

Menifee United Church of Christ

Established in 1962 by God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit

SERMON FOR

December 13, 2015

“Do Not Worry About Anything”



Reverend Bill Freeman: Senior Minister
Eckart Seeber: Music Minister
Marie Paulus-Nyquist: Children's Minister
Velna Pitts: Lay Reader

Menifee United Church of Christ

Sunday Service and Sunday School 10 AM

*26701 McCall Boulevard,
Menifee, California 92586
(951) 679-1149*

Email: uccmenifee@gmail.com

Website: menifeeucc.org

Following Jesus

Isaiah 12:2-6

Surely God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid, for the LORD GOD is my strength and my might; he has become my salvation. With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. And you will say on that day: Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name; make known his deeds among the nations; proclaim that his name is exalted. Sing praises to the LORD, for he has done gloriously; let this be known in all the earth. Shout aloud and sing for joy, O royal Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.

Philippians 4:4-7

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Do Not Worry About Anything

Jack had been a worrier for years, to the point where it was ruining his life. Jack saw a psychologist who recommended a specialist who could help him stop worrying. Bob, Jack's friend, noticed a dramatic change in Jack. Bob said, "Jack, what happened? Nothing seems to worry you anymore." Jack said, "Nope. I hired a professional worrier and I haven't had a worry since." Bob said, "That must be expensive." Jack said, "Oh yes, it is. He charges me \$5,000 a month." Bob said, "\$5,000 a month! How can you afford to pay him?" Jack said, "I don't know. I'll let him worry about that."

Worry has some of us, well, worried. While others of us never worry about anything at all. Like Jack. And like a couple friends of mine. One friend says, "No worries, Bill." Another friend

says, "It's all good, Bill." In fact, Kathleen and I saw a bar in Florida called, the "It's all good" bar. (I'll drink to that.)

What good does worry do? Probably nothing. Although, maybe it keeps us on our toes. If we're worried about losing our significant other to someone else, maybe it makes us pay closer attention to our significant other and treat our significant other better. If we're worried about losing our job, maybe it makes us work a little harder, or maybe it makes us look for another job before we lose our current job. If we're worried about failing our class, maybe it makes us study a little harder so we don't fail our class. (Or maybe it makes us take an easier class next time.)

Do you worry? Or are you worry-free? What does the Bible say about worry? And do we pay attention to what the Bible says about worry? (And do we worry, if we don't pay attention to what the Bible says about worry?) Well, the Bible has plenty to say about worry, of course. Basically the Bible says, like that old Bobby McFerrin song, "Don't worry. Be happy."

Paul the Apostle tells us, "Do not worry about anything." Paul tells us, if you start to worry, take your worries to God in prayer. In other words Paul tells us, let go and let God. Isaiah the Prophet tells us that God is our salvation, so we should trust in God and not worry. Isaiah tells us God is our strength and our might. Isaiah tells us to, "Give thanks to God," and to tell people all that God has done for us. And Jesus tells us, "do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear." Jesus tells us, "Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?" Jesus tells us: Look at the birds and consider the lilies; God takes care of them and God will take care of us.

So, with Paul, let us let go and let God. Are you worried about your loved ones? Let go and let God. Are you worried about your finances? Let go and let God. Are you worried about your future? Let go and let God.

And with Isaiah, let us tell people that God has given us this beautiful community of Menifee, California. Let us tell people that God has given us this magnificent church, full of compassionate adults and kind children. And let us tell people that God has given us this church full of eager volunteers, who fed 144 people on Thanksgiving Day.

And with Jesus, let us thank God for taking care of the birds. Let us thank God for taking care of the lilies. And let us thank God for taking care of us, and for taking care of everyone. And if it doesn't look like God is taking care of us, or taking care of everyone, let us thank God for welcoming all of us one day into eternal life in heaven above. And let us not worry. Not that there isn't plenty that could make us worry.

Islamic terrorists - like the ones in San Bernardino, California a week and a half ago, that killed 14 people and wounded 21 others - could make us worry. Christian terrorists - like the one in Colorado Springs, Colorado a few weeks ago, that killed three people and wounded 9 others at a Planned Parenthood clinic - could make us worry. Presidential candidates could make us worry. Let's take these potential worries one at a time.

Will Islamic terrorists strike again in America? San Bernardino wasn't the first time they struck, of course. Islamic terrorists have also struck in Boston, Massachusetts, Ft. Hood, Texas, and Chattanooga, Tennessee. Not to mention New York City, Washington DC, and Pennsylvania on 9/11. Will Christian terrorists strike again in America? Colorado Springs wasn't the first time they struck, of course. Christian terrorists have also struck in South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama. "But, Pastor: Christian terrorists don't exist. Islamic terrorists are the only terrorists that exist." I know, you might get that impression from the media. But whether they have a foreign-sounding name or an American-sounding name: A terrorist is a terrorist is a terrorist.

“Okay, Pastor, but do you really think presidential candidates could make us worry? How?”

Well, if elected, will they ban all Muslims from coming to America, which experts say would be contrary to the U.S. Constitution? Some people might worry about that. If elected, will they push for a Constitutional amendment, overturning Same-Sex Marriage, which experts say has given millions of gays and lesbians marriage equality? Some people might worry about that. If elected, will they appoint justices to the U.S. Supreme Court who will one day overturn *Roe v. Wade*, which experts say has given millions of women the right to control their own bodies? Some people might worry about that. And if elected, will they outlaw Obamacare, which experts say has given healthcare to more than 16 million people? Some people might worry about that.

Now, I’m a minister. And as you know, ministers are not allowed to endorse presidential candidates from the pulpit. So I don’t endorse presidential candidates from the pulpit. In fact, I don’t even talk about politics from the pulpit. But I’m a United Church of Christ minister. So I do talk about justice from the pulpit. And this is a United Church of Christ church. So, you’re free to think and talk about justice issues all you want. All I’d suggest is, when you think about Islamic terrorists, Christian terrorists, and presidential candidates: Don’t worry. Other people would say the same thing.

Gandhi says people who have faith in God, “should be ashamed to worry about anything.” Winston Churchill says, “I never worry about action, but only inaction.” And cartoonist Charles Schulz says, “Don’t worry about the world coming to an end today. It’s already tomorrow in Australia.” And then there’s Jimmy Carter. Jimmy Carter announced this past summer that he had brain cancer. But at 90 - now he’s 91 - he wasn’t worried. In fact, Jimmy Carter said he was looking forward to this next “new adventure.” Wow. To be that worry-free. And as you may

know, Jimmy Carter told his church recently that he is now cancer-free. Is Jimmy Carter cancer-free because of a new drug he took? Or because people prayed for him? Or because he wasn't worried? Or because of all of the above? God only knows.

Sometimes, whatever might make us worry, we can do something about. Let's say you're worried about people being alone on Christmas day. Don't worry. Invite those people to come to our church and come to our church yourself for our "Free Christmas Day Dinner" on December 25 at 2 PM. You and they will enjoy ham, scalloped potatoes, vegetables, rolls, and Christmas cookies. And you'll enjoy each other's company and the company of others. See? Nothing to worry about.

Or let's say you're worried about people hearing hateful messages in the church they attend - hateful messages about a hateful god who created us to hate us; not to mention hateful messages about gays, women, immigrants, and others. Don't worry. Invite those people to come to our church and come to our church yourself. You and they will hear loving messages about a loving God, who created us to love us - all of us - including gays, women, immigrants, and others. See? Nothing to worry about.

Or let's say you're worried about people hearing hurtful messages in the media about Muslims - like all Muslims are terrorists. Don't worry. Invite people to come to our church and come to our church yourself on January 24, when I'll have a one-on-one discussion during our 10 AM worship service with Abdallah Jadallah, Director of the Perris, California Islamic Center. You will also be able to ask him questions. Hopefully after that, we'll all have a better understanding of Muslims and we'll all have a better understanding of Islam than we get from certain news channels. See? Nothing to worry about. And we shouldn't be worried anyway, especially during this time of year,

when we should be enjoying baby Jesus, loved ones, Christmas cookies, and Christmas carols.

“Angels We Have Heard On High,” is a Christmas carol that gives us wonder, rather than worry. Especially when we sing about angels “sweetly singing o’er the plains,” because of the birth of Jesus. And, “O Come, All You Faithful,” is a Christmas carol that gives us wonder rather than worry. Especially when we sing about being “faithful, joyful, and triumphant,” because of the birth of Jesus.

The birth of Jesus should give us wonder, rather than worry. Because the birth of Jesus is the birth of faith, hope, love, and joy. And you cannot worry, if you have faith, hope, love, and joy. In fact, I believe, if you have faith, hope, love, and joy, they won’t lead you to worry; they’ll lead you to peace. The kind of peace we talk about this time of year: Peace on earth, good will to all.

So, let us give up worry, like Jimmy Carter did, as a birthday present to Jesus and as a Christmas present to ourselves. But let us not wait until December 25 to give up worry. Let us give up worry now, as an early Christmas present to ourselves. Then we’ll be able to say, along with my friends, “It’s all good,” and, “No worries.” And then we’ll be able to say, along with Paul, “Do not worry about anything.”

Let us pray...

*God of Love,
Help us not to worry.
Help us to help others not to worry.
And help us to know that you want us not to worry.
Now and forevermore.
By the power of the Holy Spirit.
And in the name of Jesus.
Amen.*

THE GOLDEN RULE

*Do to others what you would
have them do to you.*
Christianity

*What is hateful to you
do not do to others.*
Judaism

*None of you believes until he wishes for his
brother what he wishes for himself.*
Islam

*Do not do to others
what would cause pain if done to you.*
Hinduism

*Hurt not others in ways that you yourself
would find hurtful.*
Buddism

*Regard your neighbor's gain as your gain,
and your neighbor's loss as your loss.*
Taoism

*Do not do to others
what you do not want them to do to you.*
Confucianism

*Treat other people
as you'd want to be treated in their situation.*
Humanism