

“Less worry, more thanks.”

How many people could do with a little less worry --- and little more thanks?

Some people ---- very few but some ---- are truly worry free ---- totally void of any and all sense of worry --- I’ve met a few people in my life who I can truly say never worry --- but they are the very rare exception.

For the majority of us ----- unfortunately ---- worry plays a part of our lives.

Sometimes even a big part of our lives---- but it needn’t be so.

The gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ today --- Matthew 6 25-34 ---- is largely about ---- less worry ---- more thanks ----- less worry and more seeking His kingdom and righteousness.

It’s about giving ourselves over to God’s will and trusting in Him instead of taking life upon ourselves and worrying about it.

Our gospel passage today deserves special attention ---- and it deserves special attention because it is part of the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 5-7 contain what is often referred to as the Sermon on the Mount.

And The Sermon on the Mount is the only extended sermon or teaching of Jesus Christ that goes on beyond just a few verses without interruption.

If nothing else today do yourself a favour and go home and read --- and re-read Matthew 5-7 ----- the very greatest sermon ever spoken.

So Matthew 6 --- 25-34 ---- less worry ----- more thanks.

The first verse of this passage can be summed up something like this -----
 “If God gives us life in the first place --- than we can certainly trust Him to also provide for all the things that are necessary to support this life.”

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Put another way ---- what kind of being would God be if He gave us the gift of life ---- and then failed to provide all that we need in life?

Verse 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?”

God gives life --- and God provides for life ---- and not only this but God directs us in life ----- showing us what is truly important and what is secondary.

The unfortunate part of it is ----- the things we usually consider so important in life ---- are often truly secondary.

“Is not life more than food and the body more than clothes.” ----- is Jesus’ simple and direct way of saying --- “Don’t get all caught up thinking about just the bare necessities in life ----- life is about far more than just food --- drink and other stuff --- material things.”

And of course Jesus gets specific ---- very specific about what life is truly about ----- saying in verse 33 ----- “Seek first His kingdom --- and His righteousness ---- an all these things will be given to you.”

The key is either way ---- seeking His kingdom and righteousness --- or simply seeking worldly provisions on our own without first seeking God’s will --- God will provide ----- the difference is in one scenario we are free from worry and in the other we become consumed by it.

God doesn’t function on us earning things --- the difference lies in focus and level of trust as we are provided for graciously.

Unless we seek His kingdom and righteousness first ---- even though we are provided for we will never truly be at peace about it.

Instead because we are seeking food and clothing and health and worldly stability first we will always first concern ourselves with them --- and will always and forever also worry about them.

In a nutshell if we worry --- we distrust God.

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People don't like to hear this but it's true.

And it's true not because I said it ---- or he said or she said it ---- it's true because that's what the Bible teaches today.

On a fundamental level ---- all worry is simply a distrust of God.

We can reason away all we want --- try to explain away all we want ---- as to why we worry ----- but in the end the point is blunt and simple ---- anyway you look at it ---- all worry is a fundamental distrust of God.

God says ---- seek first my Kingdom and righteousness and all will be looked after and you will be provided for.

Too many of us say --- well it's not that simple ---- I first have to make sure I've got enough food --- and drink --- and shelter --- and resources --- health clothing whatever ----- and then I can rest a little easier and focus on God.

Nice try but ---- according to our scripture passage today ---- uh uh ---- NO -- it just doesn't work this way.

Jesus says ---- look at the birds ---- they work hard at getting what they need --- food and shelter ---- but they never worry --- that is how you are to live.

Just as the birds of the air work at looking after themselves so are we --- but we are not to worry.

There is a huge difference between concern ---- paying attention to duty ----- as necessary ---- and worrying.

The birds of the air from verse 26 ---- can teach us something.

They don't give undue attention to their worldly needs --- food and shelter -- - they don't stockpile --- and yet God looks after them.

Birds don't concern themselves with trying to see into a future that cannot be seen into ---- they don't have the human weakness called worry.

And if God looks after them --- mere animals --- how much more will He look after us --- humans --- the very crown of creation.

And then Jesus says the very same thing about flowers in the next few verses --- saying if God provides ---- making the flowers look so beautiful and radiant when before long they wither away ----- how much more will He provide for us in beauty --- us who will live on forever in Christ --- us the crown of creation.

Verses 31 and 32 from Matthew's gospel today read ---- "So do not worry saying ---- 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'" For the pagans run after these things and your heavenly Father knows you need them."

In other words ---- God knows what you need --- don't worry about these things --- He will look after them.

Instead we are to focus on the very next verse ---- instead ---- "seek first His kingdom ----- and His righteousness" --- because when you do all these things --- food drink --- clothing --- good health in an eternal sense ----- life abundant and everlasting ----- will be given to you.

All worry is --- on a fundamental level ---- a distrust of God.

And further to this worry gets you no where --- worry adds nothing --- gives nothing ---- indeed all it does is serve to hinder and cripple and kill.

Verse 27 ----- "Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?"

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And of course the answer is no.

Worry never adds anything to life --- it only ever takes away.

It takes away energy --- it takes away confidence ---- it takes away peace --- it takes away the ability to be present in life ---- and in the extreme it cripples one in life --- leading to inaction ----- a kind of frozen numbness and a getting stuck on things kind of rut.

Does anyone enjoy worrying? ----- who enjoys worrying?

No one --- so why not get rid of it --- we don't need it.

People usually respond to this saying ---- “Well that’s all fine and dandy but how do I get rid of worry --- can we ---- can I ever really get rid of worry?

And the answer of course is simple.

Accept God’s will ---- leave things in God’s hands and worry dissipates.

To get rid of worry ----- simply accept God’s Will.

It’s that simple.

Contrary to whatever we may think worry is NEVER caused by external circumstances.

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We like to think it is --- saying things like ----- “And now I’ve got that to worry about.” --- as if it’s self evident or justified that we can now worry because such and such has happened.

Worry is never caused by external circumstances.

Worry is internal --- it’s lack of faith and it’s distrust in God.

Worry is us wanting to kick God out of the driver’s seat so that we can take it.

2 people can have the exact same thing happen to them in life ----- one will worry and the other will accept it and live on worry free.

One can worry and the other can be totally relaxed and at peace.

It can be a concern --- a factor ----- an accepted reality for both ---- but worry need not come into play necessarily.

Scottish New Testament scholar will Barclay said ---- in reference to this passage.

“Worry is needless --- useless ---- and actively injurious.”

It’s true ----- “Worry is needless --- useless ---- and actively injurious.”

And Barclay took this a step further and went on to say ----- “There may be greater sins than worry ----- but very certainly there is no more disabling sin.”

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In other words ----- worry kills.

Worry kills our spirit ---- it destroys peace ----- it hinders harmony and erodes away at faith --- our relationship with God.

Pause ----- And now for something a little more positive.

There is hope --- there is a way to do away with worry.

As I mentioned earlier worry is killed off by simply accepting God’s will and living it out.

Seeking God’s Kingdom -----God’s will and righteousness pushes worry aside and allows us to get on with the real matters of life.

Someone said to me recently ----- “Don’t you want to do everything you can to live as long as you possibly can ----- stop eating this --- start eating that and so on.”

My answer was “Well no ---- not really ---- yes I want to look after myself and eat well and nourish my body but I’m well aware of the fact that my body will fail me and I’m truthfully more concerned with Kingdom stuff --- I’m more concerned with kingdom building than body building.”

Don’t get me wrong I’m not advocating eating junk and sitting around like a sack of potatoes but to read endlessly and concern yourself endlessly with

matters of this world when there is Kingdom work to be done ----- seems misguided to me.

And to Jesus according to our scripture passage today.

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Of course we still have concern --- a healthy dedication and commitment o the often mundane tasks at hand.

The bird of verse 26 today works hard at gathering food and building a nest - -- the bird is concerned --- a healthy commitment to day to day needs ----- but the bird never worries --- it simply carries on knowing that it will find all that is needed by the end of the day.

And this is precisely how we are to live too.

Worry wears out the mind and ultimately also the body.

Worry is life taking --- and never life giving.

“Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?” --- Jesus asks.

It can be a difficult journey ---- trying to live worry free ----- many of us grow into this part of our faith slowly ----- very slowly.

Like many of us --- I too am still learning to live worry free.

I'm a lot further ahead of where I was 15 years ago ---- 10 years and so on.

The list of things that I readily pass into God's hands instead of trying to figure them our myself now keeps on growing and growing ----- my trust in Him is greater and greater.

I know that all Jesus said today in Matthew 6 is true.

Seek His kingdom and righteousness and all will work out.

Life isn't about us cramming things in and getting them done ----- figuring things out and getting smarter and wiser.

Life is about giving way to God in our lives ---- kingdom building and righteousness seeking.

Jesus shows us another way ---and opens up another door.

Trust in Him ----- follow Him ---- let Him occupy the driver's seat and all will be well.

Yes we'll still have to work at things --- put our shoulder to the grindstone and give it some elbow grease --- sometimes even lots and lots of elbow grease ----- life can include sore muscles and tired bodies and minds.

Yeah we're still gonna die ---- yes our bodies will still fail us and collapse ultimately.

But this only happens so that we can continue to be with Him eternally.

If we all we ever focus on is earthly needs --- food --- drink ---- clothing ---- possessions ---- health and wealth we will always always always find that we are also people who worry ---- and who worry a lot.

If on the other hand we focus first on seeking His kingdom and righteousness all these things ----- food --- drink --- clothing --- health and wealth will be provided for as long as we need them ----- until God calls us home.

Why --- because God promises and Jesus teaches us that it is so.

“Less worry ----- more thanks.”

May this be our slogan or motto this thanksgiving.

Or more appropriately --- may ----- “Less worry ----- more thanks.”

Be our celebration ----- and our prayer ----- this thanksgiving and beyond.

May we not only give thanks ----- but may we also give away our propensity to worry and doubt God.

Less worry ----- more thanks ----- thanks to Jesus Christ and God's generous saving and abundant grace.

Amen.