

Lessons in Luke: Do Not Worry

Luke 12:22-32

Sandy Rothschiller

I have a question for you. Do any of you ever worry? Well, I sure do. About 3 months ago, I received a phone call in the middle of the night from my daughter, Lauren, who was pregnant and ready to have a baby in a couple of weeks. She called me to tell me she was in labor. I was so excited I couldn't go back to sleep. When morning came and I hadn't heard anything I began to worry. Worry is nothing new to me. In fact, I can worry about almost anything! Relationships, money, children, jobs, politics, world hunger...and now the newest added to the list--my new grandson, Ryder!

Most of us worry about things at one time or another. We often worry about the same kinds of things.

- Do you ever worry about the weather – whether we've had too much rain or not enough, whether it's too cold or too hot, or if it's going to ruin your plans for the day?
- Ever worry about the economy, the loss of jobs, the rising debt and growing inflation?
- Have you ever worried about your security and the threat of terrorism, both outside and within our own country?
- Do you ever worry about your health, the health and safety of your loved ones, and need I add this last year of Covid 19?

We worry quite often about what people think of us, about what we look like, how much we weigh, growing old, about our loved ones dying, even about our own death.

And yet in today's Gospel reading from Luke, Jesus tells us, plain and simple, "Don't worry!" Well, today, we are going to explore what Jesus can tell us about worry.

Our Gospel lesson for today comes from Luke 12:22-32. It's actually about a conversation Jesus is having with those questioning how to settle their estate.

At the core of this conversation is worry. They're worried if they have enough. Interesting. Have you ever worried about if you're going to have enough? Enough money? Enough to live on? Enough to retire on? Enough to have your kids and their activities? You know what? If we're not careful, worrying can become a way of life. It's as if we were born to worry, it's part of our genetic makeup.

Worrying is really not all that helpful. Actually what it does is give us a false sense of control. It's as if to say that, by worrying we can somehow change the course of events. We all know it doesn't work that way. So worry gives us nothing but a false sense of control.

So what does Jesus have to say about worry? Let's read from the 12th chapter of Luke, verses 22-32.

²² Then, turning to his disciples, Jesus said, "That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food to eat or enough clothes to wear. ²³ For life is more than food, and your body more than clothing. ²⁴ Look at the ravens. They don't plant or harvest or store food in barns, for God feeds them. And you are far more valuable to him than any birds! ²⁵ Can all your worries add a single moment to your life? ²⁶ And if worry can't accomplish a little thing like that, what's the use of worrying over bigger things?

²⁷ "Look at the lilies and how they grow. They don't work or make their clothing, yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. ²⁸ And if God cares so wonderfully for flowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith?

²⁹ "And don't be concerned about what to eat and what to drink. Don't worry about such things. ³⁰ These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers all over the world, but your Father already knows your needs. ³¹ Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and he will give you everything you need.

³² "So don't be afraid, little flock. For it gives your Father great happiness to give you the Kingdom.

Our scriptures tell us over and over again not to worry. For example, in Philippians Paul writes,

"In nothing be anxious, but in everything, by prayer and petition 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 thoughts in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:6-7)

The Psalmist writes, *“Cast your burden on God, and he will sustain you. He will never allow the righteous to be moved..”* (Psalm 55:22)

In Isaiah we read, *“Don’t you be afraid, for I am with you. Don’t be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you. Yes, I will help you. Yes, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.”* (Isaiah 41:10)

The thing is, as we read these things, we can remember and know that God has us. But somehow we worry anyway. The question is, what can we do about this, even knowing that God has us?

Well, I think we all know what it’s like to live in a worry world, right? Yet Jesus promises us that he is with us, and we can work through our worry with him.

Now, here are three things we can do when our worry is on our hearts.

First: We can expose worry for what it is – a false sense of control.

Worrying is kind of like atrial fibrillation, where the muscles of the heart race wildly, but they don’t pump the blood like they’re supposed to. They go through all the motions, oh they do everything, but they aren’t doing any good. What keeps you alive is for the muscles of the heart to contract and expand in such a way as to pump the blood efficiently. Just moving back and forth all this blood doesn’t get the job done.

Just think about it. Just running all over the place, worrying, it’s just like that for us. You know, sometimes when we get in a crisis, we just run around, and we feel so out of control.

Worrying doesn’t accomplish control over anything. Worrying literally accomplishes nothing! Just like it says in our reading from Luke today, *“Can all your worries add a single moment to your life? And if worry can’t accomplish a little thing like that, what’s the use of worrying over bigger things.”* Worrying gets us absolutely nowhere! It’s a waste of time, and calling it what it is, a lie that tells us we are somehow in control is the first step toward letting go of worry. The first step toward fulfilling Jesus’ words telling us not to worry. It’s catching ourselves in the lie that worrying can bring us control of a situation. We can quote Jesus, and say to ourselves, *“Worrying doesn’t add a moment to my life.”* In fact, it takes our precious moments away!

Second: Focus on today, just today.

Worry and distraction always travel together. When we’re worried, we’re often distracted—and when

we’re distracted it is almost impossible to be present. If you think about it, most of the things we worry about don’t actually happen. That’s why Jesus told us not to worry about the future. He said to look at the flowers, how they’re clothed with outfits the richest people couldn’t recreate if they tried. What if we looked at things that actually exist, not all the things we worry about that don’t. Jesus said we won’t add anything to our lives by worrying; we’ll just miss seeing Him in action. When we focus on the present, on today we can be assured that Jesus gives us all we need just for today. Rather than live our lives distracted, we can trust that God is with us in the present moment, especially the hard stuff in life. When worry distracts us, we can go to scripture, we can meditate, we can pray, and ask God to bring us back to the present. Because God promises that God is present with us right now, in the midst of all of our circumstances. When we can focus on today, just today, we can be assured that God is with us. Which leads me to the third thing we can do.

Third: Give it to God.

If we spend all our time worrying about what people think, or what might happen to us or our loved ones, we hold on to the very thing that keeps us from experiencing God. Worrying takes up our precious time. An old English proverb says, *“Worry is like a rocking chair. It gives you something to do, but it doesn’t get you anywhere.”*

If you think about it, worrying never makes us feel better, it only makes us more anxious. It certainly doesn’t fix anything. And yet ironically, we often think that somehow by worrying we can prevent something bad from happening. Unfortunately, it doesn’t work that way. We actually waste time and energy worrying. What can we do? We can expose worry as meaningless, and we can focus on right now, today, and we can give it all to God.

God has called us into a loving relationship. God wants us to bring everything to God. Our thoughts, our worries, and our love. We can give it all to God. When we share what is on our hearts with God, especially our worry, we dare to believe that God is at work in ways we can’t see or imagine. We open ourselves up to experiencing God’s love for us through our quiet thoughts, through friends, through family and even strangers. When I shared my worries about my grandson, Ryder, with God, I was sharing my worries with my friend, who happens to be a grandmother herself, and she surrounded me with love and

compassion. And I was able to let go of the worry. I experienced God's love through her to me.

When worry enters our heads and our hearts, there are three things we can do:

- 1) Expose worry for what it is, a false sense of control.
- 2) Focus on today, just today.
- 3) Give it to God.

Last week, Pastor Jeff shared with us what can happen in prayer. As we pray we can lay our fears and our worries into the hands of God, who loves us and cares about all that we are going through today. We can trust in God's amazing, overwhelming love for us. As our scripture today states, "So don't be afraid, little flock. For it gives your Father great happiness to give you the Kingdom."

I shared some of this message with my neighbor, Mary, and she shared with me a wonderful quote that she lives by. "It is not my business to worry. My business is to think about God, and it's God's business to think about me!"

And so today, as a tangible symbol of giving our worries to God, we invite you to text the word WORRY, followed by any specific concern that you wish to name, to the number on your screen (270-330-8350). You will receive encouragement in the form of scripture that you can keep on your phone and refer to when you need it.

What worry are you going to let go of today?