**Text

Description automatically generated**

“WHAT & WHOM”

- Week 2 -

SCRIPTURE

MATTHEW 6:34NLT

**34“So don’t worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries.**

**Today’s trouble is enough for today.**

MESSAGE

*As the theme of this series is “control v. surrender,” it’s important to talk about all the areas of our lives where we hang on so tightly for that control. Our professional lives, (ie. jobs and finances,) might be THE single most difficult arena for us to surrender control. So, it’s important to discuss. However, if talking about finances is a touchy subject for your congregation, tailor this message to aim more toward jobs and profession, and speak on the money aspect in vague terms.*

We are in week 2 of our series, called, “Covenant,” talking about our Covenant, our relationship between us and God, and which one of those two parties should really be in control of our lives.

Last week we talked about that very thing, how we wear ourselves out trying to control every aspect of our lives. And giving our lives to God means trusting God with the outcome. So, we started our series last week talking about surrendering our lives to God.

But this week, and for the next 4 weeks, we’re going to get more specific, and take a look at specific areas in life that we try to control, the aspects of life that we hold onto, and don’t want to give over to

God. And to help us with this, we’ve been using an historic prayer written 250 years ago…

*[Hand out bookmarks for anyone who wasn’t here last week]*

This prayer was written by a guy named John Wesley, who started the Methodist movement in the 1700s. He put together what he called a Covenant Service that he had all his Methodist churches do as a reminder of their relationship with God. And this prayer is taken from that service… with a little bit of my adaptation. (But that’s why it’s got all the thees and thous and thines in it. It’s old school.)

Last week we focused on the first line: “I am no longer my own, but thine.” When we pray that line of the prayer, we’re just saying, “God, our lives are not ours to control. Our lives are yours.” This really puts it in perspective. If our lives aren’t ours to control in the first place, we can give that control to the one who SHOULD be in control, and we can walk that journey with some peace.

Now, after this first line, the prayer gets more specific, and today we’re going to look at that second line. Say it with me:

**Put me to what thou wilt,**

**rank me with whom thou wilt.**

Let me do a little modernizing for you. Here’s how we want to understand this line. It means, “God, whatever you want me to be doing, and whatever station in life you want me to have… I’m going to be okay with that.”

One of the areas people said last week that they have a hard time letting go control of is our professional lives. Anyone who has lost a job or switched jobs, anyone who has lived paycheck to paycheck, or been at a place where they don’t know where their next meal is coming from, knows what it’s like to feel like you have no control in this area.

Or, for some, if you’re financially and professionally secure, the fear is not if you’re going to have rent money next month, maybe it’s living in the fear of losing the security you do have. Because sometimes, all it takes is one bad break for everything to come crashing down.

And the struggle is real, right? There’s a popular commercial out right now for a company that helps people refinance their debt that starts with… “1 in 3 millennials has student debt they will most likely die with.”

That got me doing some research. Here are some stats for the United States as a whole. Check this out… we have:

Types of Debt Per person Total

Any type of debt\* $137,879 $14.15 trillion

Credit cards (revolving)\*\* $7,104 $466.2 billion

Mortgages $192,618 $9.56 trillion

Auto loans $27,934 $1.33 trillion

Student loans $46,679 $1.51 trillion

That’s a total of $27 TRILLION dollars of debt! To give you an idea of what that’s like, if you laid 27 trillion dollars end to end, it would reach to the sun… and back… 14 TIMES!!! Now, don’t get me wrong, some debt is good. Student loans get you the education you need to enter your desired field. A mortgage is an investment that will hopefully appreciate in the future. An auto loan got you here this morning. And a credit card got you those new Louis Vuittons I’m sure you needed.

Not all debt is bad… and I’m not here today to talk about the benefits and drawbacks of our capitalist socio-economic structure, I skipped that day in seminary. But what I do want to highlight is that, with this set up, and how we operate as Americans, it’s no wonder that this is a critical area where we feel like we don’t have control. Because when it comes to our professional and financial lives, someone else kinda IS in control. The IRS, creditors, our boss or company… has some level of control over our future. And that causes our anxiety to sky rocket.

So when it comes to our professional lives… what do we do?

Well, there are two sides to this. There’s the practical side… and for that, I refer you to someone infinitely more qualified in that arena than I am. Go see your financial planner or check out someone like Dave Ramsey and his Financial Peace University.

I’m only qualified to talk about the spiritual side of this, and for that I refer you to another expert… Jesus. One of the most famous sections of the stories about Jesus in the Bible is what we call the “Sermon on the Mount.” By this time in Jesus’s ministry, he had gathered quite a following. And in the area around the Sea of Galilea in Israel where Jesus was, there are a lot of hills and valleys that create natural bowls, almost like a geographic amphitheater. Jesus would go up to these areas, the crowds would follow, and he would speak to the masses.

What Jesus knew was that there were people sitting in that crowd who were having the same sort of anxiety of a lack of control in this aspect of their lives that we do today. And so he addressed it:

**Matthew 6:25-34 NLT**

**25“That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn’t life more than food, and your body more than clothing? 26Look at the birds. They don’t plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren’t you far more valuable to him than they are? 27Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?**

**28“And why worry about your clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don’t work or make their clothing, 29yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. 30And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith?**

**31“So don’t worry about these things, saying, ‘What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?’ 32These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. 33Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.**

**34“So don’t worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today’s trouble is enough for today.**

Our series is called, “Covenant,” because we’re talking about the give and take that makes up our relationship with God… what is expected on our part, and what God promises to do. And every week, we’re going to look at what God wants from us, and then, what God promises us in return. And this passage beautifully describes that give and take.

So first, what is required of us?

In most contractual relationships, especially in the financial arena, what’s required of us is pretty heavy, right? A bank gives you a loan… you have to pay it back, with interest. An employer gives you a job… and you have to work your butt off to keep it. But, did you notice the requirements on our part that Jesus gives us in this scripture? Let me list them for you… here’s what’s required of us: Don’t worry about everyday life. Don’t worry about your clothing. Don’t worry about what you will eat or drink. Don’t worry. Don’t worry. Don’t worry. Seek the Kingdom of God. And just in case you forgot… don’t worry.

So, unlike your credit card company that thrives on worrying the crap out of you, your ONLY requirement when it comes to this part of your covenant relation with God is… don’t worry! Now, I know some of you are like, “Uh, pastor, I don’t know how to *not* worry, so I’d rather have a monthly installment payment plan, please.” Sorry, Jesus doesn’t operate like that! But here’s the good news, and what Jesus is trying to get these folks to understand, God’s going to take care of you even if you can’t help but worry!

That’s God’s side of this covenant. That’s why Jesus says, look at the birds, God takes care of them. Aren’t you more valuable to God than they are? Don’t worry. God’s got you. Look at the flowers in the field, they’re clothed in more splendor than the greatest kings, and aren’t you more valuable to God than even these? Don’t worry. God’s got you.

And maybe the greatest source of comfort in the middle of this scripture, and the ultimate reason we should be able to not worry… Jesus says, “God already knows all your needs.”

Last week we talked about trusting God with the outcome of the journey we’re on because God is the one who should be in control in the first place. This scripture is *why* we can surrender control: God, as the ultimate parent, knows our needs better than we do, especially in this area of our lives. We think we know what’s best for us. But Jesus reminds us, God knows ultimately what we need more than we do.

So that’s our Covenant when it comes to our professional or financial lives, an area where it can feel like we have little or no control of our future. God promises to take care of us, already knowing all our needs, and because of that, we can give up the worry. That’s a pretty good contract.

So, as we pray our Covenant Prayer, (and as you’re praying this every day over the course of the week,) when you get to that line, that’s what I want you to think about, “Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt.” Think, “God, in whatever job you have me doing, in whatever station in life I find myself… I’m not going to worry because you promise to take care of me. God, I let go of my worry.”

Let’s pray.

**I am no longer my own but thine.**

**Put me to what thou wilt,**

**rank me with whom thou wilt.**

**Put me to doing, put me to suffering.**

**Let me be employed for thee,**

**or laid aside for thee.**

**Let me be exalted for thee,**

**or brought low for thee.**

**Let me have all things,**

**let me have nothing.**

**Let me be full,**

**let me be empty.**

**I freely and humbly yield all things**

**to thy pleasure and thy disposal.**

**And now, sweet Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,**

**I am thine and thou art mine.**

**And may this covenant made on Earth,**

**be ratified in heaven.**

**So be it.**