

Text: Matthew 6:25-34

Title: "What Are You Worried About?"

Introduction: This past fall I felt led by God to challenge the churches of Boscobel and Mt. Zion to work toward and increase in our attendance at worship and in our discipleship. I believe that God led me to dream that Boscobel & Mt. Zion could have over 500 in worship in the next five years. 500! Between the two churches, on any given weekend, we would have over 500 people worshipping with us.

Do you have any idea what that is going to look like? YEAH, ME NEITHER!

Now, let me make something clear before we go on. Talking about 500 people in worship is not about the numbers. It's not about making you and I look good or feel good. It's not about people from other churches saying, "Wow! How did you do that?"

Having over 500 people in worship in the next five years is about reminding us that we have a job to do! Jesus said, "Go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you." (Matt. 28:19-20a)

If Jesus is Lord and these are His marching orders to us, we'd better do something about it. If we as individuals and as parts of these churches ever want to hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant" from Jesus, we'd better get to work. It's not about getting 500 people here, it's about reminding us that we are Christ's servants and we have an assignment.

BUT, here is the problem ... soon after I wrote that down last fall in our newsletter ... and soon after I said that out loud the first time; guess what?!? My brain started racing to "how on earth we are going to accomplish that?" "What if God does not bless us and we still have 200 in worship in 2012? What if we don't figure out how to structure the churches for that kind of growth? Who are we going to hire as part of the staff to help us get there? We have to build a new facility in Boscobel to accommodate that kind of growth in worship and Sunday school (discipleship) ... How will we possibly afford that? What about this detail and that detail?!?

I started to WORRY! Then, my Dad's words rang back in my head: "Stan, don't worry until I do." Dad used to say that all the time to people ... "Don't worry until I do." That was frustrating, because we knew that Dad was not going to worry!

Now, briefly, let me talk about the 500 ... then we are going to go Giant hunting! Did you know that the Methodist Churches in North America as a whole is not very good at inviting people to church? Actually, we are one of the worst at inviting ... of all the people invited to worship on any given Sunday, only 4% are invited by the Methodist Movement.

It is good to know that we are not last ... the Episcopal Church only invites 2% of those invited. Here's the problem: The Methodist Church has 18 million members ... the Episcopal Church has only 2 million and they are still inviting half as many as we are!
Conclusion: We are not doing our Job that was assigned by Jesus Christ!

All right, how many of you are worried about something this morning? Most people worry about at least one thing each day, but our Bibles tell us that we are not supposed to do it at all! What!?! Don't worry?!? What will I do with my time?!?

I invite you to take the insert out of your program. On one side you will find our Scripture for today. On the other side you will see that there is an outline of where we are going today, complete with fill in the blanks and some room to write extra notes. My hope is that today you will hear something about Worry that will help you or someone you know with the battle against this Giant.

Let's go ahead and read our Scripture right away. This is Jesus speaking and where we pick up in Chapter 6 of Matthew is right in the middle of the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus is teaching these things to thousands of people who have crowded around Him. Starting with verse 25...

READ MATTHEW 6:25-34 NOW AND PRAY!

Before we go any further, let me explain a couple of things about the Giant of Worry ... When Jesus teaches us not to worry, let me tell you what "Don't Worry" doesn't mean:

1. It doesn't mean "**Don't Plan**" = 6:34 says, "So don't worry about tomorrow..." That sounds like, "make no plans for tomorrow", but that's not what it says. Jesus planned for the future and our Bibles encourage us to do so. So, "Don't worry about tomorrow" is not the same as "Don't plan for tomorrow."
2. It also doesn't mean "**Don't Ever Be Concerned**". We are not to float through this life without a care in the world. We have plenty of things that God puts in front of us that we need to take time with and use these brains that God gave us to approach them. Don't worry does not mean, "quit thinking."

Now, grab your sling and your stones and let's get after this Giant of Worry. To get started, we are going to divide today's Bible verses up. First, we are going to use verses 25-32 to find out why worry is a waste of time!

I. Facing the Giant of Worry

A. Worry is Not Consistent (v.25)

1. Jesus says, 'Don't worry about everyday life ... food, drink and clothes. Life is worth way more than that stuff to God.'
2. Let me ask you a couple of questions:
 - a. Who gave you that body that you live in?
 - b. Who created that body that you live in?
 - c. Who created that body to need food and clothes?
 - d. Doesn't that seem like God went to a lot of trouble in the big things (creating us) to let us die over the little things?

3. Worry is inconsistent with knowing God. If we know God, we know that God can take care of the little things!
4. There is way too much evidence that God loves us and cares for us to think that God would leave us hanging. That would be INCONSISTENT!

B. Worry is Not Rational (v.26)

1. From verse 25 we realize that God CAN take care of us. Now the question is: WILL God take care of us?
2. Jesus answers this one by talking about birds / sparrows.
 - a. The writer says that Humans are worth much more than Sparrows ... WE are created in God's image!
 - b. Genesis tells us that we have charge over the birds and animals and fish, right?!?
 - c. So, who is God more likely to care for?
3. What is a Sparrow worth?
 - a. In Matthew 10, we are told that for a copper coin, you can buy two sparrows.
 - b. 16 copper coins make up a denarius; or, one day's wage.
 - c. In Luke 12 it says that 5 sparrows can be bought for 2 copper coins.
 - d. In other words sparrows are 2 for a copper coin or 5 for 2! It's the bargain bird!
4. The argument is: If God takes care of the sparrows and they don't have to worry ... are WE not much more valuable to God?!?
5. It's not Rational to worry when we believe in God!

C. Worry is Not Effective (v.27)

1. Let's keep this one simple: Worry is totally ineffective when it comes to changing circumstances!
2. Worry will not add a single moment to your life (again back to the ultimate FEAR: DEATH).
 - a. Actually, we know that worry and anxiety affect us in a negative way ... ulcers, high blood pressure that lead to heart disease and heart attacks, etc.
 - b. I should actually say that Worry IS Effective ... at shortening our lives!
 - c. Bible = God created us and gave us an owner's manual! If we follow it, we could save ourselves some troubles.
3. Worry is not Effective ... it's never done anything good ... it's a waste of your time!

D. Worry is Not Logical (vs.28-30)

1. As if the sparrows (5 for 2) were not enough, now Jesus drives his point home about worry by using the lilies of the field!
2. We are so much more important to God than lilies. Lilies were created by God for our pleasure; and God made them beautiful and takes care of them.
3. Why would we have to worry about our clothing if we are the ones who BEAR GOD'S IMAGE?
4. I know this sounds like a repeat, but I figure Jesus understood that our worries would sound like a repeat too!
5. One more way for Jesus to say: STOP IT! IT'S NOT LOGICAL (Spock)!!

E. Worry is Not Religious (vs.31-32)

1. Remember who Jesus is talking to: Jewish followers of God.
2. Now, they were not, for the most part, snots about it; but, they knew they were the Children of God (remember the Promised Land, etc.).
 - a. Why would people who knew they were chosen by God have the same worries as the "pagans" (people who did not know God)?!?
 - b. Jesus is saying to this crowd at the Sermon on the Mount, "Stop acting like you have NO God!"
 - c. Do you have a faith or don't you?!?
 - d. If you do, you won't worry!
3. Jesus is reminding them that they are people who have a religion / Someone to believe in.

II. Fighting the Giant of Worry

A. In Order to Fight Worry, We Need a System of Priorities (v.33)

1. The worry that destroys people is the worry of a divided heart. That person cannot decide what he/she BELIEVE, so, they cannot decide how they are going to LIVE!
2. A person who does not know what they believe will constantly be pulled toward what "MIGHT" happen!
3. Jesus said that we are to stand for ONE THING: The Kingdom of God and all that it stands for!
 - a. Seek first the Kingdom of heaven and all these things will be added unto you.
 - b. If God is first in your life, everything else will fall into place according to what God wants to happen in your lives!!!

4. At some point in our battle against the Giant of Worry, we have to ask ourselves, “What is the most important thing to me??” If you decide it’s God, then you can start preparing a strategy to take out this Giant one piece at a time!

B. In Order to Fight Worry, We Need a Strategic Program (v.34)

1. I had to use this today, ya’ll. For the past 16 years I have enjoyed watching Brett Favre lead the Pack. One of the best things about Brett as a quarterback was his focus. He was always in the moment...
 - a. If he threw an interception, chances are he would come back strong on the next series.
 - b. If he threw a touchdown, he came back trying to throw another one.
 - c. In other words, he had a short memory.
2. My coach in college taught us that we couldn’t do anything about the last play and we couldn’t do anything about the next play; we could only do something about the play that was happening. Play in the moment!
3. The KEY TRUTH to fighting the Giant of Worry = Focus on Today!
4. Don’t worry about tomorrow; you will become overwhelmed.
 - a. Mark Twain once said, “I’m an old man and I’ve known a great many troubles, but most of them never happened.”
 - b. We can drive ourselves nuts imagining what could happen tomorrow!
 - c. Two problems:
 - 1) We’re not sure if it’s even going to happen and
 - 2) We can’t do anything about it anyway!
5. Don’t worry about the past; there is nothing you can do about that either.
6. So many people get stuck dwelling on the PAST: 3 things...
 - a. Focus on PAST SINS: We want God to forgive us, but we cannot forgive ourselves.
 - 1) We take things to God and then before we leave the Throne, we pick our stuff back up!
 - 2) We forget that Jesus offers to separate us from our sins as far as the east is from the west! Let Him!
 - b. Focus on PAST SUCCESS: When we turn to God, we can’t let our previous success go.
 - 1) Rich Young Ruler = wanted to follow God, but thought he had too much to lose.

- 2) It's different, but we keep our concerns and worries tied to the past.
- c. Focus on PAST SORROWS: This is the hardest ... past tragedies and heartaches stick with us.
 - 1) How do we forget the past sorrows when our hearts are tied to them?
 - 2) BUT, we have to learn to live in the immediate presence of Almighty God who knew a greater sorrow than any of us: His Perfect Son!
 - 3) I'm not asking you to deny how you feel about a past tragedy; just don't let it rule TODAY!
- C. God is, according to Exodus, the great "I Am". God is not the great "I Was" or "I Will Be".
- D. Here is our Strategic Plan: The only way to overcome the Giant of Worry is to stay focused on God First ... Today! Got it!?!?

Next Week: Do you think we can handle the next Giant? I DOUBT IT! Don't miss Palm Sunday...

Let's Pray!