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*Enough for Everyone*  
Matthew 6:25-34

In the woods about 45 minutes northwest of Boston, somewhere between Lexington and Concord, lies Walden Pond. Walden is jewel of a lake, made by retreating glaciers eons ago. A short drive out of the city will get you there, and on a hot summer day like today, it's the place to be: an endlessly deep pocket of cool shrouded by stately trees.

We know Walden, of course, because it is where the Transcendentalist Henry David Thoreau lived for a few years in the 1840's. Thoreau's experiences living off the land inspired the essays that make up his book, *Walden: or A Life in the Woods*. He went to Walden Pond in search of simplicity, independence, and self-sufficiency. He wrote: "I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived...I wanted to live deep and suck all the marrow out of life."

I can remember walking the dirt paths around the pond with leaves crunching underfoot even in summer. Thoreau implores his readers to "live in each season as it passes; breathe the air, drink the drink, taste the fruit, and resign yourself to the influence of the earth." There *was* something magical about splashing into the water there, and finding peace amongst the pines. Floating there, with sun warming your cheeks, worries melt away. With the singing of birds mixed with the calls of children playing echoing across the lake, you can almost feel the hand of God holding you up through the buoyancy of the water. I was always tempted to build my own little cabin and stay there, close to nature, to escape what Thoreau would call my life of quiet desperation.

This summer, we are considering the call to care for God's creation through a sermon series, a study of Sam Hamilton-Poore's prayer book, *Earth Gospel*, Vacation Bible School (which ended last week), and other activities sponsored by our Earth Care Team – in keeping with our new identity as a PCUSA certified Earth Care Congregation. And I'm sure I'm not alone in my fleeting desire to follow in Thoreau's footsteps and camp out in the woods for a time. Ever since I first paddled down the Buffalo River in Arkansas, I've felt closer to God outside – and I know the same is true for many of you. Dwarfed by towering trees or gazing out at a patchwork landscape from high on a mountaintop, the wisdom and ongoing care of the Creator are clear.

During his time at Walden Pond, Thoreau lived simply, with but four necessities: food, shelter, clothing, and fuel. He did this to prove to himself that he could live off the land and be self-sufficient, rejecting the world's preoccupation with power and measures of success. Though the Transcendentalists were not Christian, Jesus's words to the disciples: "do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear..." for God will care for you – reminded me of Thoreau's experiment at Walden Pond.

Or, rather, they reminded me of a critique of Thoreau's experiment: that is, for all of his talk of self-sufficiency in the wild woods, Thoreau was neither self-sufficient, nor was he in the wilderness! During his two years at Walden, he lived on land owned by his friend Ralph Waldo Emerson. The pond was but a twenty-minute walk from the house he grew up in, the house where his mother still lived. Close enough, then, for her to be able to cook for him, do his laundry, and mend his clothes. So much for self-sufficiency!

We all want to be self-sufficient, to some extent – to be independent and take care of ourselves. Maybe we in the US have the Transcendentalists to thank for that. But today's scripture reminds us that we are not. Even the lilies of the field and the birds that sing each morning – plants and creatures that *seem* self-sufficient – even they are reliant upon the creative power and providence of God for their existence. So much so for us – *we are* because of the lifegiving care and provision of *God*.

Down from the mountaintop, out of the woods, Christ's instruction: "do not worry," seems both out of touch and unreasonable. Doesn't it? So why does he say that? Is he urging the disciples to embrace a *hakuna matata* philosophy? No worries! How can Jesus tell us not to worry? Worry is a favorite pastime for some and an unavoidable obsession for others. I'm not much of a worrier, but even I know - there's so much to worry about! Studies say that teens today are the most anxious generation ever, thanks to constant connectedness and the competitive allure of social media. I worry about things big and small, and especially about things I have little control over.

We were minutes away from war with Iran this weekend. I worry about that. I worry about the child who has spent his fifth birthday in a detention center, with no idea when he might see his family again. I worry about the families and communities that will surely be torn apart today if threats of large-scale deportation operations are carried out – and surely immigrant communities are worried about that, too. I worry about the world we are leaving for my daughters, a world warmed by pollution and degraded by extraction to feed our insatiable hunger for more stuff.

What worries you? I'm guessing it won't be hard to think of a few things: money? Health? Work? Family? Turn to the person sitting next to you and tell them one thing that worries you.

Worry is unavoidable, it's a burden each one of us carries at one time or another. And yet, Jesus is right: not one of us, by worry, has added a single minute to our lives. Neither has worry on its own ever changed the outcome of anything. The passage is part of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus' instructions in the gospel of Matthew about how to serve God faithfully. The disciples are about to be sent out to preach the good news of the kingdom with nothing but the cloaks on their backs, fully reliant on the generosity of strangers and the provision of God. Surely they were worried about who they would meet, where they would sleep, what they would eat and drink, how they would be received.

So here is how I make sense of this passage – I believe Jesus wants to liberate us from the burden of worry, by imploring us to trust God’s abundance. He wants to free us to trust God’s goodness, God’s provision. Because when we trust God, we trust, love, and care for one another – that is, we find the reign of God, the kin-dom of God among us.

Each day, in a world filled with worrisome and wonderful things, we have a choice about who to trust; a choice about whom we serve. And Jesus reminds us: you can’t serve both God and wealth. So do we go it alone? Fool ourselves into believing we are self-sufficient? Do we serve money, believing it can save us? Do we trust the empire, believing it will protect us? Do we buy into the myth of scarcity in a world of abundance?

Trust in God, Jesus says. Serve God. Seek God’s kindom, and God will provide enough for everyone. Because God is a God of abundance. Creation sings with God’s creative power and love and provision – even right here we can see it: the beauty of diversity, the miracle of flour and water and yeast and salt combined into one loaf, the mystery of fermentation or refrigeration to preserve and protect fruit long cut from the vine.

In this passage, Jesus invites us to let go of our worries, and to trust God’s providential care for creation. Trust the good news to be good. What would that look like for you?

For Scott and Gabby Dannemiller, it looked not like what they did but what they didn’t do: they lived for a year without buying anything. Then Scott wrote a book about it – *A Year Without a Purchase*. They had a few exceptions – they could buy food and invest in experiences as gifts, instead of things. But no new clothing, toys, gadgets, or other non-essentials. The experiment helped them reconnect to a commitment to simple living they’d made while serving as Young Adult Volunteers in Guatemala many years before – a commitment Nate Burt will make when he begins his year of service in New Orleans in August. The choice to live without the cushion of money is a privilege, for sure – just as Thoreau’s time in the woods was the product of privilege. But it helped the Dannemillers rely more on their community, through swapping Halloween costumes and clothing needed for events. The year without a purchase made them realize how much unnecessary stuff we spend money on and fill our homes with and worry about. And they proved that it’s possible – possible to embrace a simple life even now, as a family in 21<sup>st</sup> century American suburbia. It’s possible to trust God’s provision and presence in community.

Do not worry about your life. Seek the reign of God and God’s justice, and the rest will come. Jesus’s promise to us is that if we offer what we can – no matter how little, no matter how flawed or frail we feel – God will use it, to bring more love and healing and wholeness into the world, to build kindom of God right here among us. And when we do, we just might find that there is enough for everyone. May it be so.

