

## Do Not Worry

Good morning Grace Community Church family and friends, welcome to our second Sunday in quarantine. I hope you're all doing well and staying healthy.

As I've talked to different people, I've been hearing one word a lot lately. That word, understandably is the word "worry". Let's consider a timely word from Jesus found in **Matt. 6:25-34**.

The Bible has a lot to say about fear. In fact, the most frequent command in the Bible is the command do not be afraid. God says it a lot cause He knows that fear is a major struggle for most of us.

Fear is a word that captures a whole spectrum of emotions from intense fears like panic and terror, to the typically milder fear like nervousness and everything in between. Somewhere in this range of fears is the fear we call worry. If terror hits us like a tidal wave, worry is more like a relentless trickle of fear that runs in the background of all our thoughts and feelings. The more we worry, the deeper the channel it cuts in our thinking until, as one person put it, all our thoughts drain into it.

One of the things I've noticed about worry is that it attaches itself to uncertainty. Worry is like the "what if" fear. We lie awake worrying "What if this happens? What if that happens? What if such and such doesn't happen?" It's a fear of what the future might hold, the what ifs that we can't see. Which is why Jesus' words are so timely for us because we're in a time of great uncertainty. This week Governor Cuomo said, "we've never been here before". As a nation we've never been here before, which means there's a tremendous amount of uncertainty. And so many of us are probably struggling with worry. With "what ifs".

What if massive numbers of people get the coronavirus? What if our economy crashes and can't recover? On a personal level, what if I or someone I love get sick? What if I lose my job or can't pay my bills? What if. What if. What if.

One night when my kids were younger I was tucking my youngest into bed when he mentioned something that had happened earlier in the day and said "daddy, when that happened, it scareded me." Now the thing that had happened really wasn't a scary thing. The rest of us didn't even notice it. But it scareded a four year old boy. The last thing I wanted to say to him was "oh get over it. That wasn't even scary. Stop being afraid." My father's heart wanted to assure his frightened heart that everything is ok. He's ok. He's safe.

When Jesus says, do not worry, I don't imagine him saying it like, "c'mon get over it, it's nothing. Stop it, will ya?" Jesus knows – God knows – that fear and worry bangs away at our hearts and minds and when it does it's very real to us. I imagine Jesus leaning into our situation – your situation – and reassuring us, don't worry, it's ok. Everything is going to be ok. I've got this. And then what Jesus does is he speaks certainty into our uncertainty. So here's four certainties that can help us in our fight against worry.

1. Life is bigger than all the things we need to keep us alive

*Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Vs. 25*

Food, drink, and clothing are pretty essential for life. But food, drink, and clothing *aren't* life. Our lives are bigger than the things we need to keep us alive. Jesus is reminding us what a miracle and a gift life is. Gift from God. Worry blinds us to the awesome gift life is by reducing life to stuff like "what will I eat? What will I drink? What will I wear?" Jesus says, remember life is so much more than those things.

Now we need those things. Over the course of your life, you've probably eaten a whole lot of food to keep you alive. I know I have! We wouldn't be here if we hadn't eaten those breakfast, lunches, and

dinners. But if you lined up all the food you've eaten over the course of your life – every burger and French fry and spinach wrap, all that wouldn't equal the value of your life. Not even close. Life is bigger than the things we need to keep us alive. One of the ways we can fight worry is by waking up every morning and being aware of the gift life is! Don't let worry reduce your life to what you do or don't have.

No matter the challenges or hardships or deprivations our lives may hold, our lives are an awesome gift from God. Jesus reminds us life is bigger than the things we need to keep us alive.

2. Our heavenly Father will take care of us cause He loves us...a lot! (vv. 26-31)

*<sup>26</sup> Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? <sup>27</sup> Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?*

*<sup>28</sup> "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. <sup>29</sup> Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. <sup>30</sup> If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? <sup>31</sup> So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'*

Jesus draws our attention to how much God cares and provides for His creation. Janice and I enjoy watching nature shows, and in one of them they were tracking with blue whales and they said that a single blue whale eats approximately 40 million krill a day. 40 million krill – 4 tons of krill - every single day. One whale. But as far as I know blue whales don't run any "krill breeding farms" out there. They just swim along and expect the krill to be there. And they are! God provides for them.

Birds are busy little creatures. I love watching birds. They're not lazy, they're industrious. They're up early looking for worms and bugs to eat. But they don't sow or reap or build barns. They just wake up and assume there will be worms and bugs for them to eat. And there will be, because God feeds them.

But we know that Jesus is leaning in speak assurance and strength to our worry because he doesn't say God will provide for us. He says our *heavenly Father* will provide for us. If God feeds the birds of the air and cloths the grass of the field, how much more will your heavenly Father provide you with what you need. Imperfect earthly fathers love and provide for their kids, how much more will our perfect heavenly Father love and provide for us?

Worry says it's all up to you. If you don't worry and fret and lie awake at night tossing and turning and getting an ulcer, you're never going to make it. If you don't take control of this thing, you're gonna go under!

Jesus says, "hey, uh, can I be honest with you? You're not in control. Any control you think you have is an illusion." To prove this, Jesus says worrying can't control the length of your life by even one hour. You can't add even on single hour to your life by worry. Might take a few years off, but you can't lengthen your life by 60 minutes through worry. You don't have control.

Our heavenly Father does have control. Total control. And He provides krill for the whales and worms for the birds, and He loves us much, much more. Be certain of that. He is our heavenly Father. Be certain of that. Don't worry, trust your heavenly Father.

### 3. Faith makes a better compass for our lives than worry (vv. 31-33)

*<sup>31</sup> So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' <sup>32</sup> For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. <sup>33</sup> But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*

When I read these verses, I always see a contrast of direction. Gentiles (those who don't know God) are running in the direction of acquiring food and drink and clothes. In other words, material needs and desires are setting the direction of their lives. They've set their compass so that true north is getting what they need and want. This is true whether they're trying to scavenge a crust of bread to feed their family, or trying to acquire a multi-million dollar company to add to their portfolio, the size isn't the issue, the direction is the issue.

Jesus speaks to our own tendency to point our lives (by worrying) in the direction of acquisition and says, you don't need to live like that. Your heavenly Father knows you need those things. Here's the better direction: seek first his kingdom and his righteousness.

How do we seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness? One word: Jesus. Put Jesus first. Put trusting Jesus first. Seeking the kingdom of heaven doesn't mean seeking a place. It's not even primarily seeking a lifestyle. Seeking the kingdom of heaven means seeking a Person - Jesus the king of heaven. When Jesus began his ministry he began with the words, *the kingdom of heaven is among you*. Meaning him. He was among us so the kingdom was among us. How do we seek God's righteousness? Definitely not by trying real hard to be righteous because when we try to be righteous on our own we really mess things up. The Bible says our righteousness is like dirty rags to God.

On the cross Jesus bore our sin as if it were his own, so that we might receive his righteousness as if it were our own. 2 Cor. 5:21 says: *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God*. So how do we seek first God's righteousness? By believing in Christ's finished work on Calvary and receiving his righteousness by faith.

When our lives are directed by faith in Christ and we live a life of following him, all the other things we need are added to our lives by our heavenly Father. This doesn't mean we ignore our needs or don't do what we need to do to live a practical, productive life. What it means is that we always seek to make Christ our #1 priority and he and his kingdom is the compass that guides our lives.

### 4. Deal with the troubles of today today and the troubles of tomorrow tomorrow (vs 34)

*<sup>34</sup> Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*

When I was a kid I was a real worrier. Not so much anymore. But there are times when a vague fear about what might lie ahead creeps into my heart. It's hard to fight cause it doesn't even seem to be attached to anything, it's like a foggy fear of the future. And while it's not attached to anything, it's real and it messes with my heart and mind. Maybe you know what I'm talking about. Or your worries might be attached to something very real and tangible. You could show me the bill you can't pay, the pink slip that means you have no job, or a doctor's diagnosis that something's not right and they want to do more tests.

Jesus begins and ends this passage with two really honest truths about life: life is bigger than the things we need to keep us alive, and second even when we live life exactly as God intends us to, life will still have its share of troubles.

Do not worry doesn't mean we don't have any troubles. Faith isn't a "get out of trouble free" card. Today will trouble and so will tomorrow. Work on the problems and challenges today holds today and work on the problems and challenges tomorrow holds tomorrow. God gives us life one day at a time.

Just to be clear: Jesus isn't saying we shouldn't plan ahead – he's saying we shouldn't worry ahead. All worrying about tomorrow will do is cast a cloud over today. When worry becomes a habit, we start to live today under the cloud of tomorrow. Sure today is a beautiful day, but I hear it's supposed to rain tomorrow. Sure I've got a job today, but I can't be sure I'll have it tomorrow. Sure my kids are healthy today, but what if something happens to them tomorrow? Nothing robs today of joy faster than worrying about tomorrow.

Corrie Ten Boom said, *Worry doesn't empty tomorrow of its sorrow, it empties today of its strength.*

Jesus comes alongside of us, whatever worry may look like in your life or mine, and he says, do not worry. It's ok. Your heavenly Father loves you a lot! He will provide for you, and He will walk with you through whatever today – and all your tomorrows – hold.

Let's go to our heavenly Father now, and if you have fears and worries, give them to your Father. And leave them with Him. Don't pick them back up when you stop praying.