

Series: **EVERYDAY THINGS** - July 12, 2009

**BIRDS AND WILDFLOWERS**  
**Matthew 6:25-34**

**I. INTRO**

- A. How many of you have ever been stressed out? How many of you have never been stressed out—but the person next to has? How many of you **are** stressed out right now—and it's **because** of the person sitting next to you!

-Because we live in high stress times, I thought you might enjoy something called the **High-Stress Diet**. Would you like to know what it is?

\*Breakfast: ½ grapefruit, 1 slice whole wheat toast, 8 oz. of skim milk

\*Lunch: 4 oz. of lean broiled chicken; 1 cu. Steamed zucchini, 1 Oreo cookie and herb tea.

\*Mid-afternoon snack: rest of the package of Oreos, 1 quart Nestle Turtle's ice cream; 1 jar of hot fudge.

\*Supper: 2 loaves of garlic bread; 1 large Delissio pepperoni pizza; 2 liters of Diet Coke

\*Evening snack: 2 Snickers bars, and an entire frozen cheesecake eaten directly from the freezer.

-Would anyone like to hear the accompanying **Diet Tips**?

\*If no one sees you eat it—it has no calories

\*If you drink diet soda with a candy bar, there are no calories. The two cancel each other out.

\*If you're eating with someone else, calories don't count if you both eat the same amount!

\*Food used for medicinal purposes doesn't count. Like chocolate..

\*If you can fatten up everyone around you—you look thinner

\*Movie related foods, like popcorn and nachos, don't count; they're part of the entire entertainment experience.

\*Cookie pieces contain no calories; the process of breaking causes calorie leakage.

-It's interesting that the word **stress** has only been used to describe emotional pressure for about 70 years. Before then it was only an engineering term that applied to metal, wood or bone when it was bent or stretched too far.

- B. But worry and fear? Man, they've been around forever. And everyone knows what they feel like. Does anyone here **enjoy** the feeling of worry and anxiety? I don't think anyone does. In fact, this stuff raises blood pressure, makes junk stick to the inner arteries of your heart, and affects the immune system. It can drive you right over the edge emotionally and mentally.

1. It's funny, there are some things that Jesus says to do that something in me resists, like loving and praying for those who hate me and make my life miserable. But when He says, **Do not worry!**—man, **I'm there!** Yes, Lord! Give me the power—cause I'm **stressed out!**

2. Jesus uses two very common images to describe a worry-free, anxiety free life. Birds...and wildflowers. And He talks very bluntly about the things we tend to worry about—stress out over. Having enough—and looking good!
3. We are people who have more food, more clothes, more house than people have **ever** had before in the history of the world. How many of you think we worry less than people ever have? How many of you could use some help from God in worrying less?

## II. THE WORRY THING

- A. Is there anyone here who doesn't **get** worry? We all do. And especially in the past year or so—worry and anxiety gets preached at us **every single day!** I remember a **Time** magazine cover that said it all a couple of years ago. It was right after Al Gore's documentary on global warming. It showed a polar bear walking across melting ice, with the caption. **BE WORRIED! BE VERY WORRIED!**

-Another guy speaks to this in a book entitled **Culture of Fear**—and talks about how since CNN turned news into a business—people have to **sell** the news, not report it. And they grind it into **everyone's** consciousness—to the point of insanity. I mean, how many evenings did Nancy Grace do on the Tot Mom from Florida? How many times were all the pictures of 9-11 shown? Worry **sells**. Worry sells news, insurance, deodorant, cars, diets, clothes—everything!

-To the comment, **BE WORRIED! BE VERY WORRIED!**—Jesus asks, “So—what will worry actually do for you? What productive purpose does worry do in this world—except to kill and cripple the people who do it?”

1. My Grandmother, Lillian Davis was a worrywart! She worried about **everything!** My Dad told me how one day he brought home a puppy—and she stayed up all night, pacing the floor, **worrying** that the puppy would grow up and bite someone. And it wasn't even a pit bull!

-And Jesus would say, “Lillian, you don't need to live like that! You can live with confidence that someone way, **way** bigger than you is lovingly watching over you. Because, if you stop worrying—it will hinder **everything** God wants you to do!”

-Question: We know it is God's will for us to give what we have to help others and further God's mission of making everything right. **Right?** Why do we struggle? Worry. Right after talking about not stockpiling treasure here, Jesus teaches on worry.

**That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. (Matthew 6:25 NLT)**

-So. Jesus says, **Don't worry!** Let's go home and live this out. Let's stand for prayer. Welllllll! Not quite that easy, is it?

2. One author I read **really** put his finger on the worry issue in a way we can all understand. He says, “**There's all kinds of reasons why they (worrywarts)**

worry, but the hard truth is that it's fundamentally rooted in fear and *the desire to control the future.*" (Jonathan Ellerby)

-By the way, anyone know **Who** controls the future? We don't. God does. And that, friends, is at the **core** of **everything** Jesus says about worry.

- B. To talk about worry, Jesus uses familiar images—birds and wildflowers. Listen to what He says.

**Isn't life more than food, and your body more than clothing? Look at the birds. They don't plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren't you far more valuable to him than they are? Can all your worries add a single moment to your life? And why worry about your clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don't work or make their clothing, yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith? So don't worry about these things, saying, 'What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?' These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need. So don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's trouble is enough for today. (Matthew 6:25-34 NLT)**

-Now, remember—this isn't Dr. Phil speaking; this is the **Son of God through whom all things were created.** And He puts his finger right on dirty little secret behind worry. Fear.

1. Jesus says, "Life isn't just the sum of all you have—and everything it takes to protect it and keep it going! **Life is a GIFT!**"

-You have to understand that in Jesus' day--**having enough** was an issue. Because of the poverty and the tax system, the prayer, **Give us our daily bread** was real. Especially the **daily** part.

2. And that's when Jesus introduces his first image. Birds. You have to understand that this is a little first century Jewish humor here. Jesus says, "Imagine a sparrow, supervising the planting of a whole field, thinking, 'If I plant a **whole field** of wheat—I'll have enough for the rest of my life!" So he goes out and to a bird bank, borrows some bird-funds; buys a bird-tractor and cultivator. Then our little sparrow farmer hires people to build him a barn!

-Jesus' audience would've been howling! It's like something out of a Bugs Bunny and Tweety-bird cartoon! Jesus says, "You don't see them up in trees or sitting on fences, perspiring, anxious, pacing. Thinking, "Okay, we've got worms today—but **what about NEXT week? And what about NEXT year?**

-Jesus point is—God loves birds—and did an **excellent job** when He made them. Engineered perfectly to fly. Some of them, in fact, have the smarts to head **south** for the winter! He **loves** His creation—and He **cares** for all these

birds, whether they're big and dumb like barnyard turkeys—or small and portable like humming birds.

-And Jesus asks the question, “So. Do you think God values humans as much as He values birds? On his priority list—which comes first, crows, starlings, Canada geese—or the people He created in his own image?” **People** would be my guess—given the fact that Jesus came and gave his life to redeem us.

3. Now, I want you to notice something—cause this is important. Is Jesus implying that all we have to do is sit around—and God will plunk a house down around us? That we can sit around all day and talk, play video games and text our friends and Twitter—and the resources will magically appear in our bank accounts? Actually, birds are hard workers—unless they're Tweety birds in cages. They're always out doing something—gathering food, making nests, sitting on eggs, or waiting for roadkills on highways. This *isn't* about work—it's about **worry. Anxiety.**

4. Next Jesus talks about appearance. Clothes, to be more specific. But, that doesn't really apply to us, does it. Back then people were immature enough to worry about that—but we've evolved beyond that, to the point where it's really not an issue. Right? **Right?**

-Actually, not so much. We live in a world that is literally **obsessed** with the outer ¼ inch of life in general. Pastes, diets, supplements, implants, creams, laser surgery, hair removal, smell removal, spot removal...and **clothes?** Oh my word! We live in a world where some people spend \$10,000 on a designer handbag!

-In our world of marketing, **appearance** is this big black gaping bottomless pit into which people will throw thousands and thousands of hours and dollars. And the question is, “Does **God** care about appearance? Really? Would God prefer that everyone just wore gray and black uniforms that made us look like walking stumps? And Jesus surprising answer is—**Look at the world to get your answer!** And that's where the **wildflowers** come in. **Everyone** knows what flowers look and smell like. In case you've missed the beauty—let's do a little review.

-He's put breathtaking beauty, as Jesus says, into the lilies of the field—wildflowers that blossom one day and get thrown into the fire the next. And make **no** mistake about it: If He cares like that for things that flourish—then wither and die--**He will certainly care for us!**

5. Jesus does something no one else who talks about worry does; He gets to the root of it. **Trust.** If you're going jump out of plane flying at 10,000 feet—you have to trust...the **parachute! The guy who packed the thing.** The thought that pops into your mind is, **Don't do it, you idiot!** Your **mind** knows that parachute—**probably** works, but your armpits and stomach are saying, “Hey, no one told **us!**”

-And **that's** the point where worry catches us. We face something beyond our ability and wisdom—and our instinct is **fear**. Fear is the most common emotions. People who do scary things aren't necessarily less afraid. Know what they do that's different? They walk toward their fear. I heard a **great** phrase this past week from Karen Pascal. **DO IT—AFRAID!** Are you worried that you'll fail? Are you worried about what might happen? Are you worried about giving to others, helping others, talking to others? **Do it—AFRAID.**

-Jesus asks the question, "**Why do you have so little faith?**" We say, "Well, do you think I **like** worrying? Take away the fear and I'll have more faith!" Jesus says, "The fear only goes, faith only comes—when you **Do it AFRAID—**and you find that God can be trusted. For everything. That you are **loved** beyond your wildest dreams!" Faith doesn't just come on it's own—it comes one act of trust at a time!

-Will we live as God's beloved children—with the power of Heaven behind us? Or will go around wringing our hands, whining about life.

### III. SPIRIT OF FEAR vs. SPIRIT OF GOD

- A. It's important to know that Jesus' words about trust are for **everyone** in our world. Jesus call to trust was for people like us who don't worry about whether we'll have enough to eat—but do worry about cancer—and about our kids. Jesus call to trust was for followers of Jesus in Third World countries—people who wonder **if** they'll eat. Trust—don't worry has to do with parents who are thinking about which university their kids will go to—and it has to do with parents who are wondering which **hospital** their kids will go to. Trusting God is for old people—and young people; it's for people who have a lot and people who have nothing.

-Know why? Cause, see, **worry has no borders!** And we **all** have these places down inside our hearts and lives of inadequacy. Places that are weak and broken. Sometimes they're **very** obvious. Sometimes no one knows by us—and we keep them locked in the pain file, the shame file—and swallow the key. And **those** are the places where we are most tempted to be afraid. To worry. To get anxious and obsess. I have places like that. So do you. And Jesus shows us how to let the peace and grace of God we so **desperately** need into these **impoverished places.**

1. One of the things you see if you watch Jesus' life carefully is that He has trusting, giving, receiving, generous relationship with the Father. There's intimacy and connection. You could say it like this: **Jesus has an inner life that is thoroughly saturated with the love of God.** It was that inner life that God Him the confidence and freedom to just ask and trust that the Father would give.

-You see this **all through Jesus' ministry.** Just one chapter before this passage in Matthew—Jesus tells His followers,  
**Love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you!**  
(Matthew 5:44 NLT)

How do you love like that if your inner life isn't filled with love? You can't. But all the disciples watched Jesus live that out as He was flogged, slapped around—and nailed to a cross. And they took Him seriously.

-And when Jesus says here,

**That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear...Look at the birds...(Matthew 6:25 NLT)**

He is so saturated with the love of God—and trust for God—He has no sense of lack. He assumes, “Well, of **course** you'll be taken care of. You'll be just **fine!**” To worry would be to betray his inner life's orientation—which is saturated by trust.

2. Now, here's the deal...here's the secret. Jesus want's to give his followers His inner life with God. He wants **us** to have an inner command center that is filled with love and trust and grace.

-We all have an inner life. I do. You do. It's the part of us that makes decisions—and molds how we think and act. Sometimes my inner life isn't saturated with love. Anyone here ever wake up grumpy? I don't—I just let her sleep. **Just kidding!** Truth is, sometimes this inner life in us—this **command center** is filled with criticism, distrust, and suspicion. What this inner life we have is saturated with, friends, affects **everything** we say and do—including those places where we are impoverished! Filled with need and worry.

- See, contrary to what everything thinks, it's **not** what goes on in the **external** circumstances of our lives that stops worry and gives us courage and hope. You can't just talk yourself off the ledge when it comes to worry. Oh, you can talk brave and act confident—but love—and all of it's other components--**peace, goodness, health, joy and hope** comes from the Spirit. And sometimes you have to **DO LIFE AFRAID**—until you find out that God is there and that He hasn't orphaned you.

-The North American way of dealing with worry and fear and anxiety is to try to **control** everything and everyone. Create a perfect life. And we're crazy enough to think that if we have enough money and influence and power—we can do that. And we **can't**.

3. And that—**that** is why Jesus says what he says at the close of this passage on worry:  
**Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need. (Matthew 6:33 NLT)**

-The Kingdom of God, put most simply, is where God reigns and leads. To put it simply—let God be God. So. Have you ever fully submitted what **you** want—to what **He** wants? Have you ever said to God, “Okay, God...**Be God!** I will do what **You** want, not what **I** want—because you're God—not me. I don't **have** to have control!

-When you and I pursue what God is up to here—redeeming and restoring people and creation to **His** leadership and **His** lordship—for that to work, **we** have to be under his Lordship as well. To **refuse** to place ourselves under God's leadership and just do our own thing is to live in **rebellion** against what God wants to do.

4. You will **never** be able to give God permission to lead your life unless you **trust** Him. How many of you have someone in your life that you trust. Like **really** trust. You trust that they believe the best about you. You trust that they aren't talking about you behind your back, that they're who they say they are—and you'd place your **life** in their hands?

-How many of you just **met** that person yesterday? Maybe not! Trust takes a combination of **time** and **experience**. Trust increases...and worry decreases one decision, one step forward at a time. Sometimes all you have to trust is the character of God—because the external evidence is really sparse. Jesus says, "God is a loving Father who causes all things within the sphere of his loving care to thrive. Will you **trust** Him? That He's an **excellent** provider, engaged with his creation--good, generous, kind, patient, merciful.

-So how? Do we just say, "God help me trust"—and God zaps it into us—kinda like charging a battery? Well, we have to get to know **other's** experience with Him and His Character—as it's recorded in the Bible. But that's not enough. We actually have to choose to trust Him. Trusting isn't a feeling. Trusting is where you **act in faith**—and then the feelings follow.

-Know this--knowledge by itself **never** turns to trust. And you never **will** trust God—and leave worry behind—until you just **do** what you should do—even if you're afraid. You'll never trust Him to help you forgive—until you **choose** to forgive; you'll never trust Him to provide until you **give**—and find He's way more generous than you. You'll **never** find that His grace is enough for those impoverished places in your soul—until you let Him in. And over time, you realize that Jesus is telling the truth about God when He says, "God takes care of **everything** else--**you'll be just fine!**"

5. The alternative to trust is not a good one. I always thought that the Bonsai Tree was a great example of purposely stunting your life. Know how they grow Bonsai Trees? They take a tree when it's young, and keep trimming it and bruising it so that it stays tiny and cute—and small enough to keep on a plant stand.

-Is that what you want for your life? Tiny? Cute? "Awww—it's so **cute? How did you make your life so tiny and compact and doable?"** Down through the years, those who have followed God have had immense missions—way beyond themselves. Bonsai doesn't work when God asks you, like He did Moses, to confront the most powerful man on earth and tell him to release his entire workforce. Bonsai doesn't work when God asks you to be more than a beautiful face in a harem and lay everything on the line for your people—as He did Esther. Bonsai is cute, but it doesn't work when God asks you to confront 700 prophets of a foreign god—as He did Elijah.

-How will you ever have the guts to live on the edge—if you trust **you** but not God—not really? How will you ever have the guts to leave a prosperous, safe life—and do what God asks—even if it seems dangerous—when your very first instinct is to **worry**? How can you inspire your friends and family to trust God for their eternity—if **you** won't trust Him with something as stupid as money and stuff?

-See, that's what the **Kingdom** is about. Living the inner life of Jesus—saturated with the love of God—and absolute trust **in** God! Believing that because you are loved, you'll be **just fine!**

- B. Now, there are two things I want to say in closing. Jesus gets at the foundation of worry—and gives us the image of birds and wildflowers—and how they're cared for. We all know that birds and wildflowers don't have the complications of human life. Sometimes being clueless to the threats life offers works—and birds and wildflowers are clueless. We aren't.

-I'm guessing that if Jesus teaches us **not** to worry—to worry is not just an unpleasant pastime—it's a sin of omission. If worry is based on us trying to control things--and create a perfect life—then we're trying to be God. Is **being God** in anyone's job description this morning? But life does get complicated, doesn't it? And the temptation to worry—and live with anxiety shredding our insides will always be there! So, what do you do?

1. Maybe the first place to look is what Jesus did when **He** got anxious and afraid. Sounds strange, doesn't it—God in flesh, anxious and afraid! We see this the night before He died—when He was under intense Satanic attack in the Garden of Gethsemane. Anyone remember what He did? He prayed. Intensely. To the point where He cried. He asked His Father to take **the cup** away—but in the end, He submitted. **Not my will, but YOUR will be done.**  
-And he walked toward His suffering and death with this incredible strength and peace.
2. Paul, an early leader, talks about **how** to pray in the middle of pain and anxiety and need—because he had been there **many** times. He describes this deep sense of need in his own life as a **messenger of Satan**. He begged God at least three times to take it away. God told him, "This area of need will stay—but it's okay, because **My grace** is sufficient for you, and **My strength** is made perfect in your weakness."
3. Paul, this leader, gets **very** specific about anxiety. Listen to what he says: **Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7 NLT)**

-See the pattern? Pray about everything. Be specific; tell God what is grinding you up. Tell Him what you're worried about; about those things you can't

control. So, let's be clear: What do you **worry** about? **Nothing!** What do you pray about? **Everything.**

-Sometimes when I pray, I whine. I keep going through the same thing again and again. Like a little kid, I guess I think if I whine and grovel enough—God is more likely to answer. This says, “Pray—then **thank** Him.”

-Two things. When you live with intentional gratitude for what you already have—it changes you. Gratitude is a powerful thing. Second—saying “Thanks” to God is an act of confidence that **He’s** handling things—and **you** don’t have to control it.

-And then peace comes. And if it doesn’t? Pray again! Jesus, when he was anxious and afraid went back three times to the Father. And you and I have ever right to ask God for our birthright as His Children. Peace. Peace right in the middle of the most impoverished places in our hearts. This is what **everyone** on this planet is looking for—and it’s **yours!** Do you want it?

#### IV. CLOSING THOUGHTS

- A. This morning we’re going to close with a short film that has come right out of the heart of The Olive Branch—out of the hearts of two women in our church, Judy Hazlett and Cynthia Croker. It’s a dance that some of you have seen here. It all started when Cynthia, a professional dancer, invited whoever wanted to—to join a dance troupe—and the most willing person was Judy. Cynthia had never danced with someone with Parkinson’s—but when they came together, this dance, **Impoverished Places**, was born.

-Well, Karen Pascal took the idea to Canada’s **Bravo** Channel—who gave a grant; a director named Francois Driessen gave his skills and vision to it, and then composer Michael Janzen created an original score. It’s being shown here today as a preview for the cast and crew. Because it was birthed here, you will be the very first audience to see it.

-The **reason** we’re showing it, though, is because it so profoundly describes how God meets us at the deepest, darkest, most impoverished places in our lives.

- B. My question for you is—will you allow God into that place in your life where you are at your lowest, most vulnerable, most anxious point—and let Him meet you there?