

Thanksgiving – November 28, 2013
Text: Philippians 4:6-20
Theme: “What? Me Worry?”

If I could wave a magic wand and remove one thing that gets in my way of living a happy, joyful life, I would take away worry.

Worry is the chief antagonist for Christians. We worry about people, money, jobs, weather health, life, death, and everything in between.

We worry about things that we could change instead of actively changing them and we worry about things we have no power to change as though worrying about them might make a difference.

However, in order to be rid of worry, I would have to take away sin and we already know that only God can do that and he won't until we're all done here. We cannot get rid of it, but maybe we can decrease worry's power in our lives.

Worry is driven by fear and fear is driven by a sinful lack of faith. If our faith were perfect, we would fear nothing because we have nothing to fear. FDR really had something when he said we have nothing to fear but fear itself, but being a politician, he couldn't run with that idea as far as it went. He had to stop short of theology but the concept of fear is theological by nature. What do we fear? Things that will hurt us. Who wants to hurt us? Satan. Satan is always at the root of all evil. That's right, money is not the root of all evil. Satan is the root of all evil and while he tempts us to love money, he usually does that with fear. What if I lose my house?

What if we don't have enough to eat? What is my kid can't have the newest and bestest at Christmas and he might feel left out when the other kids have newer and better? Fear is Satan's game.

His bottom line question with which he tempts our tiny brains is,

"What if God does not provide for you as he said he would?" He plays the "what if" game with us and tries to get us to doubt God's constant and loving guidance in our lives. God is not a clockmaker. He did not wind up our world and then walk off while the world ticks down. He is a shepherd, constantly leading us to still waters and green pastures and walking with us through this journey to life everlasting.

That is why Paul tells us not to be anxious about anything. He is not giving us a religious placebo. He is not suggesting as the TV preachers do,

"Just have faith and you won't have to endure anything difficult." Dänya and I have a guilty pleasure – we watch *Iyanla: Fix My Life* on the Opera Network. Iyanla is a therapist of sorts, though I don't know her credentials. What I like about her is that she is a no nonsense person. I have a sign in my office that says, "This is not a Bakery. I don't sugar coat anything." Iyanla could well have that in her office as well.

What I don't like is her propensity for making promises that she cannot possibly keep. Just recently, she promised the mother of a meth addict that her son would be saved. How does she know? Bad stuff happens because we live in a sin fallen world. Sometimes we deserve what we get and sometimes it is of no fault of our own but nevertheless, bad stuff happens. What I can promise you is this. No matter what we endure, God is right beside us giving us the strength we need to get through it. Not only that, but he promises to turn it all for good in the end if you love him. That is what I can promise and it is an amazing promise that leaves us with no need for sugar coating. Are we poor miserable sinners? Yes. Do we make a mess of things through our sin? Yes. Does God, love us, care for us and provide for us no matter what? Yes. And that is the reason that we need not worry. As long as you have that relationship with Jesus, you are safe. Alfred E. Neuman posed the question in the 1960's,

"What? Me Worry?" but he posed it out of the blissful ignorance of a fool who wanders through life with no knowledge of the past or hope for the future. We can suggest the same premise but as one who is protected by the almighty cloak of Christ who walks with us through every situation.

10 lepers were healed. One returned to thank him. This is not a lesson in manners. This is a statement of fact. The vast majority of people who have something good happen to them go the Alfred E. Neuman School of Thought and say, "boy that was lucky!" "Whoo! Dodged that bullet!" "Fate was with me." The small minority recognize that bad and evil is what this world always brings. You want a guarantee in life? I guarantee you sickness, want, loss and death. Sorry, you're not at the bakery. I don't sugar coat anything. But that tiny minority of people, the one leper, understands that a relationship with Jesus lifts us up above the sinful fray of the world and we are able to rejoice and be free because we know that if he can cure leprosy by speaking a word, he have nothing to fear from this world or the prince that rules it for now.

We are the tiny minority folks. Here we are, gathered together to thank Jesus for all the blessings he pours out upon us but chief of which is eternal life with him in paradise. We've got it made you and I. We are the 10th leper. And we have been washed clean in the waters of Baptism and now we will be fed with his body and blood and there is nothing...absolutely nothing we fear in this world.