



Do Not Fear, Little Flock
Luke 12:22-34

22 Then He said to His disciples, "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; nor about the body, what you will put on.

23 "Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing.

24 "Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds?

25 "And which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?

26 "If you then are not able to do the least, why are you anxious for the rest?

27 "Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

28 "If then God so clothes the grass, which today is in the field and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith?

29 "And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind.

30 "For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these things.

31 "But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you.

32 "Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

33 "Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys.

34 "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Ever notice how dominated the news is by worry? Everyone is worried about the election, worried about the price of gas, worried about Terrorism, worried about the strength of the economy, worried about the theory of Global Warming, worried about their job, and so on.

That really shouldn't surprise you. We live at a time where Materialism not Christianity has become the dominant religion. Materialists, as the name implies, are sure that life is made up solely of material things, that all that they see is all that there is. They believe that all they have is what they have managed to grasp on to, and that life consists mainly in holding onto what material goods you have grabbed and doing all that you can to grab up some more. They live in constant fear that they will lose what they have or that they will be unable to generate more. Since there is no afterlife and this life is all they have, they are constantly in fear of passing out of existence, so they will do literally anything for their health. If, for instance, that means that a few million human embryos have to be sacrificed in order to harvest their stem cells, then so be it. Meanwhile, since there is no God of the Bible, they do not honestly believe that there is anything that stands between them and sudden man-made Armageddon.

With a philosophy like that at work, it would be surprising if coveting, worry, depression, and ultimately despair, weren't commonplace.

Worldlings worry, its their nature, it's a natural outgrowth of their belief system. But what is odd - **no - more than that**, what is downright *sinful and wrong* is when *believers do the same thing*.

When a believer worries, no matter what gloss you want to put on it, "Oh, I'm just being sensible!" it is ultimately a lack of faith in God's promises and God's providence.

Jesus has already condemned covetousness and the idolatrous pursuit of material possessions, now in these verses he turns to his disciples and tells them how wrong it is to worry about these things. In fact, this may be difficult for many Christians to accept, but "do not worry" in verse 22 is not a suggestion – *it's a command*.

Now why, O believer, shouldn't you worry? ***Because your trust is in God, not in your own strength and certainly not in the abundance of possessions.***

Jesus points out that the Lord God, who created you, who redeemed you, who called you to faith, cares even for the ravens. They eat even though they can't grow food or build storehouses or even call out for pizza. And if God provides food for the lowliest of scavenging birds, will your God not take care of you? Aren't you worth more than all the Ravens put together?

What bird did God create in His own image? To which of them did he give an immortal soul? Most importantly, what Raven did God so love that He gave His only begotten Son for it that it might not perish but have everlasting life? *None of them! But he did do all of these things for you and will he not care for you at least as well as them?* So why are you so worried about what you are going to eat? Don't you think your father knows your need at least as well as you do?

And why do you worry about what you are going to wear? I sometimes am amazed at how much time and effort and money is consumed by something as mundane as clothing. We devote Magazines and TV shows to it, clothes are the centerpiece for every shopping mall, parents can easily go bankrupt just trying to keep up with their kids peer-pressure generated clothing "needs" and the entire system is geared to ensure that we are constantly supposed to be shopping.

Now guys, you may not be aware of this, but this whole fashion thing means that even if you were to finally assemble a complete wardrobe, you still aren't allowed to stop buying new clothes. You see as soon as you have enough ties, without coffee stains that is, somebody will suddenly decide they are suddenly supposed to be wide instead of narrow like the ones you own or vice versa.

Jesus gives a double argument here against worldliness and a lack of trust in God in the matter of clothing. He points out that a) If God can provide simple flowers with apparel that not even Solomon, the richest of the ancient rulers could how difficult will it be for him to provide you with clothes? And b) if he so gloriously provides for grass which is literally here today and gone tomorrow, will he not provide for his own beloved children?

What good is worry in any event? We have already discussed how worrying is ultimately a show of "little faith" in God but have you ever stopped to consider that other than as a catalyst for driving you to prayer there is no value in worry? Worry is one of those things that are uniformly bad for you. Let's look at some of the ways that that is true, going from the less serious to the more serious:

- 1) ***Worry is simply bad for your health and happiness:*** Jesus asks in verse 25 "which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?" Now here stature is not the best translation, the word there is *helikia* and it can mean either stature as it does Luke 19:3 Zaccheus "was small in *helikia* - stature" but far more commonly it means age or life-span so we read in Heb 11:11 that Sarah "bore a child when she was past

the *helikia* – age." What is meant in this verse is that you can't add even a cubit – that is the distance between your elbow and the tips of your fingers - to the total length of your age by worrying. Indeed, you may well end up worrying yourself to death. Worrying leads to sleeplessness, nail-biting, ulcers, heart attacks, gray hair, ill health, premature aging, and a host of other things. A worried man is seldom happy, and when he is it is seldom for long. He has no peace and no contentment.

- 2) ***Worrying leads to sin.*** Because he was *worried* that Samuel would not come in time to offer the sacrifice and that the army would scatter before the battle with the Philistines, Saul disobeyed the Lord's commands and offered a sacrifice himself. Because they were worried they might lose again to the Philistines, the army of Israel disobeyed the commands of the Lord and brought the Ark of the Covenant to the battlefield and it was lost. Because he was *worried* Uriah would find out his wife was pregnant with his child, David had him murdered. Because he was *worried* that a newborn king would take his place, Herod had all the male children in Bethlehem two and under slain, because he was worried about the strength of the storm and size of the waves Peter began to sink – and so on. Then because he was worried he would be found out, he betrayed his master, we could go on and on. *Worry is one of the most common causes for sin and spiritual disasters.*
- 3) ***Worrying is totally incompatible with the faith.*** In the parable of the sower, Jesus points out that worries and desires for riches and material things *choke the faith*. Luke 8:14 "Now the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity. The word for cares there is *memnia* which literally means worries.

Brothers and Sisters, one of the saddest things to see is when you have someone who starts well in the faith and appears to be running the race well and then gradually they are torn aside more and more by the things of this world, riches and pleasures and all the hopes and worries that inevitably come with the pursuit of them.

I'm sure you've probably heard how they trap Monkeys in Indonesia. I always thought the story was made-up for the purpose of teaching until I actually saw it being done on a National Geographic special some years ago. A monkey trap is made by taking a hollow coconut and making a hole in each end, one large and one small. The small hole is used to attach the coconut to a tree or a stake by a rope and the other larger hole is kept open. Some sweet fruit is then put inside the coconut. Now the hole large enough that an open hand can be put in, but a fist cannot be drawn out. So the monkey comes along, smells the fruit and sees it and reaches into the coconut to get it. His hand closes around the fruit and becomes a fist. And so he's trapped.

The monkey will literally become frantic, especially when the hunters close in on him, but only very rarely will the monkey do what seems so obvious and let go of the fruit in order to draw his hand out. Greed and poor abstract thinking skills keep him trapped and spell his ultimate doom. I always thought it was particularly sad that he doesn't even get to enjoy the fruit that was used to trap him.

"Silly monkey!" I mean, you laugh at the silliness of a creature that can be destroyed simply through it's unrelenting greed. And yet, the devil has successfully been using the same sort of trap on professing Christians for years. They are doing well, and then something sweet and desirable is offered up to them, their eyes get big, their hearts are filled with lust and they reach out to grab it and... they're trapped. All they would need to do to be free is let it go, to repent of their decision, but they can't, they'll become frantic with worry and make ship-wreck of their faith first. Paul knew the sadness of watching this awful process "**Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica**" he writes in his last prison epistle.

Now you know if they do indeed leave the faith and never return it indicates that they were never truly converted **"They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us."** If what they truly treasure are the fleeting things of this world: possessions, honors, pleasures, it shows that their heart never truly was Christ's for as Leon Morris put it:

"The Heart and the Treasure go together. Anyone's heart, the concentration of his energies and interests, is always with his treasure, i.e. the things he values most"

But that knowledge is cold comfort indeed for the aching heart of the Pastor who sees it happen to one entrusted to his spiritual care. I would much rather endure a personal loss than watch a person come near to the kingdom and then walk away like the rich young ruler.

4) ***Worrying then is ultimately senseless for believers:*** Does your father in heaven know you have need of these things, food, drink, clothing, money? Of Course! But he desires to give you so much more than that. By fixing your attention on these common and mundane things and worrying about them, you are in effect drawing you attention away from the true and lasting treasure he desires to give you!

Your father in heaven desires to give you an inheritance that only his Son Jesus merited, he wants to give you the very kingdom of heaven. He has made you co-heir with Jesus! These treasures are treasures that are incorruptible! *Eternal Life! Freedom from Sin, and pain, and sorrow, and want forever! Will you then turn your eyes away from the pursuit of heaven and fix them on a vain quest after dust? Will you leave the wedding feast of the lamb in order to grasp after a tiny piece of forbidden fruit you can never enjoy?*

Be willing therefore to sell or part with anything that might be a stumbling block to your faith, for as you do you are storing up treasure in heaven. Think first of the kingdom in all things, for it is not the possessions that you have that are the problem, it is when they become your hearts first delight that is the problem.

Yes it is easier to walk in the broad way, and there is a reason the Good Shepherd call his flock little for truly ***"the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it."*** But to join the many who choose the broad way is to decide to walk a road that leads away from Christ and inevitably down to destruction. It is also to choose a path that is filled with worry and care and pain, the pleasures of that path are fleeting and the sorrows are never ending.

Choose the narrow path, enter in by faith in Jesus Christ! Friend do not be concerned if you do not have as much as others, remember you are following a savior who while he was on earth confessed that "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head." And who had only one simple garment to be divided amongst his crucifiers.

What garment then will you who follow Christ wear? Do not fear little flock, know that because of that sacrifice Jesus made on Calvary, you need never again be anxious, never again worry, for no matter what men might take from you Jesus has given you a garment that can never be divided, that robe is his own spotless righteousness. My great hope and prayer is that on the last day it will be said of you all ***"These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."***