

## *More to Life*

First Congregational Church Branford

Luke 12:22-34; August 18, 2019

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In today's passage from the Gospel of Luke, Jesus had been instructing the crowds and the disciples about religious teachings such as hypocrisy, confession, and greed, when he takes a short break and talks with them about a more spiritual *Do Not Worry* teaching. Let's all take a nice, big breath...

He said to his disciples, 'Therefore I tell you, *do not worry about your life*, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? If then you are not able to do so small a thing as that, why do you worry about the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you—you of little faith! And do not keep striving for what you are to eat and what you are to drink, *and do not keep worrying*. For it is the nations of the world that strive after all these things, and your Father knows that you need them. *Instead, strive for his kingdom*, and these things will be given to you as well.

'Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. *For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

The word of God for the people of God.

Worry has never brought me anything good - no fruit has ever come from my worrying. Being anxious never solved one problem.

I do turn many things over to God, and enjoy the freedom of leaving them in His hands; but, I've stroked a good bit of worries - almost like they're my treasures! I worry about something happening to my child, I worry about something happening to my husband - shootings, car accidents, terminal illness.

Abe recently said to me after seeing the remake of "The Lion King," Hakuna Matata, mom. It means *no worries for the rest of your days....*

Jesus didn't want the disciples or the crowds to spend precious time spinning their wheels – worrying about the end of the world they thought was coming, losing people, worrying about their job, worrying about Rome, or anything else. Have you ever noticed how worry and fear lead to misery and hell for us?!; and ya know what, if *we're* anxious, we make others around us anxious...! We *cause* harm. That's almost worse - doing that to people. SOOOO, if we could all just take a breath...

There is more to life than fear, worry, turmoil, and grief. Maybe we can find out *what* if we let go of these things!

I remember when my mom and her husband turned 80 years old. My mother had always struggled with vanity, growing older, *and worry*, so I was stunned and warmed when she said during one of our visits how happy they were to be 80, that they love being old – it had given them a perspective of what matters, and of being able to look back upon events, past and present, with new eyes. Some of you would be aware of that. In some ways it's like she was a kid again. There were aches and pains to be sure, and great sadness over losing friends, but there was this new joie de vivre she carried. She discovered there is more to life than worrying about dying. In the words of poet Mary Oliver, she began standing still and learning to be astonished... just that... simplicity.

She came to realize that she couldn't change a thing with her worry. When she gave it up, joy entered in and replaced the worry. Oh, to give worry up *before* I'm 80!

And, there's more to life than anger and resentment! This past week a member shared with me that they and a friend read the bible every day together, but their friend has so much anger from the past, which they seem to refuse to let go. I told the member that people can read and read and read the Bible, but unless they become willing to be transformed by the word on the page (to be born again if you will), nothing will change - but, they'll think they're a good and righteous person because they read the bible! It seems to me that we read the bible with the intention of altering us in some way. How can we read the bible in one hand, and keep anger on our shoulder and not be willing to have it melt, to change us? It doesn't help to come to church every Sunday if we sit and keep our mind and heart closed. I think the people who get the most from church come in and say, however you want to speak to me today, Lord, I am willing to receive. (say that with me if you will...) Help me be open. Another member this week told me a therapist told them long ago that some people are fueled by their anger and aren't about to give it up. Remember a few weeks ago when I shared Dr. Phil's classic remark to his therapy patients... *how's that workin' for ya?* What's all that anger and resentment doing for you? (Did you know that nothing is worse on the heart than anger and resentment?) Who might you be *without* your anger?

What would it be like to be fueled by our love of God?

What might life be like if we thought about life being filled with more joy? What joy do we keep from ourselves because our energy is tied up in worry, fear, and anger?

So, we learn in here there is more to life, but then we all have to go out into a world that wants to make us anxious, wants to make us feel like we're not enough, that we don't have enough. It wants us to pay more and more money to feed all of our fears and worries, whatever they are – more booze will do it, more drugs will make us feel better, more cigarettes will give us joy, more magazines, more cars is the answer to more to life, more weight loss schemes, more plastic surgery will make me feel better, more handbags will take away my worry, more toys, more guns, and more wars – the world says be afraid each and every second – annihilate countries who scare us, keep people out of our country who scare us... shoot and kill people who aren't white - instead of just... *calming down*... *breathe*... There is more to life than fear and worry. What we focus our attention on grows - why do we want our fear to grow?

What would it be like, right now, to just stop *putting* fear into the world with our thoughts - if you're a person who knows about energy, then you know that our thoughts create reality - so, if we're filled up with fear and anger and worry, that's going out into the cosmos, mingling with all of the other fear, anger, and worry out there, and growing bigger and bigger and bigger - do you see what we create???? What if we made the decision, right now, to put more calm out there?... in here...

I remember a church member years ago was trying to sell their house. They were spinning their wheels over it, and over other things, too. They were a wreck! I said: "When you get up in the morning, what about if you get down on your knees and tell God how you're feeling, and that selling the house and everything else is too big for you and could he just take all of these things and handle it." Then I said to believe they'd already received the answers and give thanks. Their job now was just to sit back, to go about their life *not spending a minute* in worry – about anything..... Their house sold that day! And, the other concerns fell into place, too.

It's not always this quick!, but the point is that when we're anxious it often pays *to do less* rather than more. Just see what may come to you. It's a far more enjoyable way to live.

There has certainly been a good bit of worry among you at FCCB for your church!!! You worry if you'll survive!!! CAPITAL W. You worry about your missions, you worry about Killam's Point, you worry about your camps, you worry about the endowments, you worry about the next harvest, you worry about who your next minister will be, you worry about our attendance, you worry about our

pledging, you worry about the weekly collection, you worry about people not getting over all of their resentments. You worry!

Followers of Jesus should be the freest persons : ) – from anxiety, materialism, free with their generosity - who put more value into sharing the gospel of God's love - not sharing the gospel of worry! We can focus on reconciling broken relationships, and working for peace and justice for the oppressed. We focus our attention on worry! What if we stopped today and focused on *the power of God*? What if we just stopped today and focused on the power of God?

*Strive for his kingdom.* 'Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

When we seek God and God's will, *all* of these answers will be revealed. We'll know what to do about everything at FCCB. I said to a member this week, hey, if FCCB goes south, if it all goes away, then so be it. It will mean that it didn't matter to the people, that it wasn't adding value to their life. Worrying about one another's righteousness isn't going to buy us more time.

Let's surrender this church, its missions, everything to Him. More love to him, not more worry. The church belongs to God. We're acting like everything falls on our shoulders. Leaders, you think everything falls on your shoulders. If we tell Him we know it doesn't, maybe he'll give us the energy, passion and wisdom to build it up in a way he sees fit. What if we asked him to come in here and have his way, have his will? *We will do whatever you want us to do whenever you want us to do it.* Will you say that with me... that is great, FCCB.

Sell our possessions, and give alms. Make purses for ourselves that do not wear out, an unfailling treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. *For where our treasure is, there our heart will be also.*

Is your church your treasure? : ) Is your church your treasure? : )

Winding down, ten years ago, my son, Abe, was doing a good bit of worrying. He was 8! Sadly, did you know that many children worry - especially if they have a parent who is a worrier?! When his belly hurts, I know that he's worrying. At that time I came across a stunning paragraph in something I read by psychiatrist Dr. Theodore Rubin, I believe, and I shared it with Abe and Ken one night at dinner and I could tell Abe was eating it up. When I finished he said, "I need that."... As a reminder, I typed it up and printed it on his favorite color paper – blue, and put it on his bedroom wall, *and* on our refrigerator:

**“Worrying gets you nowhere.** If I could teach my kids one thing, I'd like them to know, deep inside, 'You are safe. You're safe with me, you're safe alone.' If you carry a feeling of safety inside, I think your whole life changes. And I want them to know that everything will pass and that in the moments in between, they should see if they can find the fun. As a kid, I worried all the time – it was just

part of my hard-wiring. I don't think anyone around me knew it, but I felt like no one ever told me I didn't have to worry, that nothing was wrong. So I wish I could go back and say to my younger self, **"Stop worrying. It all works out. It all works out just beautifully."**

Hakuna Matata - no worries for the rest of your days. FCCB.

Amen.

Sing *His Eye Is On the Sparrow*

1) Why should I feel discouraged? Why should the shadows come? Why should my heart be lonely and long for heaven and home, when Jesus is my portion? My constant friend is He: His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me; His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me. His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me. **Refrain: I sing because I'm happy, I sing because I'm free, for His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me.** 2) "Let not your heart be troubled," his tender words I hear; and resting on His goodness, I lose my doubt and fear. Though by the path He leadeth, but one step I may see: His eye is on the sparrow, and I know he watches me. His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me. **Refrain** 3) Whenever I am tempted, whenever clouds arise, when songs give place to sighing, when hope within me dies, I draw the closer to Him, from care He sets me free, His eye is on the sparrow and I know He watches me. His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me. **Refrain**