

**Matthew 6:24-34**

<sup>25</sup>“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? <sup>26</sup>Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? <sup>27</sup>And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? <sup>28</sup>And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, <sup>29</sup>yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. <sup>30</sup>But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? <sup>31</sup>Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ <sup>32</sup>For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. <sup>33</sup>But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. <sup>34</sup>“So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today’s trouble is enough for today.

## Sermon – Matthew 6:24-34 - Oct 10, 2021

### Do Not Worry

Jesus says ‘Do not worry’. In today’s text he says it three times, which means take note. “Do not worry” is an important command, and notice, it is a command! But we all worry, don’t we? You could say worry is a universal sign of the human condition and perhaps that is exactly why our Lord brings it up.

Some of us are experienced worriers and some of us are pros.

I looked up the definition of ‘worry’. Dictionary.com says: ‘to torment oneself with or suffer from disturbing thoughts. Why would we do that I wonder? Why would we torment ourselves with disturbing thoughts?’

A synonym for worry is ‘anxiety’ - the mental distress and emotional pain that accompanies constant worry. Anxiety is a serious thing. Anxiety disorders are the most common of all mental health problems. It is estimated that one in 10 Canadians is affected.

I confess that I’m a pretty serious worrier and have been from a very young age. I come from a long line of worriers. Yet people who deal with serious worry & anxiety are some of the most courageous people I know. So please do not leave here worried about how much you worry. I don’t think our Lord wants that.

In our Gospel, although Jesus mentions the command, “do not worry,” three times, the **key** in this scripture is this: “Seek first the kingdom of God ..., and all these things will be given to you as well.”

In the 1950s there was a researcher named Harry Harlow. Harlow researched human affection and the need for love, working with rhesus monkeys. He raised the monkeys in a cage with two pseudo monkey moms. One was wire. From it the monkeys could suckle milk. The other pseudo mom was a soft, cuddly mom, with whom the baby monkey could snuggle. The researchers expected the monkeys would spend more time on the mom who gave them milk. But the babies actually spent 17-18 hrs a day on the soft & cuddly mom.

To scare the monkeys they devised a contraption with glaring eyes to see which mom it would run to. Harlow says the distressed monkey wasn’t running away, it was running to... when the monkey was scared, it ran **to** the one it trusted – the

soft and cuddly one. Almost immediately the fear & anxiety & worry melted away. I think that is what Jesus is after: not just us running **from** worry, but us running **to** the Father who is love itself.

Maybe we don't worry about our next meal or having enough clothes. But we all worry about our health, especially with Covid. We worry about finances and our relationships.

Can you pretend you have a blank card and a pencil? Let's each start a Worry List. What's your biggest worry? What worries would you write on your card? Can you think of one, two, three?

We'll come back to this later.

Our Gospel says: 26 Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.

Birds are meant to fly – they're at home in the air. When birds live that way, they flourish. Have you ever seen a bird driving a tractor, planting and plowing? No! Of course not! As long as they live in their natural habitat, they have everything they need.

Same is true for us: We have a natural habitat. When we live within that we can flourish without worry and anxiety. And what is our natural habitat? It is next to our Lord. We could be like those little Rhesus monkeys when they seek refuge with the soft mom, their anxieties dissolved in the comforting presence.

We don't create our lives; we **RECEIVE** our lives from God.

It might seem like we generate our own lives: we **can** plow, plant, harvest and store grain. But what we can do is very limited. We can't make the crops grow, right? We can't make it rain. We didn't cause ourselves to be born, nor choose where. Most of what is essential we receive. We are the **CREATED**... we are not the **CREATOR**. If we live as God's creations, we have a clear focus... God is in charge, and we are God's children.

There's a great poem by Wendell Berry which captures this idea. It's called: "The Peace of Wild Things."

*When despair for the world grows in me  
and I wake in the night at the least sound  
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,  
I go and lie down where the wood drake  
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.  
I come into the peace of wild things  
who do not tax their lives with forethought  
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.  
And I feel above me the day-blind stars  
waiting with their light. For a time  
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.*

Berry writes of a freedom that comes from resting in 'the peace of wild things who do not tax their lives with forethought of grief'. We can trust that God knew what God was doing when God made us, including our limitations. It's exhausting to try to control things that are out of our control. That's worry; trying to control things that are out of our control.

Have you ever come across the books *Duck on a Bike* & *Duck for President*? They're funny because Duck wants things that are totally outside his duck world. He wants to run for president or he wants to ride a bike, and it never works out. He always goes back to being a duck.

We are humans, created by God. We are God's. All we have we owe to God and today on Thanksgiving we stop to consider that. All we enjoy is gift...our lives, our clothes, our food...our family and friends are gifts. We are called to love God and to love others. That's what we are about as humans. We are called to that but we cannot do even that alone. There is not one thing we can do without our Creator. That is what brings peace.

Worry is almost always assuming control for things... control that God never meant for us to have. Assuming control for the future... it's just not part of what we're designed to do. So Jesus says, "can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?"

We don't have that kind of power... but we can come into the peace of wild things and rest in the grace of the world anytime we accept being a human being, and trust God is in charge. One of the slogans of the 12 step program is '**Let Go and Let God**'.

Can you imagine your Worry List again. How much are you worrying about what is on it? The invitation Jesus makes to us today is really 2 parts.

The first is a running from WORRY.

The second is a running toward our FATHER who loves us.

What would it take for each of us to just let it go? ... let God carry it for awhile... could we do that?

So first, we let go of our worry. Imagine tearing up your list into little pieces and throwing it to the wind. If we were to share we would find we all worry about the same things. We are not alone. And your heavenly father knows.

Second is running to our Lord. As you come forward today for Communion can you place yourselves in God's care? Leave your worry at the altar and take away God's love to spread.

May we be truly thankful that we are God's beloved creations and that we do not need to worry. Amen.