

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ. It's "Canada's past time." Do you know what it is? Some say that it's hockey, some say baseball. But that's not the past time I'm talking about. This past time is something that just about everyone does, and they really shouldn't, according to Jesus. It's not a sport. It's a thought, and it is Canada's past time. Do you know what it is?

It's worrying. When was the last time you spent time worrying? Have you ever lost sleep because you were worrying about something? What is worrying? It's when you feel nervous, anxious about the future, because something might happen that you don't want. And you think about it.

We worry about lots of things. We worry about money, about health. If you're a parent, you worry about your kids. I was reading an article the other night, and the author said, "Of course I worry, I'm a parent. I don't sleep at night, I just worry with my eyes closed."

Today, we're going to see what Jesus says about worrying. In his sermon on the mount, Jesus was talking to a group of people who were worried. And right before our Gospel reading, he points out the root cause of worry. He says, "O you of little faith." Did you hear that? The reason we worry is that we have such a small amount of faith. We worry about the future - money and health and our children and everything else, and Jesus says, "Your heavenly Father knows that you need these things."

Trust that your Heavenly Father loves you and cares about your future. And instead of focusing on all those earthly things...seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." Put God first - his kingdom, his rule in your hearts. Put God first, his righteousness, his forgiveness of sins and new life that he gives you - put that first, and trust that all these other things will be given to you as well.

I went to the internet the other day, and typed into the search engine "how to stop worrying." Lots of websites came up. "Pickthebrain.com" says that you're supposed to distract yourself - maybe go running - that will help you stop worrying. "Helpguide.org" says that you should set aside a certain amount of time every day, and limit yourself to worrying just during that time. "Outofstress.com" says that you should just stop trying so hard and live by the moment.

You can also ponder clever sayings if you want to get rid of worrying. Mark Twain once said, "I am an old man, and I have known many troubles. But most of them never happened." I read somewhere that worrying is like a rocking chair - it gives you something to do, but it doesn't get you anywhere. These are nice sayings. But it doesn't get at the root of the problem - why do I worry, and how do I stop it?

In Matthew 6, Jesus tells us to repent. We are all guilty of thinking that God is not big enough or smart enough or loving enough to help us with our problems. That's a lack of faith. Repent, Jesus says. Look at yourself and say, "I am guilty of this lack of faith. This is why I worry so much. I think I'm in charge. I think it's all up to me. Dear Lord, please forgive me for forgetting about you."

And God forgives. God's kingdom and God's righteousness are all about God forgiving you. He forgives you by taking your sins - all of them - even the sin of worrying and puts them all on his Son Jesus. And Jesus pays for your sins on the cross. You never have to worry about your sins again, because Jesus took them away at the cross. You never have to worry that God is angry with you and punishing you for all the bad things you've done in your life, because God punished his Son Jesus in your place. Let your worry fade away

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as you ponder the love and power and wisdom of God, and let your worry be replaced by faith.

One source of constant worry for us is our children How can we best prepare them for the world, and teach them how to deal with the things that cause people to worry? Just think of all the issues that come up in a person's life that a student will eventually have to deal with - relationships, finances, health, temptations, highs and lows, parenting - all kinds of things that can be good, but can also be stressful. How do we prepare these young people? How do we help them to step into the future, not filled with worry, but filled with confidence and knowledge? Academics are very important, and co-curricular programs are helpful too. But what the students really need is to seek first God's kingdom and God's righteousness. That means time spent in God's Word. That means focusing on Jesus Christ and what he has done and what he promises to do. There is nothing in the world more important than being educated about the power and love and wisdom of God. The goal, is that a student is able to enter the world, not worried, but confident, and ready to glorify God as he or she faces the challenges of life.

If you are a parent, and you were given a questionnaire about your child, and you had to fill in the blank - how would you do it? Here was the question. As a parent, I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are... what? Fill in the blank. What would you fill in if you were a parent? I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are... making lots of friends? Getting good grades? Making all the sports teams! I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are... healthy? Happy! How would you fill it in?

The book of the Bible 3 John, chapter 1 verse 4 goes like this: "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth." For a parent, there is no greater joy than that. That the child would be walking in the truth

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that God loves him, that God forgives her, that God cares about him, that God helps her. "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth." That you do not need to worry. That you can seek first God's kingdom and God's righteousness, and trust that all these other things will be given to you as well.

This is why God's Word is so important for young people. And this is why God's Word is so important in the life of every Christian, no matter what stage of life you are in. May God take away your worries, and give you a heart of faith, in Jesus' name. Amen.