TITLE: Anxiety-The rodent within!

TEXT: Ro. 1:17; Phil. 4:6-7; Mt. 6:25-33 & 14:22-31; Ps. 139:23-24

INTRODUCTION: This morning I want to talk about anxiety.

With the Covid pandemic that has ravished our nation that had caused our nation to pretty much shut down economically for months and all the unrest and rioting that is taking place in many of our largest cities today we see a lot of anxiety in the hearts of many.

Does anyone know what the biggest health problem in the United States is today?

It is Anxiety!

Several years ago I heard a doctor on 60 minutes say that if we could cure all anxiety that we would empty something like 80% of all the hospital beds in this country!

It has been proven that a lot of sickness and disease finds its roots in anxiety.

Anxiety can weaken our body’s natural defenses so that we are more likely to get sick.

Anxiety is not just something that the world at large deals with...

We find anxiety within the body of Christ as well.

Do you realize that If we are a Christian and we suffer from anxiety, we constantly worry about things, then we are not only doing ourselves physical harm, but we are also not honoring God!

How is it that we are to live our lives as a Christian?

**Roma 1:17 (NIV) For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."**

As Christians we are to live by faith!

Now here is the thing; Were anxiety begins, faith ends!

The beginning of anxiety is the end of faith, and the beginning of true faith is the end of anxiety.

**Phil 4:6 (NIV) Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.**

This is an admonition to the Church! To each of us as believers!

**Do not be anxious about anything!**

Anxious= **3309 merimnao {mer-im-nah'-o}**

**1) to be anxious**

**1a) to be troubled with cares**

Anything=**3367 medeis {may-dice'}**

**1) nobody, no one, nothing, anything**

We are not to allow anything to make us anxious, allow nothing to trouble us with cares!

**Do not be anxious about anything, but** (instead**) in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.**

We are to not exercise our anxiety; we are to exercise our faith!

We do that by taking everything to the Lord! We do that by prayer and petition to God with thanksgiving and gratitude in our hearts.

William Ralph Inge (1860–1954)

*Anxiety is the interest paid on trouble before it is due.*

Years ago, in the pioneer days of aviation, a pilot was making a flight around the world. After he had been gone for some two hours from his last landing field, he heard a noise in his plane, which he recognized as the gnawing of a rat. He realized that while his plane had been on the ground a rat had gotten in. For all he knew the rat could be gnawing through a vital cable or control of the plane. It was potentially a very serious situation. He was both concerned and anxious. At first he did not know what to do. It was two hours back to the landing field from which he had taken off and more than two hours to the next field ahead.

Then he remembered that the rat is a rodent. It is not made for the heights; it is made to live on the ground and under the ground. Therefore the pilot began to climb.

He went up a thousand feet, then another thousand and another until he was more than ten thousand feet up. The gnawing ceased. The rat was dead.

The rat could not survive in the atmosphere of those heights. More than two hours later the pilot brought the plane safely to the next landing field and found the dead rat.

You see, worry, anxiety, is like a rodent. It cannot live in high places, especially in the high place of prayer petition and praise to God!. It cannot breathe in the atmosphere made vital by prayer and familiarity with the Scripture. Worry and anxiety dies when we ascend to the Lord through prayer and His Word.

So Paul says: **Phil 4:6 (NIV) Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.**

When we subject our anxiety to the high place of prayer and praise and worship, that rat of anxiety within us will die..

Jesus knew the destructive power of anxiety, of worry in the life of a believer...

**Matt 6:25 (NIV) "Therefore 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 important than food, and the body more important than clothes?**

**26 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 much more valuable than they?**

**27 Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?**

**33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.**

Jesus tells us an important truth here about anxiety, about worry.....

**27 Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?**

Think about it? What will worry, what will anxiety do for you?

Say you are terminally ill. We can worry and stew about our illness 24-7, but no matter how much we worry and stew about it we are still terminally ill. Our worry will not prolong our life by even one hour! In fact it may very well shorten it!

—Corrie Ten Boom

Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow, it empties today of its strength.

KJV says: **who by worrying can add a single cubit (inch) to his height.**

I may be 5’6” and want to be 6’ 5”! I can worry about it! I can make it sound Spiritual and go on a three day worrying fast!But guess what will be the end result of all my worrying? I will still be 5’6’’ Or less!

(worrying may have me stooped over).

You see the act of worry is a totally negative force!

There is nothing positive about it! No benefit to it!

In fact the act of worrying is detrimental to any given situation!

EXAMPLE: Teenage child who goes out with car and is 4 hours late in getting home!

A Parent may stay up all night worrying----

Have you ever heard a parent who has been up all night worrying about their child say: I have been up worrying all night and I feel great!

No---it makes you feel terrible the next day! Worry can and will make you sick!

Often it upsets your stomach---it makes you tired--it will exhaust you and make you more prone to physical illness..

Arthur -Somers Roche

*Worry is a thin stream of fear trickling through the mind. If encouraged, it cuts a channel into which all other thoughts are drained.*

Isn’t that how it works??

We start to worry- it starts as a thin stream of fear of anxiety trickling through our mind.

If we encourage it by allowing it to remain it starts to cut a channel into which all others thoughts are drained.

My son or daughter is late--thin stream of worry begins...

Maybe they have had car trouble--the thin stream of worry starts to cut a little channel of fear..

Maybe they have had an accident---the channel is cut a little deeper....

Maybe they are lying along the road bleeding and hurt---the channel of fear is cut even deeper...

Maybe they have been killed...our fear has become a real gully washer and anxiety has consumed us......

And we find ourselves starting to sink into despair! Our anxiety has displaced our faith and robbed us of our peace.

What happens is that worry quenches the work of grace within us!

. -- Ruth Bell Graham

*I [have] learned that worship and worry cannot live in the same heart: they are mutually exclusive.*

You see---Anxiety and faith cannot be in operation in the same person at the same time! One will always displace the other!

So Jesus says.... Do Not Worry! Do not be Anxious!

Do not worry....instead:

**33 ---seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.**

This is the same thing that the Apostle Paul is saying in Philippians 4.....

**Do not be anxious about anything, but** (instead) **in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.**

What Scripture is saying is, don’t be anxious, don’t worry but instead, have faith, trust God! Exercise your faith by prayer and petition to God.

Scripture is not saying that as a Christian we should never be concerned----it is simply saying that we should not worry and let anxiety overwhelm us....

And there is a big difference between being concerned and being worried....

The motivation for ones being concerned is love and compassion...

The motivation for ones being worried is fear!

A Concerned Christian, a compassionate Christian, is a praying Christian! One who seeks God because they are concerned and compassionate....

A worrying Christian may pray but the element of fear keeps their prayers from being effective because it works against their faith....And faith is a necessary element in effective prayer...

We see this illustrated in Scripture when one night the disciples where out on the lake in a boat...

**Matt 14:22 (NIV) Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd.**

**23 After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone,**

**24 but the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.**

**25 During the fourth watch of the night Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake.**

**26 When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear.**

**27 But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."**

**28 "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water."**

**29 "Come," he said.**

**Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus.**

**30 But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"**

**31 Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"**

Have you ever wondered what it means when it says that Peter saw the wind and became afraid? How does one see wind? I found out on our trip to Seattle how one sees wind.

One of the side trips we took when we went to Seattle was a boat ride to the island of Victoria BC.

It is about a 3 hour ride from Seattle to Victoria and to get there you go out through the Straits of Juan de Fuca. The morning we left there was a gale warning out in the straits so the crew was advising all on board to take sea sick pills as the seas were going to be rough that day when they crossed the straits

. And rough they were! About 45 minutes into the trip we started to see the wind! 6-10 foot waves started throwing to boat all over the place!

The sea sick pills didn’t help everyone. We were on the upper deck and when one person started to vomit in their little barf bag they were given and it started a chain reaction around us.

Point is we saw the wind in the waves! The wind revealed itself to us in the waves it was producing.

As Peter exercised his faith, as he kept His eyes fixed on the Lord, there was no fear and he was able to do the miraculous, but when he took his eyes off of the Lord and saw the wind in the waves fear entered his heart and he started to sink into the sea!

What happened?

Anxiety and faith cannot CO-exist together! One will displace the other!

We cannot have fear in our heart and have our eyes fixed on Jesus at the same time!

If we have our eyes fixed on Jesus it will displace our anxiety and if we are anxious it will take our eyes off of Jesus.....

For when we have our eyes fixed on Jesus, when we remained focused on the Lord, as we exercise our faith in Him, we will be able to walk on the waters of this world!

We will triumph over the trials and tribulations of this life!

But if we allow the concerns of this life to make us anxious, cause us to worry, it will take our eyes off of the Lord and we will start to sink every time!

**Phil 4:6 (NIV) Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.**

The promise as we do this is......

**7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.**

You see, anxiety, worry is actually a choice that we make!

Just as prayer and petition and faith is a choice that we make!

If we choose prayer, petition and faith the result will be the peace of God in our lives. A peace that Scripture says transcends all understanding! A peace that will guard our hearts and our minds in Christ Jesus!

Guard= **5432 phroureo {froo-reh'-o}**

**1) to guard, protect by a military guard, either to prevent hostile invasion, or to keep the inhabitants of a besieged city from flight**

**2b) to protect by guarding, to keep**

**2c) by watching and guarding to preserve one for the attainment of something**

This is a military term that speaks of setting a guard as a sentinel.

God will set a guard over our hearts and minds! The guard that He sets over our hearts and minds is the Holy Spirit!

Nothing can prevail against Him! Our hearts and minds are safe and secure from the invasion of the hostile forces of the enemy...Especially from the hostile force of anxiety, worry and fear..

The result of living a life of prayer and petition to God, of keeping our eyes firmly fixed on Jesus at all times is the peace of God! A peace that transcends human understanding!

There is an old African proverb that speaks to the anxious soul...

*Lord Jesus, make my heart sit down.*

It is in those times when Anxiety seems to want to overtake us that we need pray this simple prayer..

*Lord Jesus, make my heart sit down!*

Still and calm my mind, fill me with your peace and your presence!

When anxiety starts to overwhelm us we need to come before the Lord as King David did when he found his heart becoming anxious..

**Psal 139:23 (NIV) Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.**

**24 See if there is any offensive way in me,**

**and lead me in the way everlasting**.

Anxiety in the life of a believer is offensive to the Lord!

Offensive because anxiety displaces our faith and trust in Him!

Again, Corrie ten Boom insightfully said:

*Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow, it empties today of its strength.*

How about you this morning? Are there times when you hear that rodent of anxiety chewing away at the cable of your faith? Do you have times when the cares of this life start a stream of anxiety and worry that grows and cuts a channel of fear robbing you of your peace? Are their times when you allow anxiety to displace your faith?

Then Hear the Lord speak to you this morning.....

**Phil 4:4 (NIV) Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!**

**5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.**

**6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.**

**7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.**

Prayer... **Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.**

**24 See if there is any offensive way in me,**

**and lead me in the way everlasting**.