

## Message for June 28, 2020

I would like to share with you something I've learned during this time of COVID 19 and the numerous precautions we have had to undertake to guard against it. Perhaps I shouldn't say "learned" because I've known this principle for a long time, but over the recent weeks the Lord has impressed it deeper into my being so that I have been able to embrace it more fully than ever before. As a result, I am more at peace in spite of everything going on both around me and in the world. But before I share it, I first need to talk a little about our garden.

Back at the end of May we prepared our garden area for the upcoming planting. The soil was dug up, raked, and fertilized. It looked the way garden soil should look, a nice uniform brown all over. Then we put in our plants and seeds. After a short time the seeds germinated and green sprouts began to show. So far so good! But it wasn't long before we also got what we didn't plant or want. Weeds! And more weeds! That meant more work. You have to get rid of them or else they will choke the good plants and rob them of valuable nutrients. But I worry that in pulling them out I might also pull out some of the good young plants (which I've done many times in the past). I also worry about critters that think the garden is their own private smorgasbord. After all, they're too smart to bother eating the weeds.

Isn't life a lot like that? You do everything right, follow the rules, sow seeds of good works, and what happens? Not only do you see good fruit from your labors, but you also get weeds. And not just any weeds. These are the worst kind. Weeds of worry! These weeds rob you of joy, peace, and spiritual nourishment. They draw you away from God and get you to focus on worldly issues and fears about the future. "What if?" is constantly on your mind. What if I said or did the wrong thing, or my efforts aren't good enough, or God calls me to do something I really don't want to do? What if I get the virus? What will tomorrow bring? Or any of a number of other issues that trouble us and give us cause to worry? It's not hard to get into that frame of mind just paying attention to the

news of the day. Unfortunately, I fell into that trap. I worried about what this country was turning into culturally, what will happen if this "social distancing" goes on for much longer, and what impact all of this will have on Second Baptist, as well as a number of other things. These are all genuine concerns, but not worthy of worry!

And that's the thing I "learned". I must not worry about anything over which I have no control. Is God sovereign and still on the throne? Of course He is! That means *He* is in control, not me. I can't "fix" any of these things. And apart from Him, I can do nothing. But He has everything well in hand, regardless of whether or not I understand what is happening around me. I can trust Him with every aspect of my being and every circumstance of my life. Once I let go of my worries and acknowledged His sovereignty over all of creation, I was no longer troubled; I am at peace again, and His joy returned. Everything will work out perfectly according to His will. I only need to be attentive to Him and trust Him unconditionally. So no more weeds of worry for me! Although I still have to contend with the ones in the garden.

Have you "learned" anything during this time as I have? If so, I would encourage you to share it with Donna so she can include it in her daily emails. In that way we all would benefit and be encouraged as we go through this trying time together.

Blessings to all,  
Pastor Joe

## FAITH AND FEELINGS

During a Bible study on faith, Ney Bailey came up with this definition: “Faith is taking God at his word.” Furthermore, she was reminded that “the word of our God endures forever” (Isaiah 40:8, NIV).

In *Faith Is Not a Feeling* (WaterBrook), Bailey writes, “[Sometimes] I have felt afraid or lonely or depressed. My heart has literally ached in anguish over circumstances of life, and in those moments I have been the most tempted to doubt the truth of God’s Word. But instead I chose with my will to believe his Word. Thousands of times my prayers have begun, ‘Lord, I feel ... but, Lord, your Word says ....’”

Bailey counsels, “You and I can either grow accustomed to listening to our feelings, thoughts, and circumstances, letting them control us, or we can be in the habit of taking God at his word despite our feelings and life experiences. ... His Word is truer than our feelings.”

## HELL'S LAMENT

Today Hades tearfully sighs: “Would that I had not received him who was born of Mary, for he came to me and destroyed my power; he broke my bronze gates and, being God, delivered the souls I had been holding captive.”

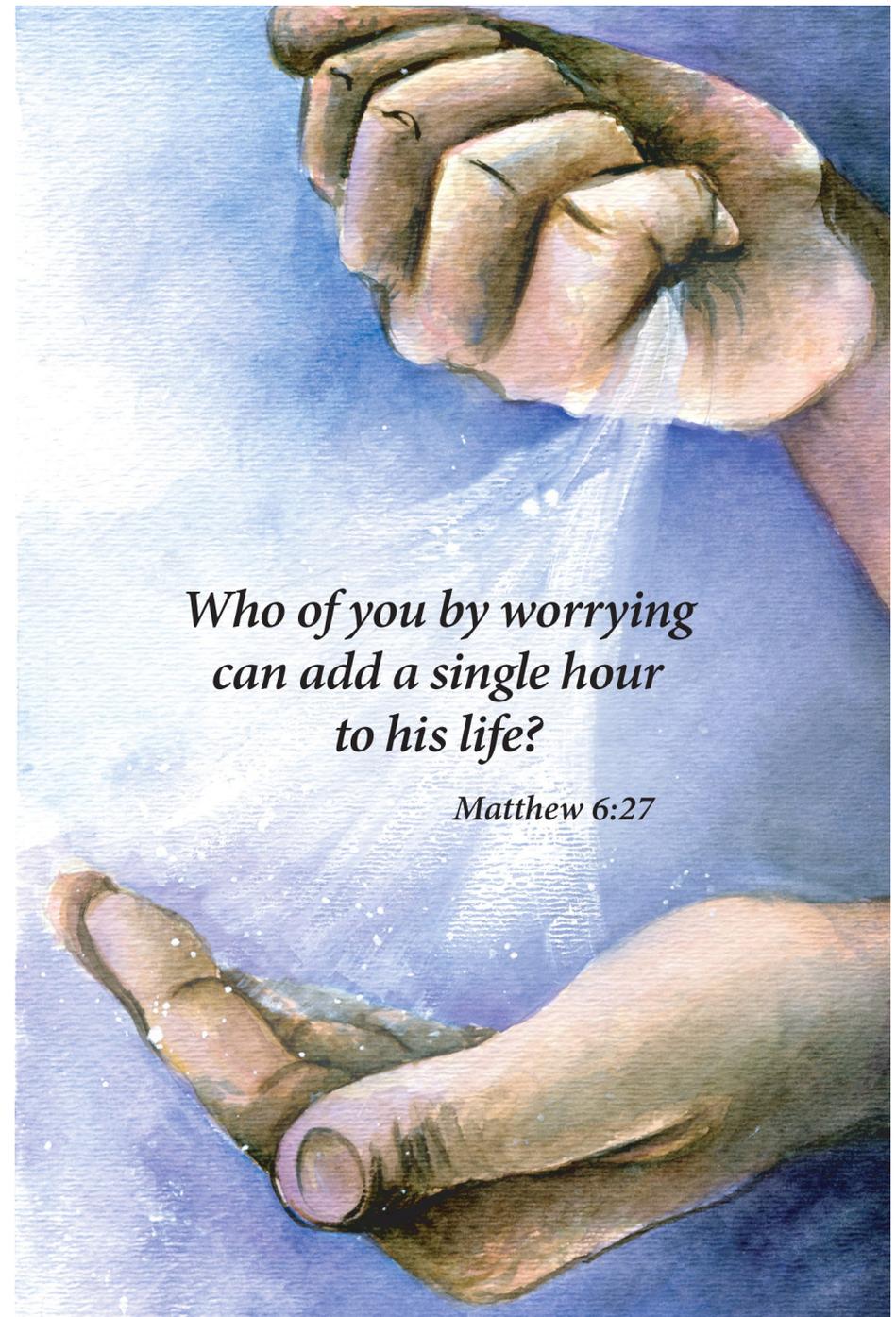
Today Hades groans: “My power has vanished. I received one who died as mortals die, but I could not hold him: with him and through him, I lost those over which I had ruled. I had held control over the dead since the world began, and lo, he raises them all up with him!” O Lord, glory to your cross and to your holy resurrection!

—from a Holy Saturday liturgy in Byzantine Daily Worship

## FINDING TRUE LIFE

No one ever struggled more to find inner unity and, thus, real life than St. Paul. In chapter 8 of his letter to the Romans, Paul testified: “those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace” (Romans 8:5-6, NRSV).

Spirit-minded souls, Paul would say, will find the fruit of the Holy Spirit within: “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23, NRSV).



*Who of you by worrying  
can add a single hour  
to his life?*

*Matthew 6:27*

**“The Little Church That Could”**  
“Believing is Seeing”