

[1]
Learning to Say "NO" to Worry
Matthew 6:25-34
June 8th, 2014, Jeff Germs

One of the things I've talked about quite a bit Sunday mornings is the hard work of change. No matter how you look at it, change is hard. There are very few people who like change, and even those who say they like change, when change is imposed on them they will change their mind and tell you they don't like it.

[2]

But, **change is necessary. We cannot grow without changing. Growth, by definition, is change for the better.** And the sad truth is that we only actually grow when things are uncomfortable; no pain, no gain. So we need to get comfortable with being uncomfortable because if we are cooperating with the Spirit of Jesus He is going to continually take us out of our comfort zone so we can grow to maturity.

And so, in our lives when we come up against difficulties, when we encounter pain, when we try to look into the future and the only thing we see is uncertainty we should ask God to give us the grace to stay in the struggle and choose to live on the growing edge (James 1:2-4, Romans 5:3-5). This theme runs all through Scripture from the first verse to the last. This morning we are going to carry on with that theme. We are going to take a look at what Jesus says about worrying.

[3]

Here is a truth that we don't like very much. **To get better at anything in life it takes practice and hard work.** As a matter of fact, the experts say that to become an expert at anything, no matter what it is, takes about 10,000 hours of practice. We will not coast into being good at anything.

The same holds true about not worrying. It does not come naturally for any of us. I would imagine we have a lot of worriers here this morning. We worry about a lot of things. Well, if we are going to get better at not worrying what do you think we need to do? We need to practice not worrying. We need to be okay with God allowing things in our lives that we are tempted to worry about so we can practice not worrying. Sounds fun doesn't it? Not!

I typically do the majority of my sermon prep in coffee shops. I do that for a number of reasons. One reason is that I have a hard time concentrating in my office at the church. It is too easy for me to get distracted. The other reason is so that I can get outside the church walls and build relationships with people in the community. There are several people that I regularly chat with now in a few different coffee shops in town.

On one particular occasion when we were still living in Tsawwassen I went to a coffee shop to work on my sermon. I ordered my Americano and thought I would indulge a bit so I ordered a piece of carrot cake as well. I needed to procure a seat near a plug-in for my laptop so I sat down beside an older man who was reading the newspaper. He looked at my carrot cake and without cracking a smile and said, "Oh, carrot cake! That's my favourite too." I said, "Carrot cake is great isn't it." That's all we said to each other for a few minutes and then after a while he said in a very deadpan way, "What would the world be like without carrot cake?" I wondered how long we were going to carry this on, but I responded in kind, "It would simply be a terrible place wouldn't it?"

That was a fun little interchange so I thought that this man, even though he didn't crack a smile the whole time must actually be a joyful person. And then he began to complain and curse and various things. There was a constant barrage of negativity spewing from his mouth. At one point he said, "Have you been across the border lately?" "Yes", I said. "Did they ask you how much money you were carrying? Did you know they won't let you carry more than \$10,000 across the border?" I said, "Well, I knew that, but it's never been an issue for me." He was obviously a very wealthy man. He went on to complain about various other things he was reading in the newspaper. It made me quite uncomfortable and I thought that it was so sad that this man had gotten to this point in his long life and seemed to lack real joy.

It really is tragic to see that because it is symptomatic of a wasted life. He may have had a bank full of money, but he had no joy.

I had another experience several years ago when an older lady threw a temper tantrum at church and I asked if she could come into my office and talk about how she acted and her response saddened me. She said, "That's just the way I am. I'm too old to change. I know it's wrong, but that's just me."

How many of us have put up with immature behaviour from people and we say, "Oh that's just so and so. He'll never change." Or "She'll never change." Or, how many others have to put up with immature behaviour from us and they say, "Oh, that's just Jeff. That's the way he is. He'll never change." Friends, that is not okay.

[4]

God is not content to leave us in an immature state. He is going to do whatever it takes to bring us to maturity so that we reflect the beautiful character of Jesus.

Now, unless you are new here, or you've been sleeping through every sermon for the last eleven months you will have noticed that we have been and continue to be very purposeful about one thing – and that is to enter into training with Jesus as his apprentices so that we can become like him, so that we will allow His Spirit to do a work of transformation in our hearts and minds. You may have also noticed that I like to close the service with a benediction from the Bible, usually either from Jude or Hebrews. The one from Hebrews reads:

[5]

Hebrews 13:20-21 (NLT)

20Now may the God of peace—who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, and ratified an eternal covenant with his blood—21may he equip you with all you need for doing his will. May he produce in you, through the power of Jesus Christ, every good thing that is pleasing to him. All glory to him forever and ever! Amen.

The God who raised Jesus from the dead is well able to transform us into the kinds of people that can please God.

[6]

So, our goal at CRBC is to become a people that pleases God in everything we do – a people of ***love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control***. And the way that we do that is to surrender to his Holy Spirit as he works in our hearts and minds on a day by day, minute by minute basis. We want to give the Spirit of Jesus permission to change our minds about the way we live, think, and act. We want to give him free reign of our hearts and minds and lives.

And our goal in doing this is not just so that we would become a bunch of beautiful people who meet together in safety protected by these church walls feeling good that we are saved and protected from those bad people out there. As a matter of fact it's exactly the opposite. It is our goal to become like Jesus because God has a plan.

[7]

It is the divine will of God that we would be so changed by him so that others outside the walls of the church would be affected by the change that God effects in us so that God's Spirit through us can bring more people into his kingdom who will in turn be used to influence others into the kingdom. Isn't that exciting!!!

[8]

Bring them in, build them, train them well, and send them out. Everything we do should be built around this plan.

God wants to change us from the inside out so that we become a people who actually cares that there are people in our community who are dying without Christ and so that we would be willing to follow Him to do something about it. This is the most exciting life that a person could ever live – to cooperate with the Living God to fulfill his purposes on earth. Why wouldn't we want to be a part of that?

[9]

So, the goal of our lives should be to become the person God created us to be so that others would join us on our journey towards the heart of God. I've seen this happening at CRBC in some very profound ways. Some of you have told me some very encouraging stories about how God has been working in your lives and helping you to step out of your comfort zones to do things that don't come naturally to you. Others of you have told me how God is changing your character and people around you are noticing and asking questions about that change. That is the Spirit of Christ working in you bringing you to maturity. There is nothing more exciting to me than hearing that.

[10]

Now, I am convinced that **at the heart of growing in maturity is a purposeful effort to practice trusting God at deeper levels as we come up against real issues in life.** We get all bent out of shape about so many things. And the reason, when it comes right down to it, is that we don't trust God. Somebody hurts us and we want to retaliate in some way – even if it's only to give them the silent treatment. "I'll show you. I'm not going to talk to you anymore. That'll teach you."

Why do we do this? Because we don't trust what God says in his Word that vengeance is his and he will repay. We don't trust that he will do what he says so we think we have to take matters into our own hands. There so many ways that we show a lack of trust in God's provision. We see it over and over in our lives.

[11]

But, as we learn to take steps of faith, out of our comfort zone, in every area of our lives, our faith becomes stronger, not in ourselves, but in our God who always shows up, who always delivers, who will never leave us or forsake us.

When Jesus was on earth teaching his disciples he would continually lead them into situations where they had to get out of their comfort zones and trust him. Read through the Gospels and you will see it over and over again. His goal was to lead them to the place where they would trust him implicitly.

The passage that we are going to look at this morning is about trusting that God will show up for us. Jesus was sitting with his disciples on a mountain. It's the mountain that we call the Mount of Beatitudes today overlooking the Sea of Galilee. And with everything that he says to His listeners in this passage the implied question is;

[12]

Are you going to trust God with every area of your life? Are you going to believe that God will show up and do what He said He will do? Are you going to believe that there is nothing in the world that is of more value than God and His kingdom? These are the questions that Jesus poses as he sticks his probe in our hearts.

Last week Adrian did a fantastic job of opening up verses 19-24 about storing up treasure. He asked us lots of hard, probing questions about what we consider our real lasting treasure. Is our focus on accumulating stuff down here on earth that is just going to end up in the landfill when we die, or as Jesus says, “Where moth and rust destroy and thieves break in and steal”, or will we focus our lives on eternal things that will never be destroyed, God and people?

It all boils down to one question, “What, or who do we trust?” That leads us to the next section from Jesus on how to deal with anxiety.

[13]

Matthew 6:25–34 (NLT)

25 “That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn’t life more than food, and your body more than clothing? 26 Look at the birds. They don’t plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren’t you far more valuable to him than they are? 27 Can all your worries add a single moment to your life? 28 “And why worry about your clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don’t work or make their clothing, 29 yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are.

[14]

30 And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith? 31 “So don’t worry about these things, saying, ‘What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?’ 32 These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. 33 Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need. 34 “So don’t worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today’s trouble is enough for today.

[15]

If you go to the bank and ask for a loan, the loans officer will ask you what your **net worth** is so she can decide whether or not you are a good risk to borrow money. And by net worth she means how much have you accumulated. How much money do you have stored up in the bank versus your debt? What is the value of your investments? Do you own a home, and a car? Are you a good consumer? And so, our net worth, according to the world in which we live, really means; how much are you tied down to this earth? And we are encouraged to feel good about ourselves if we have lots of stuff, and bad about ourselves if we don’t possess a lot of material things.

[16]

That is the economy of the world that we live in. But, it’s not God’s economy. God’s economy is different. He says, ***“Don’t put your sole focus on earthly possessions because it’s all going to end up in the landfill and rot away with every else that’s there. There is more to life than that.”***

This too is about trusting God. Will we believe God that eternal things are worth far more than temporal things? Or, will we fall into the trap that Satan and the world has set for us and believe that the most important thing is to make sure that our “net worth” is always increasing?

We think we can live in two worlds – one foot in the world, doing the things that the world sees as important, and the other foot in God’s kingdom, do church, bible study etc. The truth though, as Jesus said, is that we cannot live like that. One of them will master us, either the world, or Jesus. We must choose.

Friends, we have to choose between the world and Jesus. And it all comes down to whether or not we trust that what God says in his Word is true, and so Jesus continues:

[17]

25 “That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn’t life more than food, and your body more than clothing? 26 Look at the birds. They don’t plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren’t you far more valuable to him than they are? 27 Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?

What’s your net worth? When the bank looks at you they add up all the money and assets you have accumulated and decide on your net worth. When God looks at you he says, “My dear child, you are priceless. I cannot put a value on you. All the money in the world, all the possessions in the world does not equal your worth. Do not worry about anything because I, your heavenly Father will care for you.”

[18]

²⁸ ***“And why worry about your clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don’t work or make their clothing, ²⁹ yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. ³⁰ And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith?***

[19]

³¹ ***“So don’t worry about these things, saying, ‘What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?’ ³² These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. ³³ Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need. ³⁴ “So don’t worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today’s trouble is enough for today.***

We’ve talked about this before. All we have is today, and yet we expend countless hours and wasted energy on worrying about tomorrow or feeling bad about yesterday. The same God that raised Jesus from the dead has promised that he will meet all our needs according to his riches in Christ Jesus. This same God that gave his life for you loves you with an everlasting love and he said that ***all things work together for the good of those who love him and are called according to His purposes.***

Now, that doesn’t mean that things are going to be easy. He never promised us an easy life. As a matter of fact, what he did promise us is trouble.

[20]

John 16:33 (NLT)

³³ ***I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.”***

You don’t have to be very old before you figure out that life is hard. And if we are set on waiting until everything in our lives is settled and trouble free before we allow ourselves to have peace and joy we will be waiting a long time. It’s not going to happen on earth. But, the one thing we can count on is that God will be faithful in the middle of whatever we are going through, today and tomorrow. **There will be trouble in our lives.** We cannot escape it. The big lesson is will we trust God to show up in the middle of our stuff.

[21]

Whatever difficulty you are going through right now, that is the very thing that God wants to use to help you to experience His presence in a very real way.

He wants to use that thing to show you that he is real. He wants to use that pain, that obstacle, that fear, insecurity, the thing that looks like an insurmountable mountain to show you he will show up every time. He will never waste the things that you are going through. If you respond humbly to him he will use it to conform you to the image of His Son. That means that the question we need to ask ourselves when we are facing an obstacle in our lives is,

[22]

“How can I use this difficulty to stay on the growing edge so that I am becoming the person that God has called me to be, so that I am growing in my capacity to love, and so that I am growing in my trust in my heavenly Father?”

Jesus summed up this whole section in verse 33 and 34.

[23]

³³ ***Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need. ³⁴ “So don’t worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today’s trouble is enough for today.***

Now this might sound overly simplistic, but really, what Jesus is saying is “Do the next right thing, and trust God.” Trust God and do the next right thing. What is it that you are facing right now? Do the next right thing, whatever that is, and then trust God. One of the things I’ve learned about God is that he rarely lights up more than one step at a time. Take that step and then trust that he will light up the next one when you need it.

³³ ***Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need. ³⁴ “So don’t worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today’s trouble is enough for today.***

[24]

Psalms 37:3 (NLT)

³ ***Trust in the Lord and do good. Then you will live safely in the land and prosper.***

[25]

Trust God and do the next right thing. Do the next right thing and then trust God.

Every obstacle that we have in life is an opportunity to practice trusting God. Whatever you are going through right now, do the next right thing and then trust God.



Learning to Say 'No' to Worry
Matthew 6:25-34
Week of June 8th, 2014

Objective of this study: To see how investing in God's kingdom undermines the hold of worry in our life.

Worship (5 – 10 minutes)

1. Spend five minutes in silent prayer asking God to prepare your heart for how he wants to speak to you.
2. After the five minutes of silence have someone interrupt the silence and read Psalm 37 meditatively to the group. (after each phrase, or paragraph if it's a long Psalm, pause and let the Lord speak to you before reading the next)
3. Sing a song or two of praise and thanksgiving to God.

Welcome (5 – 10 minutes)

What is the silliest thing you've ever worried about?

Word (20 - 30 minutes)

1. What stood out for you from the sermon?

Read Matthew 6:25-34.

3. What kinds of things do you/people in general worry about? Think of at least 5 things, from trivial to major.

4. Notice the first words of v. 25: "***That is why I tell you not to worry....***"

What, specifically, is why? Take note of the context. What is the bigger picture of what Jesus is talking about? You will need to look at the preceding verses to get the context.

5. Read the passage again, starting with verse 24 this time, through to v. 34, observing how Jesus is instructing us on how to change our allegiance, our service, from money to God. Compare masters, and compare our service to each, what our service to either accomplishes, which is more influential.

Sermon quote: "**At the heart of growing in maturity is a purposeful effort to practice trusting God at deeper levels as we come up against real issues in life.**"

6. How is verse 34 the antidote to worry?

How does seeking/pursuing/investing in God's kingdom cut across the mindset and behaviours of worry?

7. Re-read verse 26. Sermon quote: "**When God looks at you He says, 'My dear child, you are priceless.'**"

How does knowing our value to God lead to right thinking, right choices, right behaviour? Do you know your value to God?

Sermon quote: "**We get bent out of shape about so many things. The reason, when it comes right down to it, is that we don't trust God.**"

8. How does lack of trust evidence itself in immature behavior? And conversely, how does trusting God free us to grow in maturity? Think of specific examples.

Work (30 - 40 minutes)

9. Read Psalm 37:3.

Sermon quote: "Do the next right thing and trust God."

What is the 'next right thing' in an area of your life that you are worried about? Ask God to show you.

10. How can you grow in your awareness of how much you mean to God?

HOMEWORK

This week, when you are tempted to worry, ask yourself, How can I invest in God's kingdom instead of worrying about this thing?