

October 1, 2023
God's Good News Story
Jesus and His Parables
Pt. 2: Worry & Judging & Presuming

In our year long series 'God's Good News Story' we have traced the work of God to bring mankind into a right relationship with Him. It has been a story of obedience and disobedience of light and darkness.

Today we continue with our focus on Parables. Remember... "A parable is a story told to illustrate a truth. Jesus' parables were teaching aids and can be thought of as extended analogies, comparing two things or ideas. A common description of a parable is that it is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.

<https://www.gotquestions.org/parables-in-the-Bible.html>

Like the last two weeks I am going to refer to Jesus' most well known sermon we know of as "The Sermon on the Mount". It is so rich in resources for us as we seek to live as faithful disciples for Christ. I focused on Prayer last week, a positive message for us as believers. Today, I am going to address two negative tendencies and activities that too many disciples of Christ tend to engage in...Worry & Judging...

Let's remind ourselves what Jesus said about these two subjects...

WORRY

Matthew 6:25-34...²⁵ *"For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is life not more than food, and the body more than clothing?"*²⁶ *Look at the birds of the sky, that they do not sow, nor reap, nor gather crops into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more important than they?"*²⁷ *And which of you by worrying can add a single day to his life's span?"*²⁸ *And why are you worried about clothing? Notice how the lilies of the field grow; they do not labor nor do they spin thread for cloth,*²⁹ *yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these.*³⁰ *But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith!"*³¹ *Do not worry then, saying, 'What are we to eat?' or 'What are we to drink?' or 'What are we to wear for clothing?'"*³² *For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.*³³ *But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be provided to you.*³⁴ *"So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."*

The obvious point of this parable/sermon is 'DON'T WORRY'. I went to seminary for 5 years to get that...LOL. Seriously, that is the point. Seek God 1st and trust Him for today and tomorrow... Don't Worry!

Well, what about our 2nd negative tendency...

JUDGING

Matthew 7:1-5... ***“Do not judge, so that you will not be judged. ² For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. ³ Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁴ Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ and look, the log is in your own eye? ⁵ You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye!***

Jesus was quite forceful in this area. Again my many years of seminary allowed me to mine from this passage a deep and important point...DON'T JUDGE!. Wow, that's deep right. LOL. Sometime the simplest point is the most important. Just like the 1st point...Don't Worry...DON'T JUDGE.

Now don't get me wrong. We must also keep in mind what Jesus said in this same Sermon on the Mount in **Matthew 7:15-20...** ¹⁵ ***“Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶ You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor figs from thistles, are they? ¹⁷ So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut***

down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ So then, you will know them by their fruits.

So, we need to be discerning and perceptive of those who are false and deceptive, but we need to be careful about judging too quickly, without all the story and the background.

Here is a parable/story told by Max Lucado that weaves together these two issues of worry & judging. It is called **“The Woodcutter’s Wisdom”**

The following is from <https://maxlucado.com/woodcutters-wisdom-and-other-favorite-stories/>

“Would you buy a house if you were only allowed to see one of its rooms? Would you purchase a car if you were permitted to see only its tires and a taillight? Would you pass judgment on a book after reading only one paragraph? Nor would I.

Good judgment requires a broad picture. Not only is that true in purchasing houses, cars, and books, it's true in evaluating life. One failure doesn't make a person a failure; one achievement doesn't make a person a success.

Once there was an old man who lived in a tiny village. Although poor, he was envied by all, for he owned a beautiful white horse. Even the king coveted his treasure. A horse like this had never been seen before—such was its splendor, its majesty, its strength.

People offered fabulous prices for the steed, but the old man always refused. “This horse is not a horse to me,” he would tell them. “It is a person. How could you sell a person? He is a friend, not a possession. How could you sell a friend?” The man was poor and the temptation was great. But he never sold the horse.

One morning he found that the horse was not in the stable. All the village came to see him. “You old fool,” they scoffed, “we told you that someone would steal your horse. We warned you that you would be robbed. You are so poor. How could you ever hope to protect such a valuable animal? It would have been better to have sold him. You could have gotten whatever price you wanted. No amount would have been too high. Now the horse is gone, and you’ve been cursed with misfortune.”

The old man responded, “Don’t speak too quickly. Say only that the horse is not in the stable. That is all we know; the rest is judgment. If I’ve been cursed or not, how can you know? How can you judge?”

The people contested, “Don’t make us out to be fools! We may not be philosophers, but great philosophy is not needed. The simple fact that your horse is gone is a curse.”

The old man spoke again. “All I know is that the stable is empty, and the horse is gone. The rest I don’t know. Whether it be a curse or a blessing, I can’t say. All we

can see is a fragment. Who can say what will come next?”

The people of the village laughed. They thought that the man was crazy. They had always thought he was fool; if he wasn’t, he would have sold the horse and lived off the money. But instead, he was a poor woodcutter, an old man still cutting firewood and dragging it out of the forest and selling it. He lived hand to mouth in the misery of poverty. Now he had proven that he was, indeed, a fool.

After fifteen days, the horse returned. He hadn’t been stolen; he had run away into the forest. Not only had he returned, he had brought a dozen wild horses with him. Once again the village people gathered around the woodcutter and spoke. “Old man, you were right and we were wrong. What we thought was a curse was a blessing. Please forgive us.”

The man responded, “Once again, you go too far. Say only that the horse is back. State only that a dozen horses returned with him, but don’t judge. How do you know if this is a blessing or not? You see only a fragment. Unless you know the whole story, how can you judge? You read only one page of a book. Can you judge the whole book? You read only one word of a phrase. Can you understand the entire phrase?

“Life is so vast, yet you judge all of life with one page or one word. All you have is a fragment! Don’t say that this

is a blessing. No one knows. I am content with what I know. I am not perturbed by what I don't."

"Maybe the old man is right," they said to one another. So they said little. But down deep, they knew he was wrong. They knew it was a blessing. Twelve wild horses had returned with one horse. With a little bit of work, the animals could be broken and trained and sold for much money.

The old man had a son, an only son. The young man began to break the wild horses. After a few days, he fell from one of the horses and broke both legs. Once again the villagers gathered around the old man and cast their judgments.

"You were right," they said. "You proved you were right. The dozen horses were not a blessing. They were a curse. Your only son has broken his legs, and now in your old age you have no one to help you. Now you are poorer than ever."

The old man spoke again. "You people are obsessed with judging. Don't go so far. Say only that my son broke his legs. Who knows if it is a blessing or a curse? No one knows. We only have a fragment. Life comes in fragments."

It so happened that a few weeks later the country engaged in war against a neighboring country. All the young men of the village were required to join the army. Only the son of the old man was excluded because he

was injured. Once again the people gathered around the old man, crying and screaming because their sons had been taken. There was little chance that they would return. The enemy was strong, and the war would be a losing struggle. They would never see their sons again.

"You were right, old man," they wept. "God knows you were right. This proves it. Your son's accident was a blessing. His legs may be broken, but at least he is with you. Our sons are gone forever."

The old man spoke again. "It is impossible to talk with you. You always draw conclusions. No one knows. Say only this: Your sons had to go to war, and mine did not. No one knows if it is a blessing or a curse. No one is wise enough to know. Only God knows."

The old man was right. We only have a fragment. Life's mishaps and horrors are only a page out of a grand book. We must be slow about drawing conclusions. We must reserve judgment on life's storms until we know the whole story.

I don't know where the woodcutter learned his patience. Perhaps from another woodcutter in Galilee. For it was the Carpenter who said it best: ***"Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself."***
Matthew 6:34. (Max Lucado)

I hope this modern-day parable reverberates with the two passages from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount about worry & judging.

Stop before you judge and refocus when you are tempted to worry. **The bottom line is** “Do you trust God enough to (1) give Him your worries and (2) to let Him deal with others when tempted to judge.

Two of my favorite verses applies here very well to both points on Worry & Judging.

Matthew 6:33,34...³³ *But seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be provided to you.* ³⁴ *“So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*

Proverbs 3:5&6... *“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not unto your own understanding. I all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths.”*

So the challenge for today... Will you “*Seek first the Kingdom*” and will your “*Trust in the Lord with all your heart*”?