



Luke 12:22-34
Life Is Too Short To...
“Worry”

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Today we continue our series of messages that we've been in the last couple weeks, and will take us through the summer. It's a series that I hope and pray will help us to live less in tune with the trappings of this world, and more in tune with Jesus, because life is short; it goes by quickly...so let's use our time well. Today we're talking about how life is too short to worry. Have you ever worried about something? (Hands go up...but not all!)

The problem with worrying is that: **Worrying steals the joy from life today because it causes us to focus on the future, rather than the present.**

Worrying makes it hard to live for the moment, to think clearly, to be present in relationships...even to sleep well. Worrying can keep us up at night. In fact, that might be some people's biggest complaint about worrying: that they lose sleep. There was a lady I heard about who thought nearly every night for years and years that she heard a burglar downstairs in her kitchen. At least once a week, she would make her husband get up out of bed and go downstairs and check and make sure everything was ok.

One night she thought she heard a noise. She woke her husband up, and said, “Honey, I'm sure I just heard someone downstairs in the kitchen.” He got up so routinely, like he'd done a thousand times before, and went downstairs. This time, when he turned the corner into the kitchen, he found himself staring down the barrel of a gun. The burglar said, “Don't make a sound, just give me all your valuables.” He gathered up the valuables and gave them to the burglar. The burglar turned around to leave and run off, and the man said to him, “Wait a minute. You can't go yet. You have to come up and meet my wife. She's been expecting you for 30 years!”

There are many things in life that cause us to worry: health – our own or that of a loved one, finances, work-related issues, kids and grandkids and the choices they're making or the people they're hanging out with, housing, relationships, the Mariners' offense...the list goes on. If we were to go around the room and ask for each of us to share something that we worry

about, or have worried about in the past, I bet we could all come up with different things.

Jesus had some things to say about our tendencies to worry, and the good news is: he's got a solution. Let's read **Luke 12:22-34**. This is in the middle of a teaching from Jesus that is similar to the Sermon on the Mount as recorded in Matthew....

So, there are a couple verses in this passage that stand out to me as key ones. First is verse 25: **“Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life?” (Jesus, Luke 12:25)**. The answer to the rhetorical question, of course, is “no one.” When was the last time you heard a doctor say, “If you want to live longer, start worrying.” Jesus's question highlights how worrying really is not useful or helpful. For instance, did you know that about 92% of what people worry about never comes to fruition.¹? Some research shows that as much as 30% of what people worry about has already happened! People worry about the past! 96% of what we worry about are things we can do nothing about, which means 4% is within our control.²

Interestingly, it's often the small things, or the everyday things, in life that cause us the most worry. In fact, there's a Swedish proverb (I thought all proverbs were either Chinese Proverbs, or from the Bible)...but this Swedish proverb says, “Worry often gives a small thing a big shadow.” And isn't that the truth?

That's why Jesus, in his teaching on worry, highlights these common, everyday things as items not to worry about. “Don't worry about what you'll eat...or what you'll wear” he says. Those are everyday things that can cause worry. It's the day to day things like that that cause us such anxiety, because they're always in front of us, a constant part of our lives, and because we have some measure of control over some of those things. He doesn't pick on so-called “big” things, like, “Don't worry about world peace,” or “Don't worry about whether the sun will come up tomorrow” or things along those lines.

I think he doesn't mention these larger things, because for many of us, we recognize they're mostly out of our control, and we let them go. For instance, someday the sun around which our world orbits, will die out. Sorry to break it to you, if that's news to you. ☺ But there's good news: Estimates vary on how long until it happens, but it's somewhere between about 5 billion and 8 billion years from now. So, I'm not losing sleep over when that's going to happen. Things like that are so obviously beyond our control and in God's hands, we tend to let them go. Jesus recognizes that for many of us, it's the everyday things that cause us to worry: what we wear and what we eat, and what we drink, and how we're going to pay the bills – money can be a huge source of worry for a lot of people...and we could certainly add on to that with relationship issues in our families or at school or work, a car that seems to be on its last legs...there are certainly others. But these are the kinds of things we tend to worry about.

So, Jesus is letting us know that even those everyday things we need not worry about, because God will provide. God is trustworthy. Our heavenly Father loves us enough to provide us with the things we need in life. Sometimes how he provides is through our efforts – the gifts, talents, intelligence he's given us, and the ability to use them to take care of our needs. But God is still the foundation, the one who provides the abilities, who gives us the lives we have, who has filled the earth with the necessary ingredients for us to live and to flourish without worry as we trust in Him.

And so what it comes down to is: Do you and I trust God? Do we believe that God is good, loves us, and provides for us? Trust is much better than worry. Why worry when you can trust? **Worry is like a rocking chair: it gives you something to do but doesn't get you anywhere. Trust leads us forward.** So, Jesus tells us to trust him. He says that if God will take care of the lilies of the field and clothe them, “How much more will he clothe you—you of little faith!” What is our faith level with God? Do you and I believe that God desires with all of his heart to take care of us?

And trust leads us to step out and do what needs to be done. There is no doubt in my mind that God wants each and every person here this morning to trust in him and know – in the depths of our hearts – that God cares about

you, loves you, wants what's best for you, and to live with that as our foundation for life. The Biblical book of Proverbs says the same thing: **“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding and he will make your paths straight” Proverbs 3:5-6.** God wants to take our worries and our fears away, so that we can simply enjoy his blessings today, right now, and live according to his plan for each of our lives; so we can walk that straight path that he wants to lead us down.

If you were to read a little further along in the Bible you'd come to the writings of the Apostle Paul. In a letter he wrote to one of the churches he helped start, he said, **“Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-7).** What we need to know and remember is that Paul wasn't sitting on a cruise ship in the Mediterranean, basking in the sun when he wrote this. He was in prison because of his faith. If anyone had something to worry about, it was him. But he had come to a place of trust in God through all the ups and downs of life, and even while in prison can encourage us believers not to worry about *anything* and instead to trust in God.

And when we turn over to him those things that we worry about, the peace of God will come into our lives. That peace will guard your heart, and guard your mind (verse 7). Those are the very places where worry takes root. It starts in our minds, gets the heart going, the mind latches on even more, the heart gets going, your muscles get tense, your emotions come to play...Worrying is a total body experience! But when the peace of God comes into us because we've given over to him those things we can't control, our hearts and our minds are filled with his peace. And then we can concern ourselves with what Jesus says to focus on: the kingdom of God. This gets us to the second key verse. Jesus says in verse 31, **“Instead (of worrying), “strive for/seek after the [Heavenly Father's] kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well” (Jesus, Luke 12:31).** Strive for God, seek him out in all things, be in step with him, use the gifts he's given you...walk down that straight path that Proverbs 3:6 speaks of...and God will take care of the rest. That's the solution to our worrying.

So, the worries that you and I have – it's not that God doesn't care about them. In fact, just the opposite is true. That's why Jesus spoke these words to his disciples, it's why Solomon wrote the Proverb about trusting in the Lord, it's why Paul wrote what he wrote: **You and I can receive those words and receive God's promise of peace into our lives today.** Jesus does care, and he wants to relieve us of the worries of life. And as people who follow Jesus here at Rose Hill, we want to be God's hands and feet in this community and in our lives, leading people toward Jesus in our different circles of life – where we live, work, and play. The relationships we have in those places are who God has put in our life to lead toward Jesus, so they'd have this peace that passes all understanding.

If you're a guest here this morning, we want you to now the peace of God in your life so *you* might not worry, and invite you to seek Jesus and His kingdom along with us. We need that community and that support. As the Sunday worship bulletin at a different church once said in a poorly worded statement, **"Don't let worry kill you – let the church help."** Doesn't that make you want to be a Christian and part of the RH family! Obviously, what's actually being encouraged is to let other Jesus-followers come alongside you to strengthen you and carry you, in the midst of your worries.

It might mean being a bit vulnerable...but Rose Hill (other churches, too) is a safe place. We want to love each other as Jesus has loved us. So, we'll pray with you, for you, come alongside you so you'd do life with a little help from your friends who extend the love of Jesus in tangible ways. We're all a part of that. It's not just the pastor, it's not just the staff, it's not just the elders or the deacons...In life's worries, we are all the presence of God to each other, as we allow God to work through us.

Maybe you've written off God, or maybe you thought he has written off you and he was off in another corner of the Universe playing in another sandbox, or just didn't care about your worries and the stresses of your life. The fact is, **God cares very much about you, and you can trust him.** Maybe that's all that some of us need to here today. He cares about you more than he cares about the birds of the air or the flowers of the field. He's created you in his

image, and given you the very breath you're breathing right now. What he asks us to be first and foremost concerned about is our relationship with him and our place in his kingdom. "Strive for/seek his kingdom" Jesus tells us. Trust Jesus to guard your heart and your mind with this peace that passes all understanding.

So, I want to give you a very tangible way to put God's kingdom first this week and in the following weeks, to put your trust and your faith in God in to practice, and to let him bear the worries of life. Even if you've never previously decided to follow Jesus, try this for a few weeks, and see what happens. Pick a day of the week and call it your "worry day." Let's say that day is today, Sunday. **Spend time today and make a list of all the things in life that are worrying you.** Now, a few of those things may fall into the category of things that are within your control. Do something about them – walk down that straight path as you trust God, rather than sitting in a rocking chair looking at the path. Eventually, you'll work through those things and the worry will be gone.

But, for the 96% of those worries that are out of your control or the 90% that aren't likely to come to fruition: write them down on a sheet of paper, and put them into a container, and: **Ask God to take those worries away from your heart and your mind, and to replace them with his peace that passes all understanding.** Just a short simple prayer will do: "God, these things worry me. So, I'm giving them to you. Please fill me with your peace as I trust you with them. In Jesus' name, Amen." Then, don't open the container for a week – unless you're adding new items to put into the container. You can keep praying that simple prayer if you want, or even just let it go as you trust God. Rest in the knowledge that God will take care of these things in his time, and that he will give you peace.

Then next Sunday, when you come around again to your "worry day" take those things out of your worry container and take a look at them. See if God hasn't taken care of some of those things – and more importantly, that he's given you peace in the midst of them. Then update the list and do it again. See if God isn't faithful and trustworthy to handle them and to give you peace. I'd be willing to bet that he is.

The good news of the Gospel of Jesus, is that he is trustworthy – in this life and in the life to come; for many, it’s easy to trust him for the life to come, because that’s one of those “big” things that we realize we really don’t have control over. What’s difficult oftentimes, is to trust him in this life, right now. But, he’s got it all covered, and that gives a peace that passes all understanding. So, life is much too short to worry. Instead, let's seek first God and His kingdom, and trade our worries for trusting in our perfect Father who is in heaven. Let’s pray...Amen.

¹ Research on this is all over the internet, from multiple sources – Psychology Today, different university studies, etc.

² <https://www.peartreefamilytherapy.ca/2017/07/worry-4-can-change-part-1/>