

## Don't Worry, Be Happy

[Philippians 4:4-9](#), [Matthew 6:25-34](#)

Worry – we hang on to worry. It's like a warm blanket.

We wrap ourselves up in it until we can barely breathe. The problem with worry is it wears us down. It takes its toll on us in every way – physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually.

Numerous studies abound concerning worry, anxiety, and stress.

Self help books line the shelves of most book stores, all packed with methods to reduce stress, live a healthier life, and be the person you always wanted to be. Stress can lead to numerous well-documented health conditions such as high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, ulcers, and a decreased life expectancy.

Doesn't that start us off with a positive note!

Why are we so stressed out? Last week we talked about our busyness and how we get caught up in details and forget to

feed our souls. Working harder/longer hours can definitely cause stress. When we are at work we worry about what's going on at home and when we are at home we worry about what's going on at work. We're stressed out about money and caring for our families so much that we work even harder and longer to get more money which stresses us out even more! The more we pack into our day, the more we need to turn to energy drinks, caffeine, and energy-boosting vitamins to keep us going. Then we are so stressed out we have trouble sleeping even when we are exhausted. An estimated 5 million Americans turn to sleeping pills every night to help them sleep. On average we are working more, sleeping less and it never seems to get us anywhere.

The scripture from Philippians was written by Paul while he was under house arrest in Rome. He was telling the church in

Philippi to be joyful and not to worry. Let's recap – Paul was cheering up the church in Philippi, providing words of encouragement, while he was in jail. I'm sure the conditions in the Roman prison system were nothing like they are today.

Hence, Paul's environment could not have been pleasant. Yet Paul's message was one of a request for peace – to trust God and put worry aside. God will provide for God's people. Even when experiencing his own personal crisis, Paul's main concern was for the comfort of others. It seems Paul was able to find an inner peace in the midst of turmoil that can only come from God.

Matthew's gospel was written around the same time as Paul's letter to the church in Philippi. When we read Jesus' message, we hear a familiar theme. I would like to read that passage again.

“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 your life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to [one’s] life? And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will God not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, ‘what shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your

heavenly father knows that you need them. But seek first [God's] kingdom and righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”

So how do we do that? How do we look beyond our issues that seem poised to bury us? We put our trust in God. God cares about each of us. Maybe we need to find a quiet time to meditate and pray – even if that's while you are folding the laundry or doing yard work. Maybe we need to realize that worrying about things that are beyond our control is fruitless and downright harmful – it can wear us down. Maybe we can take a little time each day to read or listen to scripture – perhaps using a tape or CD of the Bible or devotional studies to ponder while we are driving. Maybe it's something as simple as giving thanks

for our daily bread. Notice the words of the Lord's Prayer say nothing about providing for us throughout our lives – the words simply state, “give us this day, our daily bread.” One day at a time – taking our problems and concerns one day at a time.

Perhaps it is pausing to see the good things we have. There's an old hymn that says, “Count your blessings, name them one by one.” Maybe it is taking a walk and seeing the beauty in nature perhaps for the first time this week – to literally stop and smell the roses (or pumpkins, or potpourri). I like the words of the prayer of St. Frances:

“God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.”

Jesus tells us that there are things that we cannot control, so why worry about them. He also tells us to leave yesterday's

worries in the past. How much time have we wasted worrying and reliving past mistakes? Jesus tells us to leave the past in the past and move on. There is a popular contemporary Christian song and I believe a country song as well that talk about the line in the middle. The songs basically talk about a gravestone and how there is a birth date and a death date on the gravestone, but a person's entire life is depicted by the line in the middle. So much of our lives are spent worrying about what has already happened in the past, or what is going to happen in the future. We are encouraged to consider today. We are encouraged to make the best of the day we have given to us and not let the worries of the past or the future consume our thoughts and actions.

I'm wondering if the title of my sermon is familiar. Perhaps you might recall the mega-hit, "Don't Worry, Be

Happy.” It was released by a virtually unknown artist by the name of Bobby McFerrin, and spent a great deal of time at the top of the American and Canadian pop charts. The first part of the song goes like this. “Here’s a little song I wrote, you might want to sing it note for note. Don’t’ worry, be happy. In every life we have some trouble, but when you worry you make it double. Don’t worry, be happy. Don’t worry, be happy now.”

I’d like to end with that song – if a picture is worth a thousand words, perhaps a song is worth something. I heard someone praise Charles Wesley, the writer of so many of our familiar hymns. “Rarely do people leave a service singing the sermon.”

[Play song]

Let us put our faith into action by trusting God to take care of us one day at a time. Amen.