

In Washington D.C., at a Metro Station on a cold January morning in 2007, a man with a violin played six Bach pieces for about 45 minutes. During that time, approximately 2,000 people went through the station, most of them on their way to work. After about 3 minutes, a middle-aged man noticed that there was a musician playing. He slowed his pace and stopped for a few seconds, and then he hurried on to meet his schedule. About 4 minutes later, the violinist received his first dollar. A woman threw money in the hat and, without stopping, continued to walk. A young man leaned against the wall to listen to him, then looked at his watch and started to walk again.

After 10 minutes a 3-year old boy stopped, but his mother tugged him along hurriedly. The child stopped to look at the violinist again, but the mother pushed hard and the child continued to walk, turning his head the whole time. Several other children slowed down to listen, but every parent - without exception - forced their children to move on quickly. The musician played continuously. Only 6 people stopped and listened for a short while. About 20 gave money but continued to walk at their normal pace. The man collected a total of \$32. When the man with the violin finished playing, silence took over. No one noticed. No one applauded. There was no recognition at all.

What is interesting about this episode? The violinist was Joshua Bell, one of the greatest musicians in the world. He played one of the most intricate pieces ever written, with a violin worth \$3.5 million dollars. Two days earlier, Joshua Bell played to a sold-out theater in Boston. The seats averaged \$100 each. He played the same music as he did in the hustle of the Metro.

What are we to make of this social experiment organized by the Washington Post? We might say that you shouldn't expect anyone to stop and smell the coffee, or listen to the music on a busy morning when there are trains to catch, deadlines to meet, and bills to pay. The parents of those children might love to stop and listen to Bach, but then they would be late for their department meeting. And if they are late for their department meeting, they might put their job in jeopardy. And if they put their job in jeopardy, then they might put their livelihood in jeopardy. And if they put their livelihood in jeopardy, then they might put their children in jeopardy.

Ok, all that might be true, but I'm going to ask you for a minute to suspend your disbelief – to stop thinking about this episode like a grown-up and start thinking about it from the vantage point of one of the children who was mesmerized by the music. Could you see this episode as one of the children who didn't know that Joshua Bell was supposed to be brilliant but just loved the music? Or one of the children who didn't think Joshua Bell might have been a homeless panhandler who

should put down his violin and pick up the want ads? After all, Jesus did say, “*Unless you accept the Kingdom of God like a child, you will never enter it.*”

I think it is with those same childlike ears that we are to hear what Jesus says in today’s gospel. “*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.... So do not worry about tomorrow....*”

I was talking with a college student about this passage this week. He, like most of us, tends to worry about his life – not so much about what he will eat or what he will wear, but what he will do when he graduates from college. But then you talk to people in their early to mid 20’s and they have the same worries about their lives – whom they will marry, if they will marry, where they will live, what kind of vocation they will have. And then, of course, the same issues affect us all the way through our lives.

The fun never ends: you start worrying about your children or your health. I was sick two weeks ago for several days, sicker than I’ve been since I was a young boy. So I did what any responsible person does when he’s ill: I looked up my symptoms on Web MD. I was convinced that I was a goner! If you don’t worry about your health, you worry about your finances, your grandchildren, and your retirement. Rare is the person who does not worry about tomorrow. Rare is the person who stops in the Metro and listens to Bach.

This student talked about his father reading him this verse ever since he was young. If he was stressed about school his father would assure him. “*Look at the birds of the air, they neither reap nor sow, nor gather into barns. And yet your heavenly father feeds them.*” If he was worried about relationships, his father would remind him, “*Can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?*” What a good dad.

Jesus is clearly saying when you are worrying you are not trusting. And Jesus is clearly saying, God loves you and God will provide for you. God is trustworthy. To believe in God is not really a set of objective intellectual assertions that you must sign on to. The way the Bible talks about belief is more in line with trust. To believe is to trust your Heavenly Father the way a little child, a toddler, an infant even, trusts her parents.

In fact, the Greek word for “child” that Jesus uses when he says that we must accept the Kingdom like a child is better translated “nursing infant.” I love all the babies that we have at Christ Church now. There is no better picture of trust and dependency than a nursing infant. I hereby declare all babies under 12 months to be our spiritual leaders! We should start having Vestry meetings in the nursery. Don’t stop acting like a baby –start acting like a baby!

Trusting in the God who provides for you is the antidote for worrying about your tomorrow. Obviously I'm not telling you anything you don't already know. But like my friend's father, I am reminding you of what you already know to be true about God. But the problem is this: the journey from your head to your heart is the longest journey in the world. What you know to be true sometimes doesn't help you when your tomorrow looks iffy and your today isn't looking so hot either. And in the day to day, it is so easy to forget about "seeking first the Kingdom of God", as Jesus says in the passage, which is just another way to say trusting God. Seeking is trusting.

Instead, most of us are like the man in the well-worn preacher joke. The man falls off a cliff and grabs a branch jutting out from the rock face. As he dangles 100 feet in the air he calls out to God. "God, if you are there, HELP ME!" To his surprise, he hears a voice from heaven saying, "I'm here, my son. Just let go and I will catch you. Trust me." The man pauses a few seconds and calls out, "Is there anyone else up there?" As Jesus says in the passage, we are the "you of little faith."

An Episcopal minister named William Porcher Dubose perfectly articulates the distance between head knowledge and heart reality when it comes to trusting God. He also gives us some insight into what it means to seek first the kingdom of God – to trust God like a nursing infant. Dubose graduated from UVA in 1859, was ordained and worked as a chaplain during the Civil War. Afterwards he taught theology at Sewanee.

In a letter to his wife during the war – a time when he had every reason to "worry about his life", Dubose wrote, "*How is it that we will so often stray away from God when it is so sweet to be near Him and so full of discomfort and wretchedness to be far from Him? If our hope rested on our own faithfulness how miserable we'd be! But blessed be God, it rests upon His faithfulness and not ours.*"

My experience is that I will not willingly trust God until I see how miserable I am without him. I will try every other avenue until all the avenues lead to dead ends, full of discomforts. Then, when I just can't hold on to the branch any longer, I will not let go of my own volition - I will just fall because my grip fails. And every time, God is there. Oh, me of little faith. It's a good thing my hope rests on His faithfulness and not mine.

Somerset Maugham's novel, *The Razor's Edge*, is a brilliant exposé of where people put their trust for their lives. One character lives for social respectability – seeing and being seen by all the right people. He dies as an old man, cursing a woman who did not invite him to the event of the social season. Another couple

lives for money. They are ruined by the crash of 1929. Another man lives for art. He remains ironic and distant. And finally, the hero seeks spiritual enlightenment from all the sources of wisdom throughout the ages. In a very real way, he is trying to “seek first the kingdom of God.” He ends his journey by spending years at the foot of a guru in India, attaining peace through austere self-abnegation.

Yet in the end, even the spiritually enlightened hero, has lived a life of trust in the self. He is no better off than the socialite who demands to be buried in his aristocratic ancestor’s costume. If our hope rests on our own faithfulness, how miserable we are.

The gospel announcement is that we do not have to go seeking anywhere for God. As Dubose says, “*God has placed forever before our eyes, not the image but the very Person of the Spiritual Man. We have not to ascend into Heaven to bring Him down, nor to descend into the abyss to bring Him up, for He is with us, and near us, and in us.*” As you go through the Metro station of your life, so anxious about your planes, trains, and automobiles, God is there with you, near you, in you. His song is a beautiful song: “*Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life.*” It is a song that will always and forever turn the heads of children.

Amen.