

SLIDE ONE Jesus and worry

Luke 12:22-34 Phillipians 4v1-9

Bring rocking chair over and a tin of baked beans... VISUAL

***Some years ago, Bobby McFerrin recorded a little song, and here are some of the lyrics....

*Ain't got no place to lay your head
Somebody came and took your bed
Don't worry, be happy
The landlord say your rent is late
He may have to litigate
Don't worry, Be happy*

COME ON EVERYONE - Don't worry, Be happy!!

SLIDE TWO To be concerned is to be human, yet, worry can be a problem. Our English word worry comes from an old Anglo-Saxon word that means "to choke or to strangle." "Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow," said Corrie ten Boom, "it empties today of its strength."

Worry is not the same as concern, and the solution to worry is not becoming ultra-laid-back!

***I had this minor comedic moment in preparation when I realized myself becoming worried about speaking on worry in preparation for today!

The story of scripture could be summed up as this: **I love you. I am with you. Don't be afraid.** / rpt Hold this context as we lean into our Jesus and culture series, here in Luke's gospel....

Simply put – your thought life matters!

God has something to say to this...

For nineteen million people in this country worry is a chronic mental illness. **The fact that we humans remember the past, anticipate the future, and make choices about the present adds stress to our lives.** Even the recent iPhone X unveiling is tapping into that innate human impulse for something more. C. S. Lewis wrote in *Mere Christianity*: "I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probably explanation is that I was made for another world."

Worry is a thin stream of fear trickling through the mind. If encouraged, it cuts a channel into which all other thoughts are drained.

Five times, Jesus uses the word "worry". Three times, it's a command. And the Greek word used in the Gospel is *merimnao*. It literally means "a distracted mind" or a "double mind."

SLIDE THREE The Bible scholar Dick France has a really helpful insight into what worry therefore is: it is to be over-concerned about something other than the kingdom of God.

The word "anxious" means to worry excessively.

Now the tense of the verb is important...Verse 25..."stop worrying." If you already are, it's a bad habit...so please end it. **Today's talk is an invitation to this...**

Wanting the necessities of life is very normal. "Just don't worry about it," Jesus says. "Don't be concerned about what you shall eat,"...Verse 25... You have no business worrying."

And Jesus gives you and I three reasons...three reasons because of living faith in you and I never to worry. **Number one, "It is unnecessary because of Your Father." Two, "It is uncharacteristic because of your faith." Three, "It is unwise because of your future."** This is an incredibly dramatic and astute presentation by Our Lord. **Because of Your Father, and because of your**

faith, and because of your future, it is foolish to worry...and friends this has been encouragement, revelation and challenge to my heart in preparation..

SLIDE FOUR Let's take the first thought...the first principle. Worry about material things is unnecessary. Even worry about what we would basically define as necessities is unnecessary because of Your Father. Now to affirm this point, Our Lord uses three illustrations. **One relates to food, one relates to health, and one relates to clothing. This should give us wonderful reason to lean into and trust the word of God... spoken all those years ago but so remarkably on-point with the challenges of our time and needs...**

Jesus isn't minimising what any of us face... rather saying there's a perspective that comes from a living faith and trust in one greater than ourselves....

Look at food in Verse 26. He says, "Look at the birds of the air." Now it may well have been that as **Jesus was standing on the mountain north of the Sea of Galilee on that sloping hillside**, he might have just pointed up as a flock of birds flew by. And by the way, Palestine is full of birds.

One writer by the name of Parmelee has written a book called *All the Birds of the Bible*. And he calls Galilee the crossroads of bird migration, think a former David Attenborough. When birds cross Europe, all the way from Western Europe clear through Eastern Europe, migrate south as they do every year for the winter, **they all fly through Israel. That's true even today.**

More Israeli pilots have been killed by birds coming through the cockpit of their jets than by the enemies of Israel. There are special rules for coming and going from the Ben Gurion Airport at Tel Aviv because of bird migration, because they can get caught in the engines of large airplanes. It's a serious issue. So the Israelis have literally flown with the birds, and they know their migrating patterns. They know what time of year they come. They know for how long certain birds will migrate. And they also know the altitude at which they fly. **And it's always the same every year, and so they have charted all the migrating birds that migrate to the north of Africa.**

So perhaps Jesus looks up and sees a flock of birds. He says, "Look, they don't sow. They don't reap. In fact, they just fly around and pick up the seed you sow. They just come down and eat the crop that you're growing. **They don't gather into barns, yet Your Heavenly Father feeds them.** Are you not worth much more than they?" **There's no worry in their lives. There's no anxiety in their lives.** There's no attempt to pile up goods... They don't always get the 3-for-the-price-of-2 deals at the shops like I want to!! You don't see them flying with a little briefcase full of extra food in case they need it. They're not worried about some unforeseen future or some unforeseeable event.

One Jewish Rabbi, Rabbi Simian was fascinated by the way in which animals live, and he said this..."In my life, I have never seen a stag as a drier of figs, or a lion as a porter, or a fox as a merchant, yet they are all nourished without worry." **He said, "If they, who are created to serve me, are nourished without worry, how much more ought I, who am created to serve my maker, to be nourished without worry? But I have corrupted my ways, and so I have impaired my substance."**

Psalms 145:15..."The eyes of all wait on thee, and you give them their food in due season."

Life is a gift from God. **As long as He has designed to give it, He will sustain it.** He does it with the animal world, and He will do it with you. **God has given you a greater gift. Don't you think that He'll give you the lesser gift of food to sustain it?** If He's made you in His image, if He's brought you into His Kingdom through living faith, if He has provided for all your spiritual needs, if He's concerned that you live to His Glory, don't you think He'll provide the necessary physical provisions?

If He gave you the gift of physical life and called you to serve Him in this world, He'll give you the necessary food to sustain that calling. That is just such a basic simple truth.

The second issue that confronts people about which they worry is not just that they'll be able to eat in the future, but health...health is an issue. Look at Verse 27. It's quite an interesting statement. **"And which of you, by being anxious, by worry, can add a single cubit to his lifespan."** That's a very good translation... "lifespan"...at the end of Verse 27. Some translations say "stature" or "height." But he really is talking about adding to your lifespan...**aleakia is the Greek word. But nobody can add to his stature,** I mean you can't add a cubit to your stature. You can't grow 18 inches by sheer willpower. It's better to see it...and I think the translators understood in the NASB...as a span of life. Jesus says, "Look, **worry can't add one fraction to your life.**"

People really do worry about their health. **We're a generation of people literally almost cultic about exercise, almost out of control about vitamins and supplements and health.** *** Jamie and chunky kit-kats, well whatever's on sale, I can be persuaded... .. 22mins on the running machine... . The anxiety of death, the fear of disease and illness, forces us to struggle to stay alive at the highest level of health that we can. *We can all too easily preoccupy ourselves with the body and pride ourselves with being in shape, whatever the society says that shape should be.* People make incredible investments in exercise equipment, health club memberships, medical assistance vitamins, special diets, and you know it goes on and on. **And sometimes behind it is worry. And Jesus says, "You cannot add one fraction to your lifespan by worry."** In fact, the opposite is true: Friends If you worry, you'll shorten it, right?

One respected doctor I know said, **"Worry affects the circulation, the heart, the glands, the entire nervous system. I have never known a man to die of overwork, but many who died of worry."**

Why would you even think that God somehow would not provide the fullness of life to fit with the fullness of His calling on that life?

I can't lengthen my life. Ps - You neither!

I can shorten it perhaps by sin, and one of those sins is worry. You don't do anything to help yourself by anxiety over your food or your health.

And thirdly, he brings up **this idea of clothing...covering.** In Verse 28,

And here again, Jesus argues from the lesser to the greater. **If God is going to take care of grass and lilies, isn't he going to take care of you?** What are you so anxious about?

He's not talking here about the sin of carnal selfish worldly materialistic involvement in wardrobe that becomes **sort of a fashion stampede, which can arise out of lust and selfishness and pride and all of that.** He's talking about fearing that you're not going to be cared for, fearing that you're not going to have what you need, fearing that you're not going to be protected, you're not going to be properly cared for. And he says, "Well, look at the lilies of the field."...Verse 28. "They don't toil, and they don't spin." But look at the garment they wear...look at their beauty. "Even Solomon in all his glory didn't clothe himself like one of these."

He's talking about the lilies of the field. The question is, what is he exactly referring to here? **What is a field lily? Probably the best translation is "wildflowers."** There's an essential quality, there's an essential beauty, there's an essential magnificence, a delicate texture, form, design, substance, colour in flowers that man, with all his ingenuity can never imitate – something I'd ASSUREDLY WANT TO INSTAGRAM!!!

And if you doubt that, just look at the next batch of plastic flowers you see, or even silk ones. **It's a nice effort, but they don't have the grace and beauty of the real thing.**

So he says, "Look at the wildflowers. They don't toil, they don't spin." They grow. They flourish.

And Jesus is not really engaging in hyperbole here. He's stating fact...**no garment loomed with the finest thread on the finest loom is anything but sackcloth when placed beside the petal of a flower.** So Jesus said, "Why do you worry? Why do you spend so much effort in the matter of your clothes? **Look at the wildflowers. Kings haven't been so magnificently robed. Flowers put all their robes to shame.**"

The little scarlet poppies and anemones that blossomed, sometimes for one day or even a few days, were clothed in beauty-surpassing royal robes, but they just lasted a very short time. And when they died and dried, they were cut down with the grass that had died and dried. That was all bundled up and used in the oven for fire. They lived so briefly, yet with such beauty.

And Jesus asked, "**Shall He not much more clothe you who clothes them, a God who would lavish such beauty on an inanimate object, who would lavish such beauty on a flower that lasts a day, will He be forgetful of His own beloved?** Will He be forgetful of His own people? Let men of the world worry. Don't you worry." If the Creator cares for His creatures, the Father cares, believe me, for His children...that's the point. And he concludes this first point by saying, "Oh, ye of little faith." **When you worry about these things, you demonstrate a lack of faith. Where's your faith?**

You remember the famous incident of the Lord's earthly life when he's sleeping in the stern of the boat on the Sea of Galilee, and the storm was going, and the water started to come into the boat. **The sea became very boisterous, and the disciples became worried, and they said, "Master, don't you care that we perish?"** And what did he say to them, according to Luke's Gospel? He said, "**Where is your faith? Where is it? You've got it somewhere; where did you put it?**"

Listen, we have a Father who cares for us. We have nothing to fear, no matter what happens, no matter if the whole economy crashes, no matter if all the banks lose our money. **We have a Father who cares for us...that's enough for me. I don't have any fear. I don't have any anxiety as long as I know my Father cares. We need not worry because of our Father.**

****Dry and weary in worship... "I will rest in your promises – my confidence is your faithfulness!"**

Our confidence is the promises of God – even when we feel ourselves to be or are factually unfaithful, God remains faithful... It's the reason for our surety!

SLIDE FIVE Secondly, he says, "We need not worry because of our faith." He's just said, **"Where's your faith? Could you guys please go find it? I know you have it somewhere; where did you put it? Where's your faith?"**

Whatever our age or stage... faith is invited, and vital to a healthy soul...

There's no promise that God is going to make you rich. There's no promise that God is going to give you more than you need, or indeed what you want.

There's no promise that God is going to lavish you like he did Job or Abraham. **But God will take care of necessities.** This is not consistent with who you are. This is not consistent with your faith.

Naturally those who are unbelieving, those who don't acknowledge God in Jesus those who have no claim on God's provision,...we expect them to worry – this is expected. These are the kinds of things that preoccupy the anxieties of the Pagans, says the passage.... **But for us, it's senseless, needless, useless, and excuseless.** And it's not a trivial sin. It's one that strikes at the very character and promise of God.

We're conflicted and unbelieving.... *we are not trusting God's character and goodness to come through....*

***I've had TWO times when I particularly had to trust....

Architecture to Christian ministry transition

Trust.... And then a handful of years ago, doing freelance projects... And I logged how my income ... '...I discovered the unshakeable truth that you will never come second by putting God first'

There's something wonderful about being in that position of utter dependence so you can see the faithful hand of God. The less we have sometimes the more free we are to trust and not be anxious...

How is your worry-ratio... .. and what you do you feel God asking you to do about it?

Do you trust in His goodness? Do you trust in His promise? Daughters and sons of the king don't conduct themselves like beggars. **Do I face life like an unbeliever, or do I face like a child of God?** Do I face life like the child of a king who possesses everything, or differently....

The real issue, I guess, is **does my Christian faith affect my view of life and control my view of life in everything?** By faith you don't have any reason to worry.

Back to Verse 32, and it goes right back to where he started. **"Your Heavenly Father knows that you need all these things."**

All worry then assumes that God doesn't care, one, or that God doesn't know, two, or that God doesn't have the resources. Ridiculous...**God does care, God does know, and God does have the resources.** It's a matter of faith...it really is a matter of faith.

SLIDE SIX He then comes to a third point. It is unnecessary to worry because of our Father, because of our faith, **and thirdly it is unwise because of our future.** It is unwise because of our future. Now we're getting down to the nitty-gritty here in Verse 34.

Don't worry about tomorrow! Imagine being concerned about what's going to happen on January 1st, the year 2000, and fretting about that now! **God is the God of tomorrow, just like He's the God of today.** And His mercies are new every morning. Great is His faithfulness...Lamentations 3.

Worry is a tremendous force. It can warp your personality, it can steal your joy, it can rob your peace, it can foul up your relationships, it can cripple your faith, it can harm your usefulness, and it can wreck your Christian testimony.

Worry is a powerful force. It's not a trivial sin; it is a significant sin. It creates havoc in your heart and the hearts of those who are watching your life. **I mean if Satan can get us to worry, and get us burdened and anxious and stressed and defeated and fearful, what kind of Christian testimony do we have?** What kind of benediction and blessing are we to the people around us? What kind of usefulness do we have? And how in the world can that honour God?

I like William Hendrickson's translation. He then says, "*For tomorrow will bring its own anxieties. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*"

Really friends, how foolish to reach forward and scoop up all the imagined trouble of the future and dump it into today. You don't have enough? *Leave tomorrow out there. God is the God of all your tomorrows.*

You and I have enough trouble without doubling it by pulling in what may or may not happen in the future.

To anticipate trouble is to double your trouble.

God only gives strength for each new day. He'll give you the grace for today's trouble, but there's no sense in presuming that you're going to get grace for the trouble tomorrow that you're feeling today.

*** A goodly number of years ago we were all told of the anxiety of Y2k... What would happen? Could the world survive? Would the planet cope when the clocks tried to click over again? Was there going to be a terrible chaotic result in the banking world so that all of a sudden there won't be any money? And the people who are supposed to be accounting for the money that we have placed in various places will no longer be able to do that...all that information may be lost.

SLIDE SEVEN I read the revisit of that story, when someone in Texas, bought remote land, and built a bunker for supplies including wait for it... over 10,000 cans of baked beans and pulses, as it came to noterity that the story, was that over the 17 years since, they've consumed 50 tins a month to rectify the fear-full-anxiety decisions made back in anticipation of the millennium! What times....? ?

What a reminder.....? We too can be fearful in rather silly ways too... **Fear, by the way, is a liar...fear is a liar.** *Fear tells you tomorrow is something to be afraid of. Fear tells you you're not going to have what you need tomorrow.*

Fear tells you that there's terrible pain out there. *Fear is a liar for the Christian because there is no thing that you're ever going to go through, no trial, no temptation, that God will not provide sufficient grace to sustain you in.*

So just shoulder the burden of today.

Enjoy the grace that God gives you today. And leave the future to God. What happens happens.

Don't cripple the present by worrying about the future. You just destroy your joy, and then you lose the present. **God will be there in the future. He'll be there when it's less than ideal. And he says, when it does, count it all...what? Joy, because God is doing a perfecting work.**

Worry, then, is a forbidden sin. **And Jesus forbids it because it is incompatible with your Father, it is incompatible with your faith, and it is incompatible with your future.** If you are a Christian today, You are guaranteed by the grace of God a glorious future. Everything that comes in the future, God will give you the grace to carry and to bear. What are you afraid of? *Build a bunker somewhere and fill it with thousands of cans of baked beans...why? I'm not a prophet...I don't know the future.*

SLIDE EIGHT **Worry refuses to know God. It refuses to trust God. It refuses to love God.** And worry is a serious sin. Please dont distrust God's promised love for you his child....

You remember in the Old Testament, the prayer, "**Don't give me so much that I forget You, and so little that I'm angry with You. Just give me what I need.**" And if He gives more, pour it into the Kingdom, and He will make sure all your needs are met.

We really don't want to be concerned about mundane things. We don't want to be concerned about the basics of life as if we had no loving Father, as if we had a Father who didn't know, or we had a Father who didn't have the resources. You are our Father. You do love us. You do know everything about us, and You do have all the resources. *And beyond that, You have made a covenant and a pledge to be our God and to supply our needs if we will faithfully pursue the Kingdom and Your Righteousness. Thank You for that promise.*

And may we live that with a clear eye, as it were, of the soul, seeing clearly Kingdom purpose, righteousness as the objective of life, day after day after day, **leaving the physical things to a loving, caring, knowing, infinitely resourceful Father who has pledged His eternal love to His own.** And in that love, the promise of faithfulness every day, we thank You for this.

Accept your limitations. "Who of you by worrying about it can add a single hour to his life?" v25. Think about it. **Worry is like a rocking chair; it gives you something to do, but it doesn't get you anywhere.** I know that's hard to swallow. We are used to getting things done. If it's broke, fix it. If it's old, replace it. If it's needed, do it. I like action-packed doers of the Word. That's what I love about this church. Yet there remain illnesses that won't heal, problems that can't be solved and people who won't shape up. That's frustrating!

Take the longer view. Verse 31 says, "Seek God's kingdom first, and all these things will be given to you as well." Fifty years from now it's not going to matter if you get the grass cut, the laundry done or the beds made. *Your golf score is not going to determine your place in glory. Fifty years from now nobody is going to remember a single word I said today. But, fifty years from now these children baptized today may love Jesus.*

Loving God deliver us from narrow-mindedness. Save us from short-sightedness. Forgive us for squeezing you into our small sized moulds instead of being transformed into your kingdom goals. **Fix our minds on things eternal. For only then will life make sense and our worries be ended.**

SLIDE NINE Remember the big promises of the God of yesterday, today and forever,... **I love you. I am with you. Don't be afraid.**

What is the action you should take.....?

What is the prayer you might pray....?

Why don't you bring your worries to the Lord and leave them there. Why not trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding....