

REPLACE WORRY WITH REPENTANCE

Worry is a sin for which we must repent -- Repentance is faith that trusts God's grace and mercy.
Matthew 6:24-34

TEXT: *No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money. Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that 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, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*

In Jesus' name, fellow redeemed:

Stop worrying! Anyone ever say that to you? How did that work for you? Did that simple command make you feel better? Did your worries vanish? Stop worrying! But if you are really under some stress, when you heard that you might have even gotten secretly angry. It's easy to tell somebody to stop worrying when you are not in their shoes, when you don't know what they are going through.

Then, to make it worse, they tell you, a Christian: Don't worry, trust in God! There it is! Another command. Don't do this: don't worry; but do this: trust in God! How did that work for you? Did your worries go away when they reminded you to trust God? You know that they mean well when they tell you not to worry. And you know that they are right when urging you to trust God. But the cause of your worry is still there, and their urging you to trust in God only makes you more aware of the weakness of your faith. So now you've learned: my faith is weak! Something else to worry about!

So how does it make you feel when Jesus himself tells us the same thing? *I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. ... Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ... Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.* What comfort is there for us when even our Savior tells us to do something that we cannot do?

When we read a portion of Scripture that tells us what to do, we are reading God's Law. All this good counsel and advice coming from Jesus Himself as well as from well-meaning Christians cannot do what the Gospel does, for it is the Gospel that is God's power. Therefore we must IMPORT the Gospel into this lesson of our Lord as he also advises us to do when Jesus also says: *But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.* What Jesus is telling us to do for power and strength to trust in God and to make worries subside is often what we call repentance. REPLACE WORRY WITH REPENTANCE. Worry is a sin for which we must repent. Repentance is faith that trusts God's grace and mercy.

Worry is a sin because you cannot say you trust in God while your heart is doubting God's gracious wisdom. It is therefore a sin against the very First Commandment, instantly followed by the Second and the Third. Worry doesn't let us worship God with hearts of joy and confidence. It is a sin that condemns us so that we also deserve nothing from God but his anger and punishment, both now and forever.

The fact is that we all worry, some of us more than others. Jesus even lists some of the kinds of worrying of which we sinful human beings are guilty: *Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that 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, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'* We are directed to consider the lilies of the field and birds of the air who do not work and yet the Almighty opens His hand and satisfies their needs.

Ah, but we are not animals. We are humans with brains and the ability to work and to provide for ourselves! We are commanded to work and to provide for our families. Doesn't the apostle Paul say: ***For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat."*** 2 Th 3 Doesn't Paul also write: ***If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.*** 1 Ti 5 This takes money! Especially in these days! Who can raise a family today without both parents working? What about childcare? That costs money! Then there's the concern about putting aside enough money for our retirement so that we aren't a burden to others. That takes more money! Then if that's not enough to worry about as our country's jobless rate grows and our economy dives, Jesus stands there and says "Don't worry." If he doesn't want me to worry, then why doesn't Jesus give me more money? Instead of giving me the money I need to do what the Bible says I must do, He says: ***No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.*** But I need money! And if I only had more money, then most of my worries would go away! Right?

"By the way, dear Jesus, so does your Church need money! Where's the Church going to get the money? I'd give more to the Church if you'd give me more money to provide for the responsibilities you've commanded me to oversee." And so we commit the greatest sin by blaming God and condemning His wisdom as being far more inferior to ours.

I'm not going to tell you, "Don't worry..." Instead I am going to tell you to repent. There's nothing anyone can do about worry and failure to trust. It's the nature of our Old Adam. But we can confess our sins. David declared: ***I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD"-- and you forgave the guilt of my sin.*** Ps 32:5 What can God do? He has bound Himself to the promise of forgiveness with the blood of Jesus. So when Jesus says, "Don't worry..." it's because he has promised to forgive us our sin of worry and doubt and to comfort us with promises of His grace and mercy.

Replace worry with repentance and because repentance holds to the blood-sealed promise of God, namely, that ***God made Jesus who had no sin to be sin for us so that in Christ we might be the righteousness of God!*** 2 Co 5 That is, holy people. People whom God loves to bless and protect.

This is what is meant by importing the Gospel into this section of Scripture. Jesus said: Don't worry, ***But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*** Yes, we should trust God. But when you look at your faith and your ability to trust, you will worry all the more! Instead, look at what God has made you to be through your Baptism. By God's command, the Holy Spirit washes away sin in Holy Baptism and empowers us to believe in him and to trust in Jesus. Remember when you were very young? Remember when there was a powerful Michigan thunderstorm and how comforting it was that your father and mother were with you? Did you worry? Sure! But their presence comforted you because they were your parents. God is our Heavenly Father! He put His name on you at your Baptism. And it's written in both the Old and New Testaments: ***Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"*** He 13

It is to you that the promise is directed: ***Look at the birds of the air ... heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? ... See how the lilies of the field grow. ... Yet I tell you that 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, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?*** So Jesus goes on: ***So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.*** Your Heavenly Father already knows.

There's one more thing. All this takes time and experience to see and to learn that God does indeed keep His promises. So while we live here, Jesus reminds us that this exercise of our faith will be with us until we leave this earth. That's what lies behind Jesus' reminder: ***Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*** So get used to it! Learn to live with it! It's out the love of our Heavenly Father that keeps us humbly trusting in His grace and mercy.

So every day, replace worry with repentance and you will see God grace and mercy, and your faith and trust in God will be an example to others. Amen.