

## **FROM MINDLESS WORRY TO MINDFUL TRUST**

**Matthew 6:24-34**

**Preached by Dr. Cahill**

**Babcock Presbyterian Church**

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In his first inaugural address, Franklin Roosevelt declared, "... the only thing we have to fear is fear itself." The day he took the oath of office, millions of people were unemployed, businesses were bankrupted, mortgages, rents and food bills went unpaid. With the nation in crisis it was the new president's job to restore confidence.

"The only thing we have to fear is fear itself." It's true, isn't it? No matter what you're going through, no matter how bad it gets, if you can short circuit your fear factor, you can bear down and get through anything.

For the sake of personal integrity I need to make a disclaimer: I worry. I don't worry about everything, but I do worry excessively about some things. So this morning especially, I'm preaching to myself hoping you'll overhear something that will help you cut your worries down to size. Then you can be freed up to pay more attention to those things that really matter, especially your relationships with God and your neighbor and yourself.

Let's start with Jesus' own words. "...do not be worried about the food and drink you need in order to stay alive or about clothes for your body. After all, isn't life worth more than food? And isn't the body worth more than clothes?"

Keep in mind Jesus' audience wasn't made up of upwardly mobile middle class Americans. These were people living hand to mouth, with no safety net. There was no unemployment insurance or guaranteed medical care. Taxes were high and the average day's pay barely put food on the table. Life was hard.

And yet Jesus' words struck a chord because he was one of them. If a Pharisee wearing expensive robes came along preaching mindless "Don't worry, be happy" platitudes probably the people wouldn't have listened. It's easy for you to say "don't worry" to someone else when you have nothing to worry about. But since people sensed Jesus was real and practiced what he preached, they trusted him.

And notice, this is important, Jesus wasn't promoting a prosperity gospel, that is, manipulating your faith in God to get whatever you want. Instead Jesus preached God would provide whatever you need.

"Look at the birds of the air, they don't plant seeds and gather a harvest and put it in barns, yet your Father in heaven takes care of them. Aren't you worth much more than birds? Can any of you live longer by worrying about it?"

Jesus is teaching us this simple, profound truth: God created a world in which every living thing gets exactly what it needs. Think about that for a minute. Encoded in the creation's DNA is the ability to sustain itself; the land, sea and air were created to be in balance, allowing plants, people and animals to live in harmony with nature. That was God's original intention. That's why Jesus could say, "Look at the birds flying around. Obviously God takes care of them so don't you think God is just as capable of taking care of you?"

Since Christians are supposed to take Jesus' teachings seriously what are we left to do but not worry? Easier said than done, despite Jesus' brilliant insight God created

the world to sustain itself, because sometimes that perfect balance is knocked off kilter forcing plants, people and animals to be in disharmony with nature in spite of God's good intentions. Truth is, droughts cause famines and earthquakes destroy lives. So what's a Christian to do when these things happen? How can you not worry?

When the TV news is filled with images of earthquakes and hurricanes leaving survivors without food, clothing and shelter, most of the things we worry about somehow seem inconsequential. Even though we may experience serious relationship, financial and health worries, at least we have the bare necessities, food, clothing and shelter. I'm not saying our personal problems aren't real and painful, but I am suggesting maybe we owe it to those who are worse off to get our worries under God's control so we can redirect our energies towards loving and serving those who lack the bare necessities of life.

So where do we begin? With this: What did Jesus say? "O you of little faith do not worry, where will my food come from or my drink or my clothes? These are things non believers worry about."

If anyone else said this, we'd say, "Yea right." But this is God speaking through Jesus. God himself is lovingly reassuring us.

"O you of little faith." Do you realize that's a term of endearment Jesus reserved only for his disciples? He never called Pilate or Herod "you of little faith," because they refused to believe. Only those who struggled with their faith, doing the best they could with what little they had were given that title. Listen again to Jesus. "O you of little faith, you who do your best with what little you have, your Father in heaven knows everything you need. Therefore give your attention to God and his Kingdom. Trust God will provide what he knows you need at any given moment."

If only we could trust like that we'd never worry again. "TrustGod." Trust God will always give you exactly what you need, nothing more, nothing less. You may not get what you want, you may never get what you want, but you will always receive whatever you need, so don't worry about it.

What's hard here is learning to be satisfied when your most basic needs are met.

In his letter to the Corinthians the Apostle Paul revealed he had to come to terms with the realization God wasn't going to give him what he wanted.

For a long time Paul suffered an unnamed ailment. He called it his "thorn in the flesh." Obviously it worried him because he constantly prayed about it. "Lord, I want you to remove this thorn in my flesh." What was it, a chronic physical ailment, maybe an emotional or spiritual problem? He doesn't say, which is really helpful, because maybe Paul's worry is your's or mine and so we can really identify with Paul's endless prayers for relief. But Paul, like us sometimes, didn't get what he wanted. The answer God gave him? "Paul, my grace is sufficient."

"My grace is sufficient." What does that mean? "My grace is sufficient" means God will give you whatever you need to live faithfully and gracefully in any situation. Maybe God won't lift the burden from your shoulder but he will make your shoulder strong enough to bear any burden.

Well why doesn't God just cut to the chase, take our burdens away and make life more bearable? Unfortunately, no answer to that question will ever completely satisfy because "God's ways are not our ways." But maybe this will help: maybe God doesn't remove your source of worries because he wants you to learn how to trust him. God's

answer, “My grace is sufficient,” instructed Paul to dig even deeper into his soul to find Christ hidden in that thorn in his flesh. God wanted Paul to learn how to live one day at a time trusting he would receive his daily bread every day, just in time. And then this: have you ever noticed your trust in God deepens and your gratitude for the things of the Kingdom grows when you persevere to the end and you learn to accept the things you can’t change. That’s when you begin to realize your worries and fears are falling by the wayside and being replaced with the newly learned ability to trust God with your life.

Listen again with new ears to Jesus teaching: Look to the birds in the air and the lilies of the fields, how they live and grow completely oblivious to God’s care of creation. And then look to your advantage, because unlike birds and flowers, you know God through his Son Jesus. You know God knows your every need and you also know you have the ability to trust that God will provide, if you let him.

And that’s the key to unlearning how to worry: by learning how to trust in God. And don’t worry. God will show you how, through the scriptures, through a deepening prayer life, through your Christian friends and through the passing of time.

Do you really want to stop worrying and start trusting? Then take Jesus very seriously. Put getting to know him better on the top of your to do list. Make the time and the effort to grow your faith, and the time will come, sooner than later, that you will no longer be a prisoner of your fears, instead you will be free to enjoy all of God’s graces and mercies and free to redirect your new-found energy into what really matters, being a faithful disciple, determined to love and serve your neighbor in the name of Jesus Christ.