

Sermon: Don't Worry about Things!

Text: Luke 12:22-34

Gary L. Wackler

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Introduction: Worry is a billion dollar business. You can be anxious about virtually anything. “Anxiety is one of the most debilitating and most common mental illness in the United States Of America. Statistics show that a staggering 40 million individuals throughout the U.S. are afflicted with some form of anxiety. This is an astounding 19% of all people in America. Every year over 140 billion dollars is spent on mental disorders; 42 billion dollars of that money is spent on anxiety disorders alone.” © 2010 Anxiety Cures

Jesus had just finished a parable about investing too heavily in this world and the real returns on greed. Now, our Savior, turns his attention to solutions for this disease (sin). It involves a lot of don'ts and dos. After all, Jesus insists, life is a matter of perspective and determining what is really important. Worry is a big problem even in 1st century Palestine, so the Great Physician gives us some remedies as told through Dr. Luke. Here's the prescription:

I. Don't Worry about Your Life (vv. 22-23, 29-30).

There's a lot of pressure on children and parents today. Even in Lake Wobegon, they are not immune “where all the women are strong, all the men are good-looking, and all the children are above average.” - Garrison Keillor

Jesus understands that even the necessities of life can produce anxiety in people. Today we are constantly bombarded about even what kind of foods we should eat. Obesity is the next national obsession. What a person wears is considered essential to self esteem. Even in the “New Adventures of Old Christine,” the primary character has to make a decision between buying a \$2000.00 dress or giving the money to Christian charity. She chooses the dress! Barb purchases a commercial popcorn machine.

Luke 12:22-23, 29-30 (NIV) ²²Then Jesus said to his disciples: “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. ²³Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. ²⁹And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. ³⁰For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them.

I don't necessarily think that the word for *life* here (*φύχη*) is being set in contrast to the physical life. I do think that Jesus is saying a person should not focus on that aspect only. Jesus says:

A. Life is *more* than food.

Many of Jesus' audience including his disciples sometimes struggled to get *any* kind of food for the day. Yet Jesus says don't worry about such matters. Jesus performs miracles to provide food and hopefully faith in his abilities to meet needs.

Jesus' concern is that basic needs do not become an intense desire and occupy our minds with a lot of unnecessary worry. Today we have food courts in our local malls and block after block of prime real estate is designated to meet our every culinary hunger. We have food channels. We have TV shows about food and many of the plots center around food. Please do not misunderstand, I love to go out and eat as much as many of you, but life is more than that. If we spent as much time, energy and money on evangelism as we do on food, certainly, our churches would be fuller. A good meal at Taiwan 101 will satisfy me for a few hours, but Jesus satisfies forever.

B. Life is *more* than clothes.

Now Jesus is talking about just the necessities to protect against the climate of desert living and provide modesty. He is saying even these needed things should not be an overwhelming concern.

Again our culture, has taken it to the next level. Jesus says pagans become consumed by desire for these things. They run after clothing. We have heard of people being killed for over-priced tennis shoes that some 8-year-old Malaysian girl may have produced. Why all the fuss? Well, some people think if you look good (valuable), then you must be good (valuable). Jesus says, you can be well-fed and well-dressed, but if you are alienated from God, you do not understand the answer to "what is the meaning of life." If we are seduced by greed or her relative, constant worry, then we will miss out on *real* life. If our obsession with food and clothing is removed, all the shopping malls would immediately go out of business. This, of course, would deprive us of places to walk, socialize and take our family, and make unplanned purchases when we see something we have to have.

In the U.S. Census Bureau News I learned that in January (one month) of this year (2010) Americans spent nearly \$356 billion on retail and food service sales.

Jesus is saying, “relax.”

C. God will take care of you.

Jesus is saying your heavenly Father will take good care of you. You know, growing up I remember eating bread and milk for breakfast and shopping at Goodwill Industries for clothes, but I never was concerned about being fed or clothed because my father loved and cared for us. He always took care of our basic needs. That is the point here. God will take care of those who follow his design for their lives.

II. Don't Worry about God's Provision (vv. 24, 27-28).

Luke 12:24, 27-28 (NIV) ²⁴Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! ²⁷“Consider how the lilies grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ²⁸If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith!

In a reference back to the rich man who wanted to hoard rather than share what God had blessed him with - Jesus says there is no need for that kind of faithless behavior.

A. God cares for *all* his creation.

The raven, or possibly crow, was on a list of unclean animals (**Lev. 11:15; Deut. 14:14**). If God would care about the life of an unclean bird, certainly he would look after the needs of the most important part of his creation. God cares about *all* his creation, but when it comes to man there is nothing more important to God. We are more valuable than any other part of creation. Man alone was made in God's image.

All of creation is to reflect God's glory. There is nothing quite so beautiful as flowers in bloom after a rain in the desert. In the harshest of climates God provides ways for even the tiniest of wildflowers to not only survive, but provide beauty. Also in the desert where there appears little to eat I have never seen a skinny quail.

“Birds and flowers can be our teachers when it comes to depending on God.” - Craddock, *Luke*, p. 164

Jesus said:

B. Have faith! Trust me. I will take care of you. Look at what I do in nature, and I love and care about you more. We need to believe the Scriptures that demonstrate over and over how much God cares about His people. In the O.T. God supplied daily food for the Israelites in manna. In the New Testament something more precious is supplied to prove God’s love.

Romans 8:31-32 (NIV) ³¹What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³²He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

For the Kingdom person life goes on beyond our earthly experience so...

III. Don’t Worry about Your Longevity (vv. 25-26).

Luke 12:25-26 (NIV) ²⁵Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? ²⁶Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?

The great theologian, Charlie Brown, has said: “I’ve developed a new philosophy... I only dread one day at a time.” (Charles Schulz)

Glenn Turner adds: “Worrying is like a rocking chair, it gives you something to do, but it gets you nowhere.”

A. Worry does not extend life.

In fact, if anything, worry shortens life. “The Mayo Clinic claims 80-85% of its total caseload is due directly to worry and anxiety. Many experts say that coping with stress is the #1 health priority of our day. One leading physician has stated that, in his opinion, 70% of all medical patients could cure themselves if only they got rid of their worries and fears. We know that medical science has closely tied worry to heart trouble, blood pressure problems, ulcers, thyroid malfunction, migraine headaches, a host of stomach disorders, amongst others. For example 25 million Americans have high blood pressure due to stress/anxiety; 1 million more develop high blood pressure each year. 8 million have stomach ulcers every week; 112 million people take medication for stress related symptoms.” [Craig Simpson. “Don’t Worry About Anything.” SermonCentral.com]

B. Only God is in control of life.

The sooner we realize that God is in control and also capable, the better life will go for us. God has numbered our days. He has a purpose for each of us. Would you like to know how much time you have left here on earth? May I tell you? Not much! In comparison to eternity, we have hardly any time left. That should not paralyze us or put us into a depression. It should energize us, give us a sense of urgency, and even a calmness in our spirits.

There is no sense in trying to calculate it, only live it!

In the meantime:

IV. Don't Worry about the World's Agenda (vv. 31-33).

You see the world's agenda is only about now! Jesus' plan for a non-worried life extends into eternity.

Luke 12:31-33 (NIV) ³¹But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well. ³²“Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. ³³Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.

A. Seek God's Kingdom.

It is the Lord's command to us, and we are to use the same energy and determination for the kingdom that we once squandered on worry. God's plan must become ours. It means that in everything we do, we put God first.

Fear and worry are really about the same thing - not trusting God. It is a faith problem. It is a priority problem as well. It can only be solved by wholeheartedly following Jesus. We were created to be in communion with God.

A Johns Hopkins University doctor says, “We do not know why it is that worriers die sooner than the non-worriers, but that is a fact.” But I, who am simple of mind, think I know; We are inwardly constructed in nerve and tissue, brain cell and soul, for faith and not for fear. God made us that way. To live by worry is to live against reality.” [Dr. E. Stanley Jones, www.bible.org/illus/w/w-54.htm]

B. The Kingdom is now!

And the text indicates it is a present gift. If we follow and obey our Lord, we will find the desires of our heart. We do not have to wait on God's presence; we have the Holy Spirit. We do not have to wait on eternal life, it begins when we accept Jesus as Lord.

To get to the future with God we need to live correctly in the present. "How we use our resources *now* communicates our values. People and needs have priority over possessions and ownership." - Bock, *Luke*, p. 350

Look at the early church how they shared their assets, money and property. Wealth and success here and now is a short-lived reality if only used for self. "Earthly goods are given to be used, not to be collected." - Bonhoeffer, p. 194

As faithful stewards now, we need to invest now! We need to acquire eternal purses, spending capital on programs that matter. Treasure and heart need to be united for kingdom pursuits.

C. Plan for the future.

We are talked about as aliens and strangers here on earth. It is our temporary residence until we get to heaven. So how invested should we be in a world that will someday be a burned out cinder?

Jesus certainly must have looked vulnerable on the cross, but it is not what things look like, but how they turn out - that matters. To be with God in the future you need to be with Him now.

Conclusion: [Luke 12:34 \(NIV\)](#) ³⁴For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

[Verse 34](#) really sums up the cardiac health of a person who truly follows Jesus. "If the eye sees an object which is not there, the whole body is deceived. If the heart is devoted to the mirage of the world, to the creature instead of the Creator, the disciple is lost." Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, p. 193

Tell me what your treasure is, what's most important to you, and I will tell you also where your heart is. To what (Whom) are we really devoted?