

Matthew 6 25-34 **Don't Worry Be Happy.**

Disclaimer: Material for this message was adapted in part from sermons found on the Sermon Central website.

In 1988, Bobby McFerrin wrote a tune, that immediately went to the top of the billboard charts and has since become a perennial summertime beach party favorite – one of the few times when we might actually take its advice seriously.

Here's a little song I wrote
You might want to sing it note for note
Don't worry, be happy.
In every life we have some trouble
But when you worry you make it double
Don't worry, be happy. Don't worry, be happy now.

And so it goes. Bobby actually wrote another 200 verses for his song, all of which were then published as a book.

It's a catchy tune, but not a completely new concept. That same philosophy was espoused by Jesus of Nazareth 2000 years ago, in His Sermon on the Mount. Jesus not only said "*Don't worry*" He backed it up by repeatedly asking, "*Why do you worry?*"

"*Don't worry, be happy,*" but that is a lot easier said than done. Millions of copies of Bobby McFerrin's record have been sold around the world, but it didn't seem to have a major impact on whether or not people stopped worrying.

Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Matt 6: 25

We are fortunate in that most of us don't spend a lot of time worrying about where our next meal will come from, or if we have enough layers to keep us warm in the winter months. But for far too many people, these sorts of concerns do cause daily worry. We also need to admit that, no matter what our circumstances, every single person worries about something, whether it's concerning basic needs or frivolous wants, and everything in between.

People in Palestine Ohio, worry about long-term poisoned air, water, and soil after their recent train derailment. With anti-Semitism again on the rise, Jewish people worry about renewed attacks on themselves and their synagogues. People in Israel and Gaza are concerned that at any moment a missile might drop from the sky, destroying the neighborhood and killing innocent friends and family.

Closer to home, we worry about when the bottom might totally fall out of the stock market again, completely obliterating our retirement savings, or whether a shooter is going to show up in our children's class room.

We live with such fears on a regular basis. Is China spying on us through our cell phones? What if terrorists shut down the national power grid? Could a tornado wipe out my home or my entire home town? Will the next fatal car accident on the news name a member of my family?

These are the things that worry us and make us anxious, and I don't want to downplay the significance of the realities we face. Whether we are concerned about having enough of the basic necessities like food, clothing, and shelter, or worrying over natural disasters and man-made attacks, these are legitimate reasons for worry.

So with all these truly reasonable concerns, how can Jesus calmly tell us not to worry? Reading this passage, I think, "*Oh how nice: cute birds and pretty flowers,*" but does Jesus REALLY expect me not to worry about making sure my family is safe, fed, clothed, and provided for? This is a pipe dream! How could Jesus possibly expect us to live life not worrying?

But we have to remember, Jesus knows about worry. Even though He is God's son, He was also human like us, with all the same experiences and feelings. I imagine that from time to time Jesus would be walking along with the crowds and His stomach would begin to rumble, and He'd start thinking about where He was going to eat that evening. He might've worried, just a little bit. Or, in sending His apostles out into the world, I am sure He was worried if they actually could disciple everyone, and in teaching others, that they would remember everything He had taught them.

So it's not so much that Jesus is telling us that we should live without worry; rather, I think, He is cautioning us about being consumed by worry. That is why the first thing we should note in this morning's text, is that the word that Christ used for **worry** in the Greek actually meant "***an anxious worry,***" it conveys a sense of continued anxiety.

So when you worry about and go to check on your grandchild out playing in the neighborhood, that's not a problem. But if you become consumed with such worry that you can no longer function, or you never let them outside of the house, then you have a problem. There is a world of difference between concern and anxious worrying. And so Jesus spends the next ten verses explaining why we shouldn't worry.

First because, worry is needless, useless, even dangerous. Jesus began with the most basic concerns of life; our need for food, clothing, and shelter. Now these aren't frivolous concerns. You might be able to run around bare tailed and live under a tree on the island of Tuvalu. But it's a small atoll, so for most of the world that just isn't an option. Besides on Tuvalu, they are really worried about losing their entire island to rising sea levels.

So Jesus begins with the basics. He doesn't say, "*Don't worry about where your next car is going to come from*", He says "*Don't worry about where your next meal is going to come from*" He doesn't say "*Don't worry whether you have Levis or Reeboks to wear*" He says "*Don't worry about what you wear.*"

Now that is not to say that we shouldn't be concerned with the material things of life, or with providing for our families. But the point is, **has worry ever been able to provide anything that we have ever needed?** Nope. Not at all. Here is a wise saying: "*Worry is like a rocking chair, it gives you something to do but doesn't get you anywhere.*" So, worry is essentially wasted energy, energy which could be used a lot more productively somewhere else.

Jesus continues on by drawing a couple of examples from nature to illustrate His point. ²⁶*Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?* Matthew 6:26

Now don't mistake what Jesus has said and start thinking, "*Great! I don't have to do anything but wait for God to provide me with all my needs, and all my wants.*" Christ wasn't talking about not being gainfully employed, He wasn't talking about not having to work He was talking about worrying.

You don't have to watch a bird very long to realize that theirs isn't a life of ease; they are constantly, building nests, hunting for food, feeding chicks, and avoiding cats. But I would suspect that your average bird doesn't agonize over whether or not there will be another worm to catch tomorrow, or whether she'll be able to find enough twigs to build a new nest.

In a similar thought Jesus asks, *and why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin,* ²⁹*yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these.* Matthew 6:28-29

One of the things I really love about living here in Virginia is the seasonal parade of flowers. It seems like every other week we are presented with another flowering tree, bush, or bulb. Israel also has beautiful flowers and fruit; a wall of flowering bougainvillea is stunning, along with olives, figs, and grapes for the picking. Perhaps the hill on which they were sitting was covered with flowers, so Christ is saying "Look around you, look at the beauty that God has created and yet it doesn't worry!"

If we can concede that God created everything around us, and if we can concede that God created us, then we should be able to concede that the same God who created us can take care of us. **When you think about it, our worrying is essentially a lack of faith in God's promise and ability to provide for us.**

Christ then comes to the point: *can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?* Matthew 6:27 Pretty much sums it up, doesn't it?

You see, worry is not only needless, for a believer it is also useless. **Worry doesn't change a thing.** Everything that you worry about will fall into one of two categories.

- It is either something you can do something about, or it's something that you can't do anything about.
- And if you can do something about it, then do it. But if you can't do anything then worrying about it isn't going to solve the problem. It won't go away if you worry about it and it's not going to get any smaller. If anything it's going to get bigger and bigger in your imagination.

It's kind of like the guy who had a flat tire on a back road late at night and then discovered that his jack was missing. As he starts down the long dark road to a farmhouse in the distance he gets to thinking,

- "What happens if there's been a lot of break ins around here lately? And what if the farmer hears me and thinks I'm a burglar?"
- And what if he's bought himself a couple of pit bulls for protection?"
- And what if when I arrive he doesn't give me a chance to explain who I am and when I knock on the door he turns the dogs loose on me?"

Well the closer he got to the farm the more he had convinced himself that the very worst was going to happen. So when he finally got to the house he beat on the door and when the farmer answered the guy shouted, "I didn't want your dumb old jack anyway" and stormed back to his car.

Not only is worry needless and useless but it's also dangerous. **Worry is detrimental to your health.** The two illnesses that most typify our society today are ulcers and coronary disease. Both of which have stress at their root. There are Christians who shun alcohol and tobacco because they are harmful to their bodies and yet the very same people worry themselves into an early grave. Worry is not a harmless pastime, it will make you old and will kill you before your time.

Second, worry is blind. One thing that I remember from High School History, that my teacher was fond of telling us is, "*the one thing we learn from history is that we don't learn from history;*" that applies equally to our worries as well.

If we were to chart the various things that we worry about we would probably discover that most of them are repeats. That is to say that we've already worried about them once, twice, or three times before. And if the truth was known they probably didn't happen then and they probably won't happen now. God didn't forsake you yesterday and He won't forsake you today. God is faithful and we only need to look at how He fulfilled our needs in the past to see that He will fulfill our needs in the future.

So I suppose, what we need to do is to look at all the things that we've worried about in the past and say, "*Well I've already worried over those things so it's useless to spend any more time on them now.*" God has been good and there is no reason for me to suspect that He is going to change, right?

We need only look at the blessings of yesterday to see the promises for tomorrow. Look around you Jesus says, see how God takes care of the flowers and the birds, and then reflect on how much more important you are to Him than they are. Realize that God loved you so much that He sent His only begotten Son, Jesus to die on the cross for you. And if He loved you that much then He's not going to forsake you now.

Finally, worry is irreligious. Christ said it's the heathen who worry. That's true, because to say that we need to worry is to say that God can't or won't take care of His Children; and to say that is to commit blasphemy.

Has God ever let you down?

Has God ever failed you?

To begin to doubt Him now is to ignore all that he's done for you in the past. Our friends, our family, even our earthly parents may disappoint us and let us down but God never will. And so Jesus gives us two solutions to worry.

The first is to seek to live righteously in the kingdom of God, funny how that keeps coming up. Jesus keeps coming back to this principle of putting God's Kingdom first. And it works; have you ever noticed that when you're busy doing God's work, you're too busy to worry.

As followers of Christ, our main objective is to be representatives for God. No matter how noble the other pursuits of our life may seem, our major pursuit needs to be living as faithful citizens of God's Kingdom. The great thing is that when we make that our priority, we can be sure that God will be taking care of the details.

The second thing that Christ tells us to do is to take life one day at a time. The rest of our life is enormous, but today has only twenty four hours in it and that's a big enough bite if we want to use our time wisely. As the apostle Paul advised...

Be careful then how you live,
not as unwise people but as wise,
making the most of the time ...

Ephesians 5:15-16

How might you react if your bank credited \$86,400 dollars to your account every single day, the catch being that the money had to be used up the same day, if not, it's taken away. But the process is then renewed the next day and every other day with \$86,400 being credited to your account daily. I'm sure most people would have no hesitation

and would find ways to use most, if not all that money every day! Similarly, God blesses us with 86,400 seconds credited every day, which can never be reclaimed if not used! Let us therefore use all our time wisely and without worry.

Here is another wise saying from days gone by, "*Yard by yard life is hard, but inch by inch it is a cinch.*" Which is exactly what Jesus meant by saying ...

So do not worry about tomorrow,
for tomorrow will bring worries of its own.
Today's trouble is enough for today
Matthew 6:34

So the entire question about our worrying and the reason why Jesus spent so much time talking about worrying is this: **Do I believe – as Jesus said - that God cares for me? How much faith do I truly have in God's ability to provide for my every need?**

God has told me to *cast all my cares on Him, because He cares for me.* ^{1 Peter 5:7} My past experience certainly has shown that He has cared for me many times, even when I didn't recognize His caring hand in my life. Only later, when I reflected back on the "coincidence" of the day, did I see God's touch.

So somewhere along the line I decided that while I haven't come to the place where I stop worrying all together, but that I could at least limit my worrying to that which I can do something about today! During this day I may fret and stew and imagine the worst, but tonight when I go to bed, I will give this concern to God and let Him worry about it. Since God doesn't worry, neither should I. Don't worry, be happy.