



***“So, faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ.”
Romans 10:17***

Have you ever had one of those nights when all you could do was stare at the ceiling? Body still, not able to sleep, but your mind continues to shuffle through one thought, one item, one concern after the other: Will humanity ever lay the judgements and prejudice down... So much pain.... Everything opening – is it too soon – will this get worse before it gets better... I should have walked today.... I forgot to call..... I didn't follow-up with.... Did they really not realize how hurtful that comment was..... On and on it goes until finally you begin to shut it down just enough for your eyes to close.

Sometimes life can seem darker at night. Sometimes all of the worries and the negative realities can just be waiting – waiting for us to be alone so that it begins to surface.

Recently I began to use Philippians 4:6 as one of my night time devotionals: *“Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.”* As I read these words I can't help but wonder if the Apostle Paul really meant not to worry about anything? Is that even possible? Was he for real? What on earth could he have been thinking?

Right now as we look around the world it seems to be reminding us that “worry” is undoubtedly a part of our human nature. All we need do is listen to the latest news or look at the taped footage of the latest occurrences and we will undoubtedly notice that many seem to be plagued with all that is unfolding within our midst. Even here within the membership of First Church, I hear from members who share the realism that sleeping seems to be hard, and that they are struggling to rest their minds in the middle of all that surrounds us.

And yet, as God's beloved children, we are called to faith, not fear. Faith says, "God is in charge of my life; I will trust Him, even when everything else around me might say otherwise. I believe God loves me and knows what is best for me."

Time and again, scripture reminds us that faith is that which has the power and the ability to crowd out and quiet the fear. But we have to be willing to make the time to listen. We need to be tuned into our relationship with our Lord. We need to be aware of our responsibilities as His children in this world and true to those convictions and understandings.

You see, the reality is if I haven't made time to hear from God through His Word, I find my prayers being more of a monologue of fear-based worry. But when I make time to listen to God, I'm reminded of His promises and I become familiar with His voice. And that, my brothers and sisters, is when prayers really do change from worry to praise; and that is true even at night. Even at night a dialogue, rather than a monologue, can evolve. When I turn to God with my concerns, I can hear His response. As John 10:27 tells us, *“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them ...”*

My friends, God's word reminds us to put the kingdom of God first and the things we need will be ours

(Matthew 6:33). In other words, when we devote ourselves to God, to His word – His mission – His love - all the rest will sort itself out, and this is what, in the end, brings that sense of peace into our hearts and lives.

What is most pressing in your life right now? Whatever it is I want to encourage you to put God's Word there instead. Replace the worry with the truth of God's love and power. Trust that God will do as He says: *"Those of steadfast mind you keep in peace—in peace because they trust in you."* (Isaiah 26:3)

I want to encourage you to think about God's promises, let your worry turn to praise, and let the praise turn to peace and peace to sleep. Begin to understand and to trust what Paul meant when he said, *"And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."* (Philippians 4:7)

My friends it is possible to experience God's peace; even right now. But it takes trusting and relying on our God and on our faith. It takes courage to cast our cares on our God and to trust Him to handle them; to let our faith and our devotion to Him replace our fear, to be that which leads us. It's true what they say, "Worry sees problems, but faith sees the God who can handle the problems."

This week I encourage you to remember that God's word can indeed change how we cast our cares. When we choose to cast them onto Him instead of into the air, we find comfort as well as direction in His promises.

Prayer:

O God help me to be devoted to You and Your love. Instead of tossing and turning at night, help me to remember to turn the pages of scripture in my mind. Help me to trust in your love and the promises that you hold; knowing that no situation or concern is too great. Amen.