

Don't Waste a Good Worry!

Day of Encouragement for Pastors and Wives

St. John's Wheaton, Friday 23 September, 2016

1. Our Worried World

- We all worry, some more than others.
- We all know how worry and anxiety can destroy our happiness and cripple us mentally.
- We live in a worried world.
 - Many people are plagued by chronic anxiety.
 - Downward spiral that takes over our minds: concern → worry that something bad may happen → general anxiety about whole life as a disaster → obsessive fear of certain disaster
 - Ours: an age of anxiety.
 - Extreme condition: Generalized Anxiety Disorder (3% of population)
 - Strange paradox: more we have, the more we worry.
- As Christians you all know how Satan uses worry to throttle your faith
 - Remember the parable of the sower and the seed that fell among thorns
 - It was choked by the worries of this world and the deceitfulness of riches (Matt 13:22).
- Jesus offers unexpected help to us worriers.
 - He doesn't tell us not to worry but to worry in the right way
 - Like fear or guilt, worry is not in itself a bad thing.
 - How you deal with it determines whether it is good or bad.
 - It is bad if it is misplaced and misdirected
 - So Jesus wants help us to make good use of our worries.
 - If we waste them they will lay waste of us, physically, mentally and spiritually.
 - Note Luther's distinction between worry for yourself and worry for others as well as between private worry and official, vocational worry (AE 21: 193ff)
 - If we use them properly they will bring great blessings to others and us.

2. The Teaching of Jesus on how to Deal with our Worries in Matt 6:19-34

- His teaching on the three reasons for misplaced worry in 6:19-24
 - Our insecure, possessive heart: 6:19-21
 - ❖ The urge to accumulate and secure treasure on earth: future security

- ❖ Loss of possessions from decay and theft
- ❖ Safe investment with God in heaven
- ❖ Location of the heart: earth or heaven
- ❖ Our worries show us what we treasure most.
- Our greedy eyes: 6:22-23
 - ❖ Our eyes show what is inside us by what we look for most in life, where and how
 - ❖ Healthy eye = generous, appreciative eye that seeks to give and is open to the light
 - ❖ Bad eye = greedy, envious eye that takes what it wants and shuts out the light: full of the darkness of fear and worry and unbelief
- Our divided loyalty: 6:24
 - ❖ Penalty of possessive greed: slave to two masters
 - ❖ Impossible task
 - ❖ Result: worry and anxiety
- His teaching on the right use of worry in 6:25-34
 - Misplaced worry about the wrong things
 - ❖ Basis: food, drink, clothing and health as the foundation for your life, the things that give you life
 - ❖ Your soul, your life as a person: more than food
 - ❖ Your body: more than clothes
 - ❖ Length of life: out of your control
 - Misplaced worry as mark of a pagan society
 - ❖ **The Gentiles seek these things**
 - ❖ Desire for self-preservation and self-fulfillment: eternal life on earth
 - ❖ Fear of trouble and disaster
 - ❖ Happiness from consumption and enjoyment of possessions
 - ❖ Security from money and possessions as solution to worry
 - ❖ Money and possessions as secret idols
 - Reliance on God's provision who promises to give us our daily bread rather than worry about how to secure our livelihood
 - ❖ Call to meditate on the wild birds and flowers: spiritual cognitive therapy to break the cycle of worry and see things from God's point of view
 - ❖ Example of God's care for the birds and the flowers
 - ❖ God as our heavenly Father who keeps us alive, cares for us and knows what we need to live
 - ❖ We as his children who are of more value than the birds
 - Seeking God's kingdom and his righteousness

- ❖ Our membership in God's royal family with God as our Father who shares his kingship with us (Luke 12:32)
- ❖ Using our worries to seek our heavenly Father and everything from him rather than ourselves or others or earthly possessions
- ❖ Seeking a right relationship with him and his agenda for us
- ❖ Result of right relationship: **all these things will be added to you**
- The practice of daily worry about daily troubles
 - ❖ Misplaced worry about future trouble
 - ❖ Tomorrow's worry for tomorrow
 - ❖ Right worry about daily trouble

3. How to Worry Well!

- Phil 4:5^b-7
 - The promise of Jesus' presence with us to give us access to himself
 - Call to turn anxieties into prayers
 - Worries as his stimulus for us to make our requests known to God with three kinds of prayer
 - ❖ Prayer for ourselves and others
 - ❖ Petitions for what is needed by us and others
 - ❖ Thanksgiving for God's gifts that opens us eyes to see his care for us as an antidote for anxiety
 - Result: peace that protects our hearts and minds from spiritual attack
- 1 Pet 5:7-9
 - Foundation: the Father's care for us, his worry and concern for us and everybody
 - Instruction to cast our anxieties on God in prayer
 - God's use of our worries to teach us to pray
 - See Ps 55:22: **Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall.**
 - Vigilance to prevent the devil from using our worries to destroy our faith
 - Resistance by our use of faith in prayer

4. Conclusion

- Political axiom: Never waste a good crisis!
- Christ's axiom: Don't waste a good worry!