

Where do you like to worry?

Maybe you like to worry in the car as you drive to appointments, family commitments, and work?

Laying in bed awake at night, unable to stop the litany of things that are going terribly wrong?

As you wake up in a state of almost-panic with a to-do list scrolling through your head?



We have **a lot** to be concerned with ... getting through the logistics of the day, those we love with health situations, family members who are struggling for one reason or another, the economic hardships people are facing, political divisions; violence, terrorism and war tearing communities apart. I'm going to stop now because I don't need to give you any more ideas about things to worry about.

We all worry – it's part of the human condition.

Today's scripture gives us quite a challenge. Jesus says "do not worry about your life" (v. 22) and "why do you worry about the rest" (v.26) and "do not keep

worrying” (v.29). And includes the zinger “Which of you by worrying, can add a single hour to your span of life?”

Ouch.

Ok, now.

That was a bit harsh, Jesus.

The more I ponder it, the more I believe those who worry are actually in distress, and maybe even on the slow walk to despair. In need of some grace and compassion. In need of an extra paycheck or an extra hour in the day or an extra set of hands to help. In need of some understanding and assurance because their **fear** is completely overwhelming and their brain is exploring the rabbit-trail of the worst-case-scenarios.

Recently, I was incredibly worried about a friend’s health. My mind was spinning 1,000 miles an hour – playing the game of worst-case-scenario roulette. Now, to be fair, Jesus is right – how will this add **anything** to my life? **It won’t** – (well, in this case it did help my sermon) 😊 – but worrying definitely didn’t help anything in the situation. It’s worth noting ... that worry was also not a conscious act or choice. I didn’t hear difficult news and calmly weigh the options available to me and then decide that **worry** was the best next step. It just happened. And what

got me out of that worry – was a caring family member willing to listen and sit with me in the uncertainty.

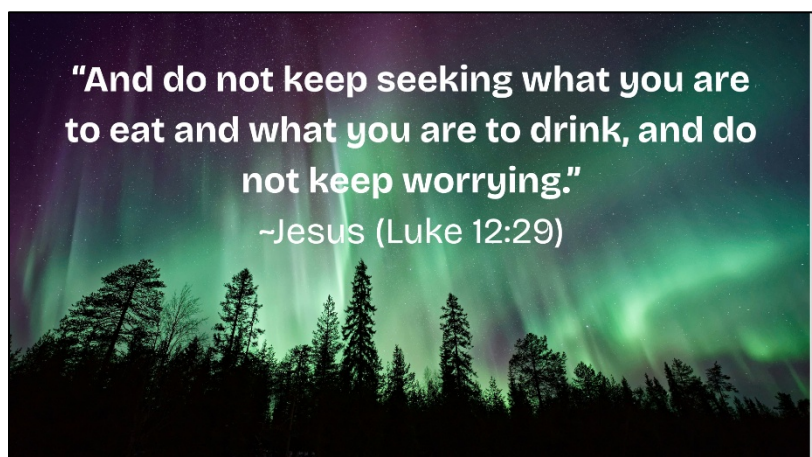
We worry because our fear overwhelms us.

And when we are afraid ... sometimes our instinct to worry just comes out without asking our permission. Many of us then find ourselves in a double-bind. We're upset about whatever is causing us anxiety – **AND** we feel guilty for worrying. Or we feel like we're not good Christians because we are anxious and Jesus told us not to worry.

I ask, "Which of you, by feeling guilty for worrying can add a single hour to your span of life?"

As I wrestled with our scripture – I found myself returning again and again to verse 29 as I looked for some good news from Jesus.

"And do not keep seeking...
and do not keep
worrying."



It's a strange sort of command. It's awkward to read – the tense is unusual – but it is here that I heard God's compassion for us. Jesus knows that we seek our own way and that we worry. **He knows it – it's simply God's assumption. That is how we humans behave.** We strive and we worry.

But here, Christ challenges us to open our eyes and hearts to what God is doing around us – and that God's work among us may **settle** our worry.

You see, fear blinds us from seeing what God is doing in the world. "Look around" Jesus says – look at the ravens, and the lilies and the grass of the field. Sometimes we just need a tiny reminder – the empathy of a loved one, a caring voice to name the goodness of God in the world. A moment to marvel at how a murder of crows calls out and gathers together from every direction. Or to interrupt and remind us to see beauty in a vibrant burning bush or a blooming lily.

Or to see the amazing generosity of the people around us. On Tuesday this week I was overwhelmed by the people showing up to help – Volunteers delivering donated snacks to the school, folks showing up to help put together a church mailing, people providing rides to Bible Study, someone baking treats to share ... all within like a 4-hour window. It was incredible to have eyes open to the power of kindness and generosity right here at Faith Lutheran. You are witnesses to the power of God – through your generosity, kindness, thoughtfulness, and care! My day was overwhelmed by the witness of love given beyond the offering plate ... it seemed everywhere I turned I was seeing and hearing and receiving grace-gifts.

When we are **most afraid**, what we most need is eyes open to God at work around us. In the natural world, as Jesus pointed out – AND in the hands, and hearts, and faces of our neighbors embodying the Kingdom of God through their love. It is so humbling and so compelling to witness this kind of richness in community.

Sometimes we take our blindfolds off and are astounded by the ways that God shows up in the world. And other times – that relentless love knocks our blindfolds off **all by itself**. In these moments – the whole world is filled with God's glory – and it is **relieving** good news to seek God's kingdom and let our inner worrier take a rest.

So may you, dear ones – see God's grace in fields and forests, birds and bushes, faces, hands, voices, kindness. And may that love give rest to not keep worrying, but have your fears and overwhelm melted by God's goodness and love. **Amen.**