

Kailua Christian Church
Sunday Morning Worship, June 25, 2023
Pastor Clive Cowell

Our message for today is this: **Trusting in God is something that He *wants* you to do!**

Our passage is a well-known one: **Matthew 6:25-34**

A short story to begin.

"The only vacancy here," the applicant was told, "is vice-president. It's a great job, pays well, said the President, "but the man that takes the job must shoulder all my cares."

"That's a tough job," said the applicant. "What is the salary?"

"I'll pay you \$200,000 a year if you will take over all my worries."

"Where is the \$200,000 coming from?" asked the applicant.

"That my friend," replied the President, "is your first worry."

Life is full of many things, and more often than not, we face daily worries!

This is the topic for today. Worry, anxiety, unrest.

At its root, anxiety is an "anticipatory response to situations". We anticipate things – sometimes positive, sometimes negative. That's true for the pessimist and the optimist. One day a pessimist and an optimist were arguing over a new situation. The pessimist said, *"It can't possibly get any worse than this."* The optimist quickly replied, *"you wanna bet!"*

Often times we think of anxiety as something negative. But, there are some benefits to anxiety:

1. Anxiety can alert your attention to potential risks or negative outcomes. You might feel worried that something might go wrong. And... later on when it does... you can say... "I told you so!" Joking apart, being alert to fire risks or flooding is a good thing because then you can come up with some solutions. Anxiety can help you be better prepared.

2. Anxiety can help motivate you. For example, a student anxious about her marks in the final exams might be motivated enough to study every weekend instead of just two days before the exam in order to alleviate her distress and get better grades.

3. Anxiety can make us compassionate. Experiencing the distress that comes with being anxious might help you recognize it in others which can bring empathy, kindness and better relationships.

4. Anxiety can bring about positive change. The energy that fuels anxious thoughts and behaviors is giving you what you need to take action and get unstuck.

So, there are four ways that worrying can in some way help or improve a situation.

But, most of us know that worrying for the most part can be very detrimental. **Anxiety** can impair our judgment. It can cause us to focus on the wrong **things**, distort the facts, or rush to conclusions. It can paralyze us, stealing joy, peace, and sleep.

So, how do we deal with the negative anticipations of anxiety, worry, unrest? Some folks use various practical approaches. Breathing techniques, meditation, going for a long walk or doing some gardening. All these ways can help.

More importantly, we can trust God. Today, I hope that we can all agree that trusting in God is always a good approach. We'd probably all say, "*that's right, you just gotta have faith!*" Yet, if you are like me, we have a problem with our faith. And what is that problem? It is too little. It could be too little in scope. It could be too little in not lasting long enough. It could be too little in the way we treat God. How so? We might just treat God simply as a practical solution to our issues... and that's all He becomes; a divine dispenser of fixing problems. I hope you agree with me that having faith, trusting in God, is more than that. It's not just practicalities; it's really about the relationship.

This is the title of the message today: Trusting in God is something that He *wants* you to do. It's His desire; it's what the Lord wants. When we trust in the Lord... with all our heart... it connects us to Him. And that's not just practical... it's relational! And when we are truly connected in such a relational way... it's no longer *little faith*.

In today's passage of the Sermon on the Mount, we are going to read about how we might trust God and see how He changes our perspectives, our approach, and more importantly, our deeper relationship with Him. After all... this is what He wants.

Let's read from Matthew chapter 6, verses 25-34.

Matthew 6:25–34

"²⁵Therefore, I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? ²⁸And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? ³¹Therefore, do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³²For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. ³³But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. ³⁴Therefore, do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."

Let's review what the Lord is saying. To begin with: "*Don't be anxious about your life or your body.*" Now Jesus is not saying we shouldn't plan or have foresight. God wants us to use our senses and abilities. What He is saying is we shouldn't worry or be anxious. And what is the basis for not worrying? **He is our Father.**

This would be a good time to remind ourselves of what a father does; especially a good father. A good father gives life; a good father loves; and, a good father protects! Clearly this underscores what Jesus is saying.

Life is more than food or clothing, right? And while God gives us incredible foods to eat and clothes that are functional and practical to wear, He gives us something more important. God gives us life and life abundantly – this is how much He loves us. God sustains our lives in the midst of all the challenges we face and, of course, He protects us. If we think about it, if we knew all the problems we'd face in the next decade or longer, we'd probably buy out all the toilet paper in the store and all the water too and stay home. Wait! We wouldn't do that, would we????

God has good wisdom for us – He protects us from getting caught up in worrying. So, heed His guidance – don't be anxious for tomorrow.

Why else should we not worry? **Our Father** takes care of the birds and the flowers. All of us can agree that **our Father** does an amazing job of looking after the birds and the flowers. These wonderful examples from nature show us how **our Father** works. And, note this: the birds are not being taken care of by “their” father, but by **our Father**! And as He takes care of them... He will take care of us. He has us in His hands.

What might we do to further our trust in Him? I think we can get to know His hands and how He provides. Take time out this afternoon and look at His creation and see for yourself – how much **our Father** cares.

Now, while our Father cares for us, sometimes we put our focus on the wrong cares. I remember many years ago coming home from mission work and showing photos of all kinds of people we had met. I was among those photos, too. Most, if not all the people I met, wore the same shirt day-in and day-out. I also wore a shirt for days on end, and that shirt kept showing up in the photos to the point that someone eventually said– “*wow Pastor Clive, you wore that shirt a lot!*” My shirt suddenly became the focus of attention. In my devotions that night it made me think how much we focus on what we in the West wear. I wasn't any different than the people in the photos, but it was my shirt that grabbed the attention. So, where are we putting our cares? Let's keep in mind what Jesus said:

God clothes the grass of the field.

Jesus points out lilies and that they are splendidly clothed. If God is going to take care of petals, leaves and stems – which incidentally will be tossed in the fire as fuel – won't He take care of our needs? He will! God cares for things and He'll even use those things to help us along. We can trust Him. We just have to see His love for us. Trusting in God is something He *wants* you to do. That's His desire; it's what our Father wants.

Now, as mentioned as the beginning of our message today, I noted that we are people of “*little faith*”.

In our text today, at the end of verse 30, Jesus says as much, “*O you of little faith.*” Why does He say this? It wasn't because there is doubt in His existence. No! It because of doubt in His ability to take care of us; doubt in how much He loves us. And it won't be the first time He makes the statement.

And he said to them, “Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?” Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. Matthew 8:26

Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" Matthew 14:31

But Jesus, aware of this, said, "O you of little faith, why are you discussing among yourselves the fact that you have no bread? Matthew 16:8

Our faith is clearly too little. We might not trust Him quickly enough, we might not trust Him long enough, we might not trust Him with our heart – we may not trust how He will provide, but whichever way... our faith is too little.

I've learned this: when His way of taking care of me doesn't match the way I want to be taken care of I find I start to get anxious and worry.

To trust Him more is to see Him more. On a daily basis we can see Him in the simple things, the birds, the lilies. We can see Him in how He feeds us and clothes us. We can see Him in how He protects us. We can see Him in our life and in the life of others. We can see Him today!

Friends, we have a loving, living Father that is **our Father**. This is not the case, however, for the Gentiles – as seen in v32. Those who did not know the Lord did not have a living God to trust to meet their needs. They put their trust in rocks and twigs and in constellations in the sky, but we do not need to live like that. Why? We have a loving, living Father.

Still, there are challenges in life but rather than trust in the things of the world we can move from anxiety to assurance by following His simple teaching.

"Seek first."

First things first, as they say. I like that. *"Seek first."* God is saying use your energies to do something positive. And what should we seek? The kingdom of God and His righteousness! When we turn from ourselves and turn toward Him all the things of heaven will be added unto you. Wow, what a promise that is!

What does this mean for our lives? Much of how we live our lives is based on attitude and our action. Here are three important things we can have good attitude about. We can...

- Value our Father's love.
- Value our Father's Kingdom.
- Value our Father's teaching.

And here are three actions we can do on a daily basis:

- Re-think through what you put your trust in.
- Properly locate your priorities – Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.
- Give properly – As God gives, so can we.

Let's finish with this story.

A man was on a flight when the sign on the airplane flashed: "*Fasten your seat belts.*" As he looked around the aircraft, it became obvious that many of the passengers were becoming apprehensive. Turbulence soon buffeted the plane. Next to the man was a little girl. Unlike the other passengers she didn't show much fear. The man turned to her and asked her why she appeared so calm. The girl replied, "*Cause my Daddy's the pilot, and he's taking me home.*"

Life brings many storms that buffet us. Skies get dark and turbulence comes. We've all known such times, and let us be honest and confess, it is much easier to be at rest when our feet are on the ground than when we are being tossed about a darkened sky. But, let us remember: Our Father is the Pilot. He is in control and taking us home.

Trusting in God is something that He *wants* you to do! Kailua Christian Church
Sunday Morning Worship, June 25, 2023
Pastor Clive Cowell

Our message for today is this: **Trusting in God is something that He *wants* you to do!**

Our passage is a well-known one: **Matthew 6:25-34**

A short story to begin.

"*The only vacancy here,*" the applicant was told, "*is vice-president. It's a great job, pays well,* said the President, "*but the man that takes the job must shoulder all my cares.*"

"*That's a tough job,*" said the applicant. "*What is the salary?*"

"*I'll pay you \$200,000 a year if you will take over all my worries.*"

"*Where is the \$200,000 coming from?*" asked the applicant.

"*That my friend,*" replied the President, "*is your first worry.*"

Life is full of many things, and more often than not, we face daily worries!

This is the topic for today. Worry, anxiety, unrest.

At its root, anxiety is an "anticipatory response to situations". We anticipate things – sometimes positive, sometimes negative. That's true for the pessimist and the optimist. One day a pessimist and an optimist were arguing over a new situation. The pessimist said, "*It can't possibly get any worse than this.*" The optimist quickly replied, "*you wanna bet!*"

Often times we think of anxiety as something negative. But, there are some benefits to anxiety:

1. Anxiety can alert your attention to potential risks or negative outcomes. You might feel worried that something might go wrong. And... later on when it does... you can say... "I told you so!" Joking apart, being alert to fire risks or flooding is a good thing because then you can come up with some solutions. Anxiety can help you be better prepared.

2. Anxiety can help motivate you. For example, a student anxious about her marks in the final exams might be motivated enough to study every weekend instead of just two days before the exam in order to alleviate her distress and get better grades.

3. Anxiety can make us compassionate. Experiencing the distress that comes with being anxious might help you recognize it in others which can bring empathy, kindness and better relationships.

4. Anxiety can bring about positive change. The energy that fuels anxious thoughts and behaviors is giving you what you need to take action and get unstuck.

So, there are four ways that worrying can in some way help or improve a situation.

But, most of us know that worrying for the most part can be very detrimental. **Anxiety** can impair our judgment. It can cause us to focus on the wrong **things**, distort the facts, or rush to conclusions. It can paralyze us, stealing joy, peace, and sleep.

So, how do we deal with the negative anticipations of anxiety, worry, unrest? Some folks use various practical approaches. Breathing techniques, meditation, going for a long walk or doing some gardening. All these ways can help.

More importantly, we can trust God. Today, I hope that we can all agree that trusting in God is always a good approach. We'd probably all say, "*that's right, you just gotta have faith!*" Yet, if you are like me, we have a problem with our faith. And what is that problem? It is too little. It could be too little in scope. It could be too little in not lasting long enough. It could be too little in the way we treat God. How so? We might just treat God simply as a practical solution to our issues... and that's all He becomes; a divine dispenser of fixing problems. I hope you agree with me that having faith, trusting in God, is more than that. It's not just practicalities; it's really about the relationship.

This is the title of the message today: Trusting in God is something that He *wants* you to do. It's His desire; it's what the Lord wants. When we trust in the Lord... with all our heart... it connects us to Him. And that's not just practical... it's relational! And when we are truly connected in such a relational way... it's no longer *little faith*.

In today's passage of the Sermon on the Mount, we are going to read about how we might trust God and see how He changes our perspectives, our approach, and more importantly, our deeper relationship with Him. After all... this is what He wants.

Let's read from Matthew chapter 6, verses 25-34.

Matthew 6:25–34

"²⁵Therefore, I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? ²⁸And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will

he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? ³¹Therefore, do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³²For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. ³³But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. ³⁴Therefore, do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”

Let’s review what the Lord is saying. To begin with: *“Don’t be anxious about your life or your body.”* Now Jesus is not saying we shouldn’t plan or have foresight. God wants us to use our senses and abilities. What He is saying is we shouldn’t worry or be anxious. And what is the basis for not worrying? **He is our Father.**

This would be a good time to remind ourselves of what a father does; especially a good father. A good father gives life; a good father loves; and, a good father protects! Clearly this underscores what Jesus is saying.

Life is more than food or clothing, right? And while God gives us incredible foods to eat and clothes that are functional and practical to wear, He gives us something more important. God gives us life and life abundantly – this is how much He loves us. God sustains our lives in the midst of all the challenges we face and, of course, He protects us. If we think about it, if we knew all the problems we’d face in the next decade or longer, we’d probably buy out all the toilet paper in the store and all the water too and stay home. Wait! We wouldn’t do that, would we????

God has good wisdom for us – He protects us from getting caught up in worrying. So, heed His guidance – don’t be anxious for tomorrow.

Why else should we not worry? **Our Father** takes care of the birds and the flowers. All of us can agree that **our Father** does an amazing job of looking after the birds and the flowers. These wonderful examples from nature show us how **our Father** works. And, note this: the birds are not being taken care of by “their” father, but by **our Father**! And as He takes care of them... He will take care of us. He has us in His hands.

What might we do to further our trust in Him? I think we can get to know His hands and how He provides. Take time out this afternoon and look at His creation and see for yourself – how much **our Father** cares.

Now, while our Father cares for us, sometimes we put our focus on the wrong cares. I remember many years ago coming home from mission work and showing photos of all kinds of people we had met. I was among those photos, too. Most, if not all the people I met, wore the same shirt day-in and day-out. I also wore a shirt for days on end, and that shirt kept showing up in the photos to the point that someone eventually said– *“wow Pastor Clive, you wore that shirt a lot!”* My shirt suddenly became the focus of attention. In my devotions that night it made me think how much we focus on what we in the West wear. I wasn’t any different than the people in the photos, but it was my shirt that grabbed the attention. So, where are we putting our cares? Let’s keep in mind what Jesus said:

God clothes the grass of the field.

Jesus points out lilies and that they are splendidly clothed. If God is going to take care of petals, leaves and stems – which incidentally will be tossed in the fire as fuel – won’t He take care of our needs? He

will! God cares for things and He'll even use those things to help us along. We can trust Him. We just have to see His love for us. Trusting in God is something He *wants* you to do. That's His desire; it's what our Father wants.

Now, as mentioned as the beginning of our message today, I noted that we are people of "*little faith*".

In our text today, at the end of verse 30, Jesus says as much, "*O you of little faith.*" Why does He say this? It wasn't because there is doubt in His existence. No! It because of doubt in His ability to take care of us; doubt in how much He loves us. And it won't be the first time He makes the statement.

And he said to them, "Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?" Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. Matthew 8:26

Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" Matthew 14:31

But Jesus, aware of this, said, "O you of little faith, why are you discussing among yourselves the fact that you have no bread? Matthew 16:8

Our faith is clearly too little. We might not trust Him quickly enough, we might not trust Him long enough, we might not trust Him with our heart – we may not trust how He will provide, but whichever way... our faith is too little.

I've learned this: when His way of taking care of me doesn't match the way I want to be taken care of I find I start to get anxious and worry.

To trust Him more is to see Him more. On a daily basis we can see Him in the simple things, the birds, the lilies. We can see Him in how He feeds us and clothes us. We can see Him in how He protects us. We can see Him in our life and in the life of others. We can see Him today!

Friends, we have a loving, living Father that is **our Father**. This is not the case, however, for the Gentiles – as seen in v32. Those who did not know the Lord did not have a living God to trust to meet their needs. They put their trust in rocks and twigs and in constellations in the sky, but we do not need to live like that. Why? We have a loving, living Father.

Still, there are challenges in life but rather than trust in the things of the world we can move from anxiety to assurance by following His simple teaching.

"Seek first."

First things first, as they say. I like that. "*Seek first.*" God is saying use your energies to do something positive. And what should we seek? The kingdom of God and His righteousness! When we turn from ourselves and turn toward Him all the things of heaven will be added unto you. Wow, what a promise that is!

What does this mean for our lives? Much of how we live our lives is based on attitude and our action. Here are three important things we can have good attitude about. We can...

- Value our Father's love.
- Value our Father's Kingdom.
- Value our Father's teaching.

And here are three actions we can do on a daily basis:

- Re-think through what you put your trust in.
- Properly locate your priorities – Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.
- Give properly – As God gives, so can we.

Let's finish with this story.

A man was on a flight when the sign on the airplane flashed: *"Fasten your seat belts."* As he looked around the aircraft, it became obvious that many of the passengers were becoming apprehensive. Turbulence soon buffeted the plane. Next to the man was a little girl. Unlike the other passengers she didn't show much fear. The man turned to her and asked her why she appeared so calm. The girl replied, *"Cause my Daddy's the pilot, and he's taking me home."*

Life brings many storms that buffet us. Skies get dark and turbulence comes. We've all known such times, and let us be honest and confess, it is much easier to be at rest when our feet are on the ground than when we are being tossed about a darkened sky. But, let us remember: Our Father is the Pilot. He is in control and taking us home.

Trusting in God is something that He *wants* you to do!