

Follow Jesus – Freedom from Financial Anxiety!

3/11/18 - Pastor Randy

OPEN: Youtube video of dots singing, "Don't Worry, Be Happy"

"Don't worry, be happy!" Isn't that just the most encouraging advice you have ever received? I don't mean to insult Bobby McFerrin, but he must have missed his psychology class on empathy. Think about the lyrics: You have no place to sleep, but don't worry, be happy. Your landlord is about to evict you, but "Don't worry, be happy".

If you are at all like me, I know what you are thinking: The last thing I need is a bunch of dots telling me, "Don't worry, be happy!" What do dots know about worry. I mean how much stress is there in the life of a dot? It is not like there is any pressure on them to perform. They don't need to know anything. If I was a dot I wouldn't worry. Nobody would be placing any expectations on me; no responsibilities. If you are a dot of course you don't worry.

Honestly, we probably all get a little annoyed when anyone tells us not to worry. Nobody worries because they like to! "Don't worry, be happy" sounds great, but it isn't quite that simple. Worry as a mental habit is hard to break.

But while I don't like being told not to worry, that's exactly what Jesus comes along and tells me! However, Jesus teaching on worry and anxiety are a little more profound and practical than the message, "Don't worry, be happy!"

Today as we continue our series on Jesus' sermon on the mount we are going to learn "Jesus Path to Freedom from Financial Anxiety" – Matt. 6:19-34

Don't store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be. ²² "Your eye is like a lamp that provides light for your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is filled with light. ²³ But when your eye is unhealthy, your whole body is filled with darkness. And if the light you think you have is actually darkness, how deep that darkness is! ²⁴ "No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and be enslaved to money.

Follow Jesus – Freedom from Financial Anxiety!

3/11/18 - Pastor Randy

Jesus gives us a “don’t”, a “do”, and then he tells us why.

DON’T... store up treasures on earth. Notice that Jesus didn’t say “Don’t treasure the stuff of this earth” (i.e. material possessions), He said “Don’t store them up”, meaning, don’t work to accumulate material possessions for yourself. This is an important point to note because we could easily dismiss our consumerism and materialism by saying, “Well, I don’t really treasure all this stuff I have. Of course I love God and people more than money.” Jesus doesn’t let us off the hook so easy. The truth is, the “storing up of earthly treasures” is evidence of a distorted value system and a love of stuff....unless you are storing them up for someone else, of course.

Well Pastor Randy, how much stuff is too much stuff? What constitutes greed? How do you define someone who is materialistic? Those are good questions and neither Jesus, nor the NT authors give us specific answers to how much is too much. There is no rulebook for how much money you can spend on a house or on a car or on jewelry. I actually recommend that a man who wants to get engaged not go too cheap on the ring he purchases...if he really wants a “yes”! But while Jesus didn’t tell his disciples what they could and couldn’t buy he did provide them with some guidelines that would inform and motivate their stewardship of their material resources.

DO...store your treasures in heaven. Treasures in heaven are things which God considers to be treasures. The things that God values. Value the stuff that God says is most valuable. These would be: People. All people, but the specific people you need to invest in primarily are your spouse, your children, your parents, siblings, and then your brothers and sisters in Christ and your neighbors. Investing in the spreading of the gospel by giving to missions, investing in causes that promote justice and lift up the poor, are some practical ways we demonstrate we value people. Some other things God considers valuable: Education and the arts. Proverbs teaches us that wisdom is more valuable than gold or silver. Because glorifying God is of highest value, music and other creative arts are valuable in as much as they are used to magnify the beauty of our God and His creation. Less valuable than people but more so than most material possessions is God’s creation.

HERE IS WHY.

1. Earthly treasures are temporary. They don't last. How many of you remember the excitement you felt over some item you purchased or which was purchased for you? That new car.; new home; new computer; new furniture; new clothes or accessories. New tools. How much of that stuff is already broken or in the trash? It doesn't last...and neither does the excitement that it brings. If you've lived long enough, you have experienced that everything that is new and exciting becomes old and uninteresting. Remember when the iphone first came out? That valuable device has lost most of its value in just a few years.

2. Earthly treasures distort our perspective. This is what Jesus was talking about when he said that, *"when your eye is unhealthy, your whole body is filled with darkness"*. The eye represented your perspective. The words translated healthy and unhealthy were also used figuratively to describe generosity or stinginess. If you have an unhealthy eye; a perspective on material resources that causes you to overvalue them, stingily hoarding them for yourself, then your life becomes corrupt and full of darkness. I believe these words of Jesus are pointing to the deceitfulness of riches. They seduce us into thinking that we need them, stealing away our time, energy, and attention on what really matters. We start out consuming possessions, and all of a sudden we discover those possessions have consumed us.

3. Earthly treasures are poor substitutes for God. Jesus said you can't serve God and money. You can't have two gods anymore than you can have two wives or two husbands. There are three basic ways in which material wealth becomes a substitute for God:

A. It becomes our source of security. We end up putting our trust in it. It is simply hard not to possess a degree of wealth without putting your trust in it. Paul wrote to Timothy to tell the wealthy members of His church to beware of two pitfalls that are associated with wealth: Arrogance – which we will get to in a second - and the tendency to trust in our wealth instead of in God for our security. No matter how much evidence we have reminding us that wealth is uncertain, we still easily become deceived into believing that if we are careful enough we can guarantee it will always be there for us.

Follow Jesus – Freedom from Financial Anxiety!

3/11/18 - Pastor Randy

B. It becomes our source of status. As I just mentioned, Paul told Timothy to warn his wealthy members, not just to beware of trusting in their riches, but to beware of the tendency to develop an inflated view of ourselves. Our wealth becomes our God when we allow it, rather than God, to determine our value. We stop looking to God for our sense of significance and begin to find it upon our financial position. Perhaps you have heard the term conspicuous consumption. It refers to the purchasing and acquiring of luxuries in an attempt to enhance one's social status. It's not always, or even often, about the thing being purchased. It is frequently about the attention that the owner will gain for himself because of the possession.

C. It becomes our source of satisfaction. Money is a means to acquiring pleasure. Wealth calls us to seek satisfaction in the pleasures that money can acquire, causing us to drift away from the greatest pleasure – communion with God. The Psalmist tells us:

"In God's presence is fullness of joy. At his hand are pleasures evermore."

I have good news for you today. God is not a killjoy. He is not anti-pleasure. He just wants you to know the greatest of all pleasure, the experience of His glory in His presence. He doesn't want you just know the happiness that results from laughter and fun times. He wants you to know the deepest, most abiding joy that comes from the experience of His grace and his love. The joy and pleasure of God's presence are superior to every earthly joy and pleasure in both degree and duration. There is no greater degree of joy than full joy. There is no greater duration of pleasure than forevermore pleasure.

"It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased." - C.S Lewis

In verse 25 Jesus draws a line connecting our perspective and priorities as they relate to material things and the subject of worry.

Follow Jesus – Freedom from Financial Anxiety!

3/11/18 - Pastor Randy

²⁵ “That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn't life more than food, and your body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds. They don't plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren't you far more valuable to him than they are? ²⁷ Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?

²⁸ “And why worry about your clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don't work or make their clothing, ²⁹ yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. ³⁰ And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith?

³¹ “So don't worry about these things, saying, ‘What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?’ ³² These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. ³³ Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.

Eugene Peterson, in *The Message*, captures the idea by beginning vs 25 with the words, “If you decide for God”. In other words, Jesus is saying that if we determine to serve God rather than riches we have discovered the key to overcoming worry and anxiety.

Jesus was not addressing clinical anxiety which results from actual chemical imbalances that need healing or medical treatment, but the anxiety that is triggered by poor mental habits stemming from a flawed perspective. Neither was Jesus encouraging an irresponsible lack of concern for one's genuine needs. The “worry” or “anxiety” that Jesus calls on His disciples to refrain from is, in the words of Scot Mcknight, an “internal disturbance at the emotional and psychological level that disrupts life”. Jesus doesn't say not to think about your needs. He says don't worry. Worry disrupts our ability to think clearly by clouding our thinking with irrational emotions. Worry hinders decision making. Sometimes it has a debilitating affect, and at other times it provokes people to hasty, irrational decisions.

George Monbiot, In an article entitled, [Materialism: A System That Eats Us From The Inside Out](#) wrote about the link between materialism and anxiety. He wrote,

Follow Jesus – Freedom from Financial Anxiety!

3/11/18 - Pastor Randy

“But an impressive body of psychological research... suggests that materialism, a trait that can afflict both rich and poor, and which the researchers define as “a value system that is preoccupied with possessions and the social image they project”, is both socially destructive and self-destructive. It smashes the happiness and peace of mind of those who succumb to it. It's associated with anxiety, depression and broken relationships.”

I think it was Corrie Ten Boon who said, “Worry never empties tomorrow of its sorrow, it only empties today of its strength.” Worry robs us of our ability to be present in today. And today is wasted.

Jesus, like he did when he called his disciples to abandon the pursuit of earthly treasures, does not just give a prohibition without providing the rationale and the means behind the prohibition.

The rationale for breaking free from worry, just like the rationale for breaking free from materialism, is a renewed perspective.

1. “Look at God’s care for His creation!” God provides food for the birds, and makes the flowers beautiful, He cares for His creation.
2. Listen. If God cares for those aspects of His creation that do not bear the stamp of the divine image upon them, how much more will he care for you who were created in His image and who he calls His children. Jesus says, “How much more will your heavenly Father care for you.”

In verse 30 Jesus pinpoints the problem with worry when he asks, “Why do you have so little faith?” Jesus’s words go directly to the root cause of worry and anxiety: a failure to trust God. The author of Hebrews tells us, “Faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen.” Worry is also the evidence of things not seen, but it is the substance of things hoped against. The substance of things we dread. Worry is a disease of the imagination, full of devil-inspired expectations; death and destruction its anticipation.

Jesus sums up this whole section in Matt: 6:33, saying, **Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.**

Follow Jesus – Freedom from Financial Anxiety!

3/11/18 - Pastor Randy

One of the great axioms of NT Christianity is that all the blessings of God which are innumerable, incomparable, and indescribable, are experienced by those who turn their attention away from the pursuit of those blessings. They come to us only as we forsake the pursuit of them. You can't pursue God in order to get His blessings. It doesn't work that way. They find us while we devote ourselves to the pursuing something else, namely the pursuit of God and His kingdom.

The reason we can make life about God and His kingdom is only because we have a confidence that he is devoted to our care.

Fear not, I am with you!

Fret not...the One who is with you is the One who loves you!

Faint not...the One who is with you is the One who holds you!