

**Fifth Wednesday of Lent**  
**Life is too Short...to worry.**

**Psalm 46**

**April 6, 2011**

**This sermon was preached by Pastor Jim Page at Trinity Lutheran Church**

Dearest brothers and sisters in Christ, grace and peace be with you all.

Looking over all who are gathered to worship this evening, I don't see anyone who looks worried. All of you sang well. Many of you look comfortable, calm, and some have been smiling at various points of this worship gathering.

So, when we get to tonight's theme, "Life is too short...to worry", I fear that it may not relate to any of you today. So, I'm going to sit down again.

But, in all practicality, if I could look into the depth's of your soul, to the real inner-workings of your heart and mind, down into the core of your being, I'm sure I could find a worry, or two, or a dozen.

That being said, I'm using a short sentence from the Old Testament book of Proverbs as the spring board for tonight's theme of worry. The book of Proverbs is rich in practical insight for daily life. Such insights are short and easy to remember. If you want to impress a loved one, write a relevant Proverb verse on a get well card or a birthday card...and I'm sure they'll be impressed!

The passage that will get us started is Proverbs 14:13. It reads as follows, "'Even in laughter the heart may be in pain, and the end of joy may be grief.'" Wow...isn't that uplifting? It may not be uplifting but it conveys a marvelous truth.

Let's look at that first phrase, "Even in laughter the heart may be in pain." There may be real pains even in those who are smiling and laughing. This simple statement cuts into the layers of superficiality, the false fasads and the 'good fronts' we put on in the eyes of others that can shape our lives.

This is a key point for us...that being when God's word is opened...it digs down into our beings and probes into who we are. We get into the depths of our feelings. It's bold. It's honest. It's freeing.

When we speak about life being short...as we have the past four weeks...life requires honesty. It is that honesty that is essential tonight because we can easily hide our worries as they silently consume not only our joy...but our quality of life each day.

So, let's be honest. What are your worries? What's on your mind?

Max Lucado, in his book, He Moved the Stones, included this unique insight from author Erma Bombeck regarding worry. Perhaps some of her worries are similar to yours.

She writes, "I've always worried a lot, and frankly I'm good at it. I **worry** about introducing people and going blank when I get to my mother. I **worry** about a shortage of ball bearings, a snake coming up through the kitchen drain. I **worry** about the world ending at midnight and getting stuck with three hours on a twenty-four hour cold capsule. I **worry** about getting into the Guinness World Book of Records under "Pregnancy: Oldest Recorded Birth." I **worry** what the dog thinks when he sees me coming out of the shower. I **worry** that one of my

children will marry an Eskimo who will set me adrift on an iceberg when I can no longer feed myself. I **worry** about salesladies following me into the fitting room, oil slicks, and about scientists discovering someday that lettuce has been fattening all along.”

The word ‘worry’ does not occur in the King James Bible and rarely in other Bible translations. The Bible speaks about concern, to take care, trouble or anxiety when referring to worry.

In the Greek, the word translated ‘anxious’ means ‘to be divided or distracted.’ The German word ‘würgen’ is where we derive our English word of ‘worry’. The word conveys the idea of being so mentally ill at ease that your thinking is divided. It’s pulling your mind towards a bothersome element while you are trying to stay focused on something else.

Worry, we know what it is but let’s be honest about it’s effects. I share these viewpoints from Chuck Swindoll’s book, “Getting through the tough stuff.”

First of all, worry highlights the human viewpoint and strangles the divine, so we become fearful. It keeps us from enjoying what we have...our gifts and what we’ve been given by God as we look at our life only with human eyes. Eyes that tend to see the grass greener on the other side.

Second, worry chokes our ability to distinguish the incidental from the essential, so we get distracted. In all the details of life...we add not only fear but doubts, tasks, expectations and pressures...because we worry about various circumstances. All this leads us to lose focus on what truly matters in our lives.

Third, worry siphons our joy and makes us judgmental rather than accepting of others, we can eventually become negative people. Tempers run short, patience is elusive. We take our anxiety out on others...those we live with, those at work, anyone. We become bitter and irritable.

What is unique about this quality and all the qualities in this series, is that they can be so easily modeled and also taught to future generations. Now, I’m going to show you this fact straight from the Bible. This will only take a couple minutes. It’s in Genesis, the first book of the Bible.

We’re focusing on Abram...the great prophet and leader of God’s people.

In Genesis chapter 12, Abram’s been called by God to lead God’s people and that God would bless him and make him into a great nation. He’s been told by God to leave his homeland to enter a land that God would show him.

When Abe’s enters Egypt he says to his wife Sarai, “I know what a beautiful woman you are. When the Egyptians see you, they will say, ‘This is his wife’. Then they will kill me but will let you live. Say you are my sister, so that I will be treated well.”

She did so, Abe then received cattle and servants, and Pharaoh and his household received various diseases. Pharaoh then learned that Abe and Sarah lied and asked them to leave the land.

In Genesis chapter 20, Abram has been re-named Abraham by God and he’s on another journey near the region of Kadesh. He then told King Abimelech of his wife, “She is my sister.” Then Abimelech king of Gerar sent for Sarah and took her.

God came to Abimelech in a dream and said, “You are as good as dead because of the woman you have taken; she is married.”

Now Abimelech has not gone near her, so he said, “Lord, will you destroy an innocent nation? Did he not say to me, ‘She is my sister’? I have done this with a clear conscience.”

It goes on to say that God understood and asked him to return Sarah to Abraham.

The kicker of all of this comes in Genesis 26 where Abraham and Sarah’s son Isaac is in a unique predicament. There’s a famine and Isaac now goes to King Abimelech of Gerar since God told him to stay there and promised that he would bless all of Isaac’s descendents just as he promised to his father who was faithful.

We read, “When the men of that place asked him about his wife, he said, ‘She is my sister,’ because he was afraid to say, ‘she is my wife’. He thought, ‘the men of this place might kill me on account of Rebekah, because she is beautiful.’”

Abimelech learned of this lie and was angered that someone may have slept with her and brought guilt upon the nation. He then ordered Isaac and Rebekah to move on.

The qualities of this series are easily passed on to each other and to the next generation. Life is too short and some key principles from the scriptures can help us in living lives of joy where such qualities are not present...such as worry. To be confident in God’s presence as stated in our psalm for tonight, “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear.” And finally, these words of peace, “Be still and know that I am God.”

I want to leave you with three key principles that can be of benefit in dealing with worry. If you’re worried you won’t remember them...all of them start with ‘p’. Hold on to them...place them near your desk, in your daily planner or near the tv!

The first is presence. God’s presence. Daily trusting that God is present, at work, and seeking out the best for you in all things. Consider this verse from Isaiah 41:10, “So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God.”

Second is promises. Holding on to God’s promises. It’s been researched that there are 7,474 promises made by God in the scriptures. That will keep us busy. But, hold on to these words from Proverbs 3:5-6, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.”

Next is prayer. By prayer, I’m not referring to the general prayers that can become rote. I’m talking about specific requests bringing concerns to God. In the apostle Paul’s letter to the Philippians he writes, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”

Presence, promises, prayer. Three qualities of faith that will help you in times of worry and seize the God-given joy of life.

Life is indeed too short...it is too short to worry.  
Amen.