

Take Off Your Watch

May 25, 2008

(Pentecost 2 - Year A)

Matthew 6: 24-34

St. Alban's Episcopal Church, Waco, Texas

Sixteen years ago, in 1992, a different political battle was raging across America, a political battle between the incumbent President George Herbert Walker Bush and an up-start Democrat named Bill Clinton.

In that presidential campaign, Bush and Clinton agreed to several debates, each with different styles and formats.

One of the presidential debates that was held in 1992 was in the style of a town-hall meeting, where the candidates sat on stools, with hand-held microphones so that they could wander among the audience.

This town-hall meeting format definitely fit the style of Bill Clinton better than it did George Bush.

And, during this town-hall meeting style of debate, Bill Clinton was in his element, showing his "I feel your pain" emotions.

However, throughout the debate, the more reserved George Bush sat uncomfortably on his bar stool, with his hand-held mike drooping to his side.

Then, the television cameras captured a moment that was unforgettable in that 1992 presidential campaign:

While Bill Clinton was talking and emoting with his audience, the television cameras showed George Bush glancing down at his watch.

George Bush's glance at his watch gave the impression that he was bored and would rather be anywhere else in the world than sitting on that bar stool.

George Bush's glance at his watch gave the impression that he was not fully engaged and that he was out of touch.

George Bush's glance at his watch gave the idea that he was not fully present in that moment.

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus delivers his famous Sermon on the

Mount, and he tells his followers that they should always be fully present in the moment.

Jesus says:

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life...

Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own.”

In Jesus’ message to us, I don’t believe that Jesus is telling us that we should not plan ahead or to think about or envision the future.

What I believe that Jesus *is* telling us is that we should not *worry* about the future, that we should not be glancing down at our watches.

Jesus is telling us that we should be fully present in this moment.

When we come into this church to worship, we come here to be fully present to God.

When I lead worship here at St. Alban’s, one of the things that I try to never do is to look at my watch.

Because, if I was to be leading worship, and you were to see my glance down at my watch, that would give the impression that I am not fully present with you.

And, it would show that I am not fully present to God.

Therefore, I want us to do something together right now.

I want all of us to take off our watches and to put them in our pocket or purse.

You can put your watch back on after the worship service.

In fact, I will put my watch in my pocket now, as well.

{take off watches}

Although it might cause you some anxiety and worry for you to not be able to look at your watch during this worship service, I can give you some assurances.

First of all, there is really no need for you to have on a watch while I preach.

Someone at St. Alban’s recently told me that we should put up a new billboard at the corner of Waco Drive and North 30th Street.

This St. Alban’s member suggested that the billboard read:

“St. Alban’s Episcopal Church:
Home of the 12 Minute Sermon.”

Therefore, you don’t need to have your watch on during the sermon time
- because you already know how long it will be.

Secondly, you all know by now that I usually have us out of here around
11:05.

Therefore, there is no need to look at your watch during worship.

This might cause some anxiety and worry for some of you.

However, listen to Jesus’ words that we hear in today’s Gospel reading:

“Do not worry about your life...

Do not worry about tomorrow.

[For] today’s trouble is enough for today.”

Jesus’ words tell me that it is okay for me to plan, that it is okay for me
to have hopes and visions and dreams for the future.

But, Jesus’ words also tell me that I should not *worry* about the future.

Jesus’ words tell me to be fully present to God, today, right now.

Yet, Jesus not only wants us to be fully present to God, Jesus wants us to
be fully present to the other people around us.

When I come home from work, many times it is difficult for me to be
fully present to my family.

Part of my job as a priest is to be fully present to each of you, in many
and various ways throughout the day.

And when I get home from work and our family sits down at the dinner
table, I know that I zone out and do not listen fully to what Susan,
Scott and John are saying.

Even though I might not look at my watch while my family members are
speaking, I do know that my mind wanders off into worrying about
my life.

I do know that my mind wanders off into worrying about the huge to-do
list that is sitting on my desk for tomorrow.

I do know that I worry about what we will eat or what we will drink or
what we will wear or how we will pay for college tuition.

And now that my oldest son will become a senior in high school shortly,
I wonder where all the time has gone.

I wonder if my worrying has added even a single hour to my quality
time with my family and friends.

Therefore, I need to hear Jesus' message from the Gospel of Matthew
today.

I need to hear Jesus' words telling me to stop glancing down at my
watch, to stop worrying about tomorrow, and to live life just for
today.

However, I am sure that none of you are like me.

I am sure that none of you *ever* worry about the future - right??

So, I challenge you to join me in focusing just on *today*.

And we can start by not spending our time in worship this morning
thinking about the yard work or the grocery shopping that needs to
be done this afternoon.

We can start by not spending today worrying about what needs to be
done later this next week.

We can start by not zoning out when the people who are important in
our life are trying to talk to us.

We can start by not worrying about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring
worries of its own.

So, my friends, take off your watch - and be fully present to the people
around you.

Take off your watch - and be fully present to God, today.

AMEN.

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