

Give thanks
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Robyn Plocher

The death toll from the earth quake in China passed the 51,000 mark this week.

“Therefore I tell you-do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or drink; about your body, what you will wear...Look at the birds of the air, they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly father feeds them. Are you not more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?”

The Average price at the gas pumps earlier this week was \$3.79 though in part of the country prices have already topped the \$4.00 mark.

“And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all of his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the fields, which is here today and tomorrow is throne into the oven so you can bake your bread, then will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?”

56 % of economists now think the economy has started or will enter a recession this year. That's up from 45 percent in a survey in February.

“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”

Grammy award winning Christian musician Steven Curtis Chapman and his wife suffered the death of their youngest child this week. Five year old Maria, one of the couple three children adopted from China, was struck and killed by an SUV driven by her teenage brother.

“Be joyful always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Jesus Christ.”

Silence

Do you remember the story of told by the wife of Colonel Rick Husband? He was the commander of the space shuttle Columbia that broke apart upon re-entry. In her book, Mrs. Husband wrote about how stressful and chaotic their lives were just before the shuttle mission. In fact, the day before Rick was scheduled to go into isolation in preparation for the mission they learned their young daughter had lice. Mrs. Husband tells how Rick spent hours combing through his daughter's long hair that evening, picking out lice. As he worked, they talked...and talked and talked. Little did they know this would be one of the last times they would see each other. Mrs. Husband says she is SO grateful for the lice now, because that stressor created the circumstances of that very precious memory.

[I remember I thought it was a bit nuts to be grateful for lice.](#)

Yes, I remember that too. That may be an extreme example, but the spirit of the words is wise for us to consider. And, it illustrate Jesus message in Matthew I think.

Jesus wants us to know all things belong to God. God has ultimate ownership of all things. We can never say, "This is mine". We can only say, "This belongs to God and God has given me the use of it." That's true for our possessions, our talents, the air we breathe, our very lives.

[It reminds me of a story of a child from the city who was on a field trip in the country. For the first time in her life she saw a field of bluebells. She](#)

turned and asked her teacher, “Do you think God would mind if I picked one of His flowers?”

Exactly, that is the attitude that we are to have. When we know everything we are and everything we have is of God and in God, how can we be anxious and worried?

Right, but you have to admit those headlines you read are pretty depressing. How do we keep from worrying when so many have died so tragically, when food prices and gas prices go up every week? When all the experts think the economy is heading south fast?

Can any of those things be changed by worrying about them?

Um.....no?

No is right. Worry is useless. It doesn't change anything. It can't re-write the past or foretell the future.

I know that, I just have a hard time living it.

Most of us do.

So, worry doesn't change anything. I'll give you that one.

But, worry can be more serious than that. Worry can really hurt you, you know. Anxiety that wears out the mind also wears out the body with it.

There are a lot of stress-related illness-ucfers, hypertension, some headaches. There are many others, too. I read this week that 75% of all doctor visits are stress related. Job stress, teen stress and stress in the workplace are causing thousands of stress related illnesses every day. You mentioned headaches- Did you know there are 16-18 million people who suffer from migraines? 70% of those are women and most of those headaches are symptoms of stress.

Ok, Ok, so anxiety, worry and stressing over things can be bad for your health. I guess that's another good reason to heed Jesus' teaching about not worrying.

But even that is not the most important reason. To be blunt, worry is an insult to God. We say we're worried about gas prices, or we're worried about our kids, or we're worried about our job. We attribute our worry to the external circumstances of our lives, but the truth is worry is not about our problems out there. Worry is about a problem right here, in our heart.

I think I know what you're saying. Two people can be going through the same circumstances. One person is peaceful and one is anxious and nearly worried to death.

That's right. So it can't be the circumstances that are making the difference. It's got to be something more than that.

It has to be something about their level of trust. It takes us right back to the beginning-that everything we are and everything we have is of God and is in God. Trusting that reality-- That's what it's all about.

Yes!

But, I know someday I'm going to be stressing out about something-maybe even before the end of today. What am I suppose to do about that? What do I do with those things that really do cause me anxiety, in spite of my faith?

I think the Apostle Paul gave us that answer in I Thessalonians 5:18. He wrote: "Be joyful always, pray continually, and give thanks in all circumstances for this is God's will for you in Jesus Christ."

Wow.

Yeah, wow. But notice, he doesn't say we have to be grateful FOR all circumstances, but to be grateful IN all circumstances. This verse is about claiming the joy that we have in CHRIST that transcends our present circumstances. It's about turning to God in prayer in all circumstances-when our hearts are breaking and our tears are flowing, when we can only ask "Why God? Why?" As well as the times we come to him in praise. It is about having an attitude of gratitude that pervades your life and carries you through the rough days.

An attitude of gratitude. I kind of like that.

We can all cultivate an attitude of gratitude. Psychologist and other mental health workers are beginning to focus less on illnesses and disorders and more on understanding what makes for mental well-being. An attitude of

gratitude is one of the most important characteristic of mental health (or we might argue spiritual health) that has been identified.

Yes. Yes. I was just reading about that recently. People who describe themselves as feeling grateful to others and to God tend to have higher vitality, suffer less stress, and experience fewer episodes of clinical depression than the population as a whole. They suffer less anxiety about status and the accumulation of possessions and report they are more satisfied with their lives. It follows that they have better physical health, because they have less stress and more energy to exercise and take care of themselves.

So, do you think it's time to practice a gratitude attitude?

I sure do.

Well, you can keep a journal where you record three things you are grateful for at the end of each day. When you get so that it's easy to think of three, then try to name five.

Say thank you to people as often as possible.

Say grace to thank God for providing the food that sustains you before meals.

Give God a quick thank you anytime during the day for anything that gives you joy.

Or sing the Gratitude Attitude song.

The what?

The Gratitude Attitude song---explain.