

Matthew 6:25-33
November 22, 2018 – THANKSGIVING

No Worries

☛ “What, me worry?” 👉 Kingdom focus

In the name of the Triune God our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, dear thankful Christians:

Doesn't it feel good if you're concerned about something, and a friend or coworker texts you back: **No Worries**? Nothing changed except your point of view because someone else was working on the issue with the same heart, the same loyalty, the same diligence. You're together. **No Worries**!

Do you remember where that expression first came into our culture? Seems to me it was from Australia, as in, “No worries, mate.” Wikipedia¹ says it was once referred to as Australia's national motto. But they want to trace it to some TV Show, *Crocodile Hunter*. Wouldn't you rather put it with that all-time favorite movie, *Crocodile Dundee*? Who could be more cool in the face of a New York mugger than Paul Hogan? Big smile: “Now that's a knife!”

Screen writers are having a hard time coming up with real life heroes these days. Hollywood is so paralyzed by prejudice and phobias of offending some group because anxious worry is engrained in our human condition. Isn't it great to know a real Hero? He says, “**Cast all your cares on him, for he cares for you.**” (1 Peter 5:7) When Christ says, **No Worries**, He even tells you why.

☛ “What, me worry?”

Remember that missing tooth grin of Alfred E. Neuman? His fictional face was around before the 1950's, but *Mad* magazine popularized. Some claimed the big ears and facial features matched famous actors at the time. “**What, me worry?**” Not if you're living in your parents' basement, all expenses paid. But then there's real life. Or is Christianity just grinning your problems away?

You might have thought that except God's own Son came down to earth to experience our human condition first hand. Jesus' life of poverty meant that all He owned was what He wore. Food and shelter always had to be provided day by day from His heavenly Father. God must really love you and me to want to take on Himself all our worries and cares in order to give us peace.

Worry is like a sliver in your finger. Try to ignore it, and it will irritate and fester into something worse. Some slivers are so hard to see. An LED magnifier light and a magnifying glass may still not reveal it. Brushing tweezers back and forth will finally focus the spot to pull. It hurts, but it helps. Your dentist doesn't really want to hurt you. She taps on that bad tooth to see what she can do to help.

God's Son Jesus is preaching His *Sermon on the Mount*. He just mentioned how rust and robbers can destroy your wealth – *Mammon* in Aramaic. Money makes a lousy god; it can't even guard itself. But trying to serve money is impossible for a Christian if he wants to stay a Christian. “**You cannot serve both God and mammon.**”² Worry is a sin that festers into loving money and ruining lives. That means confessing worry is the best way to get rid of it. “**For this reason I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?**”²⁶ **Look at the birds of the air. They do not sow or reap or gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?”**

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/No_worries

² EHV ~ *Evangelical Heritage Version* (<http://wartburgproject.org>) © 2017. NPH: 800-662-6022; also Amazon-Kindle.

Maybe that's why Martin Luther said his favorite preacher was the bird outside his window. All day long he'd sing his heart out to his Creator. At sunset he'd tuck his little head under his wing and fall fast asleep, totally trusting God to care for him all night and even keep him from falling off his branch.

And how about that contest between two artists? Both agreed to paint their best picture of *peace*. One came back with a tranquil scene of quiet pastures or a bowl of fruit – I'm not sure which. But you can't forget the one who won. Picture a raging rapid with a bird on a branch, singing fearlessly above the rushing water below. *Peace* amid turmoil – priceless!

It's what makes the true story of the first Thanksgiving so endearing. During the early days of our nation's history the colonists endured many privations and hardships. As a result, their hearts and minds were filled with gloom bordering on despair, and many were disposed to return to their fatherland with all of its persecutions. When they met to decide on a day for fasting and prayer, an old man...arose to address the assembly. He...thought they had brooded long enough over their misfortune....It seemed high time...[to] consider their blessings instead. [CW 614] The colony was growing strong....Harvests were becoming more plentiful, the rivers were full of fish and the woods with game, the air was sweet and the climate pleasant. Above all, he reminded them that they now possessed what they had come for, full civil and religious liberty. He recommended...a day for thanksgiving rather than for fasting...a day of joy.³ It took a while, but finally, during the dark days of the Civil War, widow-author-mother-of-five Sarah Hale convinced President Lincoln. He declared the national holiday for the last Thursday of November, 1863. Even in war, Lincoln said, we can count our blessings: "They are gracious gifts of the most high God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy."⁴

🕊 Kingdom focus

None of the Black Friday sales can clothe you like God clothes the lilies of the field, Galilee wild flowers growing all around Jesus in His *Sermon on the Mount*. What does worrying accomplish? Can little boy worry himself into a giant if he worries every night for a year? Can a Grandpa or Grandma squeeze out another moment of life by anxious thoughts and sighs day and night? Jesus is using logic to help us think this through. But even better, more powerful is His Word of command. It's like the strength you get if a fireman shouts, "Climb out here. I've got you." Or a lifeguard, "Grab hold. I'll pull you out." Jesus' command is good news that heals: "***So do not worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?'***"³²***For the unbelievers chase after all these things. Certainly your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.***" "Have a great Thanksgiving. I've got this. I gave my Son for you, how could I not give you the best of the rest?" (Roman 8:32)

"Look at me," says Good Friday. Focus on what God has done rather than crashing waves, like Peter: "***Lord, save me!***" ***Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"*** (Matthew 14:30f NIV84) Thank-you, Jesus, for forgiving our doubts too.

Here's a healthy focus for Thanksgiving every day: "***Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.***" Jesus pours His kingdom blessings into your heart through His Word of promise. He runs a pipeline from His own great heart to yours by means of Word and sacrament. Will He ever run out of grace and goodness for you? Is there an end to the steady flow of God's ***righteousness*** for your life of blessing to others? Try this on your next Southwest vacation. Run the kitchen sink until you get cold water. One savvy Arizona resident told a greenhorn from Minnesota, "You'll have to drain the water tower before it runs cold." You'll never drain the heart of God on this or any Thanksgiving. So keep a clear **Kingdom focus**. Let Christ and His concerns occupy your heart instead of so many earthly things. Then when God fills all your needs and piles in many pleasures too, you'll be able to enjoy His gifts with praise. "**No Worries, mate.**" Amen.

³ Rein, R.C. *Treasury of Themes and Illustrations*. Milwaukee, WI: NPH, 1983, ref. 1524.

⁴ Morgan, Robert J. *On This Day* – October 3, "One Woman's Crusade." © 1997. (Thomas Nelson). www.laridian.com. For *The Preacher's Apprentice (TPA)* sermon study or copies: m.cordes@comast.net. New Life Evangelical Lutheran Church You can also call: 651-484-1169. Hear the sermon at www.wels.us/newlife. 180 County Rd F - Shoreview, MN 55126