

The title of this morning's sermon is, "*Do not Worry.*"

As I shared a couple weeks ago, I planned on preaching some sermons about the vision for our church – something I do every few years – but after reading these verses to you last week during announcements – the same verses we happen to be at in Luke's Gospel – I thought we should cover them now, considering everything happening w/ the Coronavirus.

I just want to make this clear...

We've been going verse-by-verse through Luke's Gospel, and these are the verses God has for us!

Look w/ me:

- **22 And he said to his disciples, "Therefore I tell you, DO NOT BE ANXIOUS about your life,**
- **25 And which of you BY BEING ANXIOUS can add a single hour to his span of life?**
- **26 If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, WHY ARE YOU ANXIOUS about the rest?**
- **29 And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, NOR BE WORRIED.**
- **32 "FEAR NOT, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.**

Very fitting, right?

I think we're all tempted to do the opposite of what they're saying.

You can't miss the theme: worry, anxious, and fear.

Since these are synonyms, they're all saying the same thing: "Do not worry...do not be anxious...do not fear."

I'll tell you something interesting that took place while I was preparing this sermon...

You might remember a few weeks ago I talked about indicatives versus imperatives:

- Indicatives are statements: they indicate something, such as:
 - We are children of God
 - We are forgiven
- Imperatives are commands: they tell us to do something.
 - Pray without ceasing
 - Do all things without complaining

I wanted to preach these verses for two reasons...

Primarily. because of everything happening with the Coronavirus.

Secondarily, b/c for the last few months we've been dealing w/ a lot of imperatives. All the sermons about:

- Not coveting
- Being content
- Not loving money
- Being generous

Were packed w/ commands, which can be very challenging.

I thought I'd preach these "lighter verses" that are filled w/ more indicatives about God's care for us – which they contain – but repeatedly we're told:

- Do not be anxious
- Do not worry
- Do not fear

These are imperatives. Since Jesus commands us not to do these things, it's sinful when we do.

We typically try to water down worry and anxiety by calling it something else, such concern or burden, but listen to this quote...

James Fowler said, *"Concern" means to 'have an interest in, give attention to, be engaged by a situation, as a matter of consideration or responsibility.' 'Worry' is a disquieted uneasiness of mind, an anxious apprehension concerning an impending or anticipated situation; fretting about a foreboding misfortune or failure. 'Concern' becomes 'worry' when we fail to relate the situation that confronts us to the source of sufficiency in God."*

Worry, anxiety, and fear are sinful.

My heart for you during this troubling time is that you hear from God through these verses. He wants to speak to you:

- He wants to challenge you not to worry
- And He wants to encourage you regarding His care for you

We're going to approach the passage a little differently...

We will cover all the verses, but instead of covering them in order, I'm going to cover them topically.

- First, we'll talk about why we shouldn't worry.
- Then we'll talk about how we can overcome worrying.

With that in mind, look at **verse 22**...

Luke 12:22 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. 23 For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing.

When Katie and I were going over the sermon she said this is the first time she can ever remember being tempted to worry about what our family will eat.

Can you remember any other time when the shelves in stores were so empty?

Notice Jesus' first word is **therefore**. This should always cause us to look at what was written before. Which is what?

The Parable of the Rich Fool!

This is about a man who had many temporary provisions for this life, but none for eternity, b/c he had the wrong perspective. Jesus tells us not to be like him...and this brings us to Lesson 1...

LESSON 1: WORRY (PART I) REVEALS A POOR PERSPECTIVE.

In **verse 22** Jesus said **Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about this life.**

The Rich Fool was very anxious about this life. In **verse 17** he said, **“What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?”**

He was worried about this life, but he gave no thought to the next life. His perspective was terrible.

Similarly, when we worry, we're showing we have the wrong perspective, b/c we're focused on what?

This life!

Like the Rich Fool, we're focused on this life and our physical needs.

We're saying:

- What shall I do about my food, clothing, body?
- What shall I do about the Coronavirus?

Jesus is telling us not to be like this!

Skip to **verse 25**. We'll come back to **verse 24**...

Luke 12:25 And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? 26 If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest?

Worrying doesn't help the situation...and this brings us to the next part of Lesson 1...

LESSON 1: WORRY (PART II) IS POINTLESS.

In the US the average lifespan is 79: 76 for men and 81 for women. 79 years is 692,040 hours. One hour is 0.000001 percent of our lives.

Jesus says we can't even make our lives that tiny amount longer by worrying, so...why worry?

Not only does worry not add to our lifespans, what does it actually do?

Subtracts!

Worry shortens our lifespans b/c it puts unnecessary wear-and-tear on our hearts:

- Plenty of studies reveal just how detrimental worry and anxiety are.
- We can worry ourselves into the hospital and even the grave.

Corrie Ten Boom said, "*Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow. It empties today of its strength.*"

Worrying makes us less effective, b/c it steals our joy and exhausts us.

How much time and energy are we committing to something that doesn't improve the situation?

Skip to **verse 28...**

Luke 12:28 But if God so clothes the grass, which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O YOU OF LITTLE FAITH!

This is a common rebuke from our Lord:

- He doesn't say they don't have any faith.
- He simply says they have little faith.

I know I can feel like this at times!

Notice the connection...

- He associated their worry with their lack of faith.
- Worry and faith are mutually exclusive
 - When we worry we're lacking faith
 - When we have faith, we don't worry

Jesus goes on...

Luke 12:29 And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried. 30 For ALL THE NATIONS OF THE WORLD seek after these things,

When Jesus says **all the nations of the world**, He's referring to Gentiles who don't know God. In other words, unbelievers.

They **seek after these things**, which is really to say:

- They worry about things
- They're anxious about things

They live for the things of the world – such as food and clothing – b/c all they know is this life:

- This is the only perspective they have
- They can't live for eternity

But before we're too hard on unbelievers, let's understand what Jesus is saying:

- In **verse 28** He said worry is a sign of lacking faith.
- In **verse 30** He mentioned unbelievers.

This is fitting, b/c unbelievers lack faith.

Jesus is saying...

When we worry – when we lack faith – we're acting like unbelievers...and this brings us to the last part of Lesson 1...

LESSON 1: WORRY (PART III) IS WHAT UNBELIEVERS DO.

We should think and act differently than unbelievers, and one way we do that is by NOT worrying when the world around us is worried.

The implications of this for evangelism and outreach is considerable:

- When everyone is filled w/ fear, but we're filled w/ faith, we're encouraging unbelievers to look to the Lord that keeps us strong
- But when everyone is filled w/ fear, and we're filled w/ fear, how can we encourage unbelievers to look to the Lord...when we're revealing by our worry that we doubt that same Lord?

John MacArthur said, *“For some reason, we think of doubt and worry as ‘small’ sins. But when a Christian displays an inability to cope with life, he is saying to the world, ‘My God cannot be trusted,’ and that kind of disrespect makes one guilty of a fundamental error, the heinous sin of dishonoring God. That is no small sin.”*

When we worry it really hurts our witness and dishonors God.

Let me ask you this...

Why do unbelievers worry?

- They don't know God.
- They can't trust Him.

But...

We do know God and we can trust Him.

Keeping this in mind is one of the best ways to overcome worry...and this brings us to lesson 2...

LESSON 2: OVERCOME WORRY BY (PART I) REMEMBERING YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER CARES FOR YOU.

Listen to this verse, and try to imagine you're hearing it for the first time...

1 Pet 5:7 [Cast] all your anxieties on him, because HE CARES FOR YOU.

There are lots of reasons we could be told to cast our cares on God:

- He created the universe
- Nothing is too hard for Him
- He's sovereign

These are all true, but He wants us to know it's b/c He cares for us.

Just consider that for a moment...

The God of Heaven and earth, the Creator of the universe, cares for you and me...just that fact alone should dispel much worry and anxiety!

When we become part of God's kingdom, He becomes our Heavenly Father.

- Unbelievers worry b/c they don't have a Heavenly Father
- We shouldn't worry b/c we do have a Heavenly Father

Jesus does something important in **verse 30** to drive this home. Look at the way it's worded...

Luke 12:30 For all the nations of the world (this is unbelievers) seek after these things, and your (this is believers) Father knows that you need them.

Twice in **verse 30 and 32** it says **your Father**:

- **30 YOUR FATHER knows that you need them.**
- **32 "Fear not, little flock, for it is YOUR FATHER'S good pleasure to give you the kingdom.**

Typically, Jesus says, "My Father." Or sometimes He says, "Our Father."

But He says **YOUR Father**.

Why does Jesus want us focusing on His Father being our Father, versus simply being God?

Let me give you two reasons...

First:

- The title, “God,” communicates, power and authority, but it can also allow God to seem distant and detached.
- The title, “Father,” is personal and intimate. It makes God seem close...which He is...and which He wants us to keep in mind, especially when we’re tempted to worry.

Second:

- What do fathers have? Fathers have children!
- Think of how fathers are w/ their children, and you understand how God wants you to think of Him being w/ you.

We might be tempted to think:

- *Well, God doesn’t know what’s going on in my life.*
- *He’s not interested in what I’m going through.*
- *He has so much to deal with, He doesn’t really care about me.*

Because there are billions of people, we can be tempted to think...

“Could He really care about me that much when there are so many other people?”

If you’ve had more than one child, you know the answer.

- When your second child is born, your love isn’t divided. You don’t love your first child less.
- Instead – no matter how many children you have – you love all of them immensely.

And that’s our sinful, selfish, fallen love.

Imagine the sinless, selfless, perfect love our Heavenly Father has for us?

This is beautiful imagery, and exactly the kind of imagery we need to overcome anxiousness, worry, and fear.

Let me be perfectly clear about what Jesus wants to say to you in these verses...

“YOUR FATHER cares for you, so there’s no need to worry.”

And Jesus goes to considerable lengths to communicate this, and He does so by arguing from the lesser to the greater...

If you briefly look back at **verse 22** you’ll see what I mean...

Luke 12:22 Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on.

The point is if our Heavenly Father gives us the greater gifts – such as life and a body – He'll give us the lesser gifts – such as food and clothing.

And He uses two examples from creation to illustrate this. Look at **verse 24**...

Luke 12:24 Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds!

Why mention birds not sowing or reaping?

They can't care for themselves. They're totally dependent on God...yet He never fails them.

How many starving birds do you now?

Since we're more valuable than them, how much more confident can we be in our Heavenly Father's care for us?

I want you to notice a subtle, but important point...

Jesus could've said **BIRDS neither sow nor reap**.

Everything He said about **ravens** is true about any bird. No birds reap or have storehouses.

So why use **ravens**...and tell us to **consider** them?

Because they're despised birds. **Lev 11:15** and **Deut 14:14** says they're unclean.

He uses ravens to make the point clearer!

If God cares for these unclean birds, how much more does He care for us?

How much more [valuable do you think you] are – not just than birds - but [ravens]?

And this is why we don't need to worry.

And Jesus gives us another example. Skip to **verse 27**...

Luke 12:27 Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 28 But if God so clothes the grass, which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith!

Just like birds don't sow or reap for their food, flowers don't gather materials or spin yarn to look good...they look good b/c God makes them look good!

In Jesus' day the materials used to make dyes for clothing were difficult to obtain and often provided poor results. In other words, people didn't look that good. If you think of pictures or movies from Jesus' day, everyone looks pretty bland and boring.

But how do flowers look?

Lots of color and beauty. Even Solomon himself w/ all his wealth couldn't clothe himself as well as some of God's flowers.

Also, wildflowers in Israel usually only grew a few weeks b/c it's so arid. Then they'd dry out. This is why people used them for tinder to light fires in their homes, which is what Jesus meant when He said **thrown into the oven**.

The point is...

If God cares even for parts of His creation that have a short life – that grow one day and are gone the next – **how much more will He care for us – His children** – who are eternal?

Now here's what's interesting...

All of us have a limited amount of time and energy that we're going to spend in different ways.

We can spend our time and energy worrying, and all of us have at different times in our lives:

- We've worried about our food and clothing
- We've worried about our children
- We've worried about our health
- We've worried about our finances
- Recently we've worried about the Coronavirus

But if we don't spend our time and energy worrying, then we find ourselves w/ time and energy to invest elsewhere.

The question is where? Where do we invest our time and energy if we're not worrying?

Jesus gives the answer in **verse 31**...

Luke 12:31 Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you.

And this brings us to the next part of Lesson 2...

LESSON 2: OVERCOME WORRY BY (PART II) SEEKING THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Notice the way Jesus words this...

Luke 12:29 And DO NOT SEEK WHAT YOU ARE TO EAT AND WHAT YOU ARE TO DRINK, NOR BE WORRIED.

Then in verse 31...

Luke 12:31 INSTEAD, SEEK HIS KINGDOM, and these things will be added to you.

The word **instead** means:

- **Instead** of worrying...
- **Instead** of being anxious...
- **Instead** of fearing...

Seek the kingdom of God.

This is a good example of putting off and putting on!

- Put off worry
- Put on pursuit of the kingdom of God

Look back at the first part of Lesson 1

LESSON 1: WORRY (PART I) REVEALS A POOR PERSPECTIVE.

Now we're discussing the remedy!

- We worry when we're too focused on this life.
- We overcome worry by focusing on the next life, or the kingdom of God

Col 3:2 Set your minds on things that are above – or seek the kingdom of God – **not on things that are on earth.**

When we're focused on heaven, we won't be worried about the Coronavirus.

If we have a heavenly perspective, we'll be able to look at this life from heaven's point of view, and put God's kingdom first in everything:

- If our hearts are focused on the things of this life, then we will always worry, b/c things are uncertain and constantly changing.
- If our hearts are focused on the kingdom of God, then we'll be at peace, b/c we know we have a Heavenly Father who cares for us and is in control of everything.

Ira Stanphill said, *"I don't worry over the future, for I know what Jesus said; so today I'll walk beside Him, for He knows what is ahead. Many things about tomorrow I don't seem to understand but I know Who holds tomorrow and I know He holds my hand."*

What does it mean to seek His kingdom?

It means serving the King of the kingdom.

- Going through life doing what He wants.
- Striving to obey Him and fulfill His will...while trusting Him to pick up the tab...which is to say, not worrying.

When we think of kingdoms our minds probably go to medieval times.

We know there are horror stories of kings who terribly mistreat their subjects.

Jesus says that if we seek His kingdom, we'll receive His full care and provision: **[all] these things will be added to you.**

When we were in our recent sermons on giving, I talked about how giving God is:

- He “gives to all mankind life and breath and everything” (Acts 17:25).
- He gives us wisdom: “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally” (James 1:5).
- He gives us wonderful things to enjoy: “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights” (James 1:17a).
- And He gave us His Son: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

We have something else we can add to the list...

He gives us the kingdom of God. Look at **verse 32**...

Luke 12:32 “Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

The part about this verse that stood out to me is that it says it's **[His] good pleasure** to do so!

When we talked about giving one of the most applicable verses is...

2 Cor 9:7 [We should give as we] decide in [our] hearts, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

God obeys His own verse!

- He doesn't give reluctantly or under compulsion
- He gives cheerfully

It pleases Him to give us the kingdom.

And again, this is the lesser to the greater...

If God gives us the kingdom, how much more can we expect Him to care for us?

This confidence in God's care produces something in our lives, and that's generosity. Look at **verse 33...**

Luke 12:33 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.

Jesus meets our needs so we can be generous and help meet the needs of others.

These words are so fitting, b/c when food, clothing, and shelter are scarce, people are tempted to do the opposite of what Jesus commands.

We're tempted to hoard!

In the process, we do the opposite of what Jesus says in this passage:

- We stop depending on God
- We start depending on ourselves

Jesus encourages us to be generous so we can continue trusting Him to care for us.

When we have faith God's going to provide for us, we can be that much more generous.

Look at our last verse for this morning...

Luke 12:34 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

This is the clearest verse in Scripture teaching that the way we spend money reveals our hearts:

- We spend money on what's valuable to us
- If we seek the kingdom of God, we'll spend our money in ways that further the kingdom.

I want you to notice something about these verses that we read...

- Verse 22 says "Do not be anxious about your life."
- Verse 25 says, "Which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to your life?"
- Verse 26 says, "Why are you anxious about the rest?"
- Verse 29 says, "Don't be worried."
- Verse 32 says, "Do not fear."

If you never read these verses before, what would you expect to follow them?

Maybe something like:

- *"Don't be anxious because there's nothing to be anxious about."*

- “Don't be worried because everything is going to be ok.”
- “Don't fear, because there's nothing to fear...your life will not have trials or tribulations.”

No, in fact, what did Jesus say in **John 16:33**?

“I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you WILL have tribulation.”

So Christ is not commanding us not to worry, or fear, or be anxious because we can expect lives free from trials and suffering.

He is commanding us to not worry because of who He is.

We can live a life free from worry because we have a Father who cares for us:

- Coronavirus
- Other sicknesses
- Relational difficulties
- Emotional rollercoasters
- Rebellious children

And the list could go on are common in this life, but they don't erase the fact that we have a God who loves us and cares for us and says it's His good pleasure to give us the Kingdom.

Christians have the ability to have peace in the midst of the storms of life, not because of the absence of the storms, but because of the presence of our Heavenly Father in the storms.

CONCLUSION

Let me conclude by sharing this quote w/ you...

“We typically crucify ourselves between two enemies: the regrets of yesterday and the worries of tomorrow.”

Let me read it one more time...

“We typically crucify ourselves between two enemies: the regrets of yesterday and the worries of tomorrow.”

Hopefully these verses that our Lord spoke can help us get rid of one of these enemies: worry.

Christ offers to get rid of the other enemy: regret.

Rom 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

If you repent of your sins and turn to Christ, you're forgiven of your sins and given His very righteousness become, which is to say you no longer need to live w/ regret.

His Father becomes your Father, which is to say you no longer need to worry about the future, b/c He loves you and cares for you.

Let's pray.