

***Don't Worry, Be Happy***  
***Series: Kingdom Culture ~ The Sermon on the Mount***  
***Matt. 6:25-34 and others***  
***August 2, 2009***

[Song playing: *Don't Worry, Be Happy*] Do you remember that song? My favorite memory of that song is of one day on our beach vacation with Paul's family many years ago, whatever year it was that song was popular. Paul and his brothers had been playing golf with their dad and after golf, granddad always liked to play cards with his boys. So it was getting later and later and the guys hadn't come home yet, hadn't even called actually. Now, my sister-in-law Marilyn was not actually *worried* about them. But she was anxious and I think a bit annoyed at the amount of time they had been gone, as well as the fact that we didn't know what to do about preparing dinner. When would they be home? Why didn't they call and give us a clue? So to counteract her anxiety, Marilyn bopped around the kitchen of our beach house singing this tune: *Don't worry...be happy*.

So, are there any worriers in the house this morning? If you are given to worrying, I hope you'll take some notes today. Because I believe that today's message will really help you if you will take it to heart. In fact, I'd like to see us *all* get in the habit of bringing a notebook to church along with our Bibles so we can always take notes from our Sunday messages. It's not that Doug and I are such great preachers. It's not that we say such brilliant things that you should write them down. But studies show that you remember more of what you hear when you take notes. And once in a while, we will say something that is particularly meaningful to you. [God does that] Or we will reference a Scripture that you want to return to and reflect on. You see, it's not that we want you to remember what *we* say. We want you to remember what *God* says.

We have been focusing this summer on what Jesus said in His often-quoted but rarely obeyed SOM. And I hope that you have come to see how very practical Jesus' teaching is. In the section just before this that Doug spoke about last week, Jesus talks about some of the things we tend to worry about: money – whether we have enough, how to make more, how to make what we have stretch farther; and stuff: how to get more, how to pay for the stuff we get, how to take care of it, whether somebody will try to steal it, what we have to do to protect it. All these things can cause us anxiety and worry. But Jesus says: Matt. 6:25-34.

Now maybe you don't focus on storing up "treasure on earth," as Jesus spoke about just before this. Maybe you don't think about acquiring all the latest techno gadgets, the biggest big-screen TV, a car with all the newest features. Maybe you don't worry about where your next meal is coming from or continually updating your wardrobe. But do you worry about what you have or *don't* have? Do you worry about whether you'll have what you need? Many of us worry about our children. Lots of people these days are worried about whether or not they'll keep their jobs. Whether or not they'll have any money in their retirement funds when they get ready to retire. What do you worry about?

Well, *three* times in this short passage Jesus says: Do *not* worry. Now, maybe you're thinking, "Well, of *course* Jesus could say that. What did *He* have to worry about?" We must be very careful with this line of thinking. We believe, after all, that Jesus was not only God, He was fully human at the same time. We see in the gospels that Jesus got tired, got angry, He was tempted to sin, wept over the death of a friend, became often frustrated with His disciples as they struggled to understand and believe what He said. He was a human being and experienced this life just as we do. And yet

still He says – He commands – “Do not worry.” So what’s the big deal? What’s wrong with worrying?

“Well, first of all,” Jesus says, “don’t worry because worrying doesn’t change anything anyway.” Have you ever noticed that worrying doesn’t ever really change the person or situation you are worrying about? “Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?” Jesus asks. Answer *is*? Nobody. In fact, worrying will probably take hours, even years, *off* your life, not *add* to it. In my experience, most folks who worry a lot know that it is not only unhealthy, it is unhelpful. Mark Twain once said: “I am an old man and have known a great many troubles, but most of them never happened.” That’s another thing about worrying: Most of what we worry about never comes to pass. Another reason Jesus says we shouldn’t worry is this: God’s got you. If He cares and provides for birds and flowers, surely He will care for you, His own beloved child. V. 30. Answer *is*? Of course He will.

Now, let me be clear: This doesn’t mean you shouldn’t study for your chemistry test, or prepare for that job interview but just trust God to take care of everything. It doesn’t mean you shouldn’t work for a living or save for the future because God will provide for you, or not give to help others because God will take care of them. But it *does* mean that you shouldn’t *worry* about your chemistry test or your job interview or making a living or whether or not you’ll have enough money to retire. It *does* mean you shouldn’t *worry* about giving money to help the poor and then not having enough for yourself.

See, here is the real trouble with worry, beyond the stress and the health risks, and the sheer uselessness of it: Worry indicates a lack of faith. “O you of little faith!” Jesus says to them. Worry is *always* a failure to grasp and apply our faith. If we worry and are anxious, it reflects a lack of trust in God, a failure to believe what He says in His Word. If you are often worried and anxious, you don’t have a worry problem, you have a faith problem. If you worry it’s because you don’t really believe God is who He says He is and that God can do what He says He can do. If you experience anxiety and *agida*, it’s because you don’t really believe who *you* are as a beloved child of God. You don’t believe Jeremiah 29:11. That’s one of the very first verses I ever memorized. I can’t tell you how many times God has allowed me to share that verse with someone who needed it.

One scholar has said this: “We commit sin when we worry. We do not trust God when we worry. *We do not receive answers to prayer* when we worry, because we are not trusting.” Did you ever think of worry as sin? Did you ever imagine that God does not hear your prayers when you worry because you are not trusting Him? It’s a scary thought, isn’t it?

“But I can’t help it!” you will say to me. Oh yes you can! The trouble is that when you *feel* worried, you indulge those feelings. You focus on those feelings. You wallow in those feelings. So what’s a worrier to do? Just whistle and sing along: “Don’t worry, be happy”? No. This is not about looking at the world through rose-colored glasses, and just pretending you’re happy when you’re really worried sick.

When you feel worried, here’s the solution, one of my favorite preachers says this: “Don’t let your feelings vote.” You don’t have to indulge those feelings of worry. You don’t have to allow them to overwhelm you. You *can* train yourself not to worry. You can. Just like you are trained to instinctively brake when you approach a red light or see brake lights ahead of you, just like you

stand instinctively when you hear the opening bars of *The Star-Spangled Banner*, you can train yourself not to worry.

And here's how Jesus says you can do it: v. 33: "Seek *first* His kingdom and His righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well." You see, it's all about priorities. It's all about what's first in your life. I love the way Eugene Peterson interprets this verse in *The Message*: "Steep yourself in God-reality, God- initiative, God-provisions. Don't worry about missing out. You'll find all your everyday human concerns will be met." I love that! "Steep yourself in God," basically. Soak your life in who God is and what God promises to do and how God provides. How do we do that? Well, first and foremost, you have to know who God is and you have to know God's promises and what God says He already has done and will do for you. And *this* is how you can come to know that: God's Word in the Bible.

Many of you were involved with our Vacation Bible School this past week. Our program this year revolved around 5 Bible points that the children learned, one each night.

"God is with us."

"God is powerful."

"God does what He says He'll do."

"God gives us life."

"God cares for us."

Each of these points was supported and explained by a verse from the Bible. And every time the kids heard the Bible point, there was a response they were supposed to make. "Fear Not!" "God is with us." *Fear not!* "God is powerful." *Fear not!* "God does what He says He'll do." *Fear not!* "God gives us life." *Fear not!* "God cares for us." *Fear not!* See, I think worry is usually based on some kind of fear. When we feel afraid about something – afraid we'll lose our job or won't find another before the money runs out; afraid something bad will happen to our children; Afraid we'll never get married or never be happy in our marriage.... When we feel afraid, we tend to worry. We worry and we fret and we even make ourselves physically sick. Even though much, if not most, of what we worry about will never happen,

Here's what fear really is: FEAR = False Evidence Appearing Real. When we are afraid, there is something we see that appears real to us but is really not real. It may appear real to you that you will not find a new job and so you won't be able to provide for your family. But as God's child, He has promised to provide for you. So that "evidence" you see is false. Fear not. It may appear real to you that you will never get out of the deep hole of credit card debt you are in. But God has promised to help you. So fear not. When you feel yourself beginning to worry, recognize it for what it is: A lack of faith, taking your eyes off God.

Doug talked last week about the good eye and the bad eye. Do you remember that what it meant to have a 'good eye' was to have a 'single eye.' A singular focus. You see, the person who is worried is not focused solely on God. The person who is worried looks all around at all the possible things that could go wrong, they are distracted by the bad things that could potentially happen in any given situation, and seeing all those things makes them anxious and upset and fearful. *Because* their eye is not single – not focused only on God. "If it was," Jesus says, "you would see that just as God feeds the birds and clothes even the wildflowers with amazing splendor, He will much more provide for His very own children."

If you are a Christ-follower, God claims you as His very own child. “The pagans,” Jesus says, “those who do not know God – who have no revelation from God – the pagans run after all these “things,” but God your Father knows you need them.” Listen: You’re going to have to decide whether or not you are going to believe God. Not just believe *in* God – *believe* God. You’re going to have to decide whether you believe God when He says: “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” When He says, “I will be with you.” When He says, “Nothing is impossible with God.” When He says, “I have plans for you and they are good plans, plans to give you hope and a future.” When He says, “In *all* things God works for the good of those who love Him...” So when you start feeling yourself worry, you’ve got to decide to set those feelings aside and claim what is true: the promises of God for you.

That’s the first thing to do when you start to worry. And the second thing is this: Pray. Phil. 4:6-7. Prayer leads to peace.

Third: If you’re going to worry about anything, worry about your relationship with God. 1 Peter 5:7: Cast all your anxiety on Him, for He cares for you. NLT: Give all your worries and cares to God, for He cares about you. MSG: Live carefree before God; He is most careful with you.

Both Jesus and Peter use the same Greek word for ‘worry’ and ‘anxiety.’ And as you would suspect, it’s a word that means to be anxious, set your mind on, be concerned. But it’s derived from a word that describes something which divides, separates, or distracts us. See, Satan doesn’t care whether or not you are storing up treasures on earth or worrying about other earthly things – He is just concerned that your mind is on *them* and not on God. In fact, Peter goes on to write this in the very next verse: 1 Peter 5:8: “Be self-controlled [Don’t let your feelings vote] and alert. Your enemy, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”

Peter knew what he was talking about. Remember that time Jesus came walking on the water in the midst of wind and waves? [Matt. 14:25ff] Peter could walk on water, *as long as* he kept his eyes focused on Jesus. But when he got distracted, when his focus was divided between Jesus and the wind and the waves around him, Peter began to sink. And he calls out to Jesus and Jesus saves him, and guess what He says? “O you of little faith. Why did you doubt?” That’s really the question for you if you worry: *Why do you doubt God? Why do you doubt His promises? Why do you doubt His provision for you?*

If you want to stop worrying, you’re going to have to decide to *believe* God. Don’t worry about making more money, getting more stuff – be anxious to know God more. Don’t worry about your relationship with your kids – be anxious about your relationship with God. Jesus is not saying, “Don’t worry, be happy.” He is saying, “Don’t worry – trust God. Steep your life in God-reality [Psalm 46:1, NLT: God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble]; steep your life in God-initiative [1 John 3:1]; Steep your life in God-provisions [Phil. 4:19: And my God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus.].

Someone once said: “Do not be afraid of tomorrow; God is already there.” So don’t worry – soak your life in God. Don’t worry – trust God. Believe His Word – believe it is true, believe it is true *for you*. Don’t worry – and you *will be* happy, and so much more. The peace of God, peace that only God can give, peace *right in the midst of* the wind and the waves of difficulty and trouble and pain, peace that exceeds our ability to comprehend it. Don’t worry: believe God, pray, give all your worries to God. And you *will be* happy.