

Isaiah 40:9-11  
Luke 12:29-34

## We Worry

Okay, you are not used to me telling jokes so I am giving you a heads up that this is one...

David had been extremely anxious for years. It got to the point where his compulsive worrying was ruining his life, so he went to a psychiatrist, who recommended that David hire a professional worrier.

After he'd been working with the specialist for a few months, David's friend John noticed a change. "What happened?" John asked. "You don't worry about anything anymore."

"I hired a professional worrier!" David answered.

"That must cost a fortune," John said.

"Yes, he charges \$3,000 a month," David said sheepishly.

"Three thousand dollars! How can you ever afford to pay him?" John exclaimed.

"I don't know," David said. "That's his problem."<sup>1</sup>

You may know someone who is a professional worrier. It may be you. My mom tended to worry a lot. I think because I watched her worry about things, along with a few other experiences in my life, I decided that worry was not going to take up a lot of my time and brain space. But I realize that I am not the norm. Most people I meet have tendencies to worry and even more troubling is just how prevalent anxiety is among people. It is contributing to mental health issues and the stresses we face, from financial pressures to challenges around one's health, can be worrisome, cause anxiety, and more. So as I speak today I don't want to have anyone think that I am minimizing concerns around mental health or downplaying the importance of caring for oneself.

What I do want to look at is what Jesus had to say about worry and our relationship with God, because it turns out that Jesus did have something to say about it. The short passage from Luke that you heard read has the words, "...and do not keep worrying" and then "Do not be afraid," as fear contributes to our worry. But that is just the tip of the iceberg in terms of how much Jesus spoke about worry.

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<sup>1</sup> [Professional Worrier – Funsteria](#) Accessed December 13, 2024.

So let's get a little context. Jesus had been teaching the crowds and at this time has addressed a person in the crowd who said to Jesus, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me." Of course, Jesus wasn't there to be an arbitrator in a family dispute, however it did create an opportunity for Jesus to tell a story about greed with the Parable of the Rich Fool who stored up a bunch of grain thinking he was set for years, only to be told by God that his life would end that night. From there Jesus goes on to talk about worry.

The whole passage on worry from Luke actually says,

'Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? If then you are not able to do so small a thing as that, why do you worry about the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you—you of little faith! And do not keep striving for what you are to eat and what you are to drink, and do not keep worrying. For it is the nations of the world that strive after all these things, and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, strive for his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.

You can tell from this passage that Jesus knows that worry is a part of being human, but he goes further to say, but God's got you. Whatever your circumstance, you are not alone. God cares about you and will not abandon you. "Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

This image of us being part of God's flock and the care of God as a shepherd can be found elsewhere as we heard from the scripture reading from Isaiah, "<sup>11</sup>He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep." And of course, the most famous scripture of all, Psalm 23, with its opening line, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want."

God has compassion on and for people and there is something that changes in us when we let God take our concerns and hold them for us. God is all about freedom to live an abundant life, and when we are able to give to God our cares, then it frees us up for that life, even in difficult circumstances. Again, none of this is cut and dry. It is difficult to let go of worry, fear, and anxiety, but one can chip away at it, letting go of one thing at a time if that is what it takes to get to a place of relying on God.

And it is not that our challenges disappear. It is not that we can sit back and do nothing, the freedom that we get when we let God do what God does allows us the energy, hope, and imagination to think about things differently. To reframe our lives and find

ways to live that we may not have considered before because worry and anxiety took up the space needed to experience God and life differently. God knows what you need and will work in you if you give God the space to do so.

Often, we need help to get to that place. It may take professionals such as doctors, social workers and the like to get us to think differently. But as someone who has experienced deep depression, the help of others was necessary and I would not have found my way out of the depression without that help and without medication. Yet, I also know that healing came through faith. It took all of that, professional help, medication, and my faith, God, for me to be okay. To this day it is my faith in God's hand in my life, God's provision, that helps me continue to be okay, and when needed, to have the courage to seek the help of those educated and trained to walk with me in these areas. With all that said, sometimes all it takes is the presence of a friend or trusted mentor to share in conversation.

Jesus says, "Do not worry." You know you will, but catch yourself and hold you and the situation in prayer. It is in part, why we share in the prayers of the people every Sunday. We know that God cares, has compassion, and is at work in the world. We are called to be God's hands and feet in the world, to be the light shining in someone's darkness, showing God's compassion and even sharing the words that they are valuable and loved by God.

Letting God take on our worry makes a difference, and our response to having God take that from us is to help others be released from a life of bondage to worry, anxiety, and fear. Our lives become a witness to what God is doing in the world. Thanks be to God that we are loved by God, the compassion of God so broad that God sent Jesus in the form of a helpless child who grew in strength and power to set us free through the cross and resurrection. The resurrection setting the stage for all to have life and life abundant and the freedom to let God move and live in and through us. This is the story of Jesus that began with the Christmas story but continues with us here and now in and through the power of the Holy Spirit walking among us, taking our cares, taking our worry, taking our fear, and giving us life. Amen.