

‘No Worries’
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based on Psalm 126 and Matthew 6:25-33

I love Thanksgiving! Thanksgiving is my favorite holiday. Other than to cook a good turkey and maybe a tasty pie, there is no pressure to thanksgiving.

It’s really too bad Thanksgiving is so close to Christmas because it gets hidden behind loudspeakers blasting Christmas music in the stores and TV ads already promoting the best holiday deals.

Thanksgiving deserves its own time and space. Imagine how our world might be different if we put as much emphasis into giving thanks as we do finding good deals at Christmas?

Today we celebrate Thanksgiving in worship. We lift to God our thanks and praise for the abundant mercies God bestows upon the people of God.

Ancient writers of songs and hymns drew parallels between an abundant harvest and God’s abundant blessings. The refrain to many of those songs and hymns was often something like what we saw in today’s Psalm: “³The Lord has done great things for us, and we rejoiced.”

We think of Thanksgiving as a North American holiday, but it seems the ancient Hebrews had their own version of thanksgiving!

Giving thanks is part and parcel to being a child of God. The psalm today is paired with a reading from Matthew...a segment of Jesus’ teachings from the Sermon on the Mount.

Jesus talks about what keeps us from adopting a whole-hearted sense of gratitude for God’s blessings: worry.

Jesus teaches us the necessity of letting God be God and we let go of what burdens and preoccupies our hearts and minds: worry.

This is one of those lessons I have to hold up a mirror and tell myself: “He’s talking about you, Ann.”

I am a worrier. I can worry about anything. You name it, I can turn it into a worry. ...and so today’s scripture reading is a very good reminder for me.

At the heart of Jesus’ message to the thousands of people gathered at the Mount, was to reassure them that God has great love for faithful, therefore don’t worry about your life, what you will eat or drink, or what you will wear...God who cares for the lowly sparrow and each blade of grass cares even more for you.

Here’s the kicker (for me): ²⁷And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?”

The answer is, of course...no.

Bottom line: Give up the worry! God’s got our backs! As a matter of fact: God’s got our fronts and sides...above us and below us. We are surrounded and supported by God.

About the time I feel consumed by worry...whether it be about money, or my children, or what's going on in the world today...I realize I'm not doing my best to let God be in control of my life.

Worry insists that I take hold of the reins that guide me in life. When I am consumed with worry, I simply do not trust God enough to let God take hold of the runaway horse that seems to be stampeding me straight to hell.

Not a great confession coming from a pastor, is it? Today is a good reminder to me, and all of us, is that when we worry we're saying we don't trust God...not with our money; with our children; or with what's going on in the world today.

Jesus' Sermon on the Mount was about helping people turn their lives and their worries over to God. Let go! God will take care of them...and not only that, God will take care of you...and me!

What happens when we let go of the worries that preoccupy a huge amount of space in our hearts and minds is we make room for more important things...like gratitude!

If we think of worry as work of the devil, then we need to think that the opposite would be gratitude for the abundant goodness God has bestowed upon us.

Last month's Christian Century had an article by Martin Copenhaver, where he writes 'gratitude takes practice...and that no one is born thankful'

Copenhaver contends it is important that we cultivate in our children an appreciation of gratitude.

The problem is, the more we have that we want to give thanks for, the more we fret and stew about what to do with all we have.

Indeed, Copenhaver says, "True thanksgiving begins with humility, the humility to recognize that we did not create ourselves, that everything we are and everything we have is a gift."

A gift from God.

Not that all worry is bad!

When my grandson decides to break into dance at the top of the stairs, I get worried he could fall.

When the stock market takes a dive I worry about what that means for millions of retirees...most of all, my mother.

When the news strikes fear in my heart I worry about what world my grandchildren will inherit.

But constant, chronic worry eats away the soul...and the best antidote for worry is gratitude – giving thanks!

God does not want us to be consumed by worry. We know that because Jesus turned an entire sermon into how we are to not only let God be God, but to be thankful for all that God provides.

Thanksgiving is my favorite holiday. Christmas can wait.

When you sit down to your Thanksgiving feast, remember to leave room for gratitude.

Thanks be to God! Amen.