

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

FEBRUARY 27, 2011

Sermon by: Thomas Graf

“SO DO NOT WORRY ABOUT TOMORROW, FOR TOMORROW WILL BRING WORRIES OF ITS OWN.
TODAY’S TROUBLE IS ENOUGH FOR TODAY.”

AS A FAMOUS PHILOSOPHER FROM THE BRONX ONCE SAID: “AIN’T DAT DA TRUT.”

Unemployment.....The housing market.....shootings.....killings..... North Korea threatens to attack S. Korea.....The republicans attempt to break the unions.....Nationwide rallies support the fight against Wisconsin’s anti-union bill.....It’s time for Libya’s Gadhafi to go.....Gasoline prices are soaring.....

So.....DO NOT WORRY ABOUT TOMORROW, FOR TOMORROW WILL BRING WORRIES OF ITS OWN.

I’m not exactly sure why, but in the middle of my preparations/reflections on today’s readings, all of a sudden the phrase”

‘DON’T WORRY.....BE HAPPY’came to mind.

Remember that song by Bobby McFerrin from back in 1989? It was on the lips of everyone....even today when it is heard, everyone begins to sing along.....

HERE’S A LITTLE SONG I WROTE
YOU MIGHT WANT TO SING IT NOTE FOR NOTE
DON.T WORRY, BE HAPPY
IN EVERY LIFE WE HAVE SOME TROUBLE
BUT WHEN YOU WORRY, YOU MAKE IT DOUBLE
DON,T WORRY, BE HAPPY
DON’T WORRY, BE HAPPY NOW.

AIN’T GOT NO PLACE TO LAY YOUR HEAD
SOMEBODY CAME AND TOOK YOUR BED
DON’T WORRY, BE HAPPY
THE LANLORD SAID YOUR RENT IS LATE
HE MAY HAVE TO LITIGATE
DON’T WORRY, BE HAPPY
DON’T WORRY, BE HAPPY NOW.

This song by Bobby McFerrin became the first A CAPELLA song to reach number 1 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart---a position it held for TWO WEEKS! At the Grammy Awards, it won the award for SONG OF THE YEAR, record OF THE YEAR and BEST MALE POP VOCAL PERFORMANCE.

Did you know that the title was taken from a famous quote by MEHER BABA (Hindu mystic/sage.) McFerrin had seen it on a poster and it stuck with him. Baba used this quote many times to teach and inspire.....DON'T WORRY.....BE HAPPY.

I began to wonder what possibly was happening during this time period that might have inspired McFerrin to write this song. So....I went back and researched some of the HEADLINES from that year:

-HIS HOLINESS THE DALI LAMA ACCEPTS THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE ON BEHALF OF OPPRESSED PEOPLES EVERYWHERE.

-THE LARGEST OIL SPILL IN U.S. HISTORY OCCURS AFTER THE EXXON VALDEZ STRIKES BIG BARRIER REEF IN ALASKA'S PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND.

-HURRICANE HUGO CAUSES 71 DEATHS AND DAMAGE ESTIMATED AT \$4.2 BILLION.

-THE BERLIN WALL COMES DOWN,,,,SYMBOLICALLY ENDING THE COLD WAR.

SO.....DO NOT WORRY ABOUT TOMORROW, FOR TOMORROW WILL BRING WORRIES OF ITS OWN. TODAY'S TROUBLE IS ENOUGH FOR TODAY.

Each age has its own WORRIES/TROUBLES.....moments that can lead us to WORRY.....FEAR..... DESPAIR.....LAMENT.

In our FIRST READING, Prophet Isaiah is speaking to a people who are WORRYING/FEARING about their future. Such FEAR and WORRY, even though we hear Yahweh giving ASSURANCE of his favor and grace...of his LIBERATING ACTION in their lives. Israel bemoans their present situation expressing their WORRY/DESPAIR/LAMENT: "THE LORD HAS FORSAKEN ME, MY LORD HAS FORGOTTEN ME."

How many of us have found ourselves expressing similar THOUGHTS.....QUESTIONS.....FEELINGS.. DESPAIRS.....LAMENT??????????

-“Just when I thought we were secure, and now we have to begin all over again. Why Lord, why?

-“I thought he was doing so well. When does this cruel circle of ADDICTION ever end Lord, when?

-“She has done so well in school, she sacrificed and sacrificed and graduated...CUM LAUDE! But now, when will you give her that BIG BREAK Lord, when....when?

So.....DO NOT WORRY ABOUT TOMORROW, FOR TOMORROW WILL BRING WORRIES OF ITS OWN.
TODAY'S TROUBLE IS ENOUGH FOR TODAY.

We know that such is more easily said than done. Perhaps we might even experience some GUILT when such WORRY/DOUBT enters into our minds....AFTER ALL, WE ARE CHRISTIANS....are we not supposed to be above such WORRY/CONCERN?????

SO....what do we do?????????

I believe that Matthew's Gospel gives us some insight into this dilemma. For many Christian Theologians this part of Matthew's Gospel teaches us a tremendous truth in Moral Theology....for it is in this part of Matthew that we are presented with the FUNDAMENTAL OPTION.

DO WE SERVE GOD.....OR DO WE SERVE THE WORLD

DO WE TRUST THE LORD.....OR ALLOW THE WORLD TO DEVOUR US

The person who makes the RIGHT CHOICE (The Fundamental Option) experiences the RICHES of the HEAVENLY KINGDOM in the HERE AND NOW!!!! This is our belief.....

IS IT A PROMISE.....OR A FORM OF MANIPULATION?

IS IT THE TRUTH.....OR IS IT A LIE?

IS IT REALITY.....OR JUST A DREAM?

It is the basis of our CHRISTIAN BELIEF----even if perhaps we cannot see, or touch it.

One either worships the TRUE GOD, or one bows before the power of MAMON.

WHAT IS OUR CHOICE??????

I find it interesting though, that in this Gospel, Jesus does not negate the reality of PHYSICAL NEEDS.... However, he does warn us to beware the PREOCCUPATION WITH WORLDLY THINGS/STUFF/CARES---to avoid the ANXIETY THAT CAN DESTROY!!!!

In so doing, Jesus gently calls us to TRUE DISCIPLESHIP, which can FREE US TO TRUST in the ONLY TRUE GOD....who lifts us up and leads us forward....perhaps, at times, like FOOTPRINTS IN THE SAND.

Such TRUST IN THE LORD can FREE US FROM DEMONIC ANXIETY ...which can confuse, confound and perhaps blind.

Such TRUST IN THE LORD, allows us to EXPERIENCE THE KINGDOM WITHIN that inspires and illumines our path....freeing us to ACCEPT FULLY the NOURISHMENT that the LORD has been offering us... OUR DAILY BREAD!

Easily said, but must be done.

But how? Perhaps our PSALM today, Psalm 131 can teach us. (Read Psalm 131)

This Psalm presents us with IMAGERY of a child.....however, the author is not a child, but an ADULT!

An adult who apparently has attained a semblance of security, of QUIET CONFIDENCE in the LORD.

An Adult who clearly has learned something OVER THE YEARS.

A person, who perhaps has SUFFERED...FEARED.....WORRIED, AT TIME TO THE POINT OF DESPAIR....LAMENT.

YET....an ADULT who has learned to BE CALM and SILENT as they CENTER THEMSELVES IN THE BOSOM OF THE LORD.

I would ask you to CLOSE YOUR EYES....To take a DEEP BREATH.....To QUIET your mind, heart...your soul. In the depths within, to bring to mind A WORRY.....A CONCERN.....A SITUATION.....A DESPAIR.. A LAMENT..... (Your own, or of ONE YOU LOVE.)

NOW.....Take another DEEP BREATH.....Quiet your mind, heart, your soul.....

Imagine yourself in the presence of OUR LOVING GOD, perhaps using imagery from our scriptures today. –Like a child upon it's mother's breast.....Like a woman nursing her child...Immersed in the compassionate love for the child of her womb.....Like one GENTLY BEING PLACED in the LOVING/GENTLE yet FIRMLY SECURE PALMS of our MOST GRACIOUS GOD. (Read PSALM 131)

BE AT PEACE.....DO NOT WORRY.....I KNOW WHAT YOU NEED....TRUST IN ME....YOU ARE INSCRIBED, YOU ARE CARVED ON THE PALMS OF MY HANDS...BE AT PEACE.....AMEN!