

In today’s gospel lesson, Jesus tells us to stop worrying. Jesus essentially makes three points in his anti-worry argument.

First, Jesus says worrying is a sign that our priorities are out of whack. He says there are more important things in life than the things we worry about, more important things that need our attention.

This argument of Jesus’, that our worry is a mis-ordering of our priorities, made me wonder just what we humans worry most about. So, here’s our top 20 worries, at least according to a 2015 poll:

1. Aging
2. Whether we have saved enough for our future needs
3. Low energy levels
4. What we are eating
5. Our credit card and other debt
6. Job security
7. Our appearance as we age (wrinkles and the like)
8. Our physique (or lack thereof)
9. Our ability to stay in our housing
10. Being generally unhappy
11. Needing a new job
12. Wondering if we are attractive
13. Whether our significant others still love us (if we have a significant other)
14. Whether we’ll find the right partner/(if we don’t yet have one)
15. The friend or family member we’ve fallen out with
16. Whether we are or were good parents
17. Meeting work targets or goals
18. If our dress sense is good
19. Our pet’s health
20. Crime levels where we live

Maybe each of us worry about these same things, more or less. Notice, though, that “terrorist attack” didn’t make the top 20 worries (it was in the top 40). Notice, too, that “Where we will be after we die” didn’t make the list, either—at all.

When we examine what we DO WORRY ABOUT, though, often we discover that what we worried about didn’t occur. In fact, the vast majority of things we worry about never happen, leaving only 8-15% of our fears that come to pass. BUT, one study found, when our fears come to fruition, we usually find we can handle the situation better than we had expected, or the situation teaches us a lesson worth



learning. If we do the math, we find that about 97% of what we worry about are false or unproductive fears.

This was Jesus’ **second point** in his anti-worry argument. Jesus said that “**God provides, so why worry?**” Jesus pointed out that God provides for his other creatures and THEY don’t worry, so we shouldn’t worry, either. Jesus teaches here that we need to trust that God will provide. Not just 97% of the time, mind you, but 100%.

Some 500 years ago, the French Renaissance philosopher Michel de Montaigne quipped about our false worrying, saying, “My life has been filled with terrible misfortune; most of which never happened.” Jesus, on the other hand, says that worrying is prioritizing poorly, because **GOD WILL PROVIDE**.

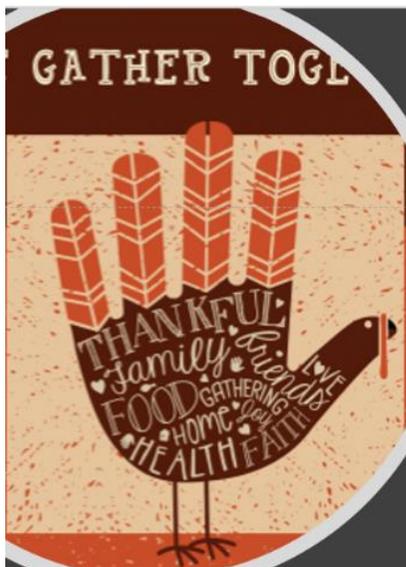
We humans **DO** spend a lot of time worrying. Another 2015 study, a British study, found that people spend almost five years of their lives worrying. That’s an average of almost two hours a day worrying, or almost 13 hours a week – or four years and 11 months across the average adult lifetime of 64 years. Of course, if you live beyond age 64, there’s arguably a lot more to worry about.

“Reprioritize your life,” says Jesus, “Trust in God.”

Jesus’ **third** point about worry in this three-point anti-worry sermon was this: “**Worry indicates disbelief**.” When we worry, we are saying, in essence, “I don’t trust that God will provide.”

Now I figure right about now you may be thinking, “But isn’t worry a normal human condition? Don’t all humans worry? Isn’t worry one of the things that distinguishes us humans from the other animals?” And, of course you are right. In a way. We humans **DO** worry, at least ever since we began thinking about the future rather than the immediate present.

Huh? We animals are equipped with the worry system to alert us to immediate dangers so that we can respond quickly and survive. The trouble is that worry is maladaptive (counterproductive) to humans today. When we think ahead, plan ahead, we worry ahead about potential future actions, potential alternative occurrences or situations. In a way, worry helps us survive and gives us an edge in the job world, but today it gets in the way of optimal health by causing ulcers, heart conditions, sleep disorders, and addictions, and other ill effects on our bodies. When we function long term at the “worry overload” level, physiologists tell us, we fall prey to these and other stress diseases. When we function long term at the “worry overload” level, Jesus tells us, we fall prey to spiritual sickness. “Reprioritize and trust God,” Jesus tells us. “Because,” Jesus adds, “if you worry you aren’t actually believing in God,



aren't trusting in God." The basic message today is that we need to follow God's ways and God will give us both a worry-free existence of health and salvation; God will provide us with everything we need.

There's just one more point to make about living a God-trusting, worry-free life. Psychologists today suggest the best way of avoiding worry is to focus on something else, something immediately measurable, something that returns our attention to the here-and-now rather than a fearful future. One of the ways we can focus on the here-and-now is to actively take stock every day of the things that God has given us, the things for which we thank God, so that each day we become aware that God actually DOES PROVIDE.

Whatever worries you carry in your life today, I invite you to count the ways God has provided you with what you need, and trust that God will continue to care for us as he cares for the birds of the air and the flowers of the field.