

Matthew 6.19-34
Worship More, Worry Less
WRCOB 8.25.24

Jesus tells his listeners, not to worry.

He tells us three times in today's passage.

The Apostle Paul says it too
In his letter to the church in Philippi

Philippians 4:6-7 CEB

⁶ Don't be anxious about anything; rather, bring up all of your requests to God in your prayers and petitions, along with giving thanks. ⁷ Then the peace of God that exceeds all understanding will keep your hearts and minds safe in Christ Jesus.

The word we translate from the Greek
As worry or anxious is

Merimnao

It is a composite word made up of

- *Merizo (to divide)*
- *Nous (mind)*

The Greek understanding of worry then
Is that which divides the mind
A good description for anxiety, isn't it?

The title of my sermon is Worship More, Worry Less
The idea that worry is self-absorbing
An unhealthy inward-focus.

Worship, on the other hand, is God-absorbing
A healthy, life-giving experience.

It is a biblical conclusion then
That the more we worship God
The less worry we experience in life.

I think that is what Jesus means
When he says to seek first God's kingdom
And everything else will fall into place.

Corrie Ten Bloom
The Dutch citizen who hid Jewish refugees
During the Nazi's Holocaust
Made this remark

*Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow
It empties today of its strength.*

~~

Jesus continues to preach his Sermon on the Mount.

He looks around at the crowds surrounding him
As they hang on to his every word.

But now he notices their faces change.

Right about now, they have this
You've-got-to-be-kidding-me
Kind of look on their faces

Seriously, he was teaching things that went way beyond
Anything they'd ever heard before.

He can't be serious, can he?
But serious he was

Don't live with anger in your hearts
Don't lust

Don't ever think about divorce
Don't swear

Don't resist evil

When someone strikes you
Turn the other cheek.

When someone sues you
Give him more than he asks

Not only should we love our neighbors
We need to love our enemies.

Stop being hypocrites.

And now this

Don't worry about your life
What you will eat, what you will drink
Or what you will wear.

Jesus, tell that to a 13-year-old Middle Schooler.

What you wear to school is the only thing that matters.

I'm thinking, along about now,
If I was up there on that mountain

I'd be wishing I was back on my boat
Doing a little fishing
Minding my own business.

Jesus, you ask too much!

~~

Jesus knows his words are challenging
And in verse 25, changes the tone of his voice

He gently and quietly speaks to them
With words of comfort

Look at the birds
They don't worry about life

And what about the lilies
They aren't concerned about tomorrow

God has seen to it that the grass is clothed.

Won't God see to it that you are too?

Do not worry about your life.

Is not life more than what you eat, drink or wear?

~~

Certainly, words of truth
But it's easier said than done.

The truth is we all worry

Some of us more, some of us less.

We come to church on Sunday
Professing confidence in a God
Who will provide what we need

And then go home and worry the rest of the week.

For some, there is a disconnect
Between Sunday and Monday through Friday.

For an hour out of the week
We focus on our love of God
And God's love for us.

And then we spend the rest of the week
Worrying about all the things people worry about.

Money, job, bills, relationships
Our health, others' health
Crime, the future, our country
The list is endless.

But what if we could change our worry to worship
Seek first the things of God
Trust that things will work out for the good?

This is what Jesus is teaching us today.

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Worry is a needless emotion.

We do not need to worry.

When God created humans
God created us with important emotions.

Emotion is there to help us perceive
What is happening around us.

Anger help us to know
That an injustice occurred.

Love is an emotion that draws us to one another.

Fear is another important God-given emotion.

It alerts us to real and perceived dangers.

Worry is derived from fear.

Fear is a God-given reaction
Worry is self-induced.

Jesus teaches to consider what causes us to worry

Matthew 6:25-27 CEB

^{25b} “Isn’t life more than food and the body more than clothes?”

²⁶ Look at the birds in the sky. They don’t sow seed or harvest grain or gather crops into barns. Yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren’t you worth much more than they are?

²⁷ Who among you by worrying can add a single moment to your life?

Worry reflects our relationship to God.

Jesus’ questions were an invitation
To trust him as creator and provider

Worry erodes that trust.

Relinquishing our fears and worries to God.
Releases worry’s powerful paralysis on our souls

A 17th Century French Bishop

Don't worry about the future--worry quenches the work of grace within you. The future belongs to God. He is in charge of all things. Never second-guess him."

~~

Now, let me say, a little self-reflection is a good thing.

It can identify things that hinder spiritual growth.

But too much naval gazing causes extensive worry

When we extend worship

Beyond the Sunday morning hour

And make it part of our everyday routine

Worry won't have any room to maneuver.

Simply because worship and worry are not compatible.

Ruth Bell Graham, a sister to Billy Graham, wrote

Worship and worry cannot live in the same heart; they are mutually exclusive.

It comes down to a matter of trust.

Are you going to rely on your worries

To work things out?

Or are you going to turn it over to God?

Let me give you an example from John Powel

In an article in Preaching Today

I used to carry my aged mother up and down the stairs of our home here in Chicago. And she would grab onto

the banister while I was carrying her up or down the stairs and hold on to it so tightly we couldn't move.

I'd say, "Momma, you have to let go of the banister or we can't move." And she looked at me with her plaintive little eyes and said, "I'm afraid you'll drop me."

The more we can learn to trust in a loving God
The less worry we have to carry in our lives.

As Paul says, don't be anxious about anything
But in your prayers, petitions, and thanksgiving
Present your requests to God.

And the peace of God
Which surpasses all understanding
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

~~

"Worship more, worry less" is our maxim for today.

When Jesus says, "Don't worry"
And "Seek ye first the kingdom"

What Jesus is saying is
Worship me
And find yourself worrying less.

When we worship God
God becomes bigger and worries become smaller.

When we worry
God becomes smaller and our problems bigger.

So, here's what's up

When Jesus says

Matthew 6:31 NRSV

³¹ Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?'

And you add Paul's thoughts

1 Corinthians 10:31 NRSV

³¹ So, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God.

Worship is not just what we do on Sunday morning

Worship is doing everything we do for the glory of God

Because worship means "worth-ship"
The state of being worthy.

Everything we do is an act of worship
If we do it for the glory of God

Give me examples of worship
That is outside of Sunday morning.

Spending time in prayer and meditation
Is an act of worship

Loving God is an act of worship
Loving our neighbor is an act of worship

Practicing gratitude is definitely an act of worship.

And every act of worship
Everything we do for the glory of God
Decreases every worry upon our hearts.

<https://youtu.be/tLpyklFEahs>

Get busy living
By doing everything for God's glory

Or get busy dying by worrying yourself to death.

Your choice.

We can start right here this morning
As we give praise and glory and honor to God.

For God is worthy of our praise.

But let worship not end here
But carry it with you to the rest of the week.

John 16:33 CEB

³³ I've said these things to you so that you will have peace in me. In the world you have distress. But be encouraged! I have conquered the world."

1 Peter 5:7 NLT

⁷ Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.

Instead of worrying, let's focus on worshipping God
And find peace in knowing He's got this.