

Isn't it amazing it seems that when something happens, we always tend to think the worst? Recently, a member of our congregation just came back from the Midwest to stay the winter in the Villages. They were in church one Sunday. Then they disappeared for two weeks. I thought the worst. Maybe, I said something in the sermon that upset them. Maybe somebody from church offended them in some way. So I get the courage to call them up. They tell me, "Pastor, we just felt a little uncomfortable with the large group in the sanctuary. We know that people are separated by one seat, but we would feel more comfortable watching online for now. Your message was fine. Open Bible is a great church.

How about you? Do You tend to think the worst when something happens. So the number of Covid Cases is picking up in Sumter County. Oh, No, I could now get this dreaded virus and die. Even though less than 1 percent of the population do actually die when they get it. Or you hear about a tragic car accident on 441-27 or 301 and you wonder if it was someone you knew personally. Or your grandson or granddaughter is in their teens and is in a serious relationship. And you are worried. What if? There's an entire industry that builds on our worries called insurance.

We make justifications for our worry and use phrases like, "I'm just concerned" when actually we're worried. I want to talk with you today about, How to stop worrying and start living. The Bible teaches that you can win over worry. The old English word for "worry" means "to choke" or "to strangle". Worry will choke your happiness.

So Jesus Christ, in the Sermon on the Mount, gives us some insights on worry. In Matthew 6:25 He says, *"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life."* That is not a suggestion. That is a command. He says, Don't worry! That's got to be the hardest command in the Bible to keep. Yet whenever God gives us a command, He always gives us the power and the practical ways to fulfill it.

First I want you to notice that in this passage of Scripture, Jesus gives us 5 reasons why we're not to worry. **1.** v. 25 *"Therefore I tell you, don't worry about your life, what you'll eat or drink, or about your body, what you'll wear. Is not life more important than food and the body more important than clothes?"* The first thing Jesus says is that worry is **UNREASONABLE**. It doesn't make sense. It's irrational. If God has given you life, which is far greater than any material possessions, will he not provide you with the lesser gifts of food, drink, clothing and shelter? Would it make sense at all for God to give us life and then be unconcerned about sustaining that life? The answer is NO. Worry is unreasonable. So Jesus says, "Don't worry." v. 26 He says *"Look at the birds in the air. They don't sow, they don't reap, they don't store in barns. Yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? And see, why do you worry about your clothes? See the lilies of the field how they grow. They don't labor or spin but I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these."* Jesus says first don't worry because it's unreasonable. Two, don't worry because It's **UNNATURAL**. He says look at the birds. If anybody was on God's welfare rolls, it's the birds. All they do is eat, fly around, and sing a little bit. He says, Look at the birds. God takes care of them. Then in v. 28, He gives us a botany lesson. He says, Look at the flowers, look at the intricate design and the complex beauty. God takes care of the flowers. Don't worry.

The fact of the matter is, animals don't worry, plants don't worry. There's only one thing in all of God's creation that worries -- human beings. Everything else trusts God. Everything else trusts God to care for them. Worry is not natural. You weren't born worrying. It's something you learn. That's good because if it's something you learned, it's something that can be unlearned. If God provides for the needs of the birds of the air, who don't even sow or reap or store away in barns, will he not provide for your needs. You have the advantage of being able to sow and reap and store up fruit in barns. You have the advantage over the lilies that you can labor and spin. You are far more valuable than a bunch of birds or lilies, because you were created with a soul, that will live on forever. So worry is not only unreasonable, worry is

unnatural. **3.** v. 27 *"Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?"* The third thing Jesus says is that worry is **UNHELPFUL**. It doesn't work. It's useless. Worrying cannot make me taller, shorter, lengthen my life. In fact it does the opposite, it shortens my life. I get so up tight, it ruins my life and it makes me ill. Worry never moves you one inch closer to a solution. It's like a rocking chair. You've got a lot of activity, but you don't make any progress -- back and forth, back and forth. That's what worry is. The only thing that worry changes is you. It makes you more miserable. It cannot change the situation.

4. Worry is **UNNECESSARY**. Jesus said, you don't need to worry. It's unnecessary because I promise to take care of you if you'll just trust Him. When I was a child, whenever I had a need, I would go to my mom. I would ask her for money and she would give me some money. I didn't worry about where the money was coming from. I didn't worry about whether my mom had it or not. I asked her for the money and she supplied. God says, "I'm your heavenly Father. And you don't have to worry. I will take care of your needs if you trust Me." You're valuable to Me."

God showed how valuable we are to him when he sent his son Jesus Christ into the world. We had disregarded his commandments again and again. We broke the 1st commandment when we failed to trust in him and worried. But our God did not disregard us. He sent his Son Jesus who always trusted his heavenly Father, and never worried. Jesus lived that trusting life for us. Then he died for all the times we have worried. Now thru faith in Jesus, we are assured that all our needs in life will be met. That oneday we will go to heaven. In Philippians 4:19 is says *"My God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus* If God can be trusted for eternal salvation, He can be trusted in the daily experiences of life. Jesus says, Don't worry. It is unnecessary -- God says He'll help you if you trust Him.

5. And Worry is UnChristian. v. 31 *"So don't worry saying 'What will we eat or what will we drink or what will we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things. Your heavenly Father knows you need them."* God says, I know you need those things. Don't worry like the pagans. Don't worry like somebody who doesn't believe, somebody who doesn't have any faith. Worry is **UN CHRISTIAN**. Non Christians have a right to worry. They ought to. They're trying to make it through the world on their own effort. They're created by God for a purpose but go through life ignoring God and that purpose. I'd worry too!

Worry really is practical atheism. It's acting as if there's no God. It's saying, "I believe that God's not really real and He can't take care of my needs or He won't take care of my needs, therefore I've got to help myself out of this mess." And we begin to think that it all depends on ourselves. Summed up in two words it's playing God. Worry is playing God. Worry is assuming responsibility that God never intended for you to have in the first place. He says, "Relax and trust Me."

When God commands you to do something, He always give you the power and the practical steps to fulfill it. What are the steps in how to overcome worry? **Step One:** v. 33 *"But seek ye first His kingdom and His righteousness and all of these other things will be given to you as well."* Food, clothing, happiness -- all these other things. Seek first His kingdom and righteousness and all the other things will be given to you as well.

The first step in overcoming worry is **PUT JESUS FIRST IN EVERY AREA OF YOUR LIFE**. We will want to serve Jesus in everything we do. We will want to live righteous lives because we know that we are righteous in his sight by virtue of Christ's perfect life and his innocent suffering and death. Because of Christ, we are God's dear children. We will want to be faithful in the use of the means by which he preserves and strengthens us in the faith, His Word and sacraments. Commit your life to Jesus Christ and He can heal your worries. As long as we love anything before God, we're going to be victimized by worry and anxiety.

It's funny about money that whether you've got it or whether you don't have it, you still worry about it. You can be a multi- millionaire or you can be dirt poor, but either way, you're still going to worry about it. If you don't have it, you worry about how to get it. If you've got it,

you'll worry about losing it. Either way, you're going to worry. So He says, "Don't worry about those kinds of things. Trust Me. Put Me first in your life." **Second step:** v. 34 *"Therefore do not worry about tomorrow. Tomorrow will worry about itself. Everyday has enough trouble of its own."* That is about as relevant as you can get. **LIVE ONE DAY AT A TIME.** Jesus says don't open your umbrella before it starts raining. Every week there are two days you should never worry about: Yesterday and Tomorrow. Concentrate on Today. Why should I live one day at a time? Two reasons: 1. In worrying about tomorrow and tomorrow's problems, I miss today's blessings. I'm so caught up in what's going to happen tomorrow, I can't enjoy today. 2. God will give you the power for the problem tomorrow. Remember when the Israelites got manna in the Old Testament. God gave it to them one day at a time. He said they couldn't store it up because He wanted them to trust Him on a moment by moment basis. The Bible does not say, "Give us this day our weekly bread." It says, *"Give us this day our daily bread."* What you need for today will be sufficient for today. When you get to the problem tomorrow, God will give you the power for the problem tomorrow. He's not going to give you the power today for tomorrow's problems. Don't worry about them. Otherwise, you're working on a situation that God doesn't give you the power to work on.

The future, when you think about it, can really be overwhelming. It can get you down when you realize how it's coming in at you. God designed the future to come at our lives in bite sized portions. It comes in 24-hour segments, one day at a time. It's like the hour glass. You flip it upside down and the sand goes through, but only one grain at a time. That's the way God intends for us to deal with our problems -- one at a time. You deal with one and then the next one comes along to deal with. Finally, **TRUST GOD TO CARE FOR THE THINGS BEYOND YOUR CONTROL.** You can't control them anyway so you might as well trust God for them. It will make life a whole lot easier. Trust God to care for the things beyond your control. Don't panic -- pray. That's your alternatives -- panic or pray. In Philippians 4:6-7 it says *"Don't worry about anything but pray about everything."* . 1 Peter 5:7 *"Cast all your anxieties upon the Lord for he cares for you."* The word "cast" in the Greek literally means "to let go, to drop". It doesn't mean I pick up my load and toss it as far as I can. Sometimes your load is so big, you couldn't toss it five feet. Literally it means "drop, let go, release." Just let it drop and they'll fall to your feet. He's saying give your worries to the Lord. The problem is we become Indian givers. We give them to God and then we take them back. Stop it. Drop them down. Trust God to Care for the Things beyond your control. I love the words of Isaiah 26:3 in the King James, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose heart is stayed on thee."

What's got you worried this morning? The country? Your health? Your retirement portfolio? Your marriage? A problem with friends? Put Jesus first in every area of your life. Live one day at a time, and trust God for things beyond your control. It's high time You Stop Worrying and Start Living! Amen...