

Date: August 25, 2019

Series: *Truth to Model for Our Neighbors*

Title: *Why Worry?*

Preacher: Mark Adams

Scripture: Matthew 6:25-34

I imagine most of you have heard of Howard Hughes. To prod your memories a bit, the movie, *Aviator*, starring Leonardo De Caprio, is a biopic about his life. And that's a good title for a movie about Hughes because he was very successful in the aviation industry.

But that's not all he was good at. Hughes is also known as a businessman who dabbled in oil and movies. But "dabbled" doesn't quite do it because all these investments enabled him to earn a lot of money. In fact, allowing for inflation, when he died in 1976 he was worth over six and a half billion.

Now you would think that anyone with this much money would be the picture of ease and tranquility. You know, spending his days sitting by the pool, sipping drinks with little umbrellas sticking out of them without a worry in the world. But that's not the way it was for Mr. Hughes. In fact, for last twenty-five or so years of his life, Howard Hughes was plagued by worry and anxiety. He was tormented by unsubstantiated fears that overwhelmed him. He was only 70 when he died---which means he spent more than a third of his life---**WORRYING**.

One thing that caused him worry was the fear that people were out to get him so he moved from hotel to hotel, where he would rent out entire floors. Those closest to him say he would sit in a pitch-black room and for long stretches of time, refusing to allow anyone to come in to see him. If you had to communicate face-to-face with Mr. Hughes and if he trusted you enough to see him, specific instructions were provided. You had to take several tissues, cover the doorknob with them, knock, and open the door ever-so-slightly. The reason behind the tissues and just barely opening the door was another source of fear for Mr. Hughes. You see, he was a serious germaphobe; terrified of some tiny microscopic bug getting in the room, making him sick.

His anxiety was so bad it led to severe stomach problems, causing him to sit in the bathroom for hours at a time. One aide says that Hughes once did that for 27 straight hours. On the rare occasion that Hughes would venture out the hotel where he was staying, he gave specific instructions to his driver. Only smooth roads were to be taken and the driver was never to exceed 35 miles per hour. On the chance that they had to cross railroad tracks or some uneven part of the road, the driver was to slow down to 2 miles per hour.

Why?

Because another one of Howard Hughes' fears was being killed in a car wreck. My point is that for a man who had it all--one thing he didn't have was peace. Worry and anxiety dominated his life! In fact, it seems to me that it **TOOK** his life. It sounds like Hughes literally worried himself to death.

This morning as we continue our neighboring vision, I want us to spend the next few weeks looking at some verses from the Sermon on the Mount. The idea is to glean truth from Jesus' words---truth our neighbors need to see us model---live out---and that brings us to this morning's text where Jesus talks about **WORRY**. Take your Bibles and turn to Matthew 6. Follow along as I read verses 26-34 and in respect to God's word, if able, would you stand?

"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 than food, and the body more than clothes? Look 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? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If 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—you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”

Now I want us to notice the context of these familiar verses. The verses right before these are where Jesus talks about materialism. He says we should lay up our treasures not on Earth but in Heaven, and that we: ***“...cannot serve both God and mammon or God and money.”*** Now why follow up a lesson on materialism with a lesson on worrying? It’s because Jesus understood the more things we have, the more we tend to worry. Materialism breeds worry.

When reflecting on his life before all the money and fame rolled in, automobile tycoon Henry Ford concluded, *“I was happier when doing a mechanic’s job.”* Multimillionaire W. H. Vanderbilt once said, *“The care of 200 million is enough to kill anyone. There is no pleasure in it.”* And the constantly frowning multimillionaire Andrew Carnegie once observed that *“millionaire’s seldom smile.”*

King Solomon, a man whom some regard to be the richest in human history, had this to say in Ecclesiastes 2:8–11:

“I amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I acquired men and women singers, and a harem as well—the delights of the heart of man. I became greater by far than anyone in Jerusalem before me. I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun.”

Do you see? Things—earthly treasures—do not eliminate worry. They don’t give us fulfillment or peace. In fact, they seem to heighten our LACK of peace.

And, we all experience this. Worry is what leads us to check on our 401K’s as soon as the news announces a drop in the stock market. We fear we won’t have enough to retire on. But money and possessions aren’t all we worry about.

- We worry about our health.
- We worry about politics.
- We worry about terrorism and the possibility of war with nations like Iran and North Korea.

This week I read about one study that found the typical citizen of the Good ole U.S. of A. is significantly more anxious than residents of third world countries like Nigeria and Lebanon. We spend billions of dollars every year on antianxiety medications and additional millions to fund research into the causes and cures for anxiety disorders. *Time* magazine recently devoted its cover story to TEENAGE anxiety, and the headline was: *“Anxiety, Depression and the Modern Adolescent: Why the Kids Are Not All Right”* The article claimed that today’s adolescents, *“are the post-9/11 generation,”* raised in an era of economic and national insecurity. They’ve never known a time when terrorism and school shootings weren’t the norm. They grew up watching their parents weather a severe recession, and, perhaps most importantly, they hit puberty at a time when technology and social media were transforming society. In the article, one expert said, *“If you wanted to create an environment to churn out angsty people, we’ve done it.”* One teenager explained, *“We’re the first*

generation that cannot escape our problems at all. We're all like little volcanoes. We're getting this constant pressure, from our phones, from our relationships, from the way things are today."

So, all of us---teens to adults---we all worry. And that's not good because, in the Sermon on the Mount our Lord tells us NOT to do that. He tells us, commands us NOT to worry. In fact, he devotes more space in His sermon to this subject than He does to any other.

Why? Why is Jesus so passionate that He would command us to not worry? Well, He tells us. (I'm relying on Bryan Loritts' commentary on this text for much of my outline today.)

(1) For example, first, Jesus says that worry leads to SELFISH decisions.

Look back at our text. Count all the times Jesus uses the personal pronoun. He says, ***"Therefore I tell YOU, do not worry about YOUR life, what YOU will eat or drink; or about YOUR body, what YOU will wear."*** Our Lord is hinting at one of the major issues with worry. Worry leads us to focus on ME. It reduces the billions of people in the world to one---ME---MY fears---MY problems---MY needs.

Worry makes ME the priority. It urges us to forget about others. A few years ago, The Atlantic ran a divorce announcement by a working mother who was obviously overwhelmed by worry. She said, *"Given my staggering working mother's to-do list, I cannot take on yet another arduous home and self-improvement project—that of rekindling my romance with my husband. In fact, along the way, I've begun to wonder, what with all the abject and swallowed misery: Why do we still insist on marriage?"*

Do you see it? This woman's worry led her to make a selfish decision. In essence, she is saying: *"I can't take it anymore. It's too much work. I'm bailing on this relationship."* What this woman's actions illustrate is the sad reality that worry leads to narcissism. By its nature worry turns our life focus INWARD. It makes us focus on self---not others---which is the OPPOSITE of Christlikeness. Remember, Jesus came to SERVE not to be SERVED. He came to DIE so that we could LIVE.

By the way, one of the keys to dealing with anxiety is following on our Lord's example---so that we learn to focus not on our worries but on the worries of others. I remember a few decades back we took Redland's teens on a self-guided cave exploring trip. I had called the owner of the cave and I asked questions like:

- Can you get lost?
- Are there any drop offs where a teen could get hurt?

And the answers were, *"You can't get lost. We give you a map. And, no, there are no drop offs. It's perfectly safe."* Well, they gave us a map but they didn't tell us where we were entering the cave so the map was useless and we immediately got lost. Plus our group quickly became separated as energetic, *"have no fear pre-teens"* began to head off to explore all the endless tunnels. And there WERE drop offs---lots of them. Well, the longer we were there the more fearful I became. I thought, *"I am going to lose some teens today. People are going to get hurt."* Panic began to fill my mind. And then, an hour or so into our exploration as I was trying to keep track of our group and not doing so, two of our teens popped out of a tunnel. They had found another teen, a girl who had been visiting our church. This was her first youth event. She had gotten separated and her flashlight had died. They found her sitting in that absolute darkness on a rock in a dead-end part of the cave crying having a major anxiety attack. We got her an extra light and focused on taking care of her and in that instant my anxiety went away. I put my mind on her fears and on getting our kids out of that death trap and my worries disappeared. We finally figured out where we were on that map and gradually found our way to the surface.

Focusing on the worries of others always does that to our own worries. It snuffs them out---proof that following Jesus' example is always best. Can you imagine the kind of impact it would have on your neighbors--- if you modelled the Lord's teaching here and focused on their concerns instead of your own?

Here's another reason Jesus gives this command NOT to worry.

(2) Worrying is USELESS.

Look at verse 27 where our Lord says: ***"Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?"*** And of course the answer is ***"NO."*** Worry IS useless.

Listen to these statistics:

- Forty percent of what we worry about never comes to pass.
- Thirty percent of what we worry about happened in the past and can't be changed.
- Ten percent of what we worry about relates to health. (What's both funny and sad is that researchers have proven that worry actually makes your health worse not better!)

Now yes, eight percent of worry is legitimate, but even then, your worrying about that legitimate concern won't change things!

- Your worry will not make your mortgage get approved.
- Worry won't get you that job.
- Worry won't fix your broken-down car.
- Your worry will not get rid of the cancer.
- Your worry will not pay the bills.

So worry is useless. It's a waste of time.

The odd fact is the USELESSNESS of our worrying is compounded by the fact that we focus our worries on mere possibilities in life---while at the same time we do nothing about legitimate concerns. For example, when it hit the news we agonized over the avian flu, which [as of December 2006] had killed precisely no one in the U.S.---but we have to be reminded to get vaccinated for the common flu, which contributes to the deaths of 36,000 Americans each year. We wring our hands over the mad cow pathogen that might be (but almost certainly isn't) in our hamburger---yet we worry far less about the cholesterol that contributes to the heart disease that kills 700,000 of us annually. Shoppers still look suspiciously at a bag of spinach for fear of E. coli bacteria while filling their carts with fat-sodden French fries and salt-crusting nachos. We put filters on faucets, install air ionizers in our homes, and lather ourselves with antibacterial soap. At the same time, 20 percent of all adults still smoke; nearly 20 percent of drivers and more than 30 percent of backseat passengers don't use seatbelts---and two-thirds of us are overweight or obese. We aren't very good at worrying are we--- which makes our doing so even MORE useless.

Here's another reason Jesus says NOT to worry.

(3) Worrying is WORLDLY.

Look at verse 32 where Jesus says,

"For the PAGANS run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them."

Jesus is saying the lives of those who couldn't care less about Him are dominated by earthly treasure and therefore THEY worry. So, when you and I worry we are going with the flow of this pagan world. When you and I fret about our jobs, our health, our money, our mortgage loans, our kids' schools, our cars, and our clothes, we're acting like the world. When we worry we are telling everyone who knows us that our hope is NOT in a loving, caring Father, but in the things of this world.

Listen.

When word gets around the office that more layoffs are coming, and all of your unsaved coworkers are getting anxious and freaking out---Jesus says you must send a powerful message about the truth of Who He is by calmly going about your work without any sign of worry. To those among us facing student loan debt: When you talk with your friends who are worried about how to pay back all that money---you must quietly and confidently wait on God in trust. To those who are single: When all your friends seem to be getting married and you aren't, the world expects you to worry---the world expects your conversation to be dominated by talk of relationships and why you can't seem to find a good man or woman. Instead, shock them when you joyfully talk about Jesus, confidently communicating that your hope is not in a relationship but in Christ alone.

One of the best ways we model the good news of the gospel to the world is when we don't worry---so make up your mind to glorify Christ today by making a decision not to do that.

Okay, enough of the negative. How do we overcome worry? Jesus talks about that too.

(1) First He says, focus on ETERNITY.

Look at verse 33: ***“Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”*** Our Lord is telling us to focus on things of eternal significance---not on the temporary worthless things of this world. Several years ago, construction workers were laying a foundation for a building outside the city of Pompeii. They found the corpse of a woman who must have been fleeing from the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius but was caught in the rain of hot ashes. The woman's hands clutched jewels, which were preserved in excellent condition. She didn't lose the jewels---but she lost her life. Her focus was on the things of THIS temporary world---what a waste!

Listen, our days ONLY have abundance when we focus on God's eternal Kingdom. The happiest most worry-free people know this so they put God's kingdom FIRST. They know that as Jim Elliot puts it, *“He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose.”* Here's something else Jesus says.

(2) Focus on TODAY.

Look at verse 34: ***“Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”*** In essence, our Lord is saying that we shouldn't bite off more than we can chew. We mustn't worry about the future---that's too much---just focus on today. We must do what we can do when we can do it and not worry about something that hasn't happened yet.

Orel Hershiser attributes his success as a major league pitcher for the Los Angeles Dodgers to his ability to concentrate on the next pitch. He says that he cannot afford to worry about an earlier bad pitch. He cannot afford to worry about the power hitter sitting in the on-deck circle. No, his only hope for survival as a major league pitcher was to concentrate solely on the next pitch he is about to throw.

In the same way, we need to give our full attention to each day as it comes to us. We mustn't worry about what may happen tomorrow. Instead we must devote all of our energy to living today in a way that brings glory to God.

So, focus on ETERNITY. Focus on TODAY And then, most important:

(3) **Our Lord says, focus on GOD---our Heavenly Father.**

In verse 26 Jesus says, ***“Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your Heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?”***

I read this week that Jesus is using a particular kind of argument here called, “*a fortiori*” ---which is an argument that moves from lesser to greater. He begins with the lesser---the birds---the grass---Then He moves to the greater and says our Heavenly Father takes care of us. His point is we eliminate worry when we realized that if God takes care of little things like the flora and the fauna---He will certainly take care of us---we who are the crown of His creation we who alone are made in His image.

Have you heard this old poem?

*“Said the robin to the sparrow,
‘I should really like to know,
Why these anxious human beings
Rush about and worry so.’*

*Said the sparrow to the robin,
‘Friend, I think that it must be
That they have no Heavenly Father
Such as cares for you and me.’”*

And note how Jesus talks about God as our FATHER. Our Lord is saying we must remember we are HIS children. Think of it. Children just assume their parents will take care of them. No child thinks, *“How is the mortgage going to get paid?”* Little ones don't give a single thought as to whether they will eat---or if they will have clothes to wear or if the house they live in will be cool in the summer and warm in the winter. Kids don't worry about car repair bills. They leave that kind of stuff to mom and dad.

I think this is one reason it's so hard when our dad's die. My father passed when I was 46 and when he did one thing that hit me even in middle age is, *“I'm on my own now. I don't have a dad looking out for me anymore.”* One thing God said to me in my grief is, *“Yes you do! I'm here. I'll never leave you or forsake you. I'm taking care of your dad. And I will take care of you.”* This is key to defeating worry---focus on God. As Jesus says a little later in this sermon:

“Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in Heaven give good gifts to those who ask Him!”

We must leave our worries in God's hands. We must trust HIM to care for us. It's like the old hymn, *“Take your burdens to the LORD---and leave them there.”*

Jesus reminds us that our Heavenly Father knows our needs.

- The layoff at work is no surprise to Him.

- The doctor's diagnosis didn't shock Him.

He knows ALL things and He loves us! Trust Him!

You may remember that the comedian Richard Pryor was critically burned in an accident in 1980. Appearing later on the Johnny Carson Show, he insisted that when you are seriously ill, money isn't important. He said, *"All that I could think of was to call on God. I didn't call the Bank of America once."* I'm sure that made the audience laugh---but there is truth there.

As someone put it, when you worry at night and can't sleep, don't count sheep, talk to the Shepherd." Our Shepherd, our Heavenly Father, is all-powerful and all-knowing and He loves you more than you can imagine. He waits for us to ask Him to help us!

We can cast all our cares on Him for He cares for us. (1 Peter 5:7) God has promised to take care of us. It is our job to let Him. Paul says, ***"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."*** (Philippians 4:6-7) Depending on God to take care of us means that we have to eliminate phrases from our conversation, like, *"I don't know how I'm going to get by"* or *"I just don't think I can make it."*

To bolster your trust---think back. Hasn't God always taken care of you?

He has me.

Let's pray.