

Sunday Sermon
Winning the Battle over Worry
Matthew 6:25-34
July 5, 2015

Someone has rightly said that our nation is not so much angry as it is anxious - anxious about the current state of affairs. Just days ago, some economists warned us that when we reach a deficit of 24 trillion our economy will begin to collapse as it has in Greece. That day is probably only five to seven years away at our present rate of deficit spending. Many are becoming nervous about the prospect of ISIS terrorist attacks on our own soil. Then there is the Supreme Court's overreach in making law when it was established only to interpret the law. We are losing our religious freedoms and private religious institutions are now being forced to choose between obeying the clear teaching of Scripture or complying with the laws of the land. On the surface, there seems to be a great deal to worry about.

But before we go on, what exactly does Jesus mean by "worry?" A whole host of definitions have been given for the word - all of them revealing a different aspect of our anxious thoughts. "Worrying is like a rocking chair. It gives you something to do but doesn't get you anywhere. Worry is the misuse of your God-given imagination. Worry is putting question marks where God has put periods. Worry is a kind of mental and emotional strangulation. But the word in the biblical language describes worry as pulling you apart in different directions with the result that you have a divided mind and a torn spirit. The idea here is that worry creates a mind divided between legitimate thoughts and destructive ones - between legitimate concerns and obsessive imaginative worries. What is patently obvious is that when we succumb to worry, it is both emotionally distressing and spiritually detrimental. And, since all of us worry from one degree to another, what do we do about it?

Journalist Scott Stossel describes his own battle with worry in a way that we all can relate to: "Anxiety has afflicted me all my life... In short, I have, since the age of about two, been a twitchy bundle of

phobias, fears, and neuroses... He goes on to describe all the things that he has done to deal with his anxiety: individual psychotherapy for 30 years, rational emotive behavior therapy, acceptance and commitment therapy, hypnosis, meditation... self-help workbooks, massage therapy, acupuncture, yoga, Stoic philosophy, audiotapes he ordered off a late-night TV infomercial, and medication - lots of medication. He then goes on to name 27 different medications he has taken and ends by saying, "Also: beer, wine, gin, bourbon, vodka, and scotch. He concludes, "Here's what's worked: nothing!"

Well as we come to our text, Jesus gives us the most definitive answer found in the Scriptures regarding overcoming your worries. And he will spend most of his time describing worry as a mindset in which you choose to instead of believing the truth, to believe the lie.

I. You must understand and accept certain facts about worry.

*** Every time you are tempted to worry state emphatically the following truths that Jesus proclaimed:

1. Worry is unacceptable!

Three times in this passage Jesus repeats the prohibition, "*Do not be anxious (6:25, 31, 34)*! We are not to be anxious about what we eat, drink, wear, or about the future. Indeed the language of the original text implies that we are to stop worrying and never start to worry again. And if you say that it cannot be done, George Mueller encourages you that it most certainly can be done. He received millions dollars (in today's money) for his orphanages without ever asking for one penny. He simply prayed. "The children are dressed and ready for school. But there is no food for them to eat," the housemother of the orphanage informed George Mueller. George asked her to take the 300 children into the dining room and have them sit at the tables. He thanked God for the food and waited. George knew God would provide food for the children as he always did. Within minutes, a baker knocked on the door. "Mr. Mueller," he said, "last night I could not sleep. Somehow I knew that you would need bread this morning. I got up and baked three batches for you. I will bring it in." Soon, there was another knock at the door. It was the milkman. His cart had broken down in front of the orphanage. The milk would spoil by the time the wheel was fixed. He asked George if he

could use some free milk. George smiled as the milkman brought in ten large cans of milk. It was just enough for the 300 thirsty children.

2. Worry is unnecessary (6:25, 26, 28-30).

²⁵ *“Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶ 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... ²⁸ And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹ yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰ But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?*

3. Worry is unproductive (6: 27).

²⁷ *And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?*

Worry is not worth one moment of your time!

4. Worry is unbecoming (6:31-32).

³¹ *Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³² For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.*

II. You must make God number one in everything!(6:33).

³³ *But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*

III. You must live one day at a time (6:34).

³⁴ *“Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.*