

The Cure for Worry
Lesson: Matthew 6:24-34

I'm tempted to reset to the Prayer of Confession and open the floor for a confession of worries. It seems like worry is a sin in Jesus' view, and I'm wondering who in the room is like Paul, "the chief of sinners." Well, I don't wonder much at all. I worry so much I go desperate enough to turn my worries into prayers.

What's on your mind in that constant background noise that distracts your attention? We hear about disasters all the time, and we are afraid the world is out of control. Do we worry to *panic*? We have real health issues, and we are scared of cancer. Do we worry to *catastrophe*? We wonder about what our children are doing, or what our parents are doing. Do we worry about things *beyond our reach*?

The IRS as given us three extra days to do our taxes this year, and just the word "taxes" raises the fear that we will run out of money. Experience shows that winning the lottery usually changes money problems more than solves them. You are thinking right now that you would all like to try that change. Most people are not greedy. They say that 10% increase in their income would help, and 20% would really solve most problems – people from poverty to wealth say 20%. Money worries are deeper than money when money won't solve them.

What is the real worry in the background noise beneath those situations and problem? Are we just being honest when we say we have "more than we can say grace over"? Is the deeper reality that we have wound up with some situation, some force, some power that we just can't master?

Jesus is usually right. Is he right in this core passage that our choice is seeking first the kingdom instead of letting other things take control of our choices, become master of our lives. Right before he says "Do not worry," he says "you can serve either God or money." So, money is not the real problem. It is our worry that we need more of it that tells what we serve instead of who we serve.

Christ is giving us a cure for the real problem beneath our worries.

Cure for Worry Step One: SHIFT VIEWPOINT

Japan woke up again this morning with worries about food and drink and clothing. Pray for them. Send food and clothing money to them. Someone in Japan – and here, for that matter – needs food and clothing worse than we need the things we imagine will solve our imagined worries.

Before we talk about the CURE, maybe we need to be HONEST about our problem. Jesus says, "Do not worry about your life - what you eat and drink, or about clothing." How many of our worries are about food or clothing? Look in our pantries and our closets. How many of your worries are about food and clothing? These things are way down our list of worries.

Maybe we need to change the places we point our view. Before we confess our worries, maybe we might count our blessings. We might first thank God we have the luxury of

worrying about some things we imagine are such big problems. How many of our worries are about things we chose to bring our way? How many fewer worries would we have if we just remembered we are generally the ones who get us into some of our worries?

How many of our worries would change if we looked at them differently? How many worries would still be worries if we looked at them the way God looks at them? What if we worried in front of God? What if we got tired enough, desperate enough, realized we are literally sick enough from our worries that we took the advice of the old hymn: “take it to the Lord in prayer.”

Jesus says “all these things are what pagans strive for.” The first point is that we need to shift our viewpoint from putting our worries in the center and asking God to do something about them, to putting God at the center and asking God if these things are worth our worrying.

Cure for Worry Step Two: TRUST God.

Jesus commands us: Do not worry about things people who do not follow worry about. Remember he took the followers up the hill so he could talk to them. These words are advice for followers! Who else would listen to Jesus? Who else would take this advice? Will we take it?

Review: “Disciple”: You may have noticed I don’t use that word much. It has become one of those church words we use so much and think we know its meaning. In a way, it has become another of those meaningless church vocabulary words.

The meaning is simple and clear. “Disciple” means *follower*. Following means letting someone else decide the direction, pick the route. We have said that “Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior.” We are supposed to listen and follow. And Jesus puts up with us, “...oh, *WE* of little faith.”

Review: “Faith” means *trust*. It does not mean we agree with Jesus and go our own way. Faith means we put our walk in the direction of his commands. We do what he says. We don’t just “consider” the lilies; we take their lesson. We don’t just gaze at the birds. We use them as an example.

For most people who do not sit at Jesus’ feet and listen, this talk is just irresponsibility talk.” But if we followers listen but do not trust, we are being irresponsible. Consider the lilies, birds of the air? Get real. How much more am I really worth to God than flowers and feathers? Well, maybe more than you think? ...and maybe less!

I was a new pastor being welcomed at a church picnic. A little girl smashed her finger in a car door, and came crying to her mother who was sitting at our table. The mother looked at the finger and stopped to pray while the girl cried. I suggested mom might find a plastic bag and some ice right quick. ...She probably thought it was an answer to her prayer.

“Let Go and Let God have his wonderful way” is an old chorus we now call “praise music.” “Your worries will vanish, you night turn to day,” it sings. And when you let go, you can blame God when it falls apart.

Does faith mean that I believe God will do whatever I ask, “in Jesus name, amen”? Does more faith mean that God is at my beck and call? How often to we use faith as a substitute for

trust? Does God NOT come through because I have too little faith? Is that what Jesus meant? Do I quit God when I found out God isn't much use to me?

Maybe what Jesus meant is that flowers live and die and are beautiful by their nature in the time they are given, and we can find beauty in our nature and time. Birds fly and hunt for food. because that is what they are made to do.

Maybe faith means that I am human and should not be surprised to have all these human problems that are part of what we call "the human condition." And maybe "trust" means when I do what God has asked me to do, I can trust that God will get me through.

The cure for worry comes when I go the second step and let trust in God point my view? Trusting God is not about overcoming your fear or pretending everything being hunky-dory with Jesus. Trusting God who never leaves, always speaks, is your "an ever-present help in time of trial" just like the Psalm says.

Trusting is about following when things look as dark as soldiers showing up in the middle of the night to take you away when all you have done is love and help people - and cause a mess of trouble along the way.

Trusting is being MOST responsible to God. "Responsibility" response-ability - able to respond with all the trust of my life to the God I trust responds to my need.

Cure for Worry Step Three: SERVE CHRIST.

Another old chorus can lead to escape more than trust: "Only believe. All things are possible. Only believe."

Trust is not a "belief." Trust is more than idea or intention or even motives. Trust is more than a song in the heart that replaces the background noise of worry. Trusting is in the singing. Trusting is in the doing – and trusting God is in doing one thing *first* that changes all the rest of doing!

Trusting changes worry when we "seek first the kingdom of God and God's righteousness." Yes, we need to change our viewpoint to look at life the way Jesus looked at living. Yes, we need to trust the "God with us" who is always in front of us – leading the ones who follow. And it is the direction Jesus leads that cures our worries for good – by doing God's good!

The core of the commands: "*Instead, be concerned above everything else with the Kingdom of God and with what God requires of you, and God will provide you with all these other things.*"

The Meriwether translation: "Go after the rule of Christ's love in your life with all your heart and mind and soul and strength - and keeping working at Christ's love in your living until you get it right. Then all the other stuff will fall into its proper place."

Will everything fall come up roses? NO, this is not a musical with snappy tunes and tap dancing. And YES. Worries about what happens fade the more we do Christ's work, because we trust that what God did for him, God will do for us. Worries in the road ahead change in view when Jesus is in the picture in front of us. And we remember that roses and lilies have their place, and we have our place in God's rule and purpose of love.

Will the world that is out of control come under God's control? NO, if control means no problems or passing our problems on to God. And YES, if control means Christ's LOVE shows us a path through the problems when we trust him to lead enough to follow.

Will following be enough to cure our worries? YES. Following Christ means serving Christ, doing his will, walking his way. In the beginning we said that Jesus said our problem was not the worrying; it was the serving. And serving him first means we can serve him only.

So the steps in the cure for worry work both ways: We change our viewpoint, we trust God, we serve Christ. The more we serve Christ, the more we trust, and the more our view takes on Christ's view. Really living Christ's love solve the problem of worry? He gifts us with enough good to do that we don't have time or reason to worry.