

Sunday, April 19, 2026

Preoccupied

Acts 2:14,36-38, 1 Peter 1:17-23, Luke 24:19-21,25,26,30-32

I sometimes get preoccupied with a lot of “What ifs”... you know what I mean:

What if the kids aren't able to pay their bills?

What if I don't hear the alarm tomorrow morning?

What if we don't have enough money to do the home remodels I want?

What if I don't lose all this weight again?

What if I can't keep my promises?

What if, what if, what if, what if ...

I'm sure you've been in my shoes, bringing on worries before they happen. I need to remember a favorite scripture of a good friend, Matthew 6:34 - *“Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”*

We all need to get over the “What ifs” and live for today, see what God has to offer us in the here and now, all the blessings that are right in front of us for the taking.

The thieves that hung on the cross next to Jesus are a good example of the “What ifs.” The one thief was too preoccupied with having his pain relieved, to understand that this was truly the Christ hanging beside him. “If you are who they say you are, what if you just get me down from here?” The other thief knew that Jesus didn't belong on the cross, that He wasn't a sinner, so that thief asked for forgiveness from Jesus.

Toby and I watched the 2014 movie, Noah, a while back – the one with Russell Crowe portraying Noah. It was graphic and may have taken a few liberties, but what was evident was that the people of Noah's day had a chance to turn from their evil ways, but they were so preoccupied with their own lives, and how they chose to selfishly live them, that they didn't want to turn to God for forgiveness. They didn't want to accept God. They didn't want to acknowledge God's presence. They didn't want to listen and they laughed when Noah began to build the ark.

We've also watched the 1956 version of The Ten Commandments, with Charlton Heston as Moses.

As Moses led the people of Israel through the desert, they were so preoccupied with their own concerns about getting to the promised land ... they were tired, uncomfortable, worried about what they would eat, thought it might be better to return ... that they didn't see what God was doing for them in the moment.

God had set them free. God had made them a nation. God was giving them a new land. He provide food for them.

They were too preoccupied with what it seemed God wasn't doing for them, preoccupied with the “What ifs” in their lives to realize all God had already accomplished. They didn't see the purpose in placing them where they were at that time.

Instead of asking “God, what do you want me to do next?” both the Israelites, and we should ask: “God, in this time of trial ... in this time of celebration ... in this time of indecision ... what do You want me to do while I'm right here? What are You showing me? What should I learn? What should I do for others? What should I do for You? What are You changing in me while I am here?”

We get so caught up in the busy-ness of our lives – just things, not necessarily bad things – that we don't always see God working in our lives, walking along side of us, talking to us, showing us the miracles of life, trying to open our eyes to all that He has to offer right here and now, asking us to be His hands and His heart to those around us, knocking, sometimes pounding, on our hearts ... wanting to come inside and show us His love, guide us to the Promised Land.

In Acts, we heard Peter come before the eleven and the crowd, telling them that this Jesus, who had just been crucified, was the Son of God, their Lord and Messiah. I can imagine the shaking of the heads, the moans of sorrow, the confusion, as the apostles said, “What shall we do?”

And Peter tells them to repent and be baptized, in the name of Jesus Christ so that their sins might be forgiven.

This is Peter, who didn't seem like a very stable leader during Jesus' ministry – remember Peter denied knowing Jesus - and now Peter has been forgiven by Christ, he has been made humble and bold. His confidence has come from the Holy Spirit and he has been made a powerful speaker. Peter is no longer preoccupied with his mistakes or about his confusion or fear about Jesus.

Have you ever felt that you've made such bad mistakes that God could never forgive you, let alone use you? Let me tell you, no matter the sins we've committed, God has promised to forgive those who follow His Son and make us useful, just as He forgave and used Peter.

We have to change the direction of our lives, from selfishness and rebellion, from a preoccupation in what we find more important, from the things that get in the way of our "God Time" – and then we have to turn to Christ, depending on Him for forgiveness, mercy, guidance and purpose.

From Luke, we learn that we're not always alone in our preoccupation with what we consider the important things in our lives. You know, those things that pull our attention away from God...

I have to finish the last pages of this book before prayer time. Sleep is so much more important than God Time. Gotta clean the house. Gotta go out to dinner. Gotta spend time with friends. Gotta, gotta, gotta.

And then those aches and pains, those trials, those deadlines, that stress, that worry that crowds our brains ... but God is present in our trials!

So, in Luke, two of Jesus' disciples are walking along towards Emmaus, away from Jerusalem, away from the presence and encouragement of other believers, worrying about all that's happened in the last few days.

This is one of their less than obvious mistakes. It's a difficult time for all of Jesus' followers. They should have stayed together to encourage each other, but here we have two of them walking away from Jerusalem.

During our dark times, we should remember to be in fellowship with other believers. We are given each other by a loving God and we can be the hands and the heart of Jesus for each other.

So, they're walking along and they come upon Jesus, but they don't recognize Him because they are preoccupied, they are dwelling on their own sorrow and confusion. This man, Jesus, asks them, "*What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?*" Scripture says they are stopped in their tracks and they look sad.

Cleopas, amazed that this man has not heard what has happened, says, "*The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet, mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed Him over to be condemned to death and crucified Him.*" He tells this Man of their shattered hopes that Jesus was going to free Israel.

The disciples have missed the significance of this great event – walking alongside this Man that we know to be our Savior, Jesus Christ, understanding what and why these events had happened – because they were too preoccupied with their own disappointments.

Jesus told them that the Messiah HAD to suffer these things and then told them what Moses and the prophets had said in the Scriptures concerning Himself.

After they urge this man to stay with them as it's getting late in the day, He agrees to stay and eats with them – and then, no longer preoccupied about themselves, their own fears, their own plans - they recognized Jesus as who He really was – their Lord!

When we are so preoccupied with our own frustrations and our shattered hopes, preoccupied with our fears –we are likely to miss Jesus walking with us, uplifting us, encouraging us, wanting to help us carry our load. If we only open our eyes to His presence, we'll realize we aren't alone at all.

In 1 Peter we hear the promises of forgiveness again. We are redeemed - forgiven of our sins - not because of silver or gold that could never buy our forgiveness.

We are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ – the perfect Lamb without blemish or defect. We can believe in Jesus! Through our belief in God, who raised Jesus from the dead, our lives are born again, renewed.

Do you have sin on your heart that you hold on to because you don't believe you can be or that you deserve to be forgiven? Do you believe the lies you are told about you being un-loveable, unforgiveable, a lost cause, not worth God's time? Do you continue to sin because you figure you're not going to Heaven anyway so you might as well continue to live it up here on earth?

Know that you are forgivable. You are loved. You have value. Know that Jesus is calling your name; He shouts so loudly and wonders why you don't Hear Him. Know that Jesus suffered a cruel, inhuman death for your sake. He knew you and loved you before you were born.

Jesus Christ loves you so much that He died for you and paid the price for all your sins - past, present, and future. His acceptance, love, and forgiveness of you are eternal. He may not always approve of our behavior, but if we accept Him, He will not reject us. That's why Easter is the most important day of the Christian year – it's about sacrifice and forgiveness.

If you have never asked Christ to come into your heart, He is available now and offers His unconditional love and forgiveness. If you do believe, but are feeling distant, you can renew your relationship with Him.

Imagine Jesus looking over every part of your life—all the sin, all the pain, and all the brokenness ... all the preoccupation with things you've put before God — and telling you that He accepts you and loves you just the way you are.

Leave behind the “What ifs”: What if I can't live up to God's expectation of me? What if God can't forgive my horrible sins? Get over your preoccupation with the all the “stuff” occupying your time and your attention. Accept God's forgiveness and allow God to use you to serve Him.

We must leave behind our preoccupation with our lives and remember that Christ walks beside us and wants to tell us more about Himself, wants us to know that we are not alone!