

Calvary United Methodist Church
October 9, 2011

DON'T WORRY, BE HAPPY
Rev. R. Jeffrey Fisher

Children's Sermon

Philippians 4:6-9



As we the children of God gather, there are some very young children around us and I would invite our young children to come forward at this time for our Children's Message. Good morning everyone, it's good to see you here this morning. Welcome.

Have you ever seen that smiley face before? When you get awake in the morning do you have a smiley face? I like to have a smiley face when I awake in the morning but some days we may not wake up quite as smiley.

Today I want to talk to you about God and how God likes us to be happy all the time. Some times it pretty hard to be happy but he wants us to learn to love the family that God has given us and the gifts he has given us. I want to read this little scripture to you from Philipians.



I'm glad in God, far happier than you would ever guess. Actually, I don't have a sense of needing anything personally. I've learned by now to be quite content whatever my circumstances. I'm just as happy with little as with much, with much as with little.



I don't know that I'm always happy with a little bit. Do you like a lot of things? If you could go into that toy store do you think you could find something you want or do you think you might find a lot of things you would want? I know even if I went into that store I would find a lot of things I want. Sometimes you can only play with one or two toys at a time so we have to learn to share those things we have. Paul was saying even if I don't have much at all we need to share those things we have. Paul was saying even if I don't have much at all I can still be happy and put on that smiley face.



Can you imagine going out to a campfire? Have any of you gone out to a campfire? Isn't that fun? Are there lots of toys around? They are just roasting marshmallows over a fire. So whether we have a lot of things or a very simple life God is teaching us that we need to be content with whatever we have.

Did any of you know it rained last month? Did you know it rained a lot? Some people had water in their houses. Did some of you have water in your house? Some people had their toys destroyed and their washers and their dryers and sofas and carpet destroyed. They had to learn that sometimes we lose things but God is still with us even when things aren't as plentiful as we would like.



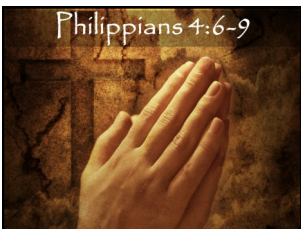
So I think the most important gift that God gives us isn't things. The toys you have may be destroyed and you would lose them. Some houses had to be destroyed because they had so much water in them. But friends can be friends forever. That is a gift that God gives us and we can be happy with and learn to be content with and thankful.

I thank you for coming up today and I hope you will thank God for your moms and dads and all of your friends because they will be there to support you each day and have fun with you.

Message

Philippians 4:6-9

I would like you to hear Paul's words for us today from Philippians. If you have a chance sometime later today of this week I would encourage you to read the whole chapter. It talks to us about worrying and anxiety and the kind of problems that we deal with in our lives. It's God's good word to us that he might comfort us and give us assurance and let us know that we are not alone in these times.



Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. Before you know it, a sense of God's wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life. Summing it all up, friends, I'd say

you'll do best by filling your minds and meditating on things true, novel, reputable, authentic, compelling, gracious—the best, not the worst; the beautiful, not the ugly; things to praise, not things to curse.

Let us sing this hymn to prepare our hearts: *Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying*.



Some years ago you'll probably remember a song, I think it came from Jamaica, called *Don't Worry, Be Happy*. It became bothersome to me because my sister bought one of those hanging fish on the wall and every time you walked by it I'd hear that crazy thing, *Don't Worry, Be Happy*. But the words are good.

All the worry in the world never changed anything. All the worry in the world has never added a day or a moment to your life. If anything, it has done just the opposite with creating all kinds of health issues in our life. Worry in some ways take the responsibility off from God and says, "God I'm bigger than you. I'm going to take care of this problem. I'm going to figure it out. I'm going to find a way to solve it myself other than trusting in you."



I like these smiley guys because I would like to think that even in the worst of times I can somehow muster up a smile knowing that God is with me. I do not face it alone. I'm always amazed when I speak to my friends who I check with in Sierra Leone, which has suffered so much war and so much devastation and rarely enough food and hardly anything in the world, and I say "How are you doing?" They reply, "Oh, by God's grace, we are doing fine." I don't know that I always say that and I live in a land of great comfort. I haven't had nearly the loss. But God gives us something inside when we can replace our worries with his righteousness. We can simply say to God, I don't understand, I don't know, I don't always accept everything that happens, but I know God you are with me. I know I am not alone in facing the things that I face.



Worry doesn't constrain itself to any age, any group, any population. You probably know that by now. If you are young you are probably wondering, Lord, will my friends accept me? Will I get into

the school that I want? Can I play the sports that I want? Will I be successful in the things that I want? Will anyone ever love me? Will I find a relationship that is important? Then we go along and as we mature we get into family issues and we still wonder will someone love me and will they be committed to me and will we have enough money to raise a family? If I have a child will everything be okay with the child? Then as we grow older we start worrying about health issues. We start worrying about our future and the loss of our loved ones. We wonder about the separations. We wonder if we will enjoy retirement. We wonder and we wonder and we worry and we worry.

In all of those things God is reminding us; please know that you are not alone when you go through these things. I, your God, will walk with you even in the valley of the shadow of death to be with you.

I think sometimes there are reasons why we don't bother with God with prayer anymore than we don't ask our parents and our friends sometimes to help. There are times when you try to do things around the home and I suspect because we are independent you try to lift something that you shouldn't lift on your own. You hurt your back and your friend says, "How in the world did you hurt your back?" You respond, "I was trying to move the refrigerator by myself." Your friend says, "Why didn't you ask for help?" You reply, "Oh, I didn't want to bother." Have you ever said that—I didn't want to bother anyone?

As a parent, would your children, if they have a legitimate need, ever be considered a bother? I doubt it. If you love your children you will do anything for your children and God says we are his children. God says there is nothing too trivial to ask that he would be with us. He would give us the strength; he would give us the support that we know that we are not journeying through these difficulties alone. He is the God who has created the universe. He is the God who has seen the rise and fall of nations. He is the God who raised his own son, Jesus, from the grave. I think he can handle our problems. Actually, I know God can handle our problems and God will be with us.

We say why is it that sometimes in life seems so easy and some things so difficult? It's because life itself as a journey is not easy. Bad things do happen to good people and bad things happen to bad people

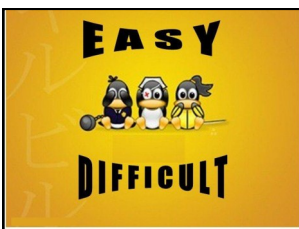


and everyone in between. So it is when we are faced with those things we say Lord where are you and how can I face these things? God tries to let us know that he will be with us even in those difficult moments when the trials are before us. God wants to be with us, even sometimes when we feel we are going to pull every hair out of our heads. Have you ever been to that point? You are so frustrated you think what can I do about this situation? We come up against a roadblock because we don't know what to do.

God tells us time and time again through this passage of scripture that we should seek him, that we should seek his righteousness and seek his way. And somehow in the midst of that God, himself, wants to bring us comfort.

Sometimes there are reasons why we worry because we refuse to face things straight on and to deal with them in the way they need to be dealt with. I live in a very real world and sometimes the very real world frightens me because I don't like the things that come down my way. I don't like it when I'm broken down on the interstate with two lanes of traffic going 70 miles an hour around me. I don't like it when someone in my family says they have some health issues and I don't know what to do with it. I don't like it when I look at the economy and wonder if I'll ever be able to retire. We could have a full long list but instead of worrying about those things, God again tells us not to pretend, not to act like an ostrich and put our head in the ground but to come with him and come to him with everything we have. When we pretend and we worry it's like we don't trust God. We don't turn it over to God.

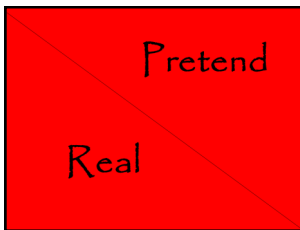
There are many times in life things come and when we don't face them head on the problems can multiply. I remember school—it's been a long time but I remember it. Some of the students who are here today are probably facing what I did then. You go into a little class as a student and you don't know math very good and you are not real good at sciences or perhaps the English is a little difficult. Perhaps you are in college and still having these issues. Weeks go by and the quizzes go by and you aren't doing so well. Actually you are getting D's and you are wondering if you will pass. Now there are some options: you can either study harder or you can get a tutor or you can talk





to the teacher and say I do not understand it. But let's pretend I'm going to get better and the end of the semester comes or the end of the year and you are failing because you have never sought out what you needed to seek.

We do that sometimes with our finances. We see it getting tighter and tighter and tighter and we don't address the issue until all of sudden we are really in trouble. We do that with health. My mother and I have talked a lot in recent weeks. I am more and more convinced that my father, about eight months before he grew ill with cancer, knew he had cancer. But it's better to pretend than to face it. There are a lot of times when we notice different about our body. Something doesn't feel right or look right. I had one 90 year old say, "I'm not going to the doctor. I haven't been there in 20 years because I know if I go they will find something wrong." There might be some truth to that too.



There are so many things in our life that if we quit pretending, quit putting our head in the sand; we can save some of those broken relationships. We can find healing for some of our bodies. We can find cures for the math and the science and the English problems. There are so many situations in our life where worry won't help but taking action will help. Doing something to transform what is not working now into something that might be a solution is possible in many cases if we are willing and able to do it.



We don't have a crystal ball. There are many times people wish we had a crystal and yet there are other times I'm not sure I want to know my future, it might be scary down the road. The crystal ball thing is sort of like the stuff I talked about at the beginning about children and we as adults. We want to know what will my future look like. Will things work out for me? Will I ever have my own home? Will I be able to do this or that? Will I be financially stable? Will I—whatever it is? And God says to us again that we need to leap of faith. We need to step out that we might trust God in those times when we do not even understand.

There aren't many things in life that are dependable. Do you realize police people get robbed? Do you know that lawyers get sued?

Do you realize that people who work hard sometimes don't succeed? Those things really happen and they are very real to us everyday of our life.



So in the midst of that the thing that God is asking us to do is not worry but to place our trust in God. He says that our trust ought to be like the faithfulness and righteousness that other have sought after many, many years before we came into existence. He reminds us in Matthew that if he cares for the birds of the air who don't have silos of food and don't have anything stored away and he cares for the flowers of the field and clothes them in such glory, certainly God cares that much for you and me.

His idea of faithfulness and righteousness comes from the act of trusting in his son, Jesus Christ. There are times we as the people who walk on this earth try to earn everything. There are times we, as the people who walk on this earth, try to earn everything. I know that I have struggled with earning people's acceptance all my life. That's a problem for some of us. Have you ever tried that? You want your teachers to like you. You want your friends to like you. There are times when we do things and participate in actions and this is where pressure gets to be a problem because we want to be accepted and loved and cared for so much we do things that aren't really who we are. God asks us instead to come to him trusting and in righteousness it comes through Jesus Christ. I cannot earn God's love. We know that. I cannot earn it by giving more money. I can't earn it by just going and helping everybody I know needs help. It is free. God says would you please stop worrying whether I love you. You know that you are my child. I created you and I love you just as you are. That's our God. Through righteousness in Jesus Christ what Jesus does has said to God these are your children and I will love them and care for them. And God says to all of us this day, I love you and I care for you. I wish you would get rid of those burdens. I wish you would cast them upon me that I could carry them for you. That is why the son, Jesus Christ, came, that we need not carry those worries.

When we start wondering about the justice and life of mercy and whether we will be cared for, I want to show you a couple photos that show you how we change our minds in life. I have been in places



around the world in Asia, South America and Africa where this would be a typical home. But poor people in these countries don't have anything that nice. That wouldn't be a home that most of us would want without windows and doors and electric and carpet and things.



And then we could come to a home like this. You see some of these in our community and they probably have every commodity that you would want in them: sports rooms, entertainment centers, nice rest room facilities. All that we want and we think it would be nice to have that.



Then we go back to the homes that were built around here in the 60's and 70's and we might as well have that as a shack in Africa. So many times when we start comparing ourselves we think oh my, I really don't have anything compared to other people. I really don't have the kind of life I wanted. But if you were that person in that first house, if you were in that different situation you would be so grateful for this last house that God has given to you that you have worked for. God doesn't just drop houses out of the sky. You have to apply yourself.



In the midst of all these things Jesus came to talk to the people, both the children and the aged of his time, to tell them if they would drop the worry at his feet he would carry the burdens for us.

What is it that we can replace worry with? How about things like simplicity? We worry a lot of times about things. I had a friend who came from nothing and became a physician and acquired some fairly reasonable wealth and had a lot of things. They were so worried about losing their things they wouldn't leave their home. They wouldn't travel to their home in Florida anymore. They wouldn't travel to other places for fear that someone would take what they had earned. They were robbed of life by their own worries and their own fears.

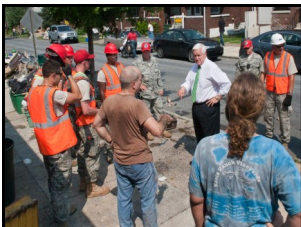
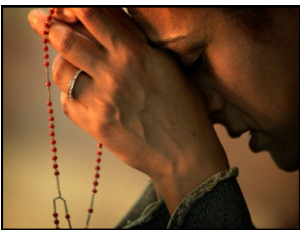
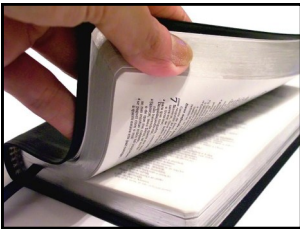
How about learning to love the way Jesus Christ loved? If we would learn to love others we wouldn't worry about the people around us because we would be caring for others. And if you care of others most likely they are going to respond with care for you.

How about ridding our lives of words that are negative? We used to have a rule about my friends and stuff in our house when I was little and we had children around the house. You can't use that word hate. I don't care if you hate peas, hate isn't a good word. There are a lot of negativities when we start talking whether it's about politics or problems in our community or finances. If we rid ourselves of those kinds of negative things, a lot of times some of that worry will leave us as well, because a lot of those things that we start talking about and become bothersome in our life are things we can't change. They draw the spirit of life right out of us.

Worry does more than just pull our spirits down. If you have ever been to a doctor ask them about worry. Do you ever see people who have headaches all the time because they grind their teeth so much because they are worried all the time? Or people that their guts are so wrenched they can hardly eat and they have all kinds of stomach problems and headache problems and high blood pressure problems because they worry about things they cannot change.

There are things that Jesus said we can do. Some of that is to become righteous like Jesus Christ and getting to know Christ. There is only really one way to know God's will—to me. It's to know God. We get to know God by doing a variety of things: by spending time with Godly people, by reading God's word, by spending time in prayer, by seeking God with our heart and our soul and our mind in all the ways of our life. In all the ways of our life we are to seek God first.

It is easy when we are part of this society, in particular, to seek nicer things. When the floods came through a couple weeks and I saw all the homes and even in my neighborhood. Thank God I was saved but across the street I saw sofas coming out, doors that had swollen. I saw carpets coming out and thing that people had worked for and earned and longed for and desired—gone. We see it all the time in the news when there are fires, when there are earthquakes, when there are tornados and hurricanes.



Our life is more than this brief one hundred years or less on this earth. Our life is a call from God to give our life back to God as a gift. Our righteousness comes not when we seek these things on earth but when we seek God with our heart and our soul and our mind. To seek God is sometimes done through the reading of God's word. Sometimes it's done through worshipping and being on retreats. Some times it is by being in prayer and asking God to fill those painful, hurtful, lonely places of our heart with assurance that we will not be alone even when we aren't sure about tomorrow. And sometimes, yes, it is service. Sometimes when we serve others and we are present with other people our worries dissipate as we see that God will even take care of these people in the midst of their worries.

I saw someone on TV the other week. I think he was from Marietta, whatever that little village was that was flooded. He said it was his third flood. I'm thinking, O Lord I would move to higher grounds. But he said, "I'll rebuild here again because I love the river and it's peaceful." I'm thinking evidently his stuff doesn't matter much to him because he is willing to accept the beauty of the river and the joy of living in that neighborhood more than worrying about all the things he had lost.



Trust becomes our utmost thing. When we worry it's turning to God and saying I'm going to hold this back. I'm not sure you can handle it so I'm going to worry for you. And God invites us to place all of our trust in God's hands which is a big leap of faith for all of us in our times of need.



All of you have seen children at some point leap into someone's arms and you wonder if someone is going to catch them. They jump off of whatever it is and that's the kind of faith it takes to be able to trust in God. We leap into what we are certain of and what we believe in. Children trust their parents. They trust that when they take that leap mom or dad is going to gather them and embrace them and be present for them. And if you know that as a parent here, imagine our Heavenly Father, who is our parent, and how much God wants to love you and care for you and invite you to leap into his arms of total trust and total space that God will be with us in every moment of our need.



God has created us to be a gift; a gift to the world around us. Not only to our family and our friends and our co-workers, we are a gift to the world. When we worry and we fret we take something away from ourselves. We rob ourselves of life and we rob others by just freely giving of ourselves.

Most of you read this week about the passing of Steve Job. By the time he was twenty-five he was a millionaire and later a billionaire. He had a very important speech five years ago at Stanford University. I would encourage those of you who have computers to get on and take a peek at that speech. He said when he finally realized that he had to face death the games were over of what's important. "I can totally be what I want to be. I can be honest. No pretend. No head in the sand. I can be honest and do and go and dream." I don't know his exact words but he was basically saying when we worry about what others think about us, what they believe about us and worry about that acceptance we aren't really living out what God has created us to freely be.

So many times we have spent lives worrying about things that never come to pass. We do. We worry about things that never come to pass and so hold ourselves back that gee I always wanted to do ballet but never tried it. (Not really.) Gee, I really wanted to go to college but I never did. I loved Dear Abby a number of years ago when a mother in the column said she was thirty-eight years and started college, dropped out, had a baby, been a mother. I always wanted to go to Med School but now I figure I'll be forty-five when I get out. And Abby said, "You're going to be forty-five whether you go to college or not." Don't worry. Just go do what you need to do.

Quit worrying about what you could be and what you could do and what others think. Quit worrying about tomorrow for today has enough worries. God said, "I will be with you." And that is the promise from God to all of us today. God loves us. God sustains us. God's spirit is present for us. And God promises to be with us even in the darkest days of our lives.