

## Turning Your Worry into Your Prayers

**Grace and peace to you from our Lord Jesus Christ...**

Have you ever heard someone say that the ‘*definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again - and then expected different results?*’...

and wouldn't you also agree that doing something over and over again – that's causing you suffering (and if it's not making you happy, or bringing you peace and fulfillment, or keeping you connected to God) wouldn't you agree that is crazy?...

and if you agree that it's crazy to do *the same WRONG thing over and over again* – then let me ask you a question – “then why do we spend so much time worrying about everything”?... (WHY DO WE WORRY SO MUCH?)... I mean, we all know it doesn't help... it doesn't fix the problem or make it go away (and sometimes worrying can even cause more problems - than the ones we think that we already have)...

In fact, I remember reading an article years ago that said that people who worry usually have higher blood pressure, they're more prone to heart attack and stroke, and given enough time it can even cause depression... which reminds me of something a good friend of mine once said... she said, “*Worrying never robs tomorrow of its sorrow, it only robs today of its joy*”...

You might have come here this morning with your own worries... maybe you're worried about the pandemic or the economy – or about the violence we see in our country and around the world – or the political election... it might even relate to a job, or your health, or your children... or about school... or whatever it is...

But let me ask you a question – is worrying about *it* doing anything to help you?... and if you keep doing it (over and over again) - and it's not changing your situation, or taking away the problem, or giving you some peace – my only question is WHY DO IT?...

In our reading this morning from Philippians 4:6 – Paul writes, “*Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God*”...

Which reminds me of our Lord's teaching Matthew 6:25, where Jesus says, "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, or what you will put on" ... (why? – because God will provide what you need (not what you want))...

And if you think about it - those early Christians that Paul and Jesus were speaking to had every reason to worry... first of all, worshipping anyone other than Caesar was illegal – and the punishment inflicted on those who were caught could be death, torture... or in the very least the loss of a job or a rejection from the community...

Which is why the first group of Christians were in a sense risk-takers (and more often than not) were in constant conflict (between having faith and living in the world)...

In fact, the word *worry* in Greek is 'Merim –nao' which simply means to 'be split in two, or be divided' ... and if you can think of a time when you've worried about something you know that feeling of being divided – half of you wants to believe that it's going to work out – but the other half of you is also scared to death...

And what Jesus and Paul were trying to remind the early Church to do is to keep focused on God (when big decisions had to be made – or their life was turned upside down) or the future was uncertain... because that's where faith comes in (and where you can learn to trust God in both mind and in spirit)... in other words, every worry that presents itself in your life (is really an opportunity to learn how to trust the Lord)... and that's why we say, "Give it to the Lord in prayer – and then leave it there," ... and trust that God will give you what you need...

Which is why C.S. Lewis once said that "*worrying is never the voice of God working in your heart... instead it is the voice of the devil that would love for you to surrender God's gift of faith at the altar of darkness – hoping that you might go about paralyzed in fear, defeated even before you know the outcome, and ready to give up on God before He would ever give up on you*" ...

Which is why we've also heard it said that, "faith and worry cannot live in the same heart"... in other words, you can't say that you believe in God and His promises – and always be worrying about every little thing that comes your way...

And do you know what I find funny? – most people that I talk to don't always worry about big things... in fact, I meet people who know they're going to die (and many of them finally get to a point where they can accept it – and what a blessing it is to watch them go in peace and be with the Lord) but talk to someone who's worrying if it will rain on their party, or if their car is going to get scratched in the parking lot, or if they've put on 5 pounds – and you'd swear that the whole world was ending...

But think about this for a second – according to the National Institute of Standards and Technology (which is located in Maryland) a thick fog that can cover 7 city blocks and be 100 feet deep – and can take away the view of everyone around it... but what's interesting is that that fog is composed of less water than can fill a regular drinking glass...

(Now I can't prove what the Government says is true) but I can tell you from experience that if we allow ourselves to give in to worry (again and again) we can take even small problems (and small challenges) and turn them into big ones... and in the end those small problems will not only take away your joy for living (but can also take away your faith in what God can do)....

You know, I don't have to be the one to tell you this – but worrying about everything is not going to change your future... it's not going to make the problem go away... and it's not going to serve you in any good way...

In fact, it's like what Mark Twain once said... he said, “worrying is like sitting on a rocking chair – it might give you something to do – but it won't get you anywhere”...

And so again – as you think about the problems you might have this morning (yes, I think we should all have a strategy in fixing them) but what good is it going to do if you spend all of your time today worrying about it?...

And that's why I want to close with something that I learned years ago from an usher who served St. John's Lutheran Church... as I've told you a million times – the thing that brought me back to church was my father's death... and very slowly, as I started to get more involved in the church, I started to sense God's presence in my heart (and in my life)...

But what I probably didn't tell you was that in other areas of my life things weren't so great... I had a girlfriend that broke up with me – I had come to the realization that I was pursuing an academic degree in something that I wasn't passionate about – and to top it all off I was working at a part-time job that I absolutely hated (in fact, I still have nightmares about it today)...

To keep a long story short I decided that I had to do two things – take some time off from school to discern what it was that I was supposed to do with my life – and two: I needed to get another job...

And so, I thought that the best way to handle it would be to finish the semester and then take action... but it didn't work out that way... I went to work that morning and someone said something to me that just set me off (and in a moment of absolute anger I told the boss where he could put his job and I quit)... and I remember (as I was leaving the building that day) having this 'outer body' type experience... I couldn't believe what I had just done... it was like I was in shock...

Well, the next day when I woke up I realized that I was sort of in trouble (in that, I had just thrown away a job that was paying my rent – and although temporary – it was a job that I needed)... in fact, I didn't have a back-up plan... and so I started to worry...

But I can remember serving as an usher that Sunday... and the head usher (whose name was Charlie) could tell that something was on my mind (and so I told him what was going on)... and he asked me a simple question... he said, "Do you think that God wanted you to stay at that job and pursue that degree?"...

And I said, "No!"... in fact, I almost felt that I was at the wrong place in my life...

And I've always tried to remember Charlie's advice... he said, "then turn your worries into your prayers"... in other words, every time you're about to worry (use it as a chance to pray)... and if you feel scared (then pray – *1 Thess. 5:16 reminds us to, 'pray without ceasing'*)... and keep talking to God and listening for His voice... and He will lead you to where you need to go...

And then do what?... trust that God will give you all that you need when you get there?... in fact, there's no better time to learn how to trust God than when you're scared...

And let me tell you something – I know that I am not a perfect being – but those words changed my life (and because I took his advice – No, I didn't get my job back) but I did find the place that I am supposed to be in life)... and I can tell you one thing – all the worrying in the world would not have brought me to this place where I feel most at peace (but God did)... and God will do the same thing for you (and not because He has to – but because He loves you) and He loves me...

And so the next time worry wants to control your mind – pray the words we find in Romans 8:31, “If God is for us - who then can be against us”...

Don't leave God's house this morning as a worrier, leave here this morning as a warrior of prayer and faith – and know – as only you can do – that He is with you every step of the way...

May God order your steps, May He bless your endeavors, and may your lips never stop praising the Lord...

In Jesus' name we pray...

**Amen!**