



MAY 27/30/31 2015

1 PENTECOST

PASTOR SCOTT FULLER

Philippians 4:4-7; Matthew 6:24-34

Don't Worry – Be Happy!

Dear friends in Christ: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prepare our hearts, Lord, to receive your Word. Silence in us any voice but your own that in hearing we may believe and in believing we may obey your will revealed to us in Jesus Christ. Amen.

Memorize scripture:

*¹⁰ Do not fear, for I am with you,
do not be afraid, for I am your God;
I will strengthen you, I will help you,
I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.*
Isaiah 41:10

The reason I started out with that particular bible passage will become apparent as this sermon unfolds. As I said in the announcements, the topic for today is one of the most powerful enemies of God – we call it **worry**.

How much time do you spend worrying about things?
-(a little, about medium, a lot)

So this question is for those of you (like me!) who are **experts** at worry:
What is worry?

- uncertainty** that **God** will **truly help**...coupled with a **certainty** that our worst **fears** could very well come **true**
- fear** of being **reprimanded** for making a mistake, *or* the wrong choice
- a sense of **anxiousness** that the evil powers at work in the world seem so much stronger than the powers of good
- dread** of being **ridiculed** for:
 - wearing the wrong clothes,
 - saying the wrong thing,

- doing something stupid,
- not fitting in
- distress** at the thought that what we dislike most about ourselves might be made embarrassingly public

Let's try that verse from Isaiah again:

*¹⁰ Do not fear, for I am with you,
do not be afraid, for I am your God;
I will strengthen you, I will help you,
I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.*

Isaiah 41:10

So here's another question: **What is the lie that worry tells us?**
Doesn't it seem to promise that if we worry, we're actually doing something about the problem at hand? In our Gospel for today, Jesus exposes that lie when he says, ***Can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?***

In fact, what do we know about worry's effect of on our span of life?

Not only does worry **not** help us conquer our fears or fix our problems,
-it also **causes** us **dis**-ease and inhibits our bodies to fight **di**-sease
-it often **drives** us to seek comfort from negative coping mechanisms like smoking, drinking, etc.

So, this will come as no surprise. In a recent study, researchers watched two groups of men for 12 years...the men in one group were worriers, while the men in the other group were not. Here's what they found: at the end of the study, only 50% of the worrying men were still alive compared to ~80% of the other group.

http://longevity.about.com/od/longevityandillness/a/neurotic_worry.htm

Let's revisit that verse from Isaiah again:

*¹⁰ Do not fear, for I am with you,
do not be afraid, for I am your God;
I will strengthen you, I will help you,
I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.*

Isaiah 41:10

So how do we combat the power that worry has over our lives? Bobby McFarin sang that old song, Don't Worry - Be Happy, as if we could get that monkey off our backs simply by changing the tune that we sing!

Then there's the old **Nike** slogan that some like to sling around as an antidote to worry: Just Do It – or, in this case, Just ***DON'T*** Do It!

Does anyone have a good suggestion for something that might actually work?

- Take it to the Lord in prayer
- Let go and let God
- Share it with a counselor or friend

In a TED talk entitled ***The Power of Vulnerability***, a sociologist by the name of Brene Brown talks about some people that she interviewed for a research project about **shame** – which is intimately connected to **worry**. When we feel shame for something, we worry that we will be found out – and our lives ruined.

As she listened to their stories, two groups appeared. As you may well imagine, one group manifested a sense of:

- worry, fear, isolation, and low self-esteem.

On the other hand, another group manifested positive traits like:

- worthiness, courage, compassion and a sense of community/belonging.

In her talk, Brown said there's one thing in particular that we can do to help ourselves deal with the fear that we let control us at times: and that is to *embrace our vulnerability...embrace our vulnerability*. In that piece of advice, I hear her say a couple of things:

-It's good for us to name the struggles we're facing – for by telling another person about it, we get that negativity out of our heads and hearts – which will then make room for some positive things to take root.

-We in the Church assert that it's also vital know **who we are** – and Whose we are. For only then we will be convinced that we are indeed *made in the image of God* and **claimed** by that very same **God in love**.

-Brown's next point flows naturally from knowing who and whose we are: she encouraged us to let **love dominate** in our lives.

-Then she offered this final piece of advice: embrace a sense of empathy, *the art of showing concern for others*, for that, she says, is the best antidote to shame and fear.

Not surprisingly, some of those traits are the same wonderful take-aways we find in our little verse from Isaiah. Let's say it again. Repeat after me:

*¹⁰ Do not fear, for I am with you,
do not be afraid, for I am your God;
I will strengthen you, I will help you,
I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.*

Isaiah 41:10

Says God, you are not alone – I am with you.
You don't need to be bedeviled by fear for I am your God.
You belong to me, so I will give you strength, and I will help you.
In fact, I will lift you up, take you into my arms, and drive away all who
would cause you pain.

So don't worry – be happy...be happy that the God of all creation has
given himself to you, and for you, for all eternity. Amen.