

The Jesus Way / THE LIFE GOD WANTS FOR YOU
Don't Worry. Be Happy.
Matthew 6:25-34

*"Here's a little song I wrote
You might want to sing it note for note
Don't worry, be happy.
In every life we have some trouble
But when you worry you make it double
Don't worry, be happy.
Don't worry, be happy now."*

When you read the sermon title for today, "Don't Worry. Be Happy" you heard in the recesses of your memory the laid back Jamaican voice of Bobby McFerrin admonishing you, "Don't worry; be happy." At least, I know Daniel heard it strong enough to have to impersonate Bobby McFerrin. Hey, maan, you don't look like him at all.

Worries. We all have them. They come singly or simultaneously. We worry about ourselves and others; about the past, the present, the future. We worry about our bodies, emotions, finances, and souls. Worries steal our sleep at night and intrude uninvited into our thoughts throughout the day. The word "worry" comes from the German language, from a root meaning to strangle or choke. Nice. It strangles our productivity and chokes our joy. Worry. Is there any relief?

There is. But it doesn't come with the irresponsible shrug of the philosophic shoulders of Bobby McFerrin's song:

*Ain't got no place to lay your head
Somebody came and took your bed
Don't worry, be happy.
The landlord say your rent is late
He may have to litigate
Don't worry, be happy.*

No, the basis of our worry-free attitude is God. Because God is the God who cares *about us* and cares *for us* as his children, Jesus gives encouragement *to us*: **"God's kids don't have to worry."** Ito has already expressed so well the words of comfort and encouragement that forms our text from Matthew 6:25-34.

²⁵*"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? ²⁶Look 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? ²⁷Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?

²⁸”And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. ²⁹Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ³⁰If 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? ³¹So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³²For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. ³⁴Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

In this passage we are given four reasons why God’s kids don’t have to worry. **God’s kids don’t have to worry because...**

1. Worry doesn’t do any good. (Matthew 6:25, 27.)

²⁵”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?

God does not forbid foresight and provision, but the anxiety (*merimne*) which distracts and distresses is to be left behind. Joseph was instructed wisely to prepare for seven lean years. Sometimes we are to give foresight to our needs, but we are not to “be anxious” (NAS) or “to worry” (NIV) in the process.

²⁷Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?

The NAS correctly translates this verse as saying, “who by worrying can add a single cubit to his life’s span?” This, of course, is a mixed metaphor. Cubit is a measurement of distance. Life’s span is a measurement of time. It is like saying in our vernacular: “And which of you by being anxious can add a single inch to the years of one’s life.” The NIV has eliminated the awkwardness of the mixed metaphor by changing the term “cubit” into a unit of time, that is, “a single hour.” Whether your translation reads “a single cubit” or “a single hour” the meaning is the same. Worrying might shorten one’s life, but it won’t lengthen it.

Dr. Charles Mayo, of the Mayo Clinic, wrote, “Worry affects the circulation, the heart, the glands and the whole nervous system. I have never met a man or known a man to die of overwork, but I have known a lot who died of over-worry.”

Worry is wasting today's time to clutter up tomorrow's opportunities by remembering yesterday's troubles.

How many times we spend unnecessary energy in working over things totally out of our control. Charlie Brown: I couldn't sleep last night. I kept worrying about school, and about life and about everything." Snoopy: "I didn't sleep well either. All night long I kept worrying the moon was going to fall on my head."

What are things you worry about that you cannot do anything about? Turn to your pew neighbor and share, if you will, what you are tempted to worry about over which you have no control.

God's kids don't have to worry because...

2. God cares about you (6:26, 28-30)

²⁶Look 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?

Some have used vs. 26 for an excuse for laziness. But anyone who has seen birds forage for food with diligence and persistence will know God's provision for birds still requires effort. God still expects us to work, but not to worry.

²⁸"And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. ²⁹Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ³⁰If 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?"

The lilies of the fields referred to are not the Easter lilies you might have in your mental picture. The term is a more general term for wild flowers that can splash a hillside in a pallet of color. In verse 30 he speaks of the shortness of life for the flowering grasses, and yet they display beauty. Today it grows; tomorrow it is thrown into the oven.

God cares for the birds and even the flowers. And the last phrase of 26 is so vital, "Are you not worth much more than they?" Today, some members of the group Animal Liberation Front would answer Jesus' rhetorical questions with a "no." But notwithstanding, Jesus intended us to answer his question with a resounding YES. We are worth much more to God than mere birds (who have no soul) or flowers (who have no breath).

In contrast, how great is the love God has for you his children. He has saved you. Why? Because he delights in you. Psalm 18:19 proclaims, "*He rescued (saved) me, because He delighted in me.*" Isaiah 62:5 says "*As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so your God will rejoice over you.*"

“For thou didst form my inward parts; thou didst weave me in my mother’s womb. I will give thanks to Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are Thy works, and my soul knows it very well.” (Ps. 139:13)

As Max Lucado writes, “If God had a refrigerator, your picture would be on it. If he had a wallet, your photo would be in it. He sends you flowers every spring and a sunrise every morning. Whenever you want to talk, he’ll listen.” (Lucado, 122)

God’s kids don’t have to worry because...

3. God promises to meet your needs (6:31-33)

³¹*So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’* ³²*For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.* ³³*But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*

Worry reveals a materially-focused world view. The word Gentiles (*ethnoi*) is peoples, multitudes, non-Jews, pagans. If you are an unbeliever, you are determined to make provision for yourself--and worry if you might not. It is understandable. A person of this world has only this world to be his heaven, and only himself to try to provide. No wonder he is worried.

But the child of God can trust his Father to have the provisions ready when they are needed. What a promise! But it is a promise with a condition. One must first seek God’s Kingdom and his righteousness. Romans 14:17 reminds us “*The Kingdom is not “eating and drinking but righteousness, peace, joy in the Holy Spirit.”* But if you pursue the kingdom, he gives you the eating and drinking that you need.

What a fringe benefit to the people of God.

Isaiah 26:3, “*The steadfast of mind Thou will keep in perfect peace because He trusts in thee.*”

Psalms 55:22, “*Cast your burden upon the Lord, and he will sustain you.*”

God’s kids don’t have to worry because...

4. Worry just borrows trouble from tomorrow (6:34)

³⁴*Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*

The truth of this verse actually is reflected in one lyric of the Bobby McFerrin tune:

*In every life we have some trouble
But when you worry you make it double
Don't worry, be happy.*

“Our anxiety does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow, but only empties today of its strength.” (Charles Spurgeon)

Some folk take three kinds of trouble all at once: all they have now, all they have had, and all they expect to have.

But God supplies grace in day-tight capsules.

Like manna. As described in Exodus 16, God miraculously delivered manna around the tents of the Israelites camping in the wilderness. The manna, ready outside the tent flaps first thing in the morning, was more consistent than the arrival of The Oregonian on your driveway. But there was a catch. God did not want manna to be stockpiled, but rather gathered for just one-day-at-a-time, except for the day before Sabbath? I believe God was illustrating God's provision will not often be for the long term future, so our dependence upon God will need to be renewed day-by-day.

Seventeen years ago, when Miriam and I were standing in the ICU next to our daughter Jessica's broken body. We wondered if she would live or die; or if she lived, whether she would walk or be paralyzed. We began to understand that grace, like manna could not be stored up ahead of time. You don't know how you'll ever be sustained beforehand, or afterwards, but during the trauma, God is there. God supplies his grace in day-tight capsules.

Applications

1. Make sure God is your Father. *“But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God,”* John 1:12.

All of the great encouragements and promises we have smiled about today were conditional. Remember the main idea? **God's kids don't have to worry.** But if you're not “God's kid” by having come into relationship with God through faith in Christ, then you'd better worry. You are going it alone and have no assurance that God hears your prayers or will extend His mercy one more day. Is God your Father? Will you right now, today, choose to become the child of God by receiving Christ into your life?

2. Consciously place your worries on God. *“Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you,”* 1 Peter 5:7.

Once when I had a high-stress job I made a garbage pit out of the property beneath the interchange where southbound I-5 merges with eastbound I-84. Each evening as I headed from work toward home, I would consciously roll my burdens off my back into that roadside pit, asking God to cleanup the landfill for me. By the time I got home, my shoulders weren't slumped anymore. Sometimes, though, I must admit, the sludge climbed out of the landfill, overtook my car, crawled back through the window, and smothered me again. This reminds us that we casting all your anxiety on God is not something we can do once for ever. As often as the worry resurfaces, we need to reaffirm our faith in God and His care for us. *"In everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, make your requests to God, and the peace of God that surpasses understanding, will guard your heart and your mind in Christ Jesus,"* Phil 4:6-7.

Not only do past worries continue to slither in to weigh us down, but new worries can suddenly arise. They have in my life, as you know. But I choose not to worry. I choose to consciously place my concern upon God because he cares for me.

Will you join me in that choice? For your problems, whatever they be—physical, financial, or emotional—will you join me in choosing to roll your burdens off? Make your personal landfill right under the pew in front of you as you envision your worries being slid off of you onto the floor. And when you stand up to leave here in a few minutes, choose to leave that pile of problems behind.

Yes, the thing you worry about might actually happen. But if it does, will God still be there? Will he still be good? Will his strength be sufficient? The answers to all of these are yes, yes, yes.

So, because we are God's kids, we really can heed the advice, "Don't worry. Be happy."