

“Imagine the Possibilities: Our Lives”
Mary Kay Collins | October 29, 2006 | Matthew 6:19-34

I hope you enjoyed the video we showed at the beginning of the service today. This is an exciting time in our church, a defining moment I believe. And I love what Don Parsons and Sandy Bishop said about this church being the people, not about a minister.

Although when Don and Sandy and others say that this church is not about the minister, I believe what they, and others, mean to say is that the church is not about the *pastors*. The church is not about who the *pastor* is but it has everything to do with who the ministers are. And guess what—that is each one of you. When you accepted Christ in your heart, as best as you knew how, you became one of Christ’s representatives, or ministers. Minister defined means, first, “servant;” second, “a person used to achieve or convey something.” Another way to put it is that a minister is “somebody’s agent or representative.”

We are all ministers in that we are all servants, all representatives, all people used to achieve and convey something. We are all servants of God, all representatives for Christ, all people used to achieve the Kingdom of God and convey the Good News of Jesus Christ. You and I are equally called to serve, to convey, and to share the Good News of the Gospel. We are all ministers! I visited a church once when I was a student in seminary, and I remember reading the bulletin. On the back page where they listed staff the first line read “Ministers: all members.” This church was making the point to remind its members and visitors that the ministers in the church are the members, the one who have professed their faith in Jesus Christ and who are living out their life serving in His church.

Take a moment with me to imagine the possibilities if every one of us fully assumed this role, that we are the ministers of God’s word. We are called to serve and to represent. How are we doing? I will tell you we are doing well, but we can do so much better. We are all called to serve God, to share his good news. We all have different gifts, different ways to do this. Maybe we don’t think we are qualified, but guess what? Jesus says that you are!

I want to ask you to pray about what it might look like if we all came to the table and said I am ready to serve—what it is you will have me do Lord? Big things would happen at the church, big things would happen in people’s lives, big things would happen in ushering in Christ’s Kingdom. Think about the children we love and care for in this church, the ones who sang for us today, think about the church for them. That is the journey we are ultimately on. How will we be representatives, how will we serve, how will we convey what it is we believe? Pray about this, pray about it a lot. I am so excited to see the direction that God is going to lead you. Going on this spiritual journey will not lead to the status quo. I am asking you to do something different, something vulnerable: to pray, and truly believe that God will give you the answers you need.

Now, I am not in any way saying that having a good pastor, a strong pastor, doesn’t matter. It does, it will, and I believe that God is busily preparing the heart of the right

person to come and lead in this church. But this church doesn't belong to that pastor, the church certainly doesn't belong to me, nor to any of the pastors before. This is God's church and you are His representatives. What would happen if each one of us prayed and asked God, what do you want me to do? How do you want me to participate? Where do you want me to give? How can I best serve you and share your good news? What could happen? Who knows? I believe something really big.

So let us now turn to God's Word, reading from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 6:19-34:

[Jesus said:] "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."

If this were a typical, standard, stewardship campaign, I could stop right here in this passage, not read any further. Simply stated, God and wealth cannot both be served. We are here in the church to serve God, therefore serving wealth is wrong, now please take out your checkbook and make it out to FPCM. BUT this isn't a typical stewardship campaign; this is a spiritual journey we are embarking on. This isn't just about writing a check, this is about paying attention to God's voice, listening for God's lead!

Over the next four weeks we will together be praying every day using the devotional you were given. We will keep this commitment card before us, and every day pray again, what do you want me to do Lord? If you journal, keep notes—what is God saying to you, teaching you? Now, if we take this journey seriously, if we devote ourselves to this journey, there is no guarantee that it will be easy. But as we begin, I hope that you start within yourself not from a place of guilt or obligation, but from a place of hope and peace. So let us continue to read from the Sermon on the Mount, we're at verse 25. Jesus has just said, "You cannot serve God and wealth:"

"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 can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? 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 strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all

these things. But strive first for 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."

Jesus says, do not worry about your life. Don't worry! Now this isn't coming out of a self-help book nor is it that old Bobby McFerrin song "Don't Worry, Be Happy;" these are the words of the One whom we profess to be Lord in our lives. Have you ever been in a state where you truly didn't worry? Man, this is a tall order, but as followers of Christ, this is what He is telling us to do—to trust. But notice how these things go together with a very important "therefore." "You cannot serve God and wealth. *Therefore*, do not worry about your life." In other words, if you choose serving God over wealth—and wealth, by the way, isn't just money, it's anything of this world, like success, prestige, possessions—if you choose God, *then* you can stop worrying.

I want to read a few of these verses to you again, but this time using Eugene Peterson's contemporary translation found in *The Message*. Listen to this:

"If God gives such attention to the appearance of wildflowers—most of which are never even seen—don't you think he'll attend to you, take pride in you, do his best for you? What I'm trying to do here is to get you to relax, to not be so preoccupied with *getting*, so you can respond to God's *giving*. People who don't know God and they way he works fuss over these things, but you know both God and how he works. Steep your life in God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions."

This is big stuff. Over these next four weeks we are invited on a journey to surrender our hearts, to say, "My life is yours Lord, show me the way." What will the outcome be? Who knows? But imagine the possibilities; imagine in your own life, if you were able to truly put your trust in Christ, what would you do with all that time that you typically spend worrying? This is a hard pill to swallow, I agree. I worry a lot: "What's next for the church? ... Am I doing the right thing? ... Where are my children, is everyone safe? ... What about the violence happening all around us?"

I worry, and yet today I am being called with this community of faith that I call family to surrender that worry to trust in God, to listen to Christ's Word, and to follow. Starting today, we are being invited to begin to surrender our hearts to Christ, to say this simple prayer: "Lord, your Scripture says don't worry and rather than worrying I am to consider all that you provide for including the birds and the wildflowers—how much more you will provide for me? Lord I am real good at worrying and real good at trying to have control over my life. Help me today, as we go on this journey together, to surrender my life to you and let your love lead me on." Lets pray.

Lord we read today in your Word, do not worry; trust you. We are told to consider the lilies and the birds, how well you care for them and how much more you care for us. Lord as we embark on this spiritual journey together, imagining the possibilities, help us to surrender our hearts, our lives to you and let you define us, not this world, but you Lord, may we put our trust in you and let you lead us on, remembering that there is nothing too hard for the Lord. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.