

When Christ is All You Have
The Monroe Congregational Church, UCC
Rev. Jennifer M. Gingras
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Matthew 6:25-34

My junior year of high school I went through a Bob Marley phase. Something about the easy-going, sunshiney nature of reggae music soothed my angst-ridden teenage soul. One of my favorite songs to listen to was Three Little Birds. Sing along if you know it...

Don't worry, about a thing, every little thing is gonna be alright... Woke up this morning, smile with the rising sun, three little birds, pitched by my doorstep ... Singing sweet songs, of melodies pure and true, singing, this is my message to you... Don't worry, about a thing...

That song, whenever I hear it, takes me back to a time when I was desperately trying to believe that every little thing was gonna be alright. Don't worry; be happy. It's a good motto, if you can believe it. But for those of us who are a bit more anxiety-prone, it's not really all that helpful. It's kind of like saying, "Don't be sad" or "Don't be angry." Don't feel what you're feeling.

And yet... there sits Jesus in our text today saying, "*Can any of us add a single hour to our span of life by worrying?*"

Corrie ten Boom was a faithful woman, a watchmaker by trade. She was born in the Netherlands in 1892, and grew up in a devoutly religious Dutch Reformed family. She wrote the book, "The Hiding Place" describing her life during War II, when she and her family harbored hundreds of Jews to protect them from arrest by the Nazis.

Something she wrote in her book has stuck with me for a long time. She said, "*Worrying is carrying tomorrow's load with today's strength... carrying two days at once... Worrying does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow; it empties today of its strength.*"

That's true, isn't it? I love the image of resting in the palm of God's hand, trusting that our lives are held by One who loves us, no matter what happens.

In May 1940, Corrie ten Boom was 48 years old, unmarried, living with her parents and siblings in the family's home above their watchmaking shop. That's when German Blitzkrieg ran through the Netherlands and the

Nazification of the Dutch people began. The quiet life of the ten Boom family was changed forever.

Her father built a secret room, no larger than a small wardrobe closet, in Corrie's bedroom behind a false wall. The space could hold up to six people, all of whom had to stand quiet and still. A crude ventilation system was installed to provide air for those hiding in there. When security sweeps came through the neighborhood, a buzzer in the house would signal danger, and the refugees had a little over a minute to make it to the hiding place.

The entire ten Boom family became active in the Dutch resistance, risking their lives by harboring those hunted by the Gestapo. Corrie became a leader in the movement, overseeing a network of "safe houses" in the country. Some fugitives would stay only a few hours, while others would stay several days until another safe house could be located. Through these activities, it was estimated that 800 people's lives were saved.

Did she worry? With the Gestapo raiding her home? With the sounds of jackboots outside her window? I can't believe that she wasn't terrified at times. And yet she remembered: *"Worrying does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow; it empties today of its strength."*

And so she emptied herself, not into worry, but into God's hands. And when she did that, God filled her with a strength and courage beyond her own. "Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God," she said.

On February 28, 1944, a Dutch informant told the Nazis about them, and the Gestapo raided their home. Corrie and her sister Betsie were sent to the notorious Ravensbrück concentration camp, near Berlin. Betsie died there on December 16, 1944. Twelve days later, Corrie was released- she never knew why she was chosen to live; and her sister was chosen to die.

"If you look at the world," Corrie wrote, *"you'll be distressed. If you look within, you'll be depressed. If you look at God, you'll be at rest."* Corrie ten Boom found in her faith the strength and courage she needed to go on.

"You can never learn that Christ is all you need," she wrote, *"until Christ is all you have."* And with her family dead and her land in turmoil, Christ was all she had.

I love stories like Corrie's. Stories of faith, and courage, and tenacity. Her family's story reminds is that in extreme times, there are angels and heroes who will rise to the occasion with a sacrificial love.

But most of our life isn't lived in emergencies. We're not usually asked to muster such courage. Instead, we're just faced with the task of making it through the day. And most days, we can handle things ourselves, all we have to do is put one foot in front of the other.

On the other hand, don't worry, be happy... doesn't seem to work when you're caring for someone you love, and you haven't slept in 3 days, or you're sick and exhausted, or you've never felt so alone.

But placing our hearts, our spirits, our tired bodies in the hand of our loving God; resting there in the strength of God: that is the place of hope. That is a place we can leave our worry, and trust that we will be given the strength and wisdom to do what needs to be done today.

The moment of silence at the beginning of our worship is one of the most profound moments of the service for me. That is when I place myself in the hand of God, when I submit my heart to the Living One. No matter what the challenges of the week have brought, there's something about... giving up. Saying *"I can't do anything more right now."*

I think it's kind of like floating... trusting that we will be lifted with a buoyancy not our own that will hold us up. To me that sounds like the words of Christian mystic Julian of Norwich, who said *"All shall be well, and all shall be well. And all manner of things shall be well. For there is a Force of love moving through the universe that holds us fast and will never let go."*

A parent was in my office recently. She said, *"I realize that I have a habit of focusing on the future instead of on the present. I like to look forward to things, but sometimes I just need to live. I noticed this about myself when one of my children started talking about her plans for the future. Planning is good, but she's so obsessed about the future that she has trouble enjoying the present."*

We can look forward to the future let's not let that rob us of the joy that is to be found in the present moment. Worrying about the future does us no good at all. All we have is today - what does God want us to do with it? Let us live today to the fullest, aware that life is uncertain, and that God has so much for us to do and to enjoy.

Amen.