

Bless to Me
 Holy Moments: Celebrating the Gifts of Life
 6.18.17
 Father's Day, Year A
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 Text: Psalm 148 and Luke 12:27

Some of you may be familiar with the book entitled *Don't Sweat the Small Stuff: And It's All the Small Stuff* written by Richard Carlson. The idea behind the book is that rather than spend our time focusing on things that might happen, things you can't change, and blowing things out of proportion, instead we should stop worrying about the small stuff and start living.

Today's passage from Luke 12 suggests the same. We heard this passage read from The Common English Bible. In the NRSV the heading for the portion of Luke 12 in which this verse appears reads: Do not worry!

This is Jesus message to us:

Do not worry. And since it's Father's Day, here is nod to our heavenly father:
 My Child, You worry too much. I've got this, remember? Love, Dad (God)

I confess this idea of not worrying is not an easy one about which to preach. I can be a worrier over little things. So, I am grateful for our worship series Bless to Me, based on Celtic Christianity.

This tradition has a helpful outlook on worry. Rather than worrying about the small things in life, Celtic Christianity suggests that we bless them (yes, even the things we worry about), that we take delight in them.

Moving through our day with the mantra "Bless to me my (whatever it is)" is a Celtic practice that slows us down and hones our appreciation for the gifts of life.

Today's psalmist reminds us that all living things are to praise the God of all Creation. We are to praise the Almighty for all blessings. When we slow down and consider our blessings, we are less prone to worry, more likely to Let Go and Let God.

Blessing someone or some situation (even a difficult situation) is a kind of prayer. When we offer a blessing, or see even the small things in life as a blessing; we live in a place of gratitude. When we focus on giving God the praise for all matter of things, our minds are focused on good things, our blessings.

In Philippians 4:8, we read "Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, what is commendable; if there is any excellence, if there is anything worth of praise, think about these things."

When we focus on good things, the positive aspects of our lives, how someone has blest us and how we might bless someone, then it is difficult to be worried about anything else. We sometimes overlook the obvious blessings in our lives and instead wish for something different.

I am reminded on this Father's Day of a story of blessing in my own life of something very important which I took for granted.

When I was in graduate school at Slippery Rock (please don't knock the rock), I had a roommate Nancy (with whom I reconnected with last week after not seeing one another for 40 years). More on that on another Sunday.

Nancy's mother was a teacher and her father an engineer. My folks were not college graduates and I often thought how lucky Nancy was to have parents who were. I imagined that her growing up years must have been filled with high level intellectual conversation.

One summer afternoon, Nancy and I went for a picnic at my parent's home. During the meal, my dad said to Heidi, my then 5 year old niece, "Pappy loves you, Heidi." Later in the day, as Nancy and I left my father shouted after us, "Suz, I love you."

When we got in the car, Nancy asked, "Did you hear what your father said?" I answered, "No, what did he say?" Nancy's response was one that has stayed with me for 40 years. She replied, "Your father said, 'I love you' to you and your niece. My father has never told me that he loves me."

In that moment, I thanked my Jesus for the blessing of a father who could express his love for his children and his grandchildren. This was a far greater blessing than having a father with a college degree.

In the New Living Translation the first line of the 23rd Psalm reads, "The Lord is my shepherd, I have all I need." The needs which God provides are our blessings. We give God our praise by naming our blessings and thanking the Almighty for them.

This congregation is blessed to be a blessing. Here are just a few of the ways in which we are blest:

- The way we faithfully pray for those within these walls and beyond is a blessing.
- The way our choir lifts their voices in praise is a blessing.
- The way we are facing the news about our ceiling is a blessing.
- The way we our fundraising leaders team is rolling up their sleeves is a blessing.
- The way we are making a difference in Manchester for the sake of the Gospel is a blessing.
- The many ways we have served and continue to serve children within and beyond our walls through Vacation Bible School and our Little Free Library are all blessings.
- The way we respond to Jesus' directive to feed my sheep is a blessing.
- The fact that we are located right across the street from Manchester Elementary School is a blessing.
- The fact that Mr. Tierney and the staff welcomed us warmly as partners is a blessing.

- The fact that we have two beautiful young women connected to Trinity UCC who going into the helping professions is a blessing.
- The fact that God sent Dan and me to you and you to us is a blessing.

In just a moment, you will have an opportunity to name one way in which Trinity blesses you. You will be invited to name those blessings during our prayer time later in worship.

Bless to Everyone of Us! Amen!