

## **Opening Prayer**

Dearest Father, we pray that you quiet our minds. Still our hearts so that we can hear your voice and live in you. Let us revel in nature's glory as we worship in the wonders of your Creation. Strengthen our lives and inspire our spirits so that we can feel your living waters flow. Through your endless grace, may we come to know and serve you better. In Christ's name. Amen.

## **Assurance of Forgiveness**

The good news in Christ is that when we face ourselves and God with the awareness of our needs, we are given grace to grow and courage to continue the journey. Friends, believe the good news of the Gospel. In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven.

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The offering today is taken to subsidize the voucher system of the Gettysburg Ministerium Emergency Assistance Fund, which provides food, fuel and temporary lodging to those in need.

## **Prayer of Dedication**

Dear Heavenly Father, what a blessing it is to give and receive, to share and support this mission of the Ministerium. Where love, justice and equality inspire our acts of service and compassion. We dedicate these gifts to all that we stand for as a community of faith. Amen.

## **Benediction**

Loving God, we thank you for hearing our prayers, feeding us with your word and encouraging us as we have met together this morning. Take us and use us, to love and serve you and all people in the power of your Spirit and in the name of your son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.  
Now...go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

## **Psalm 23 (The Message)**

God, my shepherd! I don't need a thing. You have bedded me down in lush meadows, you find me quiet pools to drink from. True to your word, you let me catch my breath and send me in the right direction.

Even when the way goes through Death Valley, I'm not afraid when you walk at my side. Your trusty shepherd's crook makes me feel secure.

You serve me a six-course dinner right in front of my enemies. You revive my drooping head; my cup brims with blessing.

Your beauty and love chase after me every day of my life. I'm back home in the house of God for the rest of my life.

## **Matthew 11: 25-30 (New International Version)**

At that time Jesus said, "I praise you Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure.

All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him.

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

## Worrying is Like a Rocking Chair

Does anyone remember the fictitious mascot and cover boy of the American humor magazine **MAD**? The character's distinct face, with his parted red hair, gap toothed smile, freckles, protruding nose and scrawny body? Of course, I'm speaking of **Alfred E. Neuman**. But did you know, before MAD, he appeared in early 20<sup>th</sup> century ads for painless dentistry – from which came his early motto, "What, Me Worry"? Despite his famous by-line we still do it. Worry, that is. But why do we worry? Worrying seems to be part of our human nature. It is a concern about the future. It's something that we fear will come to fruition.

So, why did Jesus condemn it? The answer lies in the 6<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Matthew, verses 25-34. Where does worry have its origins? As **Corrie Ten Boom** shared, "**Worry is Like an Old Man, With Bended Head; Carrying a Load of Feathers That He Thinks are Lead**". It comes from our divided mind. In other words, legitimate thoughts versus those we shouldn't be thinking. Earlier, I said that we worry about the future. But there is a problem with that. The future isn't here yet and furthermore, the future is not God's. He tells us to live in the present. He said, "I AM". Not, I WAS or I WILL BE.

Now, I'm not talking about planning for those things to come or not being concerned about anything. It's okay to do that. You see, worry is about the future whereas, concern is about the present. Concern means you are being motivated to action to get beyond those roadblocks of everyday life.

There are 5 reasons why Jesus tells us not to worry. I'd like to share them with you. In Matthew 6 Verse 25, he says, "**THEREFORE I TELL YOU, DO NOT WORRY ABOUT YOUR LIFE; WHAT YOU WILL EAT OR DRINK; OR ABOUT YOUR BODY, WHAT YOU WILL WEAR. IS NOT LIFE MORE IMPORTANT THAN FOOD, AND THE BODY MORE IMPORTANT THAN CLOTHES?**"

**#1 WORRY IS INCONSISTENT.** Your Heavenly Father gave you life itself. Why wouldn't He care for all of your other needs? In that passage, he speaks of those greater things in our life (Our very life) and ends with those that are less important in nature (food and clothes). **Read passage again.**

**#2 WORRY IS IRRATIONAL.** To make His second point, see how he reverses His words and goes from the lesser things to the greater things. Verse 26 states,

**“LOOK AT THE BIRDS OF THE AIR (LESSER); THEY DO NOT REAP OR SOW OR STORE AWAY IN BARN, AND YET YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER FEEDS THEM. ARE YOU NOT MUCH MORE VALUABLE THAN THEY (GREATER)”?** If He provides for the birds of the air, He’ll care even more about those things greater to Him. That’s you and I, Folks!

**#3 WORRY IS INEFFECTIVE.** The American humorist, Erma Bombeck, once wrote, “Worrying is like a rocking chair; it gives you something to do but never gets you anywhere”. Look at what Jesus says in Verse 27. **“WHO OF YOU BY WORRYING CAN ADD A SINGLE HOUR TO HIS LIFE OR A SINGLE CUBIT TO HIS HEIGHT”?** You see, you simply can’t do those things when worrying. Worry can shorten your life. When you worry, you’re more apt to have physical ailments. You don’t eat right, sleep right, or focus on daily activities and it is possible to become sick. It can disrupt your productivity and negatively affect the way you treat others. In extreme cases, you could even die. It doesn’t do any good and it doesn’t accomplish anything. Worry can immobilize you!

**#4 WORRY IS ILLOGICAL.** In verses 28-30, Jesus says, **“AND WHY DO YOU WORRY ABOUT CLOTHES? SEE HOW THE LILIES OF THE FIELD GROW. THEY DO NOT LABOR OR SPIN. YET I TELL YOU THAT NOT EVEN SOLOMON IN ALL HIS SPLENDOR WAS DRESSED LIKE ONE OF THESE. IF THAT IS HOW GOD CLOTHES THE GRASS OF THE FIELD, WHICH IS HERE TODAY AND TOMORROW IS THROWN INTO THE FIRE, WILL HE NOT MUCH MORE CLOTHE YOU, O YOU OF LITTLE FAITH”.** All we need to do is look at His beautiful creation that surrounds us this morning to appreciate and realize the goodness of God.

**#5 WORRY IS IRRELIGIOUS.** Don’t worry about the lesser things in our life. Don’t worry about what to eat, drink or wear. Or, the next house payment, the kids braces or that the car needs new brakes. Let’s look at verse 32. **“FOR THE PAGANS RUN AFTER ALL THESE THINGS, AND YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER KNOWS THAT YOU NEED THEM”.** Then in verse 34, **“THEREFORE, DO NOT WORRY ABOUT TOMORROW, FOR TOMORROW WILL WORRY ABOUT ITSELF. EACH DAY HAS ENOUGH TROUBLE OF ITS OWN”.** We sometimes forget who we are. We act like there is no God in heaven. Do we dare feel we are wiser than God and know better than He does? We are the chosen sons and daughters of the Creator

of this universe. In my mind, this is NOT acting in a Christian way or as one who has been called to serve our Loving Father.

Sometimes we should be more like teenagers. They visit worry, but they don't stay there. A lot of times they worry when they really have nothing to worry about. Most analyze a situation and think things through. They then realize that something might happen to them tomorrow, but they won't let their energy be zapped from them. They want to live a full life, TODAY. In the lyrics of the song, "ALREADY GONE" by the 60's/70's band, THE EAGLES, they tell us, "**SO OFTEN TIMES IT HAPPENS THAT WE LIVE OUR LIVES IN CHAINS, AND WE NEVER EVEN KNOW WE HAVE THE KEY**". We all have a personal, magical key.

How you ask? How can I get past worrying? Ask yourself this question. **HOW HAVE I ORDERED MY LIFE?** Let me offer two suggestions on how this might be accomplished. **#1.** Set a system of priorities. Do you have a divided heart? BY that I mean, what are you really living for? Are we pushing God off to the side and keeping all of our personal possessions as most important? Follow the advice in Verse 33. "**BUT SEEK FIRST HIS KINGDOM AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS AND ALL THESE THINGS WILL BE GIVEN TO YOU AS WELL**". **#2.** Form a strategic plan. Put God at the center of your life. Don't worry about those things you're not doing in life or those things you don't think you're doing enough. Commit to the better plan that God has for you.

There is a poem called "**The Bundle**" that I found in William Bennett's book "THE MORAL COMPASS". It goes something like this....

He carried a bundle of false beliefs, Musty and heavy as a lawyer's briefs; --  
Prejudice, jealousy, bitterness, strife-these were the wares of his troubled life.

He carried the bundle wherever he went-Anger, suspicion and selfish intent;  
He saw what he sought, injustice and sin. Life was a tempest without and within.

He mumbled and stumbled; the world was all wrong. His bundle grew heavy as  
he shuffled along. Worry, impatience, discord and doubt- These were the things  
that he dragged all about.

Tired of his bundle, he set the load down, He prayed long to God; his face lost  
its frown. In his eyes dawned a light by which he could see. He forsook his old  
bundle and walked away free.

We need to take comfort in Christ's counsel. Remember, nobody sinks under the burdens of today. We somehow manage to get through. It is when tomorrow's problems combine with today's burdens that we start to sink. Not to mention next weeks or next months problems. Deuteronomy 33:25 verifies this. **"AS YOUR DAYS, SO SHALL YOUR STRENGTH BE"**. God will give us grace, deserved or not, each and every day. So, don't dwell or worry about things you can't control. As Mark Twain said, **"I'm now an old man and most troubles I worried about never happened"**.

You might say that it is easy to take all these words of Scripture and apply them to the worries of today or the future. But what about the worries of yesterday?

#1 Some people worry about past sins they've committed. Simply, don't do it. God has forgiven them if you've asked for forgiveness with a contrite heart. Don't say you can't forgive yourself. That's like saying you have a higher standard than your Almighty Father. He is the ultimate authority. Don't try to be better than God.

#2 What about worrying about past successes that you no longer possess. We all hear about athletes who peak and then crash and burn. If I could only have or maintain my stardom, my position, my rank, more money. Be grateful that you've had those 'ups' in your life. What does Ecclesiastes say in Chapter 3; VS 1? **"THERE IS A TIME FOR EVERYTHING, AND A SEASON FOR EVERY ACTIVITY UNDER HEAVEN"**.

#3 Give up your sorrows. Whatever you have gone through, a loved one's death, a divorce, sickness or those things "I should have done or not have done", the pain shouldn't last forever. Psalm 23 tells us to walk through that valley, but it doesn't tell us to stay there. We must live for today! Don't be duped by the sign hanging at an old gasoline station, that says, **"FREE GAS TOMORROW"** because there will always be a tomorrow.

Finally, I'd like to give you seven words for all you worryers out there to remember. **"DON'T WORRY ABOUT ANYTHING, PRAY ABOUT EVERYTHING"**. Or, in the infamous words of singer Bobby McFerren.....**DON'T WORRY. BE HAPPY.** Amen.

