

**Victory Lutheran Church- Jacksonville, FL**  
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**Worship Series: *Focused***  
**Service Theme: *Focused Living Properly Values***  
***Heavenly Treasure***

**Sermon Theme: Don't Worry! (August 7, 2022)**  
**Luke 12:22-34**

We've all felt it-- the suffocating grip; the sleepless nights; the nauseating pit in your stomach. We've all felt...worry. And since we've all experienced the helpless feeling of worry, you've also probably experienced the less than helpful feeling of someone telling you, "***Don't worry!***"

It's usually intended to be a comforting reassurance, but when you're wrecked with worry, someone telling you, "Don't worry!" doesn't really help at all, does it? If you're staring at an eviction notice and your bank statement with insufficient funds to cover the rent; or medical tests that reveal your cancer has spread; or a text from a friend that a crushing false rumor about you is spreading through your school—someone telling you, "Just don't worry about it!" doesn't actually ease your worries, because those words don't make your worrisome problems disappear!

Is that what Jesus is doing in today's Gospel? With an almost limitless number of potentially worrisome things in our lives, when Jesus says, "***Do not worry about your life,***" is he just spouting some less than helpful words that don't actually solve our problems?

But think how differently you'd react to an eviction notice if your friend told you, "Don't worry!" then handed you a check to pay your rent for the year! If someone tells you "Don't worry," then shows you why you don't have to worry, those words change everything! That's the comfort behind Jesus' "Don't worry" here. He doesn't just tell us. He also shows us why we don't have to worry.

Last Sunday, with the Parable of the Rich Fool, Jesus warned against greed. And immediately after, in our sermon text, he teaches about worry. And that's fitting, because the stuff of earthly life is what most people worry about most!

First, he shows why we don't have to worry by pointing up. "***Consider the ravens: they do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds!***" If your animal facts are rusty, ravens are both scavengers and predators, which means they'll basically eat anything. So, think how completely God feeds them! And according to Jewish ceremonial laws, ravens were unclean birds that the Israelites were to steer clear of. If God completely provides for the needs of birds like that, do we, the Crown of God's Creation really have to worry that he won't feed us?

Then Jesus shows us why we don't have to worry by pointing down. "***Consider how the wild flowers grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you?***" Besides those gunning for "Yard of the Month" in their neighborhood, most people probably don't spend much time worrying about grass. It's a pretty inconsequential part of the grand scheme of life, right? And yet, how beautifully God clothes that inconsequential grass!

A few months ago, I saw a patch of grass next to an exit off 295 which is usually scraggly and filled with trash. But when I saw it, it nearly took my breath away! FDOT designated it a wildflower area, and that scraggly grass had bloomed into a gorgeous sea of red and pink flowers! The kind of beautiful vibrancy that Solomon's finest robes could only hope to mirror. That's how God clothes inconsequential grass. So, do you, all-important eternal person that you are, have to worry that he won't clothe you?

Jesus tells us "Don't worry" about the things we need for our daily lives, because our providential God has promised to give them to us!

Jesus assures us, ***“Do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things, and Your Father knows that you need them.”***

A Christian’s worldview about these earthly needs should be completely different than the atheist’s. Because the atheist believes this life is all there is, they have to prioritize living their “best life” now. And because they don’t believe in a loving, providential heavenly Father, they have to chase after these earthly things like an unending hamster wheel, because if they don’t get them for themselves, who will? But for Christians who know our Father’s promises to provide, and who are looking forward to the far better life to come, chasing the stuff of this life becomes secondary.

But Christians struggle with that thinking too. I think that’s why Jesus emphasizes that the birds don’t sow, reap, or store away, and the grass doesn’t labor or spin. Because we often assume the cure for our worries is “doing.” Through my hard work... my wisdom... my efforts, I can provide for myself and cure myself of worries. Or I can counteract my worries by doing whatever I think lets me cope with worry— be it drugs, alcohol, overeating, or meaningless sex.

But Abraham, who’s spotlighted in the first two readings this morning, is a great illustration that “doing” doesn’t erase worry. On multiple occasions, when Abraham was worried, he took matters into his own hands. Twice, worried that he’d be killed for his beautiful wife, he lied that she was his sister. Worried that God wouldn’t keep his promise to give him a son through his old, barren wife, Abraham had a son with her servant. And every time Abraham tried getting rid of his worries by “doing,” it blew up in his face! But when Abraham by faith trusted, and put his worries into God’s hands, everything worked out beautifully. So when you’re plagued by worry, don’t take matters into your own hands. Put it into God’s hands, and trust that he will keep his promises!

Philip Melanchthon was a close friend of Martin Luther, and a fellow Reformer. But Philip Melanchthon was a worrier. So when he often became overwhelmed with worry and anxiety, Luther would tell him,

***“Let Philip cease to rule the world.”*** What a reminder! Stop worrying as if the responsibility for ruling the world is yours, and instead trust in the gracious, loving, providential God who really does rule the world, and promises to make it all work for your good! Next time you’re worried, put your name in Luther’s encouragement!

Another reason Jesus says we shouldn’t worry is that it doesn’t do any good! As Jesus says, ***“Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?”*** You’ll never worry yourself into a longer life, but you can worry yourself to death! Anxiety and worry causes our bodies to release the chemical Cortisol, which is connected to our “fight or flight” response. And if constant worry causes constant Cortisol, it affects heart health, lowers immunity levels, and even shortens lifespan! And all for something that does absolutely nothing positive!

So Jesus shows us the most important reason we don’t have to worry. ***“But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.”*** Far more important than chasing earthly treasure is seeking what really matters...Heavenly Treasure.

The most important thing we can do in our life is to seek God’s kingdom. Instead of worrying about feeding our stomachs, prioritize feeding our souls with God’s Word and Sacraments. Instead of worrying about clothing our bodies, prioritize being clothed with Christ’s righteousness by faith. Instead of worrying about our earthly house, prioritize an eternal life in our heavenly home. And on top of that, God tells us he’ll give us all the earthly stuff we need too!

But maybe you’re thinking, “Aren’t we just shifting worries then? Maybe you’re not as worried about earthly stuff, but now you’re worried about the spiritual stuff! Is my faith strong enough? Am I a good enough person? Am I doing enough for God? Have I shown enough love to my neighbor?” But Jesus tells us, “Don’t worry!” about our spiritual lives too.

***“Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.”*** If you’re worried about seeking God’s kingdom, don’t worry! Through the loving, merciful sacrifice of the one who tells us not to worry, our heavenly Father has already given us the kingdom! And if you already possess the most important thing, and have been promise everything else with it, what’s there to worry about?

The royalty of an earthly kingdom doesn’t worry about where their next meal will come from, or if they’ll have clothes to wear the next day, because the kingdom is theirs! Through Jesus, you possess a heavenly kingdom and heavenly treasure far greater than even the most powerful earthly kingdom!

That’s the ultimate reason Jesus can tell us, “Don’t worry,” and we can believe it. As Jesus says, ***“Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*** That’s true, isn’t it? Your heart, will, and emotions are intimately connected to whatever you deem the most valuable treasure of your life. If you treat earthly possessions, positions, or people as your treasure, then your heart will ride a constant roller coaster of feeling secure when you have them, but overwhelmed by worry when those fragile, temporary treasures fade away.

The only certain cure for worry is properly valuing heavenly treasure--trusting that your relationship with God is your one true treasure! Because as Jesus says, heavenly treasure gives us ***“purses...that will not wear out... that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.”*** Your heavenly treasure can’t be stolen from you. It won’t deteriorate, or lose its value. It’s the only treasure that lasts forever!

Before we wrap up, I know that some of you struggle with diagnosed anxiety or depression. It’s a reality in my own family, and in the lives of so many. If you’re feeling guilty right now because of how often you worry; if you feel like your faith must not be strong enough because you battle anxiety, please understand. Your anxiety is caused by a chemical imbalance, not a lack of faith in God. That means setting your heart on heavenly treasure might not cure you of anxiety

any more than being a Christian will cure your cancer. But as you face that battle, know that that heavenly treasure is the most important thing you can cling to. Combat the lies that anxiety tells you by daily being reminded of God’s faithful promises to you! Seek the help of a counselor, the coping tactics they’ll teach you, or medication, but most importantly, let your heavenly treasure hold your heart in his hands!

When Jesus tells you, “Don’t worry!” he backs it up. Far greater than a friend who says “Don’t worry” and hands you the rent money, Jesus tells you, “Don’t worry!” then hands you the debt of your sin, paid in full. He says, “Don’t worry!” then hands you eternal life. He says, “Don’t worry!” then hands you perfect, unconditional love. He says, “Don’t worry!” then hands you everything you need for your life. He says, “Don’t worry!” then hands you the promise to make every struggle or suffering in your life turn out for good. When Jesus tells you, “Don’t worry!” he isn’t just saying it. He tells us “Don’t worry!” after he’s removed every reason for worry. In him, the Kingdom is yours! What’s there to worry about?