# Aughnacloy, Ballymagrane, Clogherney & Sixmilecross Presbyterian Churches

Rev. Roger McElnea

52 Caledon Road, Aughnacloy

BT696HX

H 02885557500

M 07738763747

Sunday 5th April 2020 rmcelnea@hotmail.co.uk

Dear Friends

As the minister of the congregations of Aughnacloy, Ballymagrane, and the vacant Congregations of Sixmilecross and Cloghereny, it is a great privilege that I have to bring this weekly devotion to you. I trust that you are all keeping safe and well in these present times. These certainly are unprecedented times, times when we are just so unsure of what might happen as this pandemic unfolds itself in our communities and families. We are beginning to settle into the new routines that social distancing, self-isolation and home-schooling have brought to us as a society. However in the midst of all this uncertainty God’s word remains our secure rock to anchor our lives to. Psalm 27:1 reminds us, on this Palm Sunday:

Psalm 27:1 The LORD is my light and my salvation--whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life--of whom shall I be afraid?

As many already know, the leaders of the four main churches in Ireland and many other smaller fellowships and congregations have called for today to be a national day of prayer throughout Ireland. Therefore with that end I have included a link, in the email, to the PCI Let’s Pray material as an encouragement to pray for the whole island of Ireland at this time.

Our Text for Today

Matthew 6:25-34 "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? 26 Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? 27 Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? 28 "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labour or spin. 29 Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these. 30 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 31 So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?' or ‘What shall we drink?' Or ‘What shall we wear?' 32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

On Palm Sunday it would be more traditional to reflect on ‘The Triumphant Entry’ of Jesus into Jerusalem. However, today as we read these words from the early part of Jesus ministry on earth, they shed light on the situation which unfolds throughout the week following the triumphant entry. By the end of that week however, there was so much confusion, the promised Messiah was crucified and the people who knew Him best where wondering, ‘What are we going to do now’, our life has fallen apart!

These past couple of weeks have had a similar effect on ourselves and society around us. We are now restricted to straying on own property and only allowed to leave if we have good reason to do so.

There is much anxiety and concern in each of us, as we wonder how this pandemic is going to play itself out in reality around us.

From this point, we realise that God knew what was going to happen in the last earthly week for Jesus, so be began to prepare the disciples for the crucifixion and you and I for the times we live in too. When we listen closely and watch God working, there are many times He gives us a little foresight of things to come. We didn’t know 3 or 4 weeks ago that all this would be happening. But in His plan, God did.

Do you ever wish you could just stop worrying and fixating on things you can’t control? Jesus gave us the key, and it has all to do with our focus.

In His Sermon, Jesus gave us a sobering reminder of where the heart and mind of the believer could end up when our focus is on the physical rather than the spiritual. That wrong focus is what leads to anxiety and worry. When we take our eyes off of Jesus, the world creeps in. And along with it comes worrying.

Jesus begins this section by asking us to pay close attention to what He is going to say to us. Matthew 6:25 *"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life…,* Jesus illustrated this truth by focusing on two of our most basic needs: food and clothing. The birds are fed and provided for and the wildflowers are clothed. The birds and the flowers have no concern, and since God loves us so much more than that, why should we have any concern? Worry won’t change anything. The old saying is that worrying is like sitting in a rocking chair. Rocking back and forth in the chair gives us something to do, but it really doesn’t get us anywhere. Jesus, instructs us to look upwards. When we look up, we’ll find birds flying everywhere, and not one of them seems concerned about what they’ll eat. They aren’t concerned about planting seeds or harvesting grain. Neither are they concerned about gathering and storing food just in case of an emergency. They’re free from care because there Father cares and provides for them.

The poem; “The Robin and the Sparrow" By Elizabeth Cheney clearly reminds us: Said the robin to the sparrow, *“I should really like to know, Why these anxious human beings, Rush about and worry so.” Said the sparrow to the robin, “Friend I think that it must be, That they have no Heavenly Father, Such as cares for you and me.”*

Christians have a father that loves them and cares for them, a father whose overarching love is available for them, even in the most difficult of times.

God alone takes care of the birds and adorns the flowers, He loves us so much more. In spite of our sinfulness, God loves and values us deeply. We can confidently place our trust in God because of His unconditional love for us.

## V 31-32 Jesus teaches about a relationship of trust. Remember the Israelites as they journeyed in the wilderness, some of them hoarded enough Mama to last a couple of days, but it did not even keep overnight. They were not relying on God’s promise to provide each day. They trusted in their own ability to provide for themselves. Do we see this same attitude today? God has a plan, a plan which has been in place since the beginning of time. Jesus is part of that plan, providing the prefect sacrifice for our wrong doing, our sin against God.

God provides for our every need

Matthew 6:33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you.

Above all other thing we are to seek God with passion in our heart for Him. He is our highest priority. It’s not that the cares of this life aren’t important; even Jesus invited us to pray for these things: “Give us this day our daily bread” Christ is to be our first priority. As we focus on Christ and pursue Him, He takes care of everything else.

Each day finds us centring our lives in Christ so we will be useful citizens of the kingdom of God. It’s a kingdom composed of people who belong to Him.

## We can trust God because He has already provided for our greatest need! God saw that need and sent His Son, His greatest possession. *Proverbs 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; 6 in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.*

*What a friend we have in Jesus, Have we trials and temptations? Are we weak and heavy laden,*

*All our sins and griefs to bear! Is there trouble anywhere? Burdened with a load of care?*

*What a privilege to carry We should never be discouraged; Precious Saviour, still our refuge--*

*Everything to God in prayer! take it to the Lord in prayer! Take it to the Lord in prayer!*

*O what peace we often forfeit, Can we find a friend so faithful? Do your friends despise, forsake you?*

*O what needless pain we bear, Who will all our sorrows share? Take it to the Lord in prayer!*

*All because we do not carry Jesus knows our every weakness; In his arms he'll take and shield you;*

*Everything to God in prayer! Take it to the Lord in prayer! You will find His comfort there. Joseph Scriven.*

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all this day and forevermore? Amen.