

Sermon: Don't lose your head when your feet get wet!

Reading: Mark 4:35- end

Introduction

Are you a born worrier? Are you the type of person who worries about everything? Do you find yourself worrying even when you don't have anything to worry about? Worry and anxiety are closely related and are often unwelcome visitors who can arrive unannounced and usually outstay their welcome! These two characters are no strangers to each other, they know one another well and work together when they can. Worry and Anxiety are always in good company together but very rarely are they good company when they enter into our lives and homes, they do not make pleasant companions and definitely not good household guests.

Whenever we entertain them we soon discover the relationship is one way, we never feel happy in their presence as they are like kleptomaniacs and will rob us of our peace and joy if they can get their clutches on them. Then they will steal our sleep, rob us of our the gifts of being in the present (here and now) and deny us hope for the future.

Do you know these two? How well do you know them? Some have entertained them for so long now that life would feel strange without their company. But who are these two unwelcome visitors who outstay their welcome? Can we actually rid our lives and homes of these two squatters?

In our reading today we see even the most confident and robust of characters like fishermen can be overcome when they allow these characters to journey with them in the boat. No one really knew they were there with them until the storm hit, then these two soon raise their heads and made their presence known. Jesus demonstrates how we are to deal with these two characters, the disciples have a wonderful lesson to learn, may the Lord also bless us with the same learned lesson.

Reading

That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side." Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"

He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

Context

Mark's gospel is an action packed gospel. His opening statement begins with good news about a person called Jesus who is the Son of God (**Mark 1:1**). Now that is a remarkable statement to make. Skeptics and critics would be the first to say, you've made a bold statement, now prove it! So Mark spends the remaining chapters of the gospel doing just that! Mark's gospel is packed full with amazing things which Jesus does. There has never been anyone like Him, and there has not been anyone like Him ever since. Consider these.....

Jesus is baptised and we read the Holy Trinity together

Jesus battles with Satan in the wilderness for 40 days and nights

Jesus preaches repentance for the Kingdom of God has come near

Jesus drives out a demon from a man

Jesus heals Peter's mother in law from a fever

Jesus heals many who came with various diseases

Jesus heals a man with leprosy

All this and we are still in chapter 1 of Mark's gospel. Now that is an action packed 45 verses.

Mark's aim is to make it unmistakably clear, that Jesus is God. Yes, He is fully human which we observe as Jesus falls asleep in the boat, exhausted by the days events. When we look at what He did in one single day we can understand why He would be exhausted. This does not diminish Jesus Divinity in the slightest, for He did not give up His Divinity when He took on flesh, instead He chose to lay down the rights to these powers. Choosing to dwell with us, as one with us. Coming to serve not to be served. Jesus the God/Man reveals this so wonderfully for us, Mark shows us both Jesus humanity and His Divinity clearly and undeniable for us. While the fishermen are in a panic Jesus remains calm and what Jesus does next should take our breath away, and fill us with awe as it did with the disciples. For if we can learn today's lesson well, we will be able to evict the two unwelcome visitors who seem to follow us from our homes and stick alongside us all day long. Worry and Anxiety are rubbish travel companions.

Before we take a closer look at the reading let's get better acquainted with these two characters Worry and Anxiety.

Sometimes we use the words worry and anxiety interchangeably but they are two different characters. Worry is the first character to arrive who whispers all is not right and you need to worry about this, as worry draws our attention to an issue. Now don't get me wrong, Worry does have some positive points, as there are some things in life where we do need to focus a bit more of our time and energy on. However the problem arises when Worry gets us to look at the problem/issue through its magnifying glass and then the issue grows and can look so huge. Worry giggles with glee. As we continue looking through the magnifying glass Worry begins pointing out details we had not noticed before. Now we have an accumulation of things to worry about, this begins to heighten our stress levels and then Anxiety comes along to join the party.

The main difference between Worry and Anxiety is this....

Worry uses our mind as its playground, stopping our minds from enjoying the moments of joy in our day to focus solely upon the problem all day!

Anxiety likes to join in the playground of our minds but this character likes to gate crash our body. Anxiety is characterised by feelings of tension, stressed breathing, worried negative thoughts and all of these manifest themselves in physical problems and bodily changes like increased blood pressure, digestive problems, tension, sleeplessness, IBS etc.

Anxiety enjoys befuddling our minds which makes it much harder to think through the problems Worry has introduced to us rationally. Anxiety likes to take obscure routes through our mind and body which makes it difficult to trace back to the root. Anxiety grows like bind weed in many different directions at the same time. Anxiety marks itself by catastrophic thinking.

Anxieties lie

The main concern which people have who suffer from anxiety is they will not be able to cope. They underestimate their ability to combat the negative outcomes which Worry presents. This is why Anxiety is so catastrophic, its a lie we can end up believing.

A question to help us connect the dots at this point is what triggers worry and anxiety for us? Is it our health or the health of others? Finances, Being accepted, being alone? Relationships? When we begin to explore what triggers our worries and anxieties you have just met the hidden third character who so far has remained quiet but is the silent partner in this trio's strange business. What am I speaking of? - FEAR.

Fear is probably Satan's most common weapon against every Christian. Satan knows how best to use the characters of Worry and Anxiety with great effectiveness. Once He can get us to take notice of Worry and Anxiety moves in so do the dark clouds overshadowing the Christian, filling our heart with dread. The ultimate aim is to take our eyes of Jesus and make us ineffective.

Evicting the worry

When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness by Satan, we discover Satan attempted three times to get Jesus to focus on His own personal needs.

You're hungry, turn these stones into bread! (paraphrasing)

Your alone, check the Father is still with you by jumping of this high place! (paraphrase)

You don't have to suffer, I can give all the kingdoms to you, just compromise! (ditto)

Jesus fought Satan with the word of God and Satan does not want you to know its power (why would he?) The Scriptures are an effective tool in our arsenal. This is why Satan wants to make you think this book is irrelevant and has no authority. Once we begin to undermine the authority of Scripture we loose power to fight Satan's attacks and lies.

Jesus wielded the word of God like a sharp two edged sword and Satan was unable to respond and fled. Once Jesus drew the line in the sand and said - no more (illustratively speaking), Satan had no power to influence any further and fled. If we learn to use the word of God, we have a greater power to evict Worry before Anxiety moves in and as we do, Fear no longer becomes the monster we see as a shadow of dancing on our walls in the dark hours of the night, for when we turn on the light we see it is something we can deal with better in the morning after we've had a good sleep.

Wouldn't you like to have the peace Jesus had, who could lay His head on a pillow and fall asleep, even when the wind blows and the waves roar and everyone around Him is running about in a panic! Jesus lives in true peace and contentment and this is the lesson the disciples are to learn from their experience of being in the storm with Jesus.

There is power in the word of God. Why? Because they are literally God's words. After all the Word of God brings order out of chaos (**Genesis1**) and His Word create amazing things from nothing. So learn to use God's word and see changes happen in our lives. Worry can be evicted, Anxiety cannot follow where worry is not. Although Fear still may be lurking, it is not the venomous monster it once was, for we have looked it in the eye and spoken God's word over it and discover its teeth have been pulled. No one is afraid of a gummy monster. It can no longer strike our hearts with the same paralysing fear as it one did because God's words are 'Life' and soothing to our soul, bringing peace to our hearts and enabling us to move forward confidently and boldly with courage.

Evicting worry with God's words

Try it and see. What goes through your mind as you read and ponder these verse of Scripture? Take your time, don't rush them. This is meat on your plate which needs chewing. These words are sweet to the taste which deserve savouring.....

'So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand' **(Isa 41:10)**.

'When I am afraid, I put my trust in you' **(Ps 56:3)**

'Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will ground your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus' **(Phil 4:6-7)**. If St. Paul could write these amazing words while sitting in prison, see how powerfully God's word works in our hearts.

'But now, this is what the Lord says.....Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are Mine' **(Isa 43:1)**.

'Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go' **(Josh 1:9)**.

'Cast your cares on the Lord and He will sustain you; He will never let the righteous fall' **(Ps 55:22)**

How foolish of the disciples were in their frenzy of activity as the wind and the storm grew stronger and how these men seemed to grow in anxiety as the storm grew. All this worry and anxiety clouded their judgment to think rationally as one of them eventually remembered Jesus was in the boat with them.

How human are the words of the disciple who woke Jesus as many of us may have said at one time to God, 'Don't you care if we drown?'

Jesus gets up and sorts out the storm, effectively, quickly and so amazingly, just with His words, saying, 'Quiet! Be still!' Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?" **(Mark 4: 40)**. And there we have key to keep out Fear, Worry and Anxiety - FAITH.

Who is the one who overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God' **(1 John5)**. Its Jesus who gives us His peace, and not as the world gives, **(Jn 14:27)**.

Summary

We must be assured whenever we face storms in life, we can be overcomer because (we) 'Are from God, and have overcome them because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world' **(1John 4:4)**. Remember when we are in a storm and worry creeps in, to ask ourselves is Jesus in our boat?

Do not fear, Fear, replace the whispers of fear with God's word and speak them as you do. Worry can be evicted quite easily, when we take hold the power of God's word in faith. Sing praises to the Lord when the storms hit and show God our faith and courage in Him to walk forward in confidence because of the love God has for you. In peace because Jesus gave His life up for you. In hope because we have a future and this brings us joy.

Amen