

“When God Provides”

1. I used to give our son Montez a hard time.
 - a. Whenever an important event or a fun outing was in the horizon, he would say “Oh, I can’t wait for that!”
 - b. But then, curiously, when the anticipated event was finally there, he seemed to shift his view again towards the future, now pointing to something not yet here, and he’d say the same thing: “Oh, I can’t wait for such and such to get here!”
 - c. I would then tease him: you’re always looking for the next thing. How about enjoying the thing you’re doing right now?
 - d. Maybe I teased him because, in a way, I could relate somewhat to his perspective, though from a different angle.
 - i. I like to plan, so part of the thrill of a big event is the preparation for it
 - ii. I’m thinking into the future because I’m trying to be ready for it.
 - iii. And the challenge then is to slow down enough when the anticipated event gets here to actually be present to enjoy it, to live it.
 - e. For me, photography has a way of making me stop to notice, stop to be present
 - i. I love to take pictures, like when I went on Sabbatical
 - ii. The pictures provide a triple bonus:
 1. I pay attention to what’s right in front of me
 2. It helps make up for my bad memory
 3. And then it gives me the opportunity to relive these moments years later
 - f. But photography can also get in the way for me.
 - i. I’m not as good at noticing details in the moment as Tracy is
 - ii. In that sense, the camera can give me distance that lets me be a little lazy in the moment. Lazy as in not noticing enough. Lazy as not taking it all in, but letting the camera do the heavy lifting.
2. Our Gospel passage for today concludes with an admonishment for being present in the here and now.
 - a. It comes from a perspective of concern about having enough. I’ll come back to that in a moment, but for now listen again to that last verse:
 - b. *So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow has worries of its own. Sufficient is the trouble of this day.*
 - c. It is written in negative language to say “sufficient is the trouble of this day” or as another translation puts it: “Today’s trouble is enough for today.”
 - d. But maybe we could imagine it in positive language if we said: “There is plenty to concentrate on right now. Be present.”
 - e. We’ve all been in moments where that advice was hard to hear

- i. When we've been in the hospital and faced a long recovery ahead
 - ii. When we've heard of reorganization at work, and our mind starts to race
 - f. But we've also had moments when time has stood still
 - i. When we embraced our beloved after a long absence from each other
 - ii. When a sunset or the beauty of nature has taken our breath away.
 - g. Be here. Be fully here right now, Jesus is saying.
 - h. Be here: let's try that. Look at one thing in the sanctuary like it's the first time you've seen it.
 - i. Go ahead.
 - ii. Take it in. What do you see? How does it make you feel?
 - i. Be here: now close your eyes, take a couple of deep breaths, and listen to this tune like it's the first time you've ever heard it
 - i. (Dianne plays a verse of *Come, Bring Your Burdens to God*).
 - ii. What do you hear? How does it make you feel?
 - j. Be here, Jesus is saying, be here like you have the time and space to be here.
 - k. Because, Jesus says, God is here. God is now.
 - l. And, wouldn't you know it, God will be there tomorrow too. And the tomorrow after tomorrow.
 - m. And if we can rest in the faith of God as the constant, it gives us the heart space to be here and let God be here with us. And not to be anxious about tomorrow, but simply to remember that God is the God of today and of tomorrow.
- 3. This whole passage started with Jesus' question of how much energy we should be using worrying about this or that.
 - a. I have to imagine that Jesus was talking to a group of people with varying resources
 - b. To say "don't worry about what you'll eat"
 - i. may sound like advice for someone who knows where their meal is coming from,
 - ii. but it may sound like mockery for someone who truly has no idea where their next meal is coming from.
 - c. What do you mean not to worry about what I'll eat? Asks someone already with hunger pains.
 - i. God is here with you, Jesus says. God is hungry with you.
 - ii. And just as God clothes the lilies of the field and feeds the birds of the air, so God has a way to feed and clothe you.
 - iii. Yeah, but how? Where?
 - d. And the key is right there in the passage: *But strive first for the reign of God and God's righteousness and all these will be given to you all.*
 - i. Focus on, work towards, the priorities of God's realm.
 - ii. Focus on what's right, the righteousness and justice of God.
 - iii. And then all the other things will fall into place

- e. This is the mandate to the hungry and the full, to the anxious and the comfortable, to the one carrying a heavy burden and the one with the easy job.
 - f. It is up to the whole spectrum of that society, of that community, to focus on the priorities of God's realm, because then there will be the atmosphere and the mechanisms for there to be no one who is worrying about where their next meal is coming from.
 - g. This passage isn't about a magical God, but about a justice-minded God, about an abundance-minded God, who wants us to be equally justice and abundance minded.
4. Today we dedicate our promise to God, our promise of what we'll give financially to the life of this congregation, but also what investment of time and effort we'll offer to God
- a. It is a promise based on the here and now.
 - b. Yes, sure, maybe you looked at your 2024 budget when making the decision you wrote on that piece of paper
 - c. But it is also a promise based on how you feel connected to God right now, how your faith in God, and your faith in your fellow humans in this community, how all of that allows you to make a promise to something far into the future
 - d. It is also a fulfillment of a promise, in the sense that this is a place where you feel drawn to God and to one another, and a place where we can put our efforts together to seek God's righteousness and justice together.
 - e. Today God is asking us to focus on this moment in the life of the church, so we can live it fully and faithfully
 - f. Because God is promising that tomorrow, when tomorrow's concerns raise their ugly head, God will be there to help us focus on that moment and rise to that occasion
 - g. We build together, co-creating with God, a vision of what Jesus taught and modeled.
 - h. It's a community which is not here yet. Where all are welcome and valued. A community where the hungry find food, the unhoused find a home, the healthy share their strength, and the wise make us better people.
 - i. We focus on God's priorities of justice, and God will provide for all our needs. We focus on God and we focus on this moment, so we are present with one another, and we are present for one another.
5. Be present, beloved. Take another deep breath. Feel God with us. And give thanks.

Reflection questions

1. Share a story of when you were 100% present in a moment of your life.
2. What part of Matthew 6:28–34 feels closest to how you experience life?
3. What is one way in which "striv[ing] first for the reign of God and God's righteousness" can unleash God's abundance so that "all these [things] will be given to you all"?