

# “Why Worry?”

Matthew 6:24-34

It seems worry has become a standard pastime in our culture. Far too often, worry has become the lens through which all of life is viewed. The fear is that, after a while, you will have forgotten any other way to live.

My standard approach to worrying is that if you spend your life worrying that something bad will happen, that your good health will go away, that you will die – I guarantee that eventually you are going to be right – unless the Lord returns first. But your worrying didn't allow you to fully enjoy all the good days that God has given you up to that point. There are some who have accused me of worrying too little, but I just say that I am trying to be the counter-balance for those who worry too much.

Do we see reasons to be worried today? Most people would say “Absolutely.” The 24 hour news industry is built on this belief. High costs of living, bad economy, lack of jobs, threats of terrorism, rogue nuclear nations now have ballistic missiles, tension in the Middle East (I am so glad I went to Israel when I did). I would worry about going there today.

We are told we live in “uncertain times.” I am waiting for anyone to explain to me when the “certain times” were. Pick a decade – any decade.

I challenge you. Many people hearken back to the 1950's and 60's – you know, back when school children were instructed in the proper position for ducking under their desk in the event of a nuclear attack. (Nothing will stop the effects of a nuclear blast like a good piece of American hardwood.)

We have always lived in uncertain times. The myth is that if you just do certain things then all your troubles will melt away. This is the myth on which every political campaign in history has been based. This is the myth on which the average TV commercial is based. You buy the product, or start the activity, or get the right prescription medicine that will change your life – and the troubles don't all melt away, because we live in a world of sin. The only solution for all of these troubles over which we are anxious is for sin to go away. Sin is the issue.

We are told that we need to relieve stress because it is taking its toll on our emotional and physical health. Surveys show that more than half of Americans report irritability, anger, fatigue, or sleeplessness. Almost half say they self-medicate by overeating or indulging in unhealthy foods. Many more self-medicate with drugs and alcohol.

Jesus says, "Don't be anxious." He says "Don't be anxious" to a world with very different problems than ours. He says, "Don't be anxious" to a world in which living past age 40 was an accomplishment. He says, "Don't be anxious" to a world where half of the children born to you would not see their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

He says, “Don’t be anxious” to a world where shortage of food was a recurring problem. I have never missed a meal in my life – except where I was so full from a previous meal that I just didn’t feel like eating.

Jesus says, “Don’t be anxious about what you eat, or what you drink, or what you wear.” That is what the Gentiles; that is what those who are outside of the kingdom of God are chasing after. Jesus says, “Seek first the kingdom of God.” Seek first the place where God reigns as the King of Righteousness. If you have a place within God’s kingdom of righteousness, then all of these other things will fall into their proper place.

When God is held in proper regard, in that He is acknowledged as being first and primary in our lives, all of these other things will fall into their proper place. Jesus says, “No one can serve two masters.” Whatever is your priority in life, that is your God.”

All of these things over which we are anxious are all the result of sin. Sin is the issue. And there is only one solution to sin. There is only One who could come and cover that sin. There is only one King of Righteousness. There is only One who could carry all the burdens, cares, and sin of the world and be the one and final sacrifice – to be the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.

He takes away the sin and He takes away the sting of death. All of the things over which we are anxious; all of the troubles, all of the heartache, all of the pain of this sinful life, all of the death we see around us – rather than being a source of frustration and angst; these troubles over

which we worry should be constant reminders of how much Christ has overcome, and how much God our Father is rescuing us each and every day.

A couple of weeks ago, we had a water issue in the men's bathroom here at church. Water was gushing out. After I got the water shut off, I spent the rest of the day thanking God that plastic valve didn't break in the middle of the night.

And this week, I am thanking God that I don't live in Oroville, CA as a couple hundred thousand people were displaced from their homes not knowing for how long because of the damage to the dam. They have been able to return to their homes, but how much worry is there among those who live in the shadow of the tallest dam in America. Following that bit of news made our water issue here at church seem trivial.

But the people displaced from their homes in California had much more hope for getting back into their homes than the Christians in Syria and Iraq. But did you see on the news that when the fighting stopped in Aleppo, Syria right before Christmas, that next day, the Christians had erected a big Christmas tree in the square and were singing hymns. And in one of the bombed out churches, they cleared enough debris that people could gather and share the body and blood of Christ for the first time in a long time in that church. Those are the things that happen when you have your priorities in order and you are not worried for this life, but for the life to come. Amen.