

“Winning the War Over Worry”
Luke 12:22-31

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Several years ago, Bobby McFerrin recorded a little song entitled, “Don’t Worry – Be Happy.” Here is what it said:

Ain’t got no place to lay your head
Somebody came and took your bed
Don’t worry, be happy
The landlord say your rent is late
He may have to litigate
Don’t worry, Be happy

Now, who in this room buys that? Everybody worries, sometimes. To be concerned is to be human, yet, worry can be a problem. For nineteen million people in this country worry is a chronic mental illness. The fact that we humans remember the past, anticipate the future, and make choices about the present adds stress to our lives. The Biblical word for worry means to choke or to strangle. When worry becomes a noose around our necks, we have a problem.

WHAT ARE THE THINGS THAT WORRY US?

According to a survey by U.S.A. Today, we Americans worry about work, money, children, health, marriage and parents. Jesus said, “*Do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. Life is more than food and the body more than clothes.*” Yet, we do worry, oh, how we worry.

We worry about food and clothes. In America, where we produce enough calories to meet the needs of every man, woman, and child, twice over, we continue to worry about food. I have a closet full of people’s advice on what to eat and not to eat as a sure cure for cancer. Meanwhile, Americans eat more food, more often, in larger portions than ever before in the history of the world. When I’m stuck at home unable to eat, I find the number of television ads about food to be astounding. Some of you are already wondering what you will have for dinner.

When Jesus said, “*Don’t worry about the clothes you wear,*” he was talking to people who had to make yarn in order to weave cloth from which a single garment was made. There were no department store clothing sales in Jesus’ day. Houses were not built with his and her walk-in closets, yet, how many of you have opened a closet and lamented, “I just don’t have a thing to wear”?

We worry about health and wholeness. To say that I am not concerned about my health would be a bold-face lie. There is nothing about this cancer war that I enjoy. I hate it; I despise it; I resent it. And, I refuse to let it control my life. Therefore, I make a deliberate choice not to worry about it.

One day when Jesus passed the pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem, he encountered a man who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. When Jesus learned that he had been there for such a long time, he asked the man, “*Do you want to get*

well?” The invalid responded, “Sir I have no one to help me. When I try to get into the pool someone else goes down ahead of me.” That’s what worry will do to you; it leads to pity, agony, and despair. Don’t go there.

Our son is an emergency room physician in Louisville, Kentucky. He tells me that over sixty percent of the patients he treats land in the emergency room not from physical ailments, but anxiety disorders, alcohol or drug abuse, stress, or even simple loneliness.

We worry about relationships and responsibilities. We’ve got kids to raise, jobs to do, marriages to maintain, and none of it is getting easier. Mary and Martha invited Jesus to dinner one night. They were excited to have this leader of growing fame in their home. You know how it is when you have someone over for dinner. You want things to go right and there are a thousand things to do at the last minute after the guests arrive. That’s what caused Martha to lose it. While she was scurrying about trying to get dinner on the table, Mary is sitting at Jesus’ feet, feasting on the conversation. Without thinking, Martha exclaims to Jesus, “*Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me.*” But Jesus replies, “*Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, but one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better.*” A Greek proverb says this: “A bow that is always bent will break!”

HOW CAN WE HANDLE THE WORRIES OF LIFE? WHAT ARE SOME THOUGHTS THAT MIGHT FREE US?

Jesus specifically mentions three. Know your value. In Verse 24 we read, “*You are much more valuable than a bird. Two sparrows are sold for a penny. You are worth more than sparrows.*” Said the robin to the sparrow, “I would really like to know why these anxious human beings rush and worry so?” Said the sparrow to the robin, “I think it must be they know no heavenly Father like the One who cares for you and me.”

God is not out to hurt you. God wants to help you, protect you, feed you, love you. He’s on your side when pain abounds. When trouble persists, he stays around. “Like a Bridge Over Troubled Water,” he lays himself down. God cares for his own.

Accept your limitations. “*Who of you by worrying about it can add a single hour to his life?*” (Verse 25). Think about it. Worry is like a rocking chair; it gives you something to do, but it doesn’t get you anywhere. I know that’s hard to swallow. We are used to getting things done. If it’s broke, fix it. If it’s old, replace it. If it’s needed, do it. I like action-packed doers of the Word. That’s what I love about this church. Yet there remain illnesses that won’t heal, problems that can’t be solved and people who won’t shape up. That’s frustrating! When I have no where to go, I am comforted by the prayer Reinhold Niebuhr taught us to pray:

God, grant me the serenity
To accept the things I cannot change,
Courage to change the things I can
And the wisdom to know the difference.

Take the longer view. Verse 31 says, "*Seek God's kingdom first, and all these things will be given to you as well.*" Fifty years from now it's not going to matter if you get the grass cut, the laundry done or the beds made. Your golf score is not going to determine your place in glory. Fifty years from now nobody is going to remember a single word I said today. But, fifty years from now these children baptized today may love Jesus. Fifty years from now, you Sunshine Choir members will still know the songs you've sung on tour. Fifty years from now somebody might enter heaven's gates because you took time to care.

Good God deliver us from narrow-mindedness. Save us from short-sightedness. Forgive us for squeezing you into our kingdom molds instead of being transformed into your kingdom goals. Fix our minds on things eternal. For only then will life make sense and our worries be ended.

People say that a day of worry is more exhausting than a day of work. Some people handle worry by eating chocolates, others have a stiff drink. There are web sites that will worry for you if you will pay the price.

I have a better idea. Why don't you bring your worries to the Lord and leave them there. Why not trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding? Why not discover today that Jesus cares?

Amen.