

Intro: Jesus has just been speaking of the fact that we cannot serve two masters, we must choose...If we have chosen to serve God, then it follows that naturally we will trust God to provide for all our needs.

²⁵“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. **Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes?** ²⁶Look 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?*** ²⁷**Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?**

²⁸“**And why do you worry about clothes?** See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. ²⁹Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ³⁰**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?** ³¹**So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’** ³²For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. ³⁴Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Do not worry?! Really, Jesus? Seriously? You've got to be kidding!
Do you wonder what it would be like to have a worry-free life?

There is Peanuts comic strip which features Snoopy the beagle, atop his doghouse. He is trying to go to sleep, but he is thinking: These nights kill me...Everything seems so hopeless at night...What am I doing here?

What is the purpose of it all? What's going to happen to me when I get old? What if I get sick? I don't want to get sick. What if I get hit by a car someday and end up in body cast? Or maybe they'd just shoot me like an old farm horse! What if I lost my sight or my hearing? (Have any of you experienced a sleepless night worrying??)

The next to the last frame features Snoopy Zzing/sleeping as the day dawns.

Lucy and Linus walk by and Lucy comments: "It must be nice to be a dog...They don't ever have any worries..."

I think it would be safe to say that all of us at one time or another, have had a sleepless night, due to worry. I don't know why that is...worries seem to dominate us at night, don't they? Perhaps because all activity ceases and life quiets down, we are left alone with our thoughts.

This teaching of Jesus is part of the Sermon on the Mount, here he uses a literary device, arguing from one self-evident truth to an even greater, more evident one:

Jesus' point here is that since God provides for the birds of the air and the lilies of the field **HOW MUCH MORE** valuable we are to God, who cares for and provides for us, his children, since God knows what we need!

We should give our attention to the context, and what Jesus said immediately before these verses that encourage us to trust and not worry: We cannot serve two masters...God and Money.

Ah! Isn't that one of our biggest worries? Not enough \$ to pay our bills, cover our health care costs or an unexpected emergency, trying to save enough in order to retire, and hoping we outlive our savings...lots to worry about!

Money is a big concern in our materialistic, consumer-driven society. Advertising fosters the "need" to "keep up appearances" and be the first on our block to have whatever the newest, latest and greatest product is.

If you can't afford it, no problem! Credit card companies seem more than willing accommodate the consumer addiction of acquiring more and more stuff, even at the risk of the consumer going deeper and deeper in debt.

No less than three times in this passage does Jesus repeat the refrain: **Do Not Worry!** Repetition is used to drive home a point, and Jesus does so here.

In addition, Jesus asks several rhetorical questions and uses two analogies from nature to also emphasize his point.

The root meaning of the word "worry" (in Greek) means literally: "To strangle". (M Copenhaver p. 47-8). Is it any wonder that if/when we are overcome with worry, it can manifest itself in physical symptoms that feel like being strangled!

Given the context, most of the folks who were present when Jesus spoke these words were poor. They could relate to the prayer Jesus taught: "Give us today our daily bread." People lived from day to day; without refrigeration and preservatives, bread was made daily, enough for the family for that day.

With regard to clothing, most of Jesus' original listeners had only one tunic or cloak. If they had two, Jesus instructed them to share or give the second one away. More than two tunics? One was "rich". Clothing was a measure of rank and wealth in the society in which Jesus lived.

Ultimately we discover that acquiring and possessing many things, likely will NOT eliminate worry but will contribute to it! Material things or "earthly treasures"—do **not** eliminate worry, they only serve to heighten it.

In the US--and this is **not** true of all countries--stress and worry affect over 20 million Americans.

75% percent of worry about never comes to pass!

Mark Twain said: "I am an old man and have known a great many troubles, but most of them have never happened!"

30 % of what we worry about is in the past and cannot be changed.

20% of what we worry about is related to health concerns. This is truly bad news because now we have a whole variety of stress related illnesses and anxiety disorders. The estimated cost of treating these in the USA alone, is \$400 million dollars! Hmm....that's a problem!

10% of what we worry about is probably legitimate, but even then, worrying won't have any effect on it!

Jesus understands that **worry is a universal human struggle**, however he **emphatically urges** us to **give it up!** In the Greek, he uses an imperative, a

command. He repeats it three times. Any time you are reading a passage of scripture and something is repeated, pay attention. The reason for repetition is to get our attention--this is important enough to say it three times.

There are four reasons Jesus is so passionate about getting us to move toward trust and away from worry:

First, Worry is self-centered. Think about it. Jesus says in v. 25-26: *don't be anxious about YOUR life.* At the end of the day, worry is all about me. *Or mostly about me: my world, my desires, my hopes, my spouse, my family, my kids, my career, my friends.* The worry that Jesus highlights is oblivious to self-sacrifice, humility, or the concerns of others.

One scholar goes so far as to suggest that *it is okay to worry about whether others have enough to eat--or clothing to wear--or have their basic needs met.* Concern or worry on behalf of others may in fact, move us to action so that we become the answer to the prayers that we pray for justice, for the homeless, for the hungry. This may in fact, be rooted in "seeking first God's Kingdom and righteousness" (v. 33), because "righteousness" has to do with right relationships. Inequity with regard to the basic necessities of life indicates that things are NOT right!

However we are to trust God and ask God to help us meet those needs, versus worrying about them.

The second problem with worry? *It is pointless. Useless. A waste of time and energy. Worry accomplishes nothing* toward addressing the issue about which is worrying, and serves only to raise our blood pressure or contribute to ulcers. **Worry cannot add a single centimeter one's height or a minute or second to the length of one's life!** (v.27)

Perhaps you've heard the expression: Today is the tomorrow you worried about yesterday?

Most of us can handle today all right, but we stress about the future because of the unknown. Perhaps we would do well to procrastinate about worrying?

Mark Twain again says: Why not put off til tomorrow what you could do the day after tomorrow!?

Worry is unhealthy!

Jesus encourages us to give up worrying because it is 1, self-centered, 2, because it is useless/ and in fact, counterproductive, and **3rd because it is an act of disbelief. Worrying is the behavior of a non-believer! Worry is 'functional atheism'!**

“For even the Gentiles (unbelievers) run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.” (v.32)

When we worry about "X" (you fill in the blank), **we are demonstrating that we really do *not* believe that God is good, that God is trustworthy, and that God-- our loving heavenly Father-- is able to provide for our need.**

The fourth reason? Worry sidetracks us from “seeking first the Kingdom of God and God’s righteousness.” Worry prevents us from putting first things first, and trusting God to supply what we need!

So what is the remedy to worry?

I read about one man who worried so much that he decided to hire someone to do his worrying for him. He found a man who agreed to be his hired worrier for a salary of \$200,000. After the man accepted the job, his first question to his new boss was: "Where are you going to get \$200,000. a year to pay me?" To which he responded: "That's your worry!"

What is **Jesus' remedy to worry? Trust. How do we get to trust when our default setting is worry? We have to retrain ourselves!**

How do we trust God? New Testament scholar William Barclay offers this: *“Those who (focus) their hearts on the record of what God has done in the past, will never worry about the future. Worry refuses to learn the lessons of life. We are still alive and our heads are still above water; and yet if someone had told us that we*

would have to go through what we have actually gone through, we would have said that it was impossible.

*The lesson of life is that, (with God's help) somehow we have been enabled to bear the unbearable, and to do the un-doable, and to pass the breaking point and not break. **The lesson of life is that worry is unnecessary.***

So how do we trust God? We pray. We bring all our worries to God.

Author Anne Lamott uses a box, she calls it God's In-Box. It doesn't have to be a box, it could be a bowl, or a basket, or any container you choose. The point is, by writing your worry or concern down on a piece of paper, it is now external to you. Then you can take the physical action of placing it in the box...an act of relinquishment, of literally, letting go and handing it over to God.

Sometimes she'll say aloud: "Here God. I'm giving my worry to you so I don't have to carry it anymore. YOU deal with it!"

Then she waits to hear from God. Usually what happens is that in a day or two, the phone rings or the mail comes, or she goes to church and she hears from God, in some way that addresses whatever she'd been worrying about.

Anne wrote: The other day I went to put a note in the box,...and I found a scrap of paper from last year, when Sam's pediatrician couldn't figure out why his bloodwork was so funky (Weird) and had actually began to consult oncologists. The world, as you can imagine, came to a halt, and all I knew to do was to pray for courage and faith, (instead of worry!!) and to put it in the God-box.

A week or so later the doctor discovered (the problem:) that Sam is allergic to dust mites. That morning I took out the bit of paper on which I'd written (the note about Sam), and turned my head towards the sky and I said, "Jesus, honey? I don't even know where to start. I feel like You're showing off again; so thank You. Thank You." **Then I put the note back inside, so I'd find it again, and remember.** (<http://www.salon.com/1996/12/02/lamott961202/>)

Worry can create spiritual amnesia. We forget that God has a good track record. Another remedy for worry is to keep a **gratitude journal**.

It can be very simple, but I encourage you to go home today and make a list of a time or two or three in the past when you didn't think you'd make it, and God showed up. Think of a time when you had no idea how you'd pay a bill, and God provided. Or a time you thought you'd never see another day, yet God brought healing and here you are! Remember --write down--create a way to remember God's faithfulness. Give credit where credit is due; God is faithful!

When we are tempted to worry, remember how God showed up in the past!

How many of you have been to Lake Tahoe on the border between California and Nevada? An absolutely gorgeous place! Besides being beautiful, Lake Tahoe is the 8th deepest lake in the world. In 1875 two men discovered the deepest point of the lake by lowering a weighted champagne bottle on fishing line, from the side of their boat. Years later the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration used sonar to measure the depth of the lake and confirmed the earlier measurement—1645 feet deep.

If Lake Tahoe were tipped on its side and the water flooded into California, the entire state would have 15 inches of standing water! Or another way to think of it: Lake Tahoe could provide every man/woman/child in the US with 50 gallons of drinking water per day for five years! Our personal use of the water of Lake Tahoe would never exhaust its supply.

God has NO limits! Whatever your need, you can never exhaust God's supply! This demonstrates and Jesus emphasizes "the HOW MUCH MORE-NESS" of GOD... if God cares for the birds and the wildflowers...HOW MUCH MORE will God care for you and me...God's beloved children.

God is good. God is trustworthy. God has a good track record! God is able to handle all of my worries, all of your worries and more.

Rather than worry, Jesus issues what is both a challenge and an invitation...an invitation to trust in God's all sufficient ability to love and provide for us. Don't worry, start praying, start trusting.

[PRAY]