

# Do not worry about your life

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[ 0 : 00 ] Open our Bibles, please, at the passage we read. Luke chapter 12. Can we read, please, at verse 22. Do not worry about your life.

Do not worry about your life. I don't know about you, but watching the news just now is absolutely traumatic. Indeed, a lot of folk, I know, a lot of my friends have stopped watching the news because it really is genuinely triggering for them.

You read about drones to carry on the theme in Ukraine. You read about Donald Trump's special military operation to Venezuela. You read of lots and lots of things.

And indeed, in the news last night, there was an interesting phrase. Someone said in the BBC News about Venezuela, the reporter said, it feels like the world is at a turning point.

So, I mean, everywhere you go, there is fear. And again, one of the really interesting things with contemporary society is that children are beginning to feel the fear as well as grown-ups.

[ 1 : 07 ] The kind of networked fear is everybody is kind of scared. And especially about the environment. You know, a younger generation are really concerned, and from a child's point of view, that they're terrified at the end of the world.

Research shows, in fact, there's an article in The Spectator entitled Baby Doomers. There's a fascinating article, Baby Doomers. It's basically saying that folk are avoiding having children because they are terrified of the world in which the children will be growing up.

And a lot of couples, according to the Baby Doomers article, it says there they're putting the planet ahead of parenthood. And the stats bear that out.

I don't know how they compile these things or who compiles them, but the ONS, the Office for National Statistics, said this, that 39% of people who are married or in civil partnerships reported high levels of anxiety.

39% reporting really high abnormal levels of anxiety. Of course, there's somewhat lighter moments. I go to church in Morningside, where apparently there's an alarm at the shortage of balsamic vinegar.

[ 2 : 28 ] It's causing terror in the Morningside area. But for people who do worry, it's no laughing matter. I mean, we can laugh about all these things, but for folk who have genuine anxiety issues, it really isn't something that folk can laugh about.

Kierkegaard, the philosopher, said that no grand inquisitor has in ready such terrible tortures as anxiety. So it's not something you can laugh at.

Those of you who maybe suffer from anxiety, it's not something that's peripheral. Indeed, Kierkegaard said it is bigger and more dangerous than any great inquisitor.

Now, it's into this language. You know, every church plant I go to has got a lectern like this that moves. Let me see. It'll be okay. It's fine.

I've got it under a corolla. It just means I wouldn't walk about. I'll just keep my hand there. I've tightened it as far as I can. Into this context, Jesus says these remarkable words, I tell you, do not worry.

[ 3 : 41 ] Now, counselling 101 says that that's the last thing you say. You know, if you do counselling training, someone will say that is the very last thing you say.

Do not worry. Counselling has got to be non-directive. It doesn't say this thing. So, you know, Jesus would probably fail counselling 101, but it's a little bit more complex, of course, than that.

But he does say, and he's saying to us, do not worry. And I thought for the first service of this year, that would be a great theme to think about.

Jesus' words to us, do not worry. Let's think of the bigger picture. Jesus is speaking at a very big rally. Look at verse 1.

A crowd of many thousands had gathered. There were so many, verse 1, that they were trampling on one another. He is talking to this huge crowd, and he's saying, it's going to be tough, as one of my disciples.

[ 4 : 48 ] You're going to be dragged before the authorities. There's going to be persecution. And then someone in the crowd comes out with something really, really crass, verse 13.

He says, teacher, tell my brother to divide inheritance with me. That's unusual. So Jesus is talking about really tough things, and then some guy says, whoa, Jesus, tell me how my brother should share his inheritance with me.

He just doesn't get it. He doesn't capture the moment, does he? He just misses the point. And then Jesus tells a story, doesn't he, from verse 13, about the rich young fool.

In the height of the Thatcher kind of years, when I was a student, there was a character invented called Loads of Money. He was a kind of cartoon character who just literally threw money all over the place.

This is kind of loads of money that a person, the rich young fool. And so Jesus says, look, in the middle of all this, there's this crazy guy, and all he's talking about is money.

[ 5 : 59 ] That's all he's interested in. Tell me about my inheritance. Tell me about my portfolio. And it's into this context that Jesus says, do not worry.

So this morning, really just three things to this group. He's talking about the sin of money, or the sin of the love of money.

And then he's talking to, someone said, the sin of worry. Is worry a sin? We'll unpack that a little bit later. Just three things then, here about, do not worry.

The first thing I'm going to notice is his counsel, and then we're going to see his justification, and then we're going to see his instruction. So his counsel, do not worry.

Notice the tone. Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat. Now, tone is really important. Not just what we say, but the way in which we say it.

[ 7 : 04 ] One commentator says, what we have here is a command. Do not worry. It's a command. I don't know about you, but I thought that was rather harsh, and I think we can justify that later.

Words are important. So when Jesus says, do not worry, I think Jesus is empathizing. Did Jesus ever worry? Well, if worry is a sin, Jesus didn't worry in that sense.

Did Jesus worry? There's a story in the Bible of the Garden of Gethsemane, just before Jesus was crucified, the night before he was crucified, he was anxious, and he sweat drops of blood.

So it seems to me that someone who sweat drops of blood knows a thing or two about anxiety. So I don't think it's a sin.

This here is Jesus saying, not to worry about certain things. Don't worry about stuff. But the tone is gentle, isn't it?

[ 8 : 21 ] So the tone's distinctive. Also notice the audience as well. This isn't a sergeant major barking at commands. Do not worry. Notice what it says here, verse 32.

Do not be afraid, little flock. So that kind of puts it in context, doesn't it? Do not be afraid, little flock. This is not a sergeant major barking at instructions.

Don't worry. This is a shepherd gently saying to his own flock and his own people, fear not, little flock.

It's your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. So this is distinctive counsel. This is the counsel of Jesus. I don't know if you're into life coaching and stuff like that or you're into life coach gurus.

The big sort of major figure is somebody like Tony Robbins. I don't know if you've ever heard of Tony Robbins. He does lots of YouTube videos.

[ 9 : 25 ] He's quite a compelling speaker in many ways. This isn't a life coach. What you have in church in the gospel is not life coaching.

What we provide here at Winchberg Community Church is not free life coaching. It is unpacking the words of Jesus himself to his people.

So he's saying here, look, do not be afraid is distinctively Christian. Look at verse 22. You are using the word they're disciples. Verse 30 says pagans run after these things.

You are not like that. Verse 30 your father. Verse 32 the little flock. This advice only works for disciples.

So we cannot go throughout Winchberg and say to every single person irrelevant of their faith background do not worry because this verse doesn't work for anyone who's not a believer.

[10:33] You've got to be a follower of Jesus. You've got to have this new heart and new understanding before it's even possible to get this teaching.

It only works for disciples. So that's what his counsel is this morning. He's saying to us at the beginning of 2026 don't worry his tone is gentle he's speaking to his disciples and he's saying you are my little flock he is not a sergeant major he is a shepherd.

So that's his counsel. But then secondly notice his justification. now if I say to you don't worry on its own that's ridiculous it's ridiculous.

If I have I don't know a lump appears in my neck and I say to myself don't worry that's ridiculous. ridiculous. if I were to say to you listen get in your car drive up to Caithness today you say but it's snowing don't worry that's ridiculous.

[11:52] a lot of Christians seem to approach life like this almost as if when they come into church they've unzipped their brains. This doesn't say don't worry no matter what the circumstances if you've got a lump see a doctor don't drive to wick today there's legitimate don't drive to wick in any day but there's legitimate concerns so it's not just a blanket here hey don't worry stay happy he justifies it here so a blanket don't worry is silly open our eyes to reality as Christians we are people who are into reality we don't come out with things which are blatantly ridiculous Christians have minds but you know theology leads to calm hearts you ever thought about that theology the way you think about

God the way you understand God in the Bible actually has a calming effect on life so there's a connection between obviously thinking and living so the justification here is you've not to worry because look at a couple of things number one look at God as creator look at verse 24 consider the ravens they do not sow reap they have no storeroom or barn yet God feeds them there's actually a little joke in that verse which we don't get but early disciples would have got it consider the ravens the ravens were the bad guys of the bird world in Leviticus 11 the ravens were regarded as unclean Leviticus 11 15 they were unclean they were peripheral birds they really weren't stars and yet God is saying consider the ravens God even looks after them and then he says about verse 27 consider how the wild flowers grow wild flowers are incredible if you've got a really rough garden what you want to do is get a packet of wild flower seed and scatter it and it really is stunning you've got this carpet of multi coloured vegetation and it really is quite beautiful and you look at carpet of wild flowers of meadow and you think wow that is stunning and yet who planted them and so he's saying look at the god of creation he looks after the ravens he looks after the wild flowers the sheer beauty of creation showing the creative power and genius of god!

and this world is a beautiful place god did not make the world in black and white it's not monochrome he took from his infinite palette of colours and he made us this world which is absolutely stunning i don't know if you saw the moon last night i saw over edinburgh castle in the early evening just this beautiful big globe and i just thought wow isn't that amazing isn't god amazing and so jesus is saying do not worry because the god who looks after the ravens the god who made this great carpet of wild flowers the god who put the moon and the stars do you not think that such a god can look after you and so he's saying here the creative power and genius of god but the point in verse 23 is this he's saying life is more than food and the body more than clothes jesus is saying here folks and i wish everybody in winchborough and or wherever you live could hear this jesus is saying people life is more than stuff verse 24 you are more valuable than birds we see the value and dignity of humanity life is more than stuff ken hughes the writer says we look at our body today and you think of your body that's a bit narcissistic but think of the body today ken hughes says we know how to tan it massage it pamper it close it stimulate it drug it hydrate it you know we're the most hydrated generation in modern history what is it you've got to drink seven glasses or is it surely not seven eight pints of water a day you know we are hydrated to death we really look after our bodies and Jesus is saying people you're more than that you're bigger than that you look at edinburgh you look at victorian edinburgh look at the skyline of edinburgh it's dominated by steeples from my bedroom window i can see all the steeples of edinburgh the tall booth beside the castle the crown of st giles all the big church steeples when you look at the modern skyline what dominates it the st james centre it's the new cathedral isn't it the skyline is dominated by commercial buildings retail buildings these are the new temples and jesus is saying people your life is more than stuff you don't if you ever buy a building or get a building you don't really want a

building with a steeple steeples are great because they point upwards that's what steeples for it's a finger to heaven that points to god i suppose that's one good although you pay an awful lot for a big fancy visual aid but life is more than what we think it is life is more than food there is a sense of identity do i find meaning in life that's how folk are obsessed with i was going to say yoga and pilates as you can see i'm not a big pilates guy myself but you know nothing wrong with that of course there's nothing wrong it's great to have tone it's great to be fit but it's bigger than that justification is look at who god is god is our father look at verse 30 it says for the pagan world runs after such things and your father knows that you need them but seek his kingdom your father knows that you need them whenever i talk about fatherhood these days it's a big issue isn't it because some of us don't have or have had a great experience of fatherhood some folk have had great fathers other folk have had terrible fathers so that's why whenever the bible talks about fatherhood you know in a contemporary congregation a lot of folk are saying look i've got issues with this but he says look i am a good father this is how you are not worried i've been preaching now for 40 years and i remember the first year in preaching i used to tell this really corny story it's so corny that i haven't told it for years it's a corny illustration but you know i've got you now so i may as well tell my corny illustration because it makes that a really good point so a sea captain if you're a captain or a first engineer on a ship you're allowed to take your family on a voyage used to be back in the day when i was we the captain could take his family on the voyage and there were captain's quarters so in the south atlantic there's this tremendous storm it's the worst storm that they have ever seen the furniture in the ship is going everywhere the crew are really worried is the boat going to sink one of the crew goes down into the captain's quarters and finds the captain's four-year-old little girl playing with her toys as if nothing had happened or was happening so the ship's being thrown about everywhere and there's this little girl just playing singing everybody else is in absolute terror and the steward says to the wee girl we're in a storm are you not frightened she said no my daddy is in the bridge corny story of course it's a corny story but it illustrates what a secure child feels when its father is there daddy is on the bridge many of you don't know the joys yet of teenage children i always say that parenthood is tough for about the first 40 years once the kid reaches 40 it gets a little bit better just to encourage you but you'll get a phone call from your 18 year old daughter whose car is broken down in the middle of rosshire in a february and the phone goes at 2 in the morning dad my car's broken down i tell you when you turn up your dad is the hero of the moment dad's here everything's under control jesus is saying that don't fear he says your father knows all things he is our father so you're seeing there that the phrase don't worry is not a kind of mindless you know instruction he's saying don't worry [ 22 : 55 ] because he's the creator look at the ravens because he is the one who gave the wild flowers but he's also your father a good father and he loves you look at you he says verse 25 again is an element of humor he says how much he says verse 25 who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life i love one of the old bibles it's called the authorized version i kind of love love the av it says which one of you can by worrying can add a cubit to his stature in other words does worrying help does worrying make you grow does worrying help a situation now psychologically we know it doesn't indeed worrying is the exact opposite which of you by worrying things you can add to your life verse 25 well worrying probably takes away hours from our life will worry make us grow it's an exercise in futility are you a worrier it's just what you are i'm a non worrier married to a worrier which is a really great combination because you've i'm also in our marriage as an optimist and a pessimist i won't tell you which one is which but there's a really good balance there a pessimist is just someone who knows more about reality anxiety is utterly futile the last thing we see here is his instruction what have we seen we've seen his counsel don't worry we've seen his rationale or his justification because god is creator he's got it sorted but thirdly his instruction jesus tells us to do certain things and from verse 29 to verse 31 you get more positivity do not set your heart on what you can drink do not worry about it pagans run after all such things and your father knows that you need them look at verse 31 this is a positive but seek his kingdom and these things will be given to you as well he reminds us that it's a heart issue verse 29 do not set your heart so worry and anxiety like many things in the gospel it's a heart issue it addresses basically the very centre of our what are our idols what are our idols as i was driving here today i i love cars and motorbikes it's kind of my hobby and you know my biggest worry about driving here today was taking my little car out in the salt and i thought how utterly pathetic are you when your biggest worry apart from finding a place was taking your car out in the salt van shows me that my heart at that moment was in completely the wrong place on a silly car that will rust literally it's a

Mazda so definitely it will rust where is our hearts if something was taken away from us would we lament desperately it's our heart look at the language here he says look we are worried about stuff but he wants to give you a kingdom you're worried about your cream colored carpet you're worried about your car you're worried about how your dinner party will work out you're worried about these small things I want to give you a kingdom this is huge verse 31 but seek his kingdom and these things will be given to you as well the kingdom of God what is the kingdom of God the kingdom of God is the unseen but real rule of

God in this world and in the universe the kingdom of God is God ruling at this present time and that's what we have to seek and so he's saying here look abandon your kingdom and seek his I don't know your politics I don't know how many of you are royalists monarchists republicans but every Christian ought to be a monarchist if Jesus is the monarch in that sense there is a higher kingdom there is a good king you know the Chronicles of Narnia very famous passage which Susan is asking about Aslan and Susan says what or who is Aslan and it's that great line

Aslan is a lion the lion the great lion who says Susan I thought he was a man is he quite safe I'd feel rather nervous about meeting a lion safe said Mrs.

Beaver who said anything about safe of course he isn't safe but he's good he's the king I tell you so this morning we don't worry because our father is on the bridge he is the king and then he tells him to do something very concrete verse 33 sell your possessions and give to the poor provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out a treasure in heaven that will never fail!

[ 29 : 52 ] Now he's not telling all of us to sell everything we have and give to the poor that's not taught in the Bible but he's saying I want to move from anxiety to radical generosity and kindness this is a word to divest and invest to live a little lighter is your life full of stuff the gospel is saying listen it's not about stuff invest in an eternal treasure because the heart that is invested in the kingdom knows less anxiety and so as we start off in 2026 the beauty of the gospel is that there is a higher kingdom that there is a kingdom of

God and the investment in that will never ever fail or go down and it will lead us in a life of less anxiety let's pray father we thank you for all that you've given to us we thank you for your word for its power and for its encouragement lord as we come to the end of this service we thank you that you've taught us not to worry and we pray that today that our anxieties would be dissipated in the light of your love bless us in all that we say in all that we do amen to