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Bush Hill Presbyterian Church
Alexandria, VA 22310
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Isaiah 49:8–16
Matthew 6:24–34

PLANNING AND WORRYING: HEARING A DIFFERENCE

Isaiah talks about a child being vulnerable but a mother is faithful, and God is even more faithful than a mother who is nursing a child. Isaiah describes worry as obsessing over the fact that we are vulnerable the way a nursing child is vulnerable. Worry or fear—these are the tools of conformity in our world. And in the end we know that our world esteems wealth more than anything else. We know that our culture esteems riches above all accomplishments.

Jesus takes his followers aside and encourages them to trust in God just for today's troubles. Jesus says "God will take care of you." And as we know, because we have read the Sermon on the Mount so often, God will take care of us, so we are free to take care of God's grander activities and free to be active in God's kingdom.

Now if the truth be told, when I read passages about trusting in God more than trusting in the security that I can plan for and invest in—that I can buy—if truth be told, I often I hear a voice in my head saying, "Yes, but what if so and so happens?" And then I can quickly do some mental gymnastics to justify what I want to do anyway, and I can say, "God doesn't want me to drive around without sufficient insurance – right?" Trusting in God and seeking God means living responsibly.

There's a poster in the confirmation classroom that says, "Jesus came to take away our sins, not our minds." That sounds so very Presbyterian, doesn't it? God gives us the strength and the ability to provide for our families, to work toward meeting their needs, to plan appropriately for our futures and for their futures. Yet, we still know after all our justification that scripture says, "When does it all become enough?"—when does it become too much, when does our desire to prepare for the unknown become overwhelming? Jesus says in response: when it overtakes our ability to live for God today, when we care so much about tomorrow that we neglect the imitation of God's love here in the moment. Or even worse, when we forget when it means to rest in God's love.

If I ask for a show of hands this morning, how many of you would honestly say you came into this sanctuary fully rested? The difference in worrying and planning is losing sight of when we've worked enough in one week or in one day. I believe your experience is probably like my own. Since arriving in the metro area there has not been a week when someone didn't ask, "Is there any chance you'll be in on Friday?" And if your experience is like mine, you want to say first, "Yes, I'll be there." It's part of our culture. We forget how to rest in God. We neglect our families in favor of work.

How many of us leave vacation on the table every year? How many of us lose vacation simply because we didn't take the days allotted to us for rest? Are we anxious about job security? Are we really worried that leaving our desk empty will put our jobs in jeopardy?

How do we stop worrying and start planning to participate in what God wants? God will take care of you. Say that with me, "God will take care of me." We start there—trusting. God will take care of me so I can strive to participate in what I know God is working to bring about in this world. And we know the truth is we love it when we stop long enough to be where God is asking us to be.

It won't be that long that it will be April. We like *Rebuilding Together*. We really liked it when it was called Christmas in April, too. We like the little mini-habitat projects we invest in because we know on that weekend, on that Saturday and the days leading up to that moment when we are all together working, we are doing what God wants us to do. We're sharing our concerns with brothers and sisters in Christ even for those who don't see themselves that way.

Yes, when Rebuilding Together comes around, we're seekers in God's kingdom and we know that because God wrote our names in the palm of his hand. We can do no other than be there for one another. It's not showing up at Rebuilding Together that makes God write our names. The names are already there and that's what makes us show up at Habitat projects.

God will not forsake us or forget us. So when you feel yourself giving into the fear and into the worry, talk to God. Open your life to the divine confidence that comes from being rooted in God's kingdom.

God's kingdom is about recognizing when we have enough for today. God's kingdom is about sharing what we have. It's about recognizing when we have enough, and then some, for the work of God's kingdom. In the short term and in the long haul, God's kingdom is about our optimism because we share in God's power, and it is that power that makes sense in our lives. It makes sense more than anything else can.

So in the final analysis, do you believe that God loves you? And do you trust? Do you believe that God wants to give you everything you need? Then let this be a time when you say, "Lord I need help with my anxiety, with my worry. And I want to start planning to be about your business more than I ever have before."

In spite of this being a weekend where ministers are sometimes filled with anxiety (with these congregational meetings you never know what's going to happen), my daughter came home. She finished her second semester, and while we were sitting around the table with some of her friends last night, she looked at me and said that the minister at the church where she attends doesn't talk so much about their need for money in the church. He talks more about the young people's need to give, not the church's need to receive. I looked across the dinner table and said, "Is that the first time you've heard

that?" Sometimes we need someone else to remind us, don't we, that God is interested in what we need and ever more ready to give us to meet those needs than we are to ask.

So ask God that now at this time. Make an offering of your deepest desires and worship the Lord. Amen.