



# Central Peninsula Church

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Luke 12:22-34  
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## Why Not Worry?

SERIES: *A Savior for All People*

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How much time and energy do you spend worrying?

Someone has defined worry as “a small trickle of fear that meanders through the mind until it cuts a channel into which all other thoughts are drained.” Chuck Swindoll says, “I have never seen a gravestone that reads, ‘He died of worry.’ But some of them ought to read that way. How many illnesses are directly connected with our worries, our anxieties, trying to take the responsibility that was designed for God to handle. If you can’t handle it, why are you trying to handle it? If you can’t change it, why are you worrying about it? But we do, don’t we? I have a friend who worries if she doesn’t have something to worry about. She has to have that security. I think she keeps a mental list of those reserved areas, then when she runs out of the conscious ones she draws on the unconscious. And she just brings them on, like ammunition in a machine gun, just to fire them into her life.”

Last week we talked about greed; this week we’re talking about worry. Greed and worry often both deal with the same thing, but in different ways. Greed can never GET enough stuff, worry is afraid it may not HAVE enough stuff. While many of us are probably reluctant to admit to a problem with greed, few of us would deny that we’re free from worry. It’s a problem that plagues the rich, the poor and those in-between. For some of us, trying to break away from our worries is like wrestling an octopus. It’s tough. Maybe that’s why right on the heels of talking to a crowd of people about greed, Jesus turns to his own disciples and talks about worry. It’s almost as if this particular problem would be especially difficult for them to unhinge themselves from.

### 1. Jesus commands us not to worry .

Jesus confronts this problem in his disciples head on in Luke 12:22-34. Look what he says. **“And He said to His disciples, ‘For this reason I say to you, do not worry about your life, as to what you will eat; nor for your body, as to what you will put on’”** (v. 22).

You can see here that this is a command for a follower of Jesus. It’s not an option for us. Jesus knows that worry can neutralize our effectiveness. Remember in the parable of the sower how it was the “worries of this world” which choked the seed from bearing fruit? But we don’t have to worry. This is something that we can do with God’s help.

But it may be a process. It may be one of those things we give to the Lord and then we take it back. Do you do that? I do. I worry about something, I give it over to the Lord, and my worry is gone. But then, without even knowing it, I take it back and once again I’m filled with worry. So then I have to give it back again. That’s why Jesus uses a verb tense here that literally means, “Stop being worried.” He assumes we’re worried. He knows that, in some way or another, this is an issue for all of us. What he will say here specifically addresses worry as it relates to material things. For some of us, that’s an issue. It was for the disciples because, remember, they had left everything. But you may worry about other things—your kids, your health, job. What Jesus says here can apply to anything we worry about.

The rest of the passage offers a number of different reasons for this command. Why NOT worry? Jesus tells us why not.

## 2. It is foolish to worry.

The first reason is that it's foolish. Look at v.

23. **"For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing."** Jesus says life is more than food and clothing. We talked about this last week when Jesus said in v.15, "not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions."

You see, in a certain sense, Jesus has a much higher view of people than the world does. The world wants to reduce us to mere physical beings. Like animals, we're just bodies to be fed, watered, clothed and serviced. So life is reduced to simply meeting those needs in more and better ways. But Jesus says, "You're more than that. There is a part of you that food and clothing can't touch. There is a part of you that's not defined by what you eat and what you wear. You have a soul. You have a spirit. There is a part of you that is reserved for higher things.

Back in chapter 10 when a lawyer came to him, asking about how he could inherit eternal life, Jesus defined what those higher things are. He talked about how we are made for relationship; relationship with God and relationship with others. He talked about love. He said, "Eternal life is all about loving God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind; and it's about loving your neighbor as yourself." That's the "more" that Jesus is talking about here in v. 23. That's what life is consists of.

Because we're more than what we eat and what we wear, we can never be totally satisfied with these things. Think of something that you really wanted. You wanted it so much it took up a lot of space in your head. Perhaps it was a certain car or home or outfit or vacation. And then you got it and you enjoyed it, at least for awhile. But the shine dims and the new car smell fades and the house is never quite what we want it to be. And we're back thinking about some new thing that will change our life. But things will never satisfy because we're more than that. We're like these hybrid cars. We don't run on fuel

alone; we've been built to also run on an invisible source of energy. We've been built to love God and others.

## 3. It is useless to worry.

But that's not all. Another reason not to worry is that it's useless. Someone has said, "Worry never accomplished anything except wrinkles, which gives you another thing to worry about." Jesus would agree with that. Jesus uses three arguments to show that worry is useless.

The first one deals with food. **"Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap; they have no storeroom nor barn, and yet God feeds them; how much more valuable you are than the birds!"** (v. 24). He points to the ravens and he says, "Look at them. They don't sow or reap. They don't build bigger barns to store stuff. But God feeds them." He's not telling us not to work. He's saying, "You're worth a lot more to God than them." It's interesting that ravens were considered unclean birds according to Jewish law. He's saying, "If God feeds these filthy ravens, who don't even work, how much more will he feed you?"

*Said the Robin to the Sparrow*

*"I should really like to know*

*Why these anxious human beings*

*Rush about and worry so."*

*Said the Sparrow to the Robin,*

*"Friend, I think that it must be*

*They have no heavenly Father*

*Such as cares for you and me."*

The second argument deals with life span. This is one for modern ears, since we're always thinking of ways to add a few years to our lives. Look what he says. **"And which of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life's span? If then you cannot do even a very little thing, why do you worry about other matters?"** (vv. 25–26). Not only is worry useless when it comes to adding to our life span, a good argument could be made for the fact that it shortens our life span. *Harvard Business Review* wrote a few years back that 60-90 percent of all medical office visits are for stress related symptoms. So Jesus says, "If you can't

even add a single minute to your life span, why worry about bigger things like starving to death?"

The third argument deals with clothing. Look at vv. 27–28. **"Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; but I tell you, not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass in the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, how much more will He clothe you? You men of little faith!"** God lavishly clothes flowers, but they do nothing. He even clothes the grass in the field, which back then was burned as fuel instead of wood. Jesus says, "You're more valuable than that! You disciples are going to live for eternity. If God takes care of them apart from worry, don't you think he'll take care of you?" Martin Luther wrote, "It seems that the flowers stand there and make us blush and become our teachers. Thank you, flowers, you who are to be devoured by the cows. God has exalted you very highly, that you become our masters and teachers."

Worry is not only foolish, it's useless. It accomplishes nothing. And it's really an evidence of a lack of trust in God. That's why Jesus says, "You men of little faith!" He's talking to his disciples. Remember, these guys didn't have much. They had left everything. But Jesus could read their hearts, and he knew they were really worried. Some of you have started on that path of following Jesus. There have been a lot of changes in your life. You've gotten rid of a lot of junk. You've started to serve him with your time and your talents and even your treasure. But deep down you're worried. It's like you're hanging over a cliff and the only thing keeping you from falling is God holding on to your hand. And it feels slippery. But God says, "You can trust me. I will not let you go."

#### **4. It is faithless to worry.**

If we don't believe that, we're really no different than the world. That's what Jesus says next.

**"And do not seek what you will eat and what you will drink, and do not keep worrying. For all these things the nations of the world eagerly seek; but your Father knows that you need these things. But**

**seek His kingdom, and these things will be added to you. Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom"** (vv. 29–32).

Not only is it foolish and useless to worry, it's also faithless. He says, "This is the way the nations of the world live. In other words, this is the way unbelievers live. This is the way that people who have no faith in God live." Corrie Ten Boom wrote, "When I worry I go to the mirror and say to myself, 'This tremendous thing which is worrying me is beyond a solution. It is especially too hard for Jesus Christ to handle.' After I have said that, I smile and I am ashamed." You see, some of us believe in God, but we are practicing atheists. When it comes to providing the necessities of life, it's all up to us.

The operative word in these verses that is used three times is the word "seek." Now we're going beyond worry to what we focus on, to what we set our hearts on. What we worry about is usually a pretty good indication of what we seek. So the primary focus of our life is not to be making sure we have enough stuff. That's what unbelievers do. You don't have to do that because you have a heavenly Father who knows your needs. The primary focus of your life should be on serving him, seeking the things that will bring his kingdom, his rule, to fruition in your life and the lives of others. Everything else, though it isn't necessarily to be ignored, is secondary. And Jesus makes a promise. He says if you seek first my kingdom God will take care of all those other needs.

Every once in a while I get asked to speak somewhere. Usually, when you go and speak somewhere they give you an honorarium. But you never really know how much they'll give you. Some groups are very generous; others seem to think I should be paying them for the opportunity. A few years back I found myself deciding whether or not to accept invitations to speak based on whether I knew these people to be generous or stingy. I mean, the money

was a big help. But then I realized that I wasn't seeking first his kingdom. I was seeking the honorarium. So do you know what I did? I promised the Lord that for three years all my honorarium checks would be given away. That was hard. But guess what? It freed me. It freed me to seek his kingdom first; to say yes or no based on what was best for his kingdom instead of my bank account.

Seeking his kingdom first will mean different things for different people. Let's say you have a kid who is a college student. You're paying a lot of money for them to go to college. But it's worth it because if you don't have a good education these days you'll go nowhere. And you're happy because your kid is doing well in school and if they keep it up they'll have some good opportunities when they're finished. But then one day your kid comes to you and says, "Dad, Mom, I've really been growing in the Lord. And I think maybe he's calling me to full-time ministry. I'm not sure how I'm going to make it, but I really want to follow him in this. And if I do, I really believe he'll provide for me."

What do you do with that? Do you try to talk them out of it? I know Christian parents who have tried to talk their kids out of going into a ministry that would require them to trust God for support. Because when it comes right down to it, they're practical atheists. They operate on the basis of fear rather than faith. That's why Jesus says, "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen to gladly (not reluctantly) give you the kingdom." You feel very vulnerable, like a little flock surrounded by vicious wolves, but your Father has given you the kingdom. So even if we do starve, we have his kingdom, which lasts forever and ever. So don't be faithless. Live as one who has inherited the kingdom. Seek that kingdom now. Let him reign in your life. Bring that reign to everything you do and everyone you touch.

## 5. It is dangerous to worry.

Why not worry? Because it is foolish, useless and faithless. One more thing: it's dangerous. Look at vv. 33-34. **"Sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves money belts which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near nor moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."**

What we see here is that worry can cause us to miss out on the only treasure that no one can take away from us. Worry forces us to grasp things; to hold onto our stuff for dear life. So we end up living very self consumed lives. We don't see ourselves as God's conduit for blessing others. Jesus says, "Don't let worry rob you of the best long term investment you can make. If you let go of your stuff you'll have an unfailing treasure in heaven that no one can take away from you." Worry is very dangerous because it can rob you of that.

Most of us are called to live in the tension of having things but not possessing things. Scripture says, "You are not your own, you are bought with a price." We have to understand that if we belong to him, all of our stuff does as well. Our house, our cars, our clothes, our savings, our furniture. If we don't regularly find ways to use our stuff to bless those in need, then our stuff possesses us and we run the risk of forfeiting eternal treasure.

Jesus gives a profound psychological truth in v.34 and I don't want you to miss it. He says, "Where your treasure is, there your heart is also." The more I thought about that, the more it struck me that this is the opposite of how we operate. We say, "The most important thing is that your heart is right with God. We don't care how much you give; just get your heart right and the giving will follow." We say that where your heart is, there your treasure will be also. But Jesus says that it's the other way around. He says that where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

This makes sense. If someone comes along and says, "I found out about this hot stock." He tells you the name of a company you've never heard of, but you take his advice and you invest in that stock. What happens then? You become very interested in that stock. You read up on the company. You

even buy the product. You check the newspaper every day to see how it's doing. You tell others about it. What's happened? Just like Jesus said, your heart has followed your treasure.

Years ago, John Wesley toured the huge estate of a proud plantation owner. They rode their horses for hours and only saw a fraction of the man's property. At the end of the day, they sat down to eat. The plantation owner asked Wesley, "Well, what do you think?" Wesley replied, "I think you're going to have a hard time leaving all this."

That's why Jesus says, "Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Invest your treasure in the things that you care about. Focus on that treasure that will last forever." That's the antidote to worry. Seek the kingdom. Invest in the kingdom. Use your stuff to bless others. And when you do that, even reluctantly, your heart will follow; your heart will become more and more free from worry.

## **CONCLUSION**

It really comes down to a trust issue. Do we trust him enough NOT to worry? Do we trust him enough NOT to make material things our focus in life? Do we trust him enough that we actually act on the promise that says, if we put his kingdom first, if we divest ourselves for the sake of that kingdom, we will gain for ourselves a much greater treasure?

In May 1995, Randy Reid, a 34-year-old construction worker, was welding on top of a nearly completed water tower outside Chicago. Reid unhooked his safety gear to reach for some pipes when a metal cage slipped and bumped the scaffolding on which he stood. The scaffolding tipped, and Reid lost his balance. He fell 110 feet, landing face down on a pile of dirt, just missing rocks and construction debris.

A fellow worker called 911. When paramedics arrived, they found Reid conscious, moving, and complaining of a sore back. But the fall didn't cost Reid his sense of humor. As paramedics carried him on a backboard to the ambulance, he had one request: "Don't drop me."

Sometimes we are like that construction worker. God protects us from harm in a 110-foot fall, but we still worry about three-foot heights. The God who saved us from hell and death can provide for us in the smaller things we face all week. Don't worry. You can trust him.

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