

Sermon Series: Facing Life's Problems with God's Hope— Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN—1/23/05

Title: "Handling Worry"

Text: Matthew 6: 25-34

Intro.: *Illus.: Economic Worries (8 a.m. service) and Skit on worry (10:45 service)*

Theme: Worry is avoided and conquered in Christ by being concerned for the right things.

Worry is avoided by recognizing what it is.

- It is *schizophrenic*

1. The word Jesus used means "divided"
 1. ILLUS.: What's Really Important?
2. Divided devotion will always bring regret and guilt
 1. "No one can serve two masters. He will hate the first master and love the second, or he will be devoted to the first and despise the second. You cannot serve God and wealth." Mat 6:24

- It is *fruitless*

1. Life is more important than the things of life (*The sum of what I have or will have does not equal life. vs. 25*)
2. We cannot impact what is outside of our control (*Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? 27*)
 1. ILLUS.: WAITING FOR THE ROOSTER
3. Life is too short to worry it away over what might have been
 1. *Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. vs. 34*
 2. ILLUS.: Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow, it empties today of its strength. Corrie Ten Boom
 3. *If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Vs. 30*

- It is *secular/pagan*

4. It is an anti-God mind
 1. No self-respecting Jew of Jesus day ever wanted to be numbered among the Gentiles
 2. Whenever we place a higher priority on solving our problems than on pursuing God, we are immoral. Larry Crabb
 3. As a believer I profess to operate from God truths which I violate when I worry—unbelief in God's control
5. It gives a false witness to what we claim to believe about Jesus
 1. *Christ paid the price to free us from the curse that God's laws bring by becoming cursed instead of us. Gal 3: 13*
 2. Jesus' redemption of my life from sin and its curse—what evil that will happen God already knows about (vs. 32) and has an answer for it *Before they call, I will answer. While they're still speaking, I will hear. Isaiah 65:24*

Conquering worry by taking it to Jesus

- Determining what is essential and then stop being concerned about it

1. It really puts the non-essentials into perspective (90% of our worries are over wants not needs)
2. God's promise is to give me the basics of life *As long as we have food and clothes, we should be satisfied. 1Tim 6:8*
 1. Example of birds/flowers (vs. 26, 28) to highlight God's greater concern for man, the crown of his creation
 2. God's care not based upon "God helps those who help themselves" philosophy but on his TOTAL GRACE
 3. God's promises are all bound up in his kept promise in Jesus
 - *For as many as may be the promises of God, in Jesus they are yes. 2 Cor. 1: 20*
 - *And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. Phil. 4: 19*
3. It is not that we don't take care of what God gives us but we learn to care less about what concerns God
 1. *"Casting our care upon Him for He cares for you. 1 Peter 3: 5*

- Determining to be concerned for God's first priorities in my life *Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness. vs. 33*
- 4. Making God's kingdom and righteousness a priority means moving from naval gazing to world visioning
 1. Too often we hear sanctimonious, pious thoughts (God, family, church) rather it is (God, God, God)
- 5. God's kingdom is always found in Christ righteousness and bringing others to it
 1. And guess what—everything else comes as God's blessing upon our spiritual concern
 2. ILLUS.: A PRECIOUS BLADE OF GRASS

Economic Worries

Rick Majerus, men's basketball coach at the University of Utah, recently captured a common concern: "Everyone's worried about the economy this year. Hey, my hairline is in recession, my waistline is in inflation, and altogether, I'm in depression."

What's Really Important

It was a 99-degree September day in San Antonio, when a 10 month-old baby girl was accidentally locked inside a parked car by her aunt. Frantically the mother and aunt ran around the auto in near hysteria, while a neighbor attempted to unlock the car with a clothes hanger. Soon the infant was turning purple and had foam on her mouth. It had become a life-or-death situation when Fred Arriola, a wrecker driver, arrived on the scene. He grabbed a hammer and smashed the back window of the car to set her free. Was he heralded a hero? He said, "The lady was mad at me because I broke the window. I just thought, What's more important--the baby or the window?" Sometimes priorities get out of order, and a Fred Arriola reminds us what's important

Waiting for the Rooster

The story is told of a man who raised chickens, and among them was a rooster that occasionally crowed in the middle of the night and great annoyed the next-door neighbor. Early one morning, after a week long disturbance by this rooster, he became angry enough to pick up the phone and call his neighbor to complain. He said, "That miserable bird of yours keeps me up all night!" "I don't understand," replied his neighbor, "he hardly ever crows; but if he does, it's never more than two or three times in a whole day." The angry neighbor retorted, "That isn't my problem. It's not how OFTEN he does it that irritated me! It's not knowing when he MIGHT that keeps me awake!"

A Precious Blade of Grass

Out of the history of Napoleonic France, Leonard Griffith has given us a moving story of a political prisoner by the name of Charnet. Charnet was thrown into prison simply because he had accidentally, by a remark, offended the emperor Napoleon. Cast into a dungeon cell, presumably left to die, as the days and weeks and months passed by, Charnet became embittered at his fate. Slowly but surely he began to lose his faith in God. And one day, in a moment of rebellious anger, he scratched on the wall of his cell, "All things come by chance," which reflected the injustice that had come his way by chance. He sat in the darkness of that cell growing more bitter by the day. There was one spot in the cell where a single ray of sunlight came every day and remained for a little while. And one morning, to his absolute amazement, he noticed that in the hard, earthen floor of that cell a tiny, green blade was breaking through. It was something living, struggling up toward that shaft of sunlight. It was his only living companion, and his heart went out in joy toward it. He nurtured it with his tiny ration of water, cultivated it, and encouraged its growth. That green blade became his friend. It became his teacher in a sense, and finally it burst through until one day there bloomed from the little plant a beautiful, purple and white flower. Once again Charnet found himself thinking thoughts about God. He scratched off the thing he had scribbled on the wall of his dungeon and in its place wrote, "He who made all things is God." Somehow through the guards and their wives and the gossip of the community, this little story reached the ears of Josephine, Napoleon's wife. She was so moved by it and so convinced that a man who loved a flower that way could not possibly be a dangerous criminal that she persuaded Napoleon to release him. So Charnet was set free. You can be

sure that he dug out his precious little prison flower and took it with him and cultivated that plant in the years to come. He also pondered in his heart a verse that he put on the little flower pot holding the plant. What would that verse be? "If God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?"

Matthew 6:25-34

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 important than food, and the body more important than clothes? ²⁶Look 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? ²⁷Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? ²⁸"And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. ²⁹Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ³⁰If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? ³¹So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³²For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. ³⁴Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. [NIV]