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SERMON TITLE: The Way to Shalom: The Serenity Prayer, Pt. 3
SCRIPTURE: Matthew 6:24-34
DATE October 2, 2022, World Communion Sunday
Online service at www.fpcd.org/live

Read also Psalm 73:1-28

We have been talking about the Serenity Prayer.

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
Courage to change the things which should be changed,
And the wisdom to distinguish the one from the other.

We talked about **things that happen that we cannot change**: disappointments, tragedies, failures, terrorist attacks like 9-11; and then rather than getting stuck in our sorrows, juxtaposing those sorrows with Jesus' power to redeem them. God works daily to recover our losses, and nothing is too hard for God. "Not even the gates of hell can prevail against us," so in Jesus we can expect restoration.

To trust that Jesus restores our losses takes acceptance of the change that comes with those losses, and hope for what God will do!

We talked about **the things which should be changed**. That special word, *should*, gives us purpose. We must work to change, to set things right when we stray off the path, and to build or rebuild our little part of the world. It takes courage! Regardless, Christians are called to change what should be changed.

Today we hear the rest of the original Serenity Prayer. Though it is no longer used, it summarizes the Serenity Prayer. You have a copy. Follow along:

*Living one day at a time,
Enjoying one moment at a time,
Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace,
Taking, as Jesus did,
This sinful world as it is,
Not as I would have it,
Trusting that You will make all things right,
If I surrender to Your will,
So that I may be reasonably happy in this life,
And supremely happy with You forever in the next.*

The prayer begins with *one day at a time*. There used to be a song called, "One Day at a Time, Sweet Jesus."

*One day at a time, sweet Jesus
That's all I'm asking of You
Just give me the strength to do every day
What I have to do
Yesterday's gone, sweet Jesus
And tomorrow may never be mine
God help me today, show me the way, one day at a time*

"Yesterday's gone and tomorrow may never be mine." Jesus talks about living this way! Let's hear His words. READ Matthew 6:24-34

"No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money. That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life -- whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn't life more than food, and your body more than clothing?"

Look at the birds. They don't plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren't you far more valuable to him than they are? Can all your worries add a single moment to your life? And why worry about your clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don't work or make their clothing, yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith?

So don't worry about these things, saying, 'What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?' These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need. So don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's trouble is enough for today.

Let's begin with that last sentence: "Today's trouble is enough for today." The Serenity Prayer picks up on that: "Living one day at a time, enjoying one moment at a time."

Do you know what the opposite of living in the moment is? **WORRY** Jesus says, "Don't worry!" . . .

But you worry anyway, don't you?!!

Can I let you in on a little secret? Most of the things you worry about never happen!

Before we can talk about worry, though, we must address this statement:

"No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money. That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life" (Mt 6:24-25a).

He's helping you make the right choice.

Here are the two masters: God and money

- ✓ One keeps your eyes on this world and its worries.
- ✓ The other one keeps your eyes on a God who gives you a bigger life than this world.

Pat Summerall was a legendary sportscaster who served two masters. For many years he lived for food, drink, and success. His master was money. But it ate him up. Finally, his family confronted him about his alcoholism and ambition. They checked him into the Betty Ford Clinic. Treatment takes twenty-eight days but he took thirty-three because of his intense anger at his family for intervening.

In treatment he was forced to look at his lifestyle. He recognized the bankruptcy of personal focus and the damage to his family. He gave his life to Christ. He testified that once he gave priority to Christ, he never had a craving for alcohol again.

“No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money. That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life.”

Pat changed “masters.” When asked about it, he said *to let Jesus be in control makes an indescribable difference.*¹ This caused him to reach out to help others.

He had a friend named Mickey Mantle who was also living for the wrong master. But Pat’s story turned him to seek help at the Betty Ford Clinic. Mickey had absolutely no background in the church but he opened his heart and gave up the old “master.” Another colleague came along; baseball player Bobby Richardson led him to Christ. Bobby writes, “He was baptized and seemed to gain fresh wisdom as well as peace.” With this new Master, Mantle began reaching out to young people through handwritten letters urging them to never drink or use drugs. His message: ‘God gave me everything, and I blew it. For the kids out there, don’t be like me!’²

“Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need” (Mt. 6:33).

*Trusting, Jesus, that You will make all things right,
If I surrender to Your will.*

We often intend not to worry; not to get hung up on the past; not to live for worldly things but sometimes the wrong master rears its ugly head. Sometimes Christianity seems downright unreasonable and we find ourselves clinging to worldly views. We get jealous of the rich; we think money and self-indulgence can solve our problems, like the Psalmist.

Jesus says, *why do you have so little faith?*

What to do? When we struggle to follow the right master, **we must moment by moment feed ourselves with faith.** We all need support to stay the right course!

Moment by moment we must deliberately do things, like come to church to build our faith. C. S. Lewis says most people lose their faith in Christ not because someone made a convincing argument against it, but because they simply drift away from prayer, Bible study, and churchgoing. (*Mere Christianity*)

So when you worry, or get off track, how do you counter it? Moment by moment. That’s what the Psalmist did. He prayed and God changed his perspective.

The cross was the hardship Jesus had to face. He could not change it, so on the cross, Jesus cried out to the Father, telling God his every concern and desire.

- ❖ **On the cross Jesus’ major concern was gaining our forgiveness**, so he said, “*Father, forgive them.*”
 - When you struggle with guilt, remember Jesus’ words and receive forgiveness.
- ❖ **On the cross Jesus’ major concern was giving assurance of heaven**, so he said to the repentant thief, “*Today you shall be with me in paradise.*” At that moment Jesus saw the very first fruit from his sacrifice: a man is saved.
 - When you doubt, tell Jesus, thank you for saving me.
- ❖ **On the cross Jesus’ major concern was that his mother was not left alone**, so he said to his disciple John, “*Here is your mother.*”
 - When you feel abandoned, remember Jesus never leaves anyone alone who seeks him.
- ❖ **On the cross Jesus’ major concern was us understanding that this is enough** so he said, “*It is finished.*”
 - When you stray from your faith, remember Jesus’ death is all it takes.

Each day, set your mind on the Kingdom of God above all else and live righteously. If necessary, divide it down to each moment. Go to church; study the Bible; accept your losses; look for God to restore you; do what you should to change what needs to be changed, (like Pat Summerall and Mickey Mantle); and most of all, HAVE JOYFUL FAITH in Jesus.

This is the way to peace.

Have you chosen the right Master . . .

*So that [you] may be reasonably happy in this life,
And supremely happy with [Your Savior] forever in the next.*

AMEN

¹David Palmer, “Pat Summerall’s Story,” <https://onedayatime.com/blog/2013/04/17/pat-summeralls-story-by-david-palmer/>, accessed September 28, 2022.

² <https://www.cbssports.com/mlb/news/mickey-mantles-handwritten-letter-telling-children-dont-do-alcohol-drugs-hits-auction-block/>, accessed September 28, 2022.