

Sequoyah Hills Presbyterian Church
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Dr. Steven P. Eason

Six Bad Words in the Bible; 4. "Worry"
Matthew 6:25-34

There are bad words in the Bible. You don't want to say them too often, and yet, they are in here as a warning. Stay away from these. The first word was **doubt**, then **hypocrite**. Last week was **sin**, and today's word is **worry**. Jesus said these words;

*²⁵Therefore I tell you, do not **worry** about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? ²⁸And why do you **worry** about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. ³⁰But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you – you of little faith? ³¹Therefore do not **worry**, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' ³²For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. ³⁴So do not **worry** about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today.*

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"Don't Worry, Be Happy!" (Bobby McFerrin). There's the sermon. See you next week! Not so easy, is it?

This past Monday, Israel's President Netanyahu produced evidence that Iran lied about having a nuclear weapons program. So, what does that mean? And then there's North Korea. And Jesus said,

"So do not worry about tomorrow..." (6:34a).

When's the last time you took a flight. *"Don't worry."* Well, if the engine doesn't fall off, and a passenger doesn't go crazy, or nobody hijacks the plane, I won't!

Last Sunday evening, we attended a beautiful concert at the newly built *Cathedral of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus*. Don't you love that name? We Presbyterians name our churches, "1st, 2nd, and 3rd." Sounds like we're going to a baseball game. Before we went into the concert, every bag was searched and every person was patted down. "Don't worry." And that was church!

Mass shootings in schools, theaters, and even the Waffle House. Trucks running down pedestrians and bombs being mailed to your house. "Don't worry."

You ever had to wait up for a teenager? Five minutes past curfew, and you think of everything that could happen. Those 5 minutes turn into 5 days. "Don't worry."

Why is "worry" a bad word if you care about something? There's plenty to worry about in this world, because there is plenty to care about. We can't act like this stuff doesn't matter. It all matters.

Many of us lived through 9/11. Some of you have sat in a doctor's office and received a bad diagnosis. We've had accidents happen to us. Many of you have experienced war, and some even worse.

We've seen things happen that give us cause to worry. If we ever were, we are no longer naive. "Don't worry?" Sounds like an over-simplistic bumper sticker.

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The World Health Organization estimates 1-in-13 people suffer from anxiety, which has become the number one mental health issue in North America. Forty-two billion dollars is spent each year in the U.S. on the treatment of anxiety-related disorders. Addictions, phobias, panic attacks, psychosomatic illnesses, depression and obsessive-compulsion tendencies are all attributed to severe anxiety.

I can understand letting go of *doubt*, *hypocrisy*, and *sin*, but don't you want to argue with Jesus, just a little bit, on this "worrying" thing? How could he ask us not to worry?

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I have a friend who prays with his palms pointing upwards. He doesn't do it for show. It's rather subtle. He says he prays with "open hands" to remind him to empty himself of anything that is prohibiting God to work in his life.

I wonder if Jesus is saying something like that here. If our hands and hearts are full of *worry*, there is no room for **trust**. How do you "trust in the Lord with all (our) hearts," if your heart is full of worry? How do you trust when everything around you says to do otherwise?

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You've probably heard the Cherokee legend of the two wolves.

An old Cherokee is teaching his grandson about life. "A fight is going on inside of me," he said to the boy.

"It is a terrible fight and it is between two wolves. One is evil, he is anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego."

He continued, "The other is good. He is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion, and faith.

The same fight is going on inside of you, and inside every other person, too."

The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather, "Which wolf will win?"

*The old Cherokee simply replied, "The one you feed."
(www.virtuesforlife.com/two-wolves/)*

How do you feed trust?

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Years ago, Ann Kaiser Stearns wrote, *Living Through Personal Crisis*. She did research on people who had been through horrific loss and discovered three distinct groups.

One group could not cope and suffered chronic depression, addictions, job loss, destructive anger and even suicide. Another group coped, but barely. The loss had a continuing negative impact on the quality of their lives.

The third group was different. She called them, "*Triumphant Survivors*." They suffered, but over time actually became stronger people. This group shared several traits;

1. *They find ways to express their feelings.*
2. *They move beyond blaming others, or God.*
3. *They have a sense of humor and seek joy.*
4. *They are determined.*
5. *They refuse to be a victim.*
6. *They have a network of 8 to 12 supporters.*
7. *They are anchored in a belief in God.*

They did suffer, but did you notice what they did not do? They chose not to let go of trust in God.

When something horrific happens, wouldn't that be the time to stop trusting God? You could, but I remember what someone who lost a child once said to me. "*Now is the time I either embrace God or spit in God's face. As painful as this is, I choose to embrace God,*" she said. She chose trust.

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People with anxiety disorders need medical treatment. Under normal circumstances, it's a choice to feed trust. Not one time, but every time. Otherwise worry, or anxiety creeps in, and our minds and hearts are too full of worry for trust to survive.

"*Which wolf wins, Grandfather?*" "*The one you feed.*" At this Table we come to feed on trust. We choose to trust in the one who made heaven and earth.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Congregation: **Amen**