

Spiritual Healing for Emotional Freedom: Worry
Matthew 6.25-34

FUPC
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If there's one area of life where most of us need to be healed, it's that we worry too much. We worry about getting our work done on time. We worry about doing a good job at our work. We worry about losing our job and wonder how we'd survive financially. We worry about having enough money. We worry about what we eat, if it's healthy or not. We worry about our weight, because we eat too much of the food we love that's not good for us. We worry about our children... no matter what age they are. We want them to be safe, healthy, thriving... and when they're not, we worry. We worry about our looks as we get older, lose our hair, accumulate wrinkles, feel aches and pains in our joints that were never there before. We worry that we'll get dementia or alzheimers and end up in a nursing home. We worry that someone we love will stop loving us. We worry that the plans we have for the future will go up in smoke. We worry about something we said that hurt a person we care about. We worry about the past. We worry about the future.

One Spring day, Jesus was teaching a crowd of people. He had no pulpit, no microphone, the people weren't sitting in pews. I can see the scene in my mind. He's outdoors, groups of people are gathered around, Jesus is speaking to them and as he speaks he walks among them and looks into their eyes. Like it's a one on one conversation. On this day, Jesus notices the flowers beginning to bloom, the lilies coming to life after winter's cold darkness. Perhaps there was a flock of birds sitting in the trees, or a birdsong that Jesus noticed in the background. Jesus was a master at taking what was ordinary, visible and tangible, like flowers that were beginning to bloom, and birds flying through the air, and listening for the wisdom they held for teachable moments. He knew his audience too. He could hear the anxiety and stress in the conversations going on... about having enough money, being able to buy food, needing adequate shelter and clothing. The basics of life... the things that make us all feel secure.

The crowd gathered that day was not that much different than you all gathered here in this sanctuary. Even though we're separated by several millennia, I'd say we're probably worried about a lot of the same things. So Jesus lets the flowers and the birds do the talking.

“So I tell you, don't worry about the things you need to live—what you will eat, drink, or wear. Life is more important than food, and the body is more important than what you put on it. ²⁶ Look at the birds. They don't plant, harvest, or save food in barns, but your heavenly Father feeds them. Don't you know you are worth much more than they are? ²⁷ You cannot add any time to your life by worrying about it. ²⁸ “And why do you worry about clothes? Look at the wildflowers in the field. See how they grow. They don't work or make clothes for themselves. ²⁹ But I tell you that even Solomon, the great and rich king, was not dressed as beautifully as one of these flowers. ³⁰ If God makes what grows in the field so beautiful, what do you think he will do for you? It's just grass—one day it's alive, and the next day someone throws it into a fire. But God cares enough to make it beautiful. Surely he will do much more for you. Your faith is so small!

What's Jesus saying?

Worry keeps us from being grateful in the present for what we have. If we're always thinking about what we don't have, we'll never be able to enjoy what we do have. Where we focus our thoughts determines whether we are at peace with life. Always wanting something more, something different, something more exciting, something or someone, or someplace that we think will make us happier than we are right now. And being worried that we won't get what we want. "If only" living robs us of happiness right now in this present moment. Jesus uses the flowers and the birds to teach us that. They live in the present. They're not worried about tomorrow's food or if they'll be happy. No!

They're happy right now. We are shaped by the habits we allow to control us. Worrying about the future keeps us on edge and blinds us to the beauty of the present moment. And all that's good, happy, bountiful and satisfying right now. Someone has said, "There isn't enough room in your mind for both worry and faith. You must decide which one will live there."

Jesus is also saying that worry makes us forget how much we're worth to God. Worry erases the promises of God from our hearts and replaces them with doubts and questions. Its tempting to measure how much God loves us by how many of our prayers God answers in just the way we want. If we get what we want, its clear, God loves us. If we don't get what we want, we say, "Why is God mad at me? Why isn't God listening? What did I do wrong?" Of course, we know rationally that that's not true. But still the feeling is there. Jesus says that if God takes care of the birds, surely God will take care of us too. If God creates beautiful flowers that bloom for a short time, and then are cast into the fire when they dry out... won't he treat you much better than that?

It's the difference between paper plates and good china. Paper plates are designed for temporary, one time use. When we're finished with them, we throw them away. But good china is different. We treat it with care, we treasure it, clean it gently, store it away in a safe place because of its delicate beauty. Jesus is saying, "We are not God's paper plates. We're God's good china." Yet when we worry, as though God didn't care or had a grudge against us because life doesn't turn out our way... we think we're just as like those disposable paper plates. Worry causes us to doubt God's love and care for us, and makes us question whether he can or whether he wants to meet our everyday needs.

What we forget is that "NO" is also an answer. "NOT YET" is also an answer. "KEEP TRUSTING" is also an answer. Don't worry that God has stopped loving you, just because you don't hear a "YES" to all your prayers. God loves us too much to give us everything we pray for. And though we may not understand God's logic, never doubt that there is a Divine Wisdom shaped by Infinite and boundless love watching over your life. Just like God does for the birds of the air and the lilies of the fields. Worry is worshipping the problem instead of the Creator. Give it to God and go to sleep!

Jesus is saying that Worry is useless. It doesn't accomplish or solve anything. It does create a mixture of nasty chemicals in our brains and body that result in ulcers, headaches, rashes and loss of sleep. By worrying about it, we can't add another hour to the length of our life, or another inch to our height. Worry won't take away wrinkles or put more hair on your head. Worry won't keep you healthy... in fact, its more likely to make you sick. I like what the Dalai Lama said. Though he's from a different religious tradition, some spiritual wisdom is universal. He said, "If it can be solved, there's no need to worry. And if it can't be solved, then worry is of no use." Jesus and the Dalai Lama were on the same page on that one. Worry is useless. Its like a rocking chair. It gives you something to do, but it doesn't get you anywhere.

Jesus ends his conversation with the crowd by pointing them in the direction of God's Kingdom. *What you should want most is God's kingdom and doing what he wants you to do. Then he will give you all these other things you need. So don't worry about tomorrow. Each day has enough trouble of its own. Tomorrow will have its own worries.*

It's a call to keeping perspective. Minding our mind. Worry comes from believing that our problems are greater than our God. When we realize we can't always control the future, then we get worried because we're not sure God will do what we want him to do, when we want him to do it, in the way we want him to do it. The perspective Jesus talks about is one of letting go, acceptance what comes, trusting that God is present in the issue or situation, no matter what, looking for the diamonds hidden in the mud, keeping the small things small, making room for what we know is good and worthy of

praise, what is true, honorable, right and pure and beautiful and respected. That's "kingdom thinking" and Jesus says that when we live with Kingdom Values... we can relax, we can experience peace, we can open our arms to life and be freed from our need to worry. Because God is saying, "Relax. I got this. I'm on it."

What are you worried about today? Visualize it, make it tangible even if its invisible. Reduce it to a size of something that you can hold in your hands. Feel the weight of it. Maybe its hot and burning and painful. Maybe its cold and it feels hopelessly dead. Take that worry and lift it into the realm of God's Holy Spirit... offering it to God, and by that motion, you can say, "God, I'm tired of worrying about this. Tired of losing sleep. Tired of doubting you. I believe that you are bigger than this worry and I give it to you. You promised that what concerns me also concerns you. I let it go now. Its yours. And I thank you for whatever You are going to do with it." Amen.