

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 than food, and the body more than clothes? 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? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 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. – Matt. 6:25-34

Sitting outside my friend's house on a hot September day, it took us a while to realize we were being shot at. As we sat in a circle, Paul and Mike on the ground and me sitting on the basketball we'd been playing with, we kept hearing little sounds, like a "zing", in the air. We ignored them at first and kept talking about 5th grade and all that 5th graders talk about, but then something hit the basketball under me with a soft "pth" and we knew something was up. We looked around and saw, 2 driveways down, Brian and two of his 8th grade buddies pointing something at us. When we realized it was a BB gun, fully loaded and pointed out way, we all scrambled for the garage. Hearts pounding, we couldn't believe that they were shooting at us. It wasn't a real gun, but a fully pumped up BB gun could still cause some damage with a careless (or well placed?) shot.

The danger was real and I was afraid. They got bored when we left and headed inside, but for the next month I was deeply anxious walking home from school or anytime I saw Brian. After that, this incident just wouldn't leave my mind. I found myself habitually coming back to my worry that some unknown danger might lurk behind a bush or around the next corner.

Fear. Anxiety. Worry. These three things are all similar but significantly different. We fear danger that is real and present. Being shot by the person across the street with a gun, falling off the roof on which we are climbing, being mauled by the bear standing in front of us ... we fear these things, and rightly so. Anxiety is fear of something that is not present. That someone in the building might have a gun, or we might have to climb a ladder tomorrow, or a bear might be around the next corner... these cause us anxiety. We are worrying when we are habitually and regularly concerned about something happening. I might not have enough money for food this week, or there might not be food at all. What if people laugh at how I'm dressed, or take offense at it? These things cause us to worry.

The bible addresses all three at different times, but today's passage deals with worry. "Do not worry," it says, "about God's provision. He will give you all you need." Do we truly believe this? In COVIDland, where imagined scarcity causes runs on toilet paper, do we truly believe that God will provide us with all we need? Are we free to put Him, His mission, and His Kingdom first in our lives, or are we so bound up with worry that God takes a firm 3rd place in our priority list? Jesus gives worriers some good advice: take a look around. Get grounded back in reality, Jesus says. Our imaginations are fertile ground for worry, and the spike in bad-news stories and fearful social media posts just feed that fire. But if we take a minute and look outside, see the trees budding right on schedule, the animals going about their business, and the sun rising and setting like it has for millennia, it forces us back to God's reality. It forces us back to the fact that this virus isn't affecting God in the least. He is still supplying our needs. He is still on the throne. He is still in charge and in control. We don't need to worry: God's got this.