

Why Worry?

If you take the overnight ferry from Harwich to the Hook of Holland the good people of Stena Line ferries will help you wake up in the morning by playing a song over the cabin PA – this is what you will hear.

(Bobby McFerrin singing “Don’t worry, be happy”).

Don’t worry. Be happy.

He makes it sound as if it’s a simple choice between one or the other. How shall I approach life today? Shall I worry or be happy?

Thankfully Jesus is offering something a little more substantial when he is saying “Don’t worry”.

All of us have the capacity to worry and worrying is not a sin – it does though tie up a large amount of emotional energy.

Worry is the little brother of Anxiety. If worry was a mini – Anxiety is a 4-wheel drive truck. Much bigger.

Anxiety can consume a great deal of energy and restrict our lives in numerous ways. It’s not a sin to be anxious but it does begin to raise the question WHY are we anxious when we have a loving heavenly father?

If worry is a mini and anxiety a four-wheel drive truck, both of them are aspects of the juggernaut, Fear. Fear is at the root of anxiety and worry.

Deep down we are afraid. Afraid for ourselves and afraid for those we care about. This fear can be all consuming. But it doesn’t seem to bother everyone.

I’ve been watching the latest series of Top Gear (BBC2 Sunday Evening). Freddie Flintoff appears to have no fear.

They realised that the fastest way for a car to accelerate would be to drop it off the top of a dam. With a bungy cord attached. With Freddie Flintoff inside. This is what happened.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GDyk-FgtKz0>

Let’s step back from why some people experience worry, anxiety and fear more than others and return to the scripture.

As with Dolapo’s sermon last week, we are hearing part of the sermon on the mount. Jesus is teaching a completely radical and new way to live. The context for Jesus comments about not worrying follow his instructions about what it is you focus upon.

19 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; 20 but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven,

Jesus then makes the point that you cannot serve both God and wealth. (In the KJ bible – Mammon!) Here there is definitely a choice. Where does my heart lie?

What is it I am passionate about? What matters to me most? On what will I devote my energy? There is no implied criticism of people who work – after all we have to provide for ourselves and our families and have capacity to help those less fortunate.

There’s no criticism implied of those who love their work – I love my work!! Ecclesiastes chapter 2

24 There is nothing better for mortals than to eat and drink, and find enjoyment in their toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God; 25 for apart from him who can eat or who can have enjoyment?

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I have the greatest sympathy for anyone who HAS to work to provide for the family but hates their job, that is misery indeed.

What Jesus is getting at here are those who have never been told of...or experienced...or know of a loving heavenly father. The Gentiles; that is everyone not a Jew therefore by implication who don't know of Yahweh, their highest goal is to have the things of this life and that is what they are consumed by. What to eat, what to drink, what to wear, in other words all the basic necessities.

It can go beyond basic necessities and these things become the treasures we worship, clothes, food, houses, cars and all the rest. We make no room for God.

Jesus says, don't worry. God the Father knows that you need all these things. Trust him. Seek him first. Put His kingdom first.

In a later passage, Jesus is explaining that those who will be welcomed into His kingdom are those who have fed the hungry, given water to the thirsty and clothed the naked.

Just as our heavenly father knows our need, so we are to have his attitude to others. What can we provide, what can we do for those in need?

During Lent we are going to be collecting for the clothing bank. We did this a couple of Christmases back and I'm happy that our turn has come round again to provide underwear and nightware for all ages. The notice and the details will come out in a few days.

SO – Jesus is saying 'Don't Worry' because you have a loving heavenly father who knows what you need and we are to catch the family habit of giving to those in need.

But being told not to worry isn't that easy for some of us.

Jesus has his disciples and a huge crowd around him of all sorts of people. At the risk of irritating those already bored with our recent studies, there will have been every number from the enneagram in the crowd.

Enneagram proposes that our personality forms to protect us, help us survive and thrive in the world. Informed by nature and nurture we inhabit one of 9 spaces. We can all have aspects of the nine personality types but at our core we are one of these nine. All of these people will have been listening to Jesus who has just said, don't worry.

1. The perfectionist. Jesus said it's wrong to worry therefore we should not worry.
2. The helper. I worry that I haven't helped people enough today!
3. The achiever. I worry less than anyone else – I'm not a worrier, worrying is for failures and wimps.
4. The romantic. No one understands me and my worries. Jesus wouldn't say that if he knew what my life was like.
5. The observer. Look at these people who are worrying. I'm going to do a study on why people worry.
6. The questioner (worrier). Jesus said tomorrow will bring worries of its own. WHATS GOING TO HAPPEN TOMORROW??????
7. The adventurer. I have no idea what you are talking about. Worry?? I know this great song – it's called Happy.

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8. The boss. If people don't do what I say, they will have something to worry about. I don't worry about being wrong that's for sure!

9. The peacemaker. Settle down everyone, let's all just get along...nothing to worry about, all will be fine.

Each will respond to Jesus words in different ways. Those of us who are number 6's will have the most difficulty with this scripture.

It's all very well SAYING don't worry, but when you have been worrying all your life, in fact when worrying is a part of what you do to thrive and survive how do you stop?

Imagine you are out in the open.
It's really cold.
Ahead of you is a large bonfire.
As you get nearer, you start to feel its warmth.
Nearer still, and the warmth encloses you – you are no longer cold.

The antidote to worry, is God and this is why.
Worry and anxiety are manifestations of fear.
And perfect love casts out fear.
God is love.
The nearer we draw to him – the smaller the things about which we worry become. He is Sovereign over all things, even the creation groaning in its bondage to decay. (Our reading from Romans)

The step all of us need to take is the step of Holy Trust.

I will trust God for all things.
Those I worry about
Those I do not understand

The suffering of this world
The unanswerable questions.
Tomorrow.

I will trust.

Because I have a loving, heavenly father.