get too caught up in looking to the future without the sense of hope and discovery. Corrie ten Boom, she was a Dutch author and watchmaker who helped an estimated 800 Jews escape the Nazi Holocaust. She said, "Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrows, it empties today of its strength." This is where the practicality of Jesus connects to the reality of our lives. When we put our tomorrow in the faithful hands of the one who's pioneered our today, today's troubles become a testimony for tomorrow's trials. And guess what? When we live this life, the Jesus way, the way of the sparrow, when we go through tomorrow's trials, the verdict is in for Christ followers like you and me, we win.

David Schmidgall - Lincoln Campus Pastor:

I think an appropriate way to close this out is by reciting the Lord's Prayer. I'm going to take Pastor Jon's cue, and I'm going to invite all of us to do that here at the end. But before we do that, I want to paint a picture for you. It was about its crazy even think it was a week ago that my wife and I and Pastor

Heather, with some NCC'ers, we're in the Holy Land. And we were in the Sea of Galilee. And I know everybody is jealous thinking about being with Pastor Heather in the Holy Land, right? Was there and I was on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee, and looking out over this geography and this topography of the land and seeing the very place where Jesus says these words Jesus of Nazareth. And so what I'd like to actually do is I want to paint a picture as we're closing, I want to zoom out and so I want to invite you wherever you're at. If you'd be willing and if you're able, would you close your eyes with me? I just want to get you in a posture and I just want you to imagine for a second that you're a First Century Jew and you're living in Capernaum. It's a deeply observant Jewish community where hundreds of homes are tightly packed together think about 800 people. You awoke this morning and you said the Shema which is what every observant Jew would have said every single morning. "Hear, O Israel: the Lord is God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and your soul, your mind and your strength." You've done that. And now work has begun. Think about a donkey that's passed by that's made its presence known. Think about sheep in the background, listen to that noise, children laughing you're doing everything together and you're overlooking the Sea of Galilee. And then suddenly, you're reminded you're in a militarized zone. Everywhere you go there are Roman legionnaires, and you're triggered by the sound of this consistent walk of Romans making their presence known everywhere, you're occupied. It's been 70 years since they took control and they've made themselves known in society. And so all of a sudden, your friends begin to think about what this rebellion could look like from this occupation. One of your friends joins the Sicarii, which is quote, "dagger men who sneak up in a crowd of a back alley". And they'll even go into crowds and they'll slit people's throats. So there's fear everywhere. Another friend joins a new group called the Zealots. They're like an insurgency working with guerrilla tactics, who work their name, who get their name from the zeal of Phineas from Exodus, who killed thousands in the name of the Lord.

The Bible you grew up hearing your Rabbi talk about is full of stories of God's care and his love for people. You heard about how God is saving his people from the Egyptian oppressor an Assyrian oppressor but where is God now? That's same Bible holds out promise of a coming Messiah in Isaiah and Micah a king that would come but you're waiting. And once again, you're reminded your parents tell you of the 6000 Jews that have been crucified not far from your home. Your heart is racing, as you're brought back into reality. What's going on? How long is this gonna be? This doesn't make any sense. But then you learn about a Rabbi, a new teacher, called Jesus from the town of Nazareth and all sorts of theories about who this guy is. And some think he's a prophet, some think he's Messiah, but you're not sure. And so you show up and there are thousands of people on the side of this hill, overlooking the sea of Galilee. And the first thing he does is he shares a blessing. Blessed are the poor. Blessed are the pure in heart. Blessed are the peacemakers this Rabbi blesses. No cursing, no condemnation, you begin to settle in to a peace as you're beginning to hear this Rabbi. There's no hurrying him. He says we're to become salt and light. He says a tree is known by its fruit; an eye is the lamp of the body which triggers a memory as a Jew of a Hebrew idiom that *ayin tôwbh* - the good eye. That issued from this place of generosity we begin to see and Jesus of Nazareth is beginning to show us, it's not just what we see, but its how we see. And it's in this setting where we've heard therefore. God's presence is here. His kingdom

is here. He's with us. He's for us. And we hear then therefore, do not be worried. Do not be worried. And then he tells us to look at the birds which is a rabbinic trick. Because he's distracting us away from our worries and he's pointing us back to a very tangible thing that he has created.

As we close this time, one of my tests that I do is when I go throughout my day, one of the questions I ask is, 'How often have I heard the birds?' It's amazing, I can go throughout a whole day and I haven't heard the birds once. And the moment that I hear the birds the moment I realized that I've slowed down to God's pace. And maybe what God is inviting us to do is to slow down to God's pace. God is with us. God is in us, God is through us.

My teacher Mark Turnage, says all the teachings of Jesus are summed up in one word. Guess. Relax. It's not don't take things seriously, it's not be aloof, it's not no intention. No, he says seek first the kingdom. And so I wonder if what we could do is each morning and each evening very simply, what if we just started our day with the Lord's Prayer? What if we just got on our knees right now wherever you're at and we're just going to take a deep breath for one minute? Would you do that?

Everything that we've heard from every campus pastor can be summed up in this, we can trust you. We can trust you. And so let's recite the Lord's Prayer together, wherever we're at, in one spirit.

"Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever." And everybody said amen.