

Sermon: Blessed Are The Worrywarts!

SERMON SERIES: WRESTLING WITH WORRY AND ARRESTING ANXIETY! (PART 2)

*“Lord God, at Night you are the bright flame to enlighten me,
the guiding star to lead me, the path beneath my feet,
and the Good Shepherd along the way, now and forever more.”
– St Columba 521-597AD, Iona*

IT’S THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

It’s the middle of the night and you’re awake. Sleep is elusive. What do you do?

In seminary John Kleinig looked at us bleary eyed students one morning and said, “Insomnia is a call to prayer! You may think of it as a curse. It is painful, but perhaps you have been called to a special ministry. Remember Samuel who God called in the night? Perhaps your lack of sleep is a call to something!”

FOUR INSTRUCTIONS FOR INSOMNIACS...

1. BREATHE

Breathing can be prayer. Not a panicked request for oblivion. Slow down your breath, and let your breathing be prayer. The name of God in Hebrew, I Am, Is often regarded as the sound of breathing. Yah – veh. Focus not on the worries, just breathe slowly and deeply, and call Jesus into that prayer.

Then the LORD God formed a human from the dust of the ground and breathed into its nostrils the breath of life, and the human became a living being. - Genesis 2:6

And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." - John 20:22

The Jesus prayer: *“Jesus Christ, have mercy on me.”*

2. WELCOME THE SPIRIT’S TESTING

Weigh this advice carefully. This may not be for you right now! But it is important. Welcome God the Holy Spirit to test you, to show you what’s wrong, to point out sin, to lead you to confess. Confession to God means forgiveness and freedom.

*Tremble and do not sin, when you are on your beds search your hearts and be silent.
- Psalm 4:4*

Search me, God, and know my heart. Test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. Ps 139:23-24

“The warrior poet asks God to probe deep into his heart—thoughts, mental patterns, thinking—and test him. He’s asking God to bring to the surface mental habits that

need to die. Questions, habits, patterns, ruts, ways of viewing the world, and ways of processing information that suppress his mental lungs from taking a deep breath of fresh air. When was the last time you asked God to test your mind, to show you areas where your thought life was out of sync with God’s heart? Take the time to stop, breathe, quiet the noise around you, and ask God to test your thought life and reveal your sins. And when he speaks, confess, repent, and ask him to “lead you in the way everlasting!” Ask God to break your mind out of the ruts your brain is stuck in. - John Mark Comer, My Name is Hope (p. 86).

3. STAND IN PRAYER FOR OTHERS (INTERCEDE)

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. – Phil 4:6-7

Replace anxious worrying with prayer. Stop being a worrier and become a prayer warrior. God is enlisting you as a soldier in prayer! Sometimes when we worry that we’ll be wrecked the next day. Prayer that is communing with God and resting (even awake) in God’s presence is restorative too. But fretting is not!

4. PRACTICE GRATITUDE

Rejoice in the Lord always. And again I say: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. Phil 4:4-6

The healthiest people are grateful people. They are not people for whom everything went right in life, but they learnt gratitude as a real thing!

*When upon life’s billows you are tempest tossed
When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost,
Count your many blessings, name them one by one,
And it will surprise you what the Lord has done.
- Johnson Oatman Jr, 1897.*

You are loved. You are worth dying for. Jesus stayed awake at night, praying for you, and he still is with you. He went to hell for you. He is with you in the dark of night.

“Tis grace has brought us safe thus far, And grace will lead us home!”

SAINT AUGUSTINE’S EVENING PRAYER

Watch, O Lord, with those who wake, or watch, or weep tonight, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend your sick ones, O Lord Christ. Rest your weary ones. Bless your dying ones. Soothe your suffering ones. Pity your afflicted ones. Shield your joyous ones. And for all your love’s sake. Amen.