

***Life Improvements ---- Mountaintop Makeover --- Worry! Worry! Worry!***  
***Jeremiah 17:5-10 & Philippians 4:4-7 & Matthew 6:25-34***  
***“Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or  
‘What will we wear?’” Matthew 6:31***

Jeremiah 17:5-10

<sup>5</sup> Thus says the LORD: Cursed are those who trust in mere mortals and make mere flesh their strength, whose hearts turn away from the LORD. <sup>6</sup> They shall be like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see when relief comes. They shall live in the parched places of the wilderness, in an uninhabited salt land. <sup>7</sup> Blessed are those who trust in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD. <sup>8</sup> They shall be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream. It shall not fear when heat comes, and its leaves shall stay green; in the year of drought it is not anxious, and it does not cease to bear fruit. <sup>9</sup> The heart is devious above all else; it is perverse— who can understand it? <sup>10</sup> I the LORD test the mind and search the heart, to give to all according to their ways, according to the fruit of their doings.

Philippians 4:4-7

<sup>4</sup> Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. <sup>5</sup> Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. <sup>6</sup> Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Today we continue our study of Jesus’ most famous teaching, the “Sermon on the Mount.” The “Sermon on the Mount” consists of chapters five, six and seven in the Gospel of Matthew. There is a version of this same teaching recorded in the sixth chapter of the Gospel of Luke. Our reading from the Gospel of Matthew is one of Jesus’ longest teachings found in the Sermon on the Mount. The top three topics of the longest discussion are: Jesus’ teaching on prayer and the model prayer we call the Lord’s Prayer; the powerful teaching on how to have a blessed life called the Beatitudes; and the topic of worry.

Jesus begins his teaching on worry with the word “therefore.” Jesus is tying His next teaching with the previous teaching. Basically, he is saying, “remember, *where your treasure is there is your heart also. You cannot serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and Mammon...so remember—don’t worry.*”

This morning we come to hear the third “sermonette” from the Sermon on the Mount. Let us listen for God’s word to us today from Matthew 6:25-34! Holy Spirit, illumine these words of Scripture into the Living Word. May our hearts burn within us this morning as we listen.

Matthew 6:25-34

<sup>25</sup> “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? <sup>26</sup> Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? <sup>27</sup> And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? <sup>28</sup> And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, <sup>29</sup> yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. <sup>30</sup> But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? <sup>31</sup> Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ <sup>32</sup> For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. <sup>33</sup> But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. <sup>34</sup> So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today’s trouble is enough for today.”<sup>i</sup>

I believe that Jesus’ teaching on worry is so important to us that we will take the next two weeks to read and reflect on these ten verses. This morning’s message is a three pointer: What is worry? What are the symptoms of worry? What is the solution for worry?

Point 1:

### **WHAT IS WORRY?**

The English word “worry” comes from the old German word “to strangle or choke.” That is exactly what worry does, isn’t it? Worry strangles our lives, it chokes the life out of us. Listen to how Merriam-Webster defines the verb “worry.”

**worry** \ˈwər-ē, ˈwə-rē\ *verb* **worried; worrying** [Middle English *worien*, from Old English *wyrgan*; akin to Old High German *wurgen* to strangle, Lithuanian *veržti* to constrict] (before 12th century) *transitive verb* **1 dialect British** : CHOKE, STRANGLE **2 a** : to harass by tearing, biting, or snapping especially at the throat **b** : to shake or pull at with the teeth <a terrier *worrying* a rat **c** : to touch or disturb something repeatedly **d** : to change the position of or adjust by repeated pushing or hauling **3 a** : to assail with rough or aggressive attack or treatment : TORMENT **b** : to subject to persistent or nagging attention or effort **4** : to afflict with mental distress or agitation : make anxious *intransitive verb* **1 dialect British** : STRANGLE, CHOKE **2** : to move, proceed, or progress by unceasing or difficult effort : STRUGGLE **3** : to feel or experience concern or anxiety: Fret<sup>ii</sup> Wow! No wonder Jesus spent ten verses on worry!

Someone once said, “Worry is a thin stream of fear that trickles through the mind, which, if encouraged, will cut a channel so wide that all other thoughts will be drained out.”<sup>iii</sup> Have you been to the Grand Canyon? The next time you are prone to worry, think about that!

The Greek word that Jesus uses for worry is “μεριμνάω [*merimnao* /mer·im·nah·o/], it comes from a root word that means “to be drawn into two different directions.”

Worry draws us in two different directions. Worry chokes and strangles. Worry harasses us, pulls at us, assails us, nags us, and afflicts us with mental anguish. Worry is that thin stream of fear that drains our minds of all other thoughts. *So Who Here Worries?*

According to our nation's Bureau of Standards, a dense fog covering seven city blocks to a depth of a hundred feet contains less than one actual glass of water --- divided into sixty million droplets. If all seven city blocks of fog were condensed into water, it wouldn't quite fill a drinking glass. Think of it this way, a few gallons of water can cripple an entire city.

One summer, our family drove around the coast of Lake Michigan in Northern Michigan. We had decided it would be a great experience to take the ferry across the lake to Door County. Not long after we boarded the ferry, a fog set in so dense you could not see five feet in front of you. The captain of the ship explained that the horn would sound every five minutes. He began blowing the fog horn and continued for the next several hours as we crossed over Lake Michigan.

Fog so dense you could not see. It was a terrifying feeling. Compare this to the things we worry about. Like fog, our worries can thoroughly block our vision.

Worry pulls us in two different directions, worry chokes and strangles, worry makes us feel anxious. Worry is a deep, dark cloud of fog that envelopes our life—leaving us the Grand Canyon of anxiety, doubt, and fear.

Point 2:

### **SYMPTOMS OF WORRY**

In December of 2005, a team of Australian researchers scientifically confirmed a long-suspected link between emotional stress and illness. The group from Sydney's Garvan Institute discovered that a hormone called neuropeptide Y (NPY) is released into the body during times of emotional stress. This hormone undermines the body's immune system and literally makes you sick.

According to the Institute's Fabienne Mackay, "During periods of stress, nerves release a lot of NPY, and it gets into the bloodstream where it inhibits the cells in the immune system that look out for and destroy pathogens in the body." She added, "That stress makes you sick is no longer a myth; it is a reality and we need to take it seriously."<sup>iv</sup>

Worry causes stress and stress weakens the immune system. Worry is bad on the heart according to medical doctors. Dr Charles Mayo, of the Mayo Clinic once wrote, “Worry affects the circulation of the heart, the glands and the whole nervous system. I have never met a man or known a man to die of overwork, but I have met a lot who died of worry.”<sup>v</sup>

As I thought about that statement, I thought about all the different people that I have counseled throughout my years of ministry. I thought about all the different bedsides that I have sat beside. I truly believe that Dr. Mayo is right, worry can put the hurry on physical death, but I would add that worry can also hurry spiritual death. I have seen the shipwreck of many of the faithful as they were tossed to and fro by the winds, waves and storms of worry, anxiety and stress.

No wonder Jesus spends so much time on worry. He was telling us light-years ahead of the Mayo Clinic: worry will cause untold health problems to roost upon the worrier.

Point 3:

### **SOLUTIONS FOR WORRY**

A good teacher knows that repetition is the way to bring the teaching point home. Jesus is a good teacher! In these ten verses, Jesus says three times, in verses 25, 31 and 34 --- “Do not worry!”

***“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?”***

***Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’***

***“So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today’s trouble is enough for today.”***

What’s the solution for worry? What’s the opposite emotion of worry? Let’s go straight to the text. Jesus says, *“O you of little faith. Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you.”* The solution for worry is faith.

So What?

So how do we gain more faith? How do we seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness?

Here’s your homework lesson for this week: take a blank piece of paper and write on one side of the paper at the very top “WORRY” --- “leads to stress, anxiety and even death!” Under “worry” write all of the things that you worry about. On the other side of the paper write “FAITH!”

Paul wrote to the church in Philippi words of encouragement when he told them: <sup>4</sup> *Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.* <sup>5</sup> *Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near.* <sup>6</sup> *Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.* <sup>7</sup> *And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

I believe that if you do this exercise, you will be able to guard your heart and your minds in Christ Jesus. For further encouragement, look at Galatians 5:22. *“But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, temperance and faith.”* Did you hear it? The Holy Spirit is in charge of producing the fruit of FAITH in our lives! We pray, we ask, we thank—and the Holy Spirit living within us will produce in us the PEACE OF GOD that will GUARD OUR HEARTS AND MINDS. Yeeha.

Here’s the assignment again: one sheet of paper, two headings: WORRY and FAITH. Under WORRY, put down all the things you are worrying about. On the other side, put down this prayer: “Holy Spirit, I need a faith that is bigger than my worry! Guard my heart and my mind and teach me how to pray away my worry! Thanks!” Then—wait for the peace of God.

1. The Grand Canyon of Worry wants to choke the life out of us.
2. Worry releases neuropeptides which make us sick—body, mind, and spirit.
3. The antibiotic for worry? FAITH—given to us by the Holy Spirit
4. How do we get an Rx for FAITH? *Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.*

SOUNDS LIKE: (wiggle ear as in Charades)

God, I am worried about \_\_\_\_\_. Today I pray you will help me with this great worry. Give me a faith bigger than my worry. Thanks!

Today we come worry-free to this communion table. We remember the broken body of Christ and the blood of Christ--shed so that we can live free from a life of worry. All who name the precious name of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior are invited to this table of grace. As you come forward to receive Communion, imagine our Savior holding out arms of grace for you to unload your worries into.

God, we come to this table—not because we are good or holy or right; we come because you ask us to. This morning we ask and pray that you will teach us a new way of life. We don’t want worry to carve another Great Canyon in our lives. We ask that by the power of Your Holy Spirit we will have a faith bigger than our worry. Thank you for loving us so much. Amen.

Let us pray ...

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<sup>i</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*. 1989. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

<sup>ii</sup> Merriam-Webster, I. (1996, c1993). *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*. Springfield, Mass.

<sup>iii</sup> John MacArthur, *Matthew*, 1985, Chicago: The Moody Bible Institute

<sup>iv</sup> "Australian Scientists Find Proof That Stress Makes You Sick," *Breitbart.com* (12-4-05)

<sup>v</sup> John MacArthur, *Matthew*, 1985, Chicago: The Moody Bible Institute