



WEEKLY STUDY January 21-27, 2024

(Use this guide to individually or with a group dive deeper into this week's sermon.)

No Time Like the Present

Our sermon series for January is: No Time Like The Present.

It's a new year with new opportunities. As disciples, Jesus invites us to a life of growth, transformation, greater purpose and deeper meaning. We are invited to get started today and be led to all that Jesus has in store for us, our families, and our communities.

Our scripture this week is: Matthew 6:25-27, 31-34

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look 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? And which of you by worrying can add a single hour to your span of life?"

Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' Or 'What will we wear?' For it is the gentiles who seek all these things, and indeed your Heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

'So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today.'

- 1) This is week three for our January theme: "No Time Like the Present." Week one, Pastor Sam talked about the visit of the Magi and reminded us that they bowed down and worshiped the child Jesus. She asked, "What might change if we were to bow down and worship Jesus." Last week we continued the theme with Jesus calling his first disciples. Sam talked about this important aspect of those callings: those called immediately left what they were doing to follow Jesus, using the talents, gifts, and skills they already possessed. This week we turn our attention to the teachings of Jesus as he instructed the disciples on what they needed to do. Sam summarized the message of the scripture from this Sunday by saying, "I think Jesus is saying that living a kingdom life is a daily trust exercise."

Question: Reread the scripture from Sunday. Based on your reading, do you agree with Pastor Sam that living a kingdom life is a daily trust exercise? What have you experienced that would illustrate this?

- 2) Pastor Sam said in Sunday's sermon that we have to understand the meaning of worry in this passage to fully grasp its message. She emphasized what Jesus said when he said each day has worries so don't pile on with worries about what might or could be in the future. For me, one aspect of worry is I let my mind work in and around it until it begins to be bigger than what I can manage. Then I panic. Then I get nothing done. Or another thing that happens to me is that I have a concern. I worry to the point that the only way I can see to get beyond it is to procrastinate. And then it does morph from a worry to an obstacle. I remember conversations with a family member who would call and say, "I am worried about this person because she is doing this and it will lead to this next step and then to that action and then she'll be in a 'world of hurt.'" Worry of this nature takes us out of this day and keeps us from living in the moment.

Question: What sends you into a spiral of worry? What strategies help you to stay centered? Who – like Jesus for the disciples – helps you stay centered?

- 3) One aspect that causes many of us to worry is our pre-occupation with time and being productive. Pastor Sam defined two kinds of culture related to time. She told us monochronic culture (like we have in our country) seeks time as a tool for productivity and success. The thought behind this is, "Manage your time and you can manage your productivity....wealth....health....family...etc." Time is seen as linear and rigid. Another type of culture is polychronic culture. In countries some of us have visited, time is seen as multilayered. There is flexibility which is evident in long lunch breaks, siestas, deep Sabbath, group work. Time is seen as more fluid and more free. And one result of that is that people do seem less worried.

Question: The question Pastor Sam asked all of us was: What would it look like to actually shift how we conceive of time? Consider what it would take for you to shift your view of time so that you allowed yourself to be less scheduled, less deadline driven, more focused on group rather than individual achievement.

- 4) Each time we examine how we live our lives and use our time, Pastor Sam has reminded us that there are two kinds of time in scripture. One is called Chronos time – referring to the hours of the clock. The other is called Kairos time referring to the opportune moment, a season, harvest time, or deep time. Different views of time are important for different things. So one is not all bad and the other all good. What we do know is we all need time when we feel fully alive, connected, spirit-filled. She said, "I think Jesus is asking us: How are you spending your time?"

Question: How are you spending your time? How are you spending time in the things and in the people that matter most to you?

Prayer: (As we think about balance, about life lived well, about life lived in the moment, the prayer I feel helps us the most day by day is The Lord's Prayer)

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen

Weekly Challenge: This week be intentional about your time. Allow yourself to set aside the clock for a portion of each day and immerse yourself in something that takes you into deep time: time spent playing with a child; taking a slow walk; resting; reading something for pure enjoyment; listening to a friend or family member.

(Weekly study guide prepared by Rev. MaryJane Pierce Norton)