

Welcome to Neighborhood Church!

Hey, I have some great news to share...my role at Neighborhood has changed and I have recently stepped in to be the Pastor to High School Students!!

- Don't tell anyone, but I'm LOVING it!
- So, if you are in High School (or you know someone who is),
- come hang with us on Sunday mornings at 11:15am
- or Thursday Nights at 7pm.

Please open your bible to the book of Matthew 6, verse 25.

What a wonderful time we had last weekend celebrating EASTER together!

- Pastor Bill kicked off our teaching series we're calling FREEDOM.
- Jesus Christ, by his death on the cross and resurrection 3 days later,
- has brought us FREEDOM...
- ...breaking the chains of sin and the power of death it held over us.

God has created us to be FREE...

- His desire is that we would SOAR and THRIVE.
- You see, it is the thief that comes to kill and destroy,
- But Jesus came that we might have LIFE...ABUNDANT LIFE.

Yet there are chains in our life that keep us grounded...that prevent us from experiencing the freedom Christ has already purchased for us on the cross.

- One specific "chain" I would like us to consider today is FEAR...
- specifically, FEAR OF THE FUTURE...the fear of what tomorrow may have in store for you and those you love.

Do you worry about things?

- When you think about tomorrow, next week, next month or year?
- Is there a heaviness and dread that comes over you?
- Do you carry ANY stress or anxiety about what is yet to come?
- Do you fear that something BAD will happen to you or your family?

Some of us play the "What if" game?(What if I lose my job? What my car breaks down? What if my hair doesn't do what I want it to do tomorrow? What if my hair falls out?)

- Will I have enough?
- Will I lose the things I have?
- We worry about our health...our kids!
- We fear violence, crime, war.
- Relationships seem so fragile...what if I lose my friends?

A fascinating article in the New York Times a few months ago was titled:  
Why Are More American Teenagers Than Ever Suffering from Severe Anxiety?

A recent survey of College Counseling Centers reveals that ANXIETY is the top complaint among college students seeking mental health services.

- Anxiety is common among adolescents and adults...
- but it is seen as less serious than other problems because EVERYONE HAS ANXIETY TO SOME DEGREE.
- Fear, Anxiety, and Worry is crippling; paralyzing for many of us.
- And with this fear, we often perceive threats when there are none!

I was the Campus Pastor at Simpson University for 7 years, and the weight of anxiety among the college students was THICK: Will I graduate?

Will I find love? Will I pay off my loans? Will I find work? Will my life matter?

Will I be OK?

Fear of the Future is a heavy chain that grounds us...that distracts us from what is most important...that prevents us from stepping in to the good work God has prepared for us.

You might be surprised to hear that Fear, Anxiety, and Worrying about our life is NOTHING NEW!

- These chains were prevalent 2000 years ago when Jesus walked the earth!
- How do I know? Because Jesus addressed these fears in one of His most famous Sermons in Matthew 6:25.

So let us sit at Jesus's feet today, let us "bend our ear" to hear what Jesus has to say about fear of the future:

CONTEXT of this passage:

- A portion of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount
- Jesus is speaking to His disciples, those who trust in God and are following Jesus.
- While some of these disciples may have been wealthy, most were not...many of them were poor and unsure where tomorrow's bread would come from.
- Prior to this passage, Jesus emphasizes PRIORITIZING God over things of this earth:
  - store up treasures in heaven, not treasures on earth
  - serve God, not money

\* A natural response to this might be:

“Well, if I don’t prioritize money and storing up things on this earth...will I be OK? Will I have enough? Where will I get the things I need to survive?”

These are important questions...

Let’s hear what Jesus has to say in Matthew 6:25-24...

*Matthew 6:25-34 (NLT):*

<sup>25</sup> “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? <sup>26</sup> 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? <sup>27</sup> Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?”

<sup>28</sup> “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, <sup>29</sup> yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. <sup>30</sup> 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?”

<sup>31</sup> “So don’t worry about these things, saying, ‘What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?’ <sup>32</sup> These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. <sup>33</sup> Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.

<sup>34</sup> “So don’t worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today’s trouble is enough for today.”

A keyword in this passage: “worry”

- This word (or a variation of it) is used 6 times in these 10 verses!

A general understanding of this word “worry” (merimnao) is:

- To be anxious; to care for.
- Distracted; Divided; drawn in opposite directions; pulled apart.

Sometimes this word expresses an APPROPRIATE feeling of intense concern and care for something...and it’s used POSITIVELY in the Bible:

- Caring for other people in the church (1 Cor. 12:25)
- In Philippians 2:20, Paul said that Timothy “genuinely cares” about the welfare of the Philippian church.
- In these cases, we might render this word as “CONCERN.”
- Concern is appropriate when it is directed toward the right things and motivates us to do our proper duty.

BUT, more often when this word is used in the New Testament, It is used in a NEGATIVE sense.

This type of worry is a DISTRACTION and pulls us away from our proper duty

- Matthew 13: It’s the word used in Jesus’ Parable of the Sower when the earthly concerns (“thorns”) CHOKE OUT the good seed so that it does not bear fruit,
- Or in Luke 10 when Martha is DISTRACTED with preparing dinner and other domestic concerns which kept her from participating in “what was better” (sitting with Jesus and listening to Him).

Jesus plainly says:

*Matthew 6:25 “...I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear.”*

- NOTE: food, drink, clothes are concrete examples that represent all sorts of things we can worry about...things we need in life.
- Original Greek: Chill Out, Man! You Gotta RELAX when you think about your life!
- Jesus goes beyond just saying: Don’t Worry. He gives reasons WHY!

I find 7 reasons in these verses...arguments Jesus puts forth to convince us that this type of worry is a waste of time...that we might experience Freedom from the Fear of the Future!

Why Worry? (According to Jesus):

1. An argument from GREATER to LESSER

*Matthew 6:25 “Isn’t life more than food, and your body more than clothing?”*

- God already takes care of the “greater” things:  
He has given you Life and a Body
  - Can we NOT trust Him to take care of the “lesser” things: food and clothing?
- Illustration: Parents give you a whole drum set...won’t they also provide you with the drumsticks?

2. An argument from LESSER to GREATER

*Matthew 6:26, 28-30* <sup>26</sup> 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?

<sup>28</sup> ...Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don’t work or make their clothing, <sup>29</sup> yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. <sup>30</sup> And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you.

- Look at the “lesser” things (birds/flowers): Your Heavenly Father feeds and cares for them.
- Aren’t YOU more valuable than birds and flowers? YES!
  - Humans are the crown and ruler of God’s creation (made in His image)
  - Then He will feed and care for you!

3. Worry Accomplishes NOTHING.

*Matthew 6:27 Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?*

- (I'll just leave this here for a moment)
- In fact, worry is more likely to shorten your life than prolong it!

4. Worry Casts Doubt on God's Ability to Care for You

*Matthew 6:30 Why do you have so little faith?*

("little faith" is not the absence of faith...but a deficiency of faith.)

- Faith and Worry are incompatible.
- Jesus affirms over and over: "God can be trusted!"
- In this passage, faith is reliance on the care and power of God
  - o Worry casts doubt on God's ability to care for you.

5. Worry is for Unbelievers

*Matthew 6:31-32* <sup>31</sup> "So don't worry about these things, saying, 'What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?'" <sup>32</sup> *These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs.*

- In more literal versions of the English Bible, the word "unbelievers" is "Gentiles."
  - o Not about race...it refers to men and women who are without God.
  - o They don't acknowledge God, so they are fully responsible to secure these things for themselves.
  - o Their thoughts are DOMINATED by this worry...it is their top priority.

6. Worry Distracts from What Is Most Important

*Matthew 6:33 Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.*

- "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." (NKJV)
- Our first and foremost priority in life is God: His glory, His rule, His righteous ways.
- Let the things of God DOMINATE our thoughts...
  - ...not the worries of life.
    - o This is where "worries" pull us away from what is most important.
    - o Illustration: Texting while Driving.

STORY: When I sensed God was leading me into a life of pastoral ministry, a close friend said,

- "Trav, there's not a lot of money in ministry."
- At that moment, I could have shifted my priorities to make money my most important endeavor.
- But almost immediately I said, "You're right...but I will trust God to provide."
- I decided to seek first God's plans rather than my own provisions.
- (I have not regretted that decision)

7. Today Has Enough Trouble

*Matthew 6:34 "So don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's trouble is enough for today."*

- God gives us grace and strength TODAY to face TODAY'S TROUBLES
  - o If tomorrow brings new trouble, God will give us grace and strength to meet it.
  - o "The call of God will never take us to a place where the grace of God cannot sustain us." – Darrell Bock
  - o Illustration: Snowboarding (day 1 asking about pipes, jumps, rails, boxes...today, just learn how to stop your board and how to unzip your snow pants when you need to use the toilet).
- NOTE: Even though God meets our needs, we are not guaranteed a life without problems.
  - o Jesus doesn't say: "Don't worry about tomorrow because you will be problem-free." (this is not the teaching found in the Bible)
  - o BUT WE NEED NOT WORRY ABOUT PROBLEMS BEFORE THEY OCCUR!
  - o God knows what lies ahead...we can rest in His mighty hand to walk us through whatever valleys await us!
  - o AND...Most of what we fear about the future will never happen...our fear of the future is wasted energy.

Now Listen:

Freedom from the Fear of the Future does NOT mean:

- a. Don't plan for tomorrow.
  - o Some read this passage and conclude that it is a lack of faith whenever we make plans for the future.
  - o WRONG.
  - o John Stott says it well: "There is nothing stopping Christians making plans for the future...No, what Jesus forbids is neither thought nor forethought, but anxious thought."

(it does NOT mean)

- b. Don't lift a finger...God will bring everything to me.
  - o The birds of the air don't wait with their mouths open for God to drop food inside.
  - o Jesus is cautioning against WORRY, not WORK.

We must Discern between Constructive Concerns and Destructive Fears.

- Constructive Concerns help us avoid potentially dangerous situations.
  - o Driving on icy roads? Healthy fear of crashing causes me to slow down, give more space for braking.

- o When we have an exam ahead of us, we don't want to fail...this Constructive Concern moves us to study and prepare.
- Destructive Fears are like chains around us, interrupting our sleep, keeping us grounded and immobile, taking our focus off what's most important, robbing us of joy and peace, and stunting our growth and maturity in Christ
  - o Destructive Fears LIE to us about the future.
  - o Everything is going to crash! I'm going to lose my job, my spouse, my health.
  - o Something horrible is bound to happen!
  - o This is called CatAStrophizing.
    - SPINNING WORST-CASE SCENARIOS about what MIGHT happen to us tomorrow...taking our eyes OFF God's care and provision today.

Illustration: "Trav, I would like to meet with you over lunch..."(a father of two boys in my youth group)

- I spent the whole week fretting, imagining all the issues he wanted to confront me about
- I began crafting counter-arguments to his imaginary attacks (but I treated them as if they were REAL!).
- Over lunch, he said "Trav, my two boys love coming to your youth group. As a father, whatever my boys are interested in, I want to take an interest in as well. How can I help you?"

After chapel one day, a college student approached me and said,

"Trav...how is it possible to NOT worry?"

- It is the WORK OF GOD IN US to not worry.
- Releasing anxiety is a learned behavior that begins with small steps of trust in God's daily care and provision.
- We can begin by acknowledging and declaring God's past and present provision in our life.
- We can expose the LIES that FEAR tries to spin (call out Catastrophizing)
  - remember: most of what we fear will never materialize.
- We can bring our fears and anxieties to God Himself in prayer.
  - o Phil 4:6 "Be anxious for nothing...let your requests be made known to God."
  - o Bring them into the light...no matter how irrational they might be, present your fears to the Lord.
  - o Prayer itself is a practice in the reality of God's presence (you don't talk to someone who doesn't exist).
  - o God is truth...these lies about the future cannot stand in His presence.

Jesus brings FREEDOM...Freedom from the Fear of the Future.

My wife has a verse framed in our house...it is Proverbs 31:25, describing the wise and virtuous woman:

*Proverbs 31:25 (NLT)*

*She is clothed with strength and dignity,  
and she laughs without fear of the future.*

May YOU be clothed with strength and dignity,  
And may YOU laugh without fear of the future!

- I invite Pastor Tim and the worship team to come and sing a special song over us.
- The song is called "Fear is a Liar."
- And while they sing this song, I would like you to take that blank card we stapled to your bulletin (or grab any piece of scratch paper).
- Here, in God's presence, I invite you to write down any fears you have about your future (or the future of your loved ones).

"Here's what I am anxious about, Lord."

- The words you write are for your eyes only...
- But I am going to ask you to do something with these fears at the close of our service.

Let's take these next few minutes to identify our fears of the future by writing them down as the worship team sings over us.

- You are holding in your hands your fears of the future.
- Jesus came to bring you FREEDOM from all of these.
- As you leave this room, you will walk out these doors into TODAY...but you have your fears of tomorrow in your hand.
- As an act of worship and trust in the Lord's care,
- We simply ask you to: Leave your fears of tomorrow AT THE DOOR!
- We have baskets placed at each of the exit doors.
- Drop your card into the basket... we will dispose of them for you.

Don't forget... as you go through your week that you have a GREAT GOD.

He is with you every step that you take and the joy of the Lord is your strength.