

In the cartoon comic strip 'Peanuts' featuring Charlie Brown, creator Charles Shultz crafted an episode with Charlie and Linus walking together.

Linus, as always, has his blanket and he is dragging it behind him. He turns to Charlie and says "You look kind of depressed, Charlie Brown."

Charlie Brown answers, "I worry about school a lot."

Then he added, "And I worry about my worrying so much about school."

By this time Charlie and Linus are sitting on a bench together. Charlie Brown looks up at Linus and says, "Even my anxieties have anxieties."

How much do you, we worry? Do you, do we worry about worrying?

I think it would be fair to say that within the walls of our houses there is a fair amount of worrying goes on. If we share a house with someone I reckon that at any given time somebody is doing some worrying. It might be us - or might be someone we live with.

If I'm honest and this is what I am asking of all of us today - I do have worries. I might be calm on the exterior - maybe I or you think of me as laid back - but I recognize my worries. Like the rest of you my worries concern self - the people I love - this church - the broad church - society and the world. Not to mention the performance of my football team or the Scottish Rugby team of course. How's that to be going on with?

I believe we all have worries!

What we can say on top of this - and I ask you to ponder this statement- its one thing to worry – it's another thing all-together to worry about having worries. As Charlie Brown remarks – I am so anxious – I realize even my anxieties have anxieties.

This morning I am making a bold interpretation of what Jesus was referring to in his graphic illustration featuring lilies and birds within his Sermon on the Mount. I think that what Jesus is really addressing is the sense that even our worries have worries – the sense that we have a tendency to worry when we worry – get anxious about being anxious in the first place.

In looking at Jesus words and it's easy to conclude that what he is saying is don't worry!

But is he really telling us not to worry – is he actually saying that such a thing is possible?

Let's face it Jesus had some worries of his own to contend with in his earthly life. We have the accounts of this through the gospel. Jesus worried! Yes he did. And it's not very useful to appreciate this.

'Take this suffering away from me' he cried out, 'if it be your will'

He worried about what he saw in the Temple and lashed out in anger and frustration.

He worried about his mother and who would take care of her after he departed.

He worried about the little children and them feeling excluded.

He worried for his Disciples and friends.

Jesus was Human. We would therefore expect him to worry – for is it not human nature to worry?

Worry can be useful – natural and essential.

We worry about a child's safety therefore we teach that child to cross roads properly. We take that child's hand as we walk along a busy road.

We worry about our teenagers. We buy and pay for mobile phones so they can contact us and be contactable. We ask them to be home at a certain time keep safe.

We worry about our wives and husbands; how they are feeling and we seek to comfort and support them when we detect vulnerabilities.

We worry about the state of the society, nation and world – and so we are driven to vote in democratic elections and offer to volunteer to build better communities where we can.

As human beings we worry – but maybe its worry that drives us to build, protect, love and look after.

When we consider Jesus words and the graphic picture he paints using reference to lilies and birds it's easy to conjure in our minds a calm and beautiful hillside and a carefree life and imagine that's what God offers us. But I think Jesus encouragement to think of the things he says is not to be taken lightly - it's not just a pretty watercolor – it's a hard lesson for taking with us that Jesus thinks will stand us in good stead to remember and live by.

Jesus says, 'Look at the birds of the air... Consider the lilies of the field.'

Now is it just me or do you notice something strange here. I may be wrong but Birds – don't have mortgages, they don't use petrol, they don't have Bills to pay; Lilies don't have the stress of bringing up a family or school exams or competition in the workplace.

How appropriate then is it of Jesus to compare our lives with theirs – our worries with their worries (or lack of them).

What we might want to recognize today is the particular words used by Jesus. First of all the Greek word for Worry – is ‘something that divides the mind’. It is a strong word and we might recognize that Jesus is perhaps alluding to the fact that the issues we face sometimes have a tendency to confuse us and knock us of course from the truth he wants us to know. We lose focus when we worry Jesus is saying – losing sight of God and diluting the sense of how much he loves us.

The words ‘Look’ and ‘Consider’. In the original language they are in no way passive words. They are verbs. HE asks the listener and the reader to actually do something. Jesus us really wants us to look very, very closely at our lives and the way we cope and react to things and he really wants us to consider with depth how we cope with worry and what worry does to us. Are you not of more value to God, Jesus says, than the Birds and the Lilies? Does God not have special relationship with you and has he not promised to love you?

One man told his friend, “I have a mountain of credit card debt. I’ve lost my job, my car is being repossessed, and our house is in foreclosure, but I’m not worried about it.”

“Not worried about it!” said his friend.

“No,” said the man, “I’ve hired a professional worrier. He does all my worrying for me, and that way I don’t have to think about it.”

His friend said, “That’s fantastic. How much does your professional worrier charge for his services?”

“£50,000 a year,” replied the first man.

“£50,000 a year? Where are you going to get that kind of money?”

“I don’t know,” said the man. “That’s his worry.”

At times it might be nice to have a professional worrier. Someone who frets and stewes over our problems while we live a carefree life.

But do you know I think what Jesus is telling us in this story of nature is that we do have someone; and someone way better than a professional worrier. We have a Father in heaven who is on the job 7 days a week and 24 hours every day.

Jesus would have us know that God’s love for us is so unique and full that must learn to accept that God worries about our condition and that of the world more than we could imagine.

It’s not possible to live a worry free life I think – maybe we shouldn’t even try because worrying tells us we have a conscience, it confirms we have a heart, we have a concern for self and others; worry can be an encouragement to try and sort out our muddles and protect our and our loves ones safety – pave the way for a good future for self, others, indeed, if our worries are global, for community and world too.

However maybe what we might consider today is those moments in life when it appears worries have worries of their own; when worries become overpowering, life-limiting, hard to cope with and induce an unhealthy influence on our lives or the folks around us. Maybe it’s then Jesus saying his teaching becomes most important. He worried – sometimes they became very powerful emotions for him (at least that’s what I determine as I look at his story). But as his worries became life-affecting he learned to approach God and learned to trust Him.

How much more does God love us! How much does God really love us. Enough to send his son to die! That’s how much he worries about and for us.

There is nothing much more pronounced in life than the love of a parent for their child.

I want to finish today with a personal story - not something I'm given to doing too often but I think it's pertinent. When I was sitting my Upgrades I suddenly took ill and ultimately needed to have an operation to put right some twisting and blood supply issues inside. I took ill on the day of my History exam - arriving home feeling sick and in pain. Next day was Biology. I did some work for it but ended up feeling very unwell in the evening and my family called the Doctor who came out to the house sometime before midnight - he reckoned he knew what it was and told me to sleep and go to my GP next day. Ultimately I sat the Biology exam first, went to my GP at lunchtime, was in hospital by 2pm and operated on that evening.

Point is I don't remember much of that night in between the two exams. I was going in and out of sleep and clearly a fever had set in and I was having dreams/ hallucinations. I know this because my mum stayed the night apparently - sitting up in a chair in my room. She told me that I was speaking in my sleep. I kept going over the story of how the 1st World War had started with the assassination of Austro-Hungarian Archduke Franz Ferdinand, assassinated in Sarajevo, by a Serbian. Other aspects of the 1st World War History topic might have been uttered too.

Here we have a case of a parent being so worried about a son that they gave up thoughts of sleep to take care of a loved one and in essence allow that person to get some sleep of their own (however restless it turned out to be)

God does not slumber and does not sleep. He knows our worries. But he says, look 'I'll wait up'. God say, "Look you go on to sleep. You have been worrying enough. You've got a big day ahead of you - you'll be busy tomorrow worrying some more no doubt and seeking my Kingdom and righteousness. But now - Go to sleep and rest. I'll wait up; take a walk in the hills - I'll hold the fort here; go out for a meal or take in a movie - I'll make sure the baby-sitter is doing a good job - do something for yourself - I'll watch over your loved ones in the Nursing Home or Hospital.

God says to us – Leave your worries with me for a while. Have a break!

Remember God is there for us. He loves us. That's all we need to know. Worries will come by in life – but that doesn't necessarily mean we need to become worry worts. Leave that to God – he has volunteered to do it for us. That's a promise!

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