

Why Worry?

Luke 12:22-34

Pastor Jim Rademaker

based on messages by William Cwirla and James Douthwaite

Anxiety. We all have it to one degree or another. Sleepless nights, panic attacks in the middle of the day. Racing heartbeat. Inability to focus on any one thing for more than a few seconds. Anxiety is symptomatic of our culture. The leading over-the-counter medications are for sleep and stomach disorders. Anti-anxiety meds are among the leading prescription drugs. We are an anxious society, an anxious people living in a constant state of anxiety, and it's eating us up from the inside. (Cwirla)

And he said to his disciples, "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing.

Jesus says life is more than what? More than just surviving. More than just the material. More than just the here and now. More than what can be seen. He then uses the ravens, the birds of the air, as an example. They don't plant crops. They don't harvest. So how do they make it? How do they survive day in and day out? Someone is watching out for them. Someone is looking out for them. Caring for them. GOD provides for them!

Jesus challenges us to trust that God is doing the same for us. Watching over us. Caring for us. After all, you and I are far more valuable to God than the birds of the air, aren't we? Yes, to the point of God giving up His life for us!

Jesus then asks about the *benefits* of worrying. What do we get out of worrying? By worrying, can we add anything to our lives, even a single hour to our lifespan? Not only does worry *not* add to our lives, worrying does what? It takes away from our lives. It robs us of life. So why do we do it, all this worrying?

In all our worrying, it's as though we think we're all alone. Abandoned. But that's not true. That's a lie we're believing. The truth is what? We're not all alone. God's watching over us. He's in control. Therefore, instead of worrying, we should be doing what? Trusting. Trusting God, that He's in control. Trusting our selves; trusting our lives; our days, our nights, our present, our future, in His hands.

Martin Luther puts it this way ... "Thus, our dear Lord holds before us the example of the birds, as if to say, Birds do not have a care in the world; for they know they have an excellent kitchen chef and generous butler whose name is the heavenly Father ... The same heavenly Father wants gladly to be to your kitchen chef and butler, if you would only believe it or want to have him. He proves it by what he does; he gives you land, granary, cellar, and barns; he gives you abundance much more than he gives the birds. Why then won't you trust in him? Do like the birds - learn to believe, sing, be happy, and let your heavenly Father do the caring for you"

Jesus then uses the flowers, or lilies of the field, as another example. How do they survive? How do they not only survive, but get so beautiful? What do they do? They don't work. God's the one who gives them their beauty; they're value. They live and survive and flourish because of God. He's watching over them. He's caring for them. And if God cares enough for even the grass and flowers of the field, which don't even last that long - they're here today and gone tomorrow - what does He think of you, oh, you of little faith; little trust?

You're not alone in this world. Stop focusing so much on the things of this world, especially material things - that you forget to look up; that you forget Someone's looking out for you. Someone's caring for you - every day, all day long. Someone who cares enough to give His life for you!

Don't be like the rich fool who was all wrapped up in the things of this world. Trusting in them to take care of him. Seeking an earthly, temporary kingdom. Seeking his own kingdom, instead of looking up to God. What's going to happen to the kingdoms of this world? They will all end. Then, what will you have? *"But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."*

Jesus says don't let anxiety over *things* dominate your life. That's for whom? That's what the pagans do. The unbelievers. They run after things. They're focus is on the stuff of this world; on this earthly kingdom. It's all they've got. But not you. Why would you ever seek these things, as if they're everything; like a god to you?

What does your Heavenly Father know? He knows you need the basic necessities of life. But there's *more* to life than the material, isn't there? Life is ultimately about the Kingdom of God. That's what you were made for. That's your purpose. Your meaning. Your fulfillment. You were made for God. To be in relationship with Him. To be loved by Him. To look to Him. To love Him back.

So seek *Him*. Run after *Him*. Trust *Him*. Live for *Him*. Stop living like life is about stuff; about accumulating stuff; getting stuff; trusting in stuff, wearing yourself out worrying about stuff; seeking stuff; worshipping stuff. Trust God with that; with the basics. Instead, spend your days seeking *Him*.

How do you *hear* the words of Jesus today, "Do not be anxious, do not worry"? Do you hear them as *good* news? Or do you hear them as Jesus *commanding* you to do something? I think most of the time it's probably the latter. That when Jesus says, *do not be anxious* or *do not worry*, we hear that as Jesus *scolding* us, wagging His finger at us, who have fallen short in the "do not worry" department, and commanding us to change.

And I know you *want* to do this, right, not worry? You *want* to do what Jesus says. And so, hearing these words of Jesus, you (once again) tell yourself what? To stop worrying, and trust more. But it doesn't always work, does it - at least not for very long.

But here's the good news: that's *not* why Jesus says these words today. Jesus has come, not to add to your burden, but to *carry* it for you, make your burden *light*, and give you *rest* (Matt 11:28). So don't hear these words today as a command for you to fix yourself. Instead, be *comforted*. You have a Father in heaven who's taking care of you; who knows what you need; who created all things and is caring for all things - even the things that we so often don't even notice - like the ravens, the lilies, and the grass. And if them, then you too, who are greater and worth more than all the birds and flowers put together. For you're not here today and gone tomorrow like them. You're God's child, dearly loved, for all eternity, in Christ Jesus your Lord!

And you were like that at one time ... without worry. Do you remember? It was when you were young. I was born in the 60s, a time of war and great upheaval in our society. I remember the 70s and the long lines at the gas stations. I remember the recession in the early 1980s. I remember the high interest rates. Actually, I don't. You know what I was doing? I was playing, and going to school, and enjoying being a kid. Oblivious to it all.

Children are often like that. If they're in a stable, healthy home situation, young children don't worry a whole lot. They know that Dad has things under control. They know Mom's got it covered. Food, clothing, shelter, protection? *They* are worrying about those things, so I don't have to. So children are often free, and care-free. And even when parents don't come through, or even hurt their children, those children often still look to their *parents* and rely on their *parents* for what they need. There's a confidence there. A trust there.

It's when we grow up and get a little older that things begin to change. We move on from childhood and become adults. And increased responsibilities, and obligations, and the sin so prevalent in the world, cause us to be anxious and to worry. The care free days vanish and our untroubled childhood is exchanged for hypertension, ulcers, sleepless nights.

And so today Jesus is inviting you back. To be *children* again. Children of a Heavenly Father, who has it covered for you - no matter what "it" is. For the biggest "its" of all - sin, death, devil, hell, grave, and eternal life, He's already taken care of for you. Covered by Jesus blood. Believing in Jesus, trusting in His death; in His resurrection for you, you're His child, adopted into the family of God, and under the constant care of a Father who won't let you down; who won't hurt you, ever. A Father who won't spoil you, but will discipline you when necessary, and love you enough to tell you the truth. Or in other words, a Father you can count on. (Douthwaite)

Anxiety. We all have it to one degree or another. We're an anxious society; an anxious people living in a constant state of anxiety. And what does our anxiety do for us? Does it put food on the table? Does it clothe you or your children? Can your anxiety lengthen your life one moment? What does your anxiety add to your life except sleepless nights, anxious days, and indigestion?

If God takes care of the birds, if He clothes the lilies and the grass, why are you so anxious, His foremost creature made in His image? The question contains the answer and the diagnosis. The lilies of the field, like the birds, are a picture of *faith* before God. And our anxieties reveal what? The littleness of our faith; the largeness of our unbelief.

When Jesus' disciples are worried because they hadn't brought any bread with them in the boat, Jesus called them what? "Little faith" ones, for not remembering the feeding of the five-thousand. When the disciples in the storm wake Jesus up as He's sleeping in the back of the boat, He calls them what? "Little faith" ones. When Peter cries

out in panic as he begins to sink while walking on the water, Jesus says what? "Why did you doubt, O you of little faith?"

We trust God with the big things – forgiveness of sins, resurrection from the dead, eternal life. But the little things, like food and clothing, why don't we trust Him with these as well? Why are we so anxious, O little faith ones?

This doesn't mean sit back, trust God, and do nothing. The birds of the air aren't idle. If you watch a bird, they're quite busy. The lilies of the field aren't lazy either. They're growing, reaching down into the soil and up to the sun. Faith isn't idle; it's living and active, drawing life from God and loving others. The birds and the plants do *naturally*, what we don't do by nature. They *trust*. They trust their Creator.

Anxiety begins where? It begins from *within*. It's often the stress of acquisition, and debt, and consumption, and greed, and covetousness. Anxiety is a spiritual disorder; a stress disorder of the soul, where we can find no rest, no inner peace, no quiet or stillness.

This calls for what? Repentance. That *doesn't* mean "stop being anxious." "Don't worry, be happy." Unfortunately, when we hear the word "repentance," we often think in terms of "stop sinning;" *stop* doing what you're doing, and do something better. When you *focus* on *not* sinning, what often happens? You're prone to sin more. When you *focus* your thoughts on *not* being anxious, and try to talk yourself out of it, what often happens? You become *anxious* over *not* being anxious.

Repentance in its biblical sense is a change of *mind*; a change of heart - thinking of things in a *different* way; seeing things in a new light, from a different perspective/ recognizing; *re-cognizing*, rethinking a reality we fail to notice. (Cwirla)

Rejoice in the Lord always ... The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:4-7)

But Abram said, "O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless ... And [the LORD] brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness. (Gen 15:2)

So what are you worried about, dear child of God? Your future? Your children's future or grandchildren's future? Our nation's future? The world's future? Is it something your Father can't provide? Is it something He can't see you through? Is it something greater than He? Then don't be anxious about it.

"Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear him, on those who hope in his steadfast love, that he may deliver their soul from death and keep them alive in famine. Our soul waits for the Lord; he is our help and our shield. For our heart is glad in him, because we trust in his holy name. Let your steadfast love, O Lord, be upon us, even as we hope in you. (Psalm 33:18)