

Hakuna Matata
Matthew 6:24-34
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St. John United Methodist Church
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The Disney movie "Lion King" made popular an old phrase, **Hakuna matata**. It is a Swahili phrase that is literally translated as "There are no worries". It is sometimes translated as "no worries", although is more commonly used similarly to the English phrase "no problem".

Are you a hakuna matata kind of person? Do you live a hakuna matata life, a life with no worries? I doubt that any of us are capable of living without ANY worries. But I dare say that there are many times when we worry needlessly, times when we allow fear to rule our hearts. This is an important spiritual issue today. And it was in Jesus' day. He posed this question, "Can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?" Most of us realize that worrying does not do us or others much good. But this knowledge doesn't generally help us to reduce the amount of worry in our lives.

A bassoon player came up to his conductor, Arturo Toscanini, and nervously said that he could not reach the high E flat. Toscanini just smiled and replied, "Don't worry. There is no E flat in your music tonight." Many of our worries are like that-- unfounded and unnecessary.

How about your worry life? Do you worry too much? Do you wish you didn't worry so much? We are so like this musician. There is no high E flat in our life's musical score, but we still worry that we cannot play it! Many of us are worriers because we grew up in households with worrier parents and siblings. The patterns of worry are ingrained into our psyches. Worry comes so naturally and easy for us.

I would like you right now to turn to the person sitting near you and share with them one of your biggest worries.

One of the best definitions of worry I ever heard was this. Worry is assuming a responsibility that God never intended you to have. (Repeat) If this is true then the spiritual task in front of us is to tell the difference between worries and concerns. A concern would be a responsibility God DOES intend us to have. Perhaps it would be helpful to make two lists. One list would be CONCERNS. These would be the people and things with which we have responsibility. Parents should be concerned about their children, and their possessions. We need to be concerned about our jobs and our education, and how we treat other people.

Here's an example of someone who had good reason to be concerned. A man was seen fleeing down the hall of the hospital just before his operation. A security guard stopped him before he could leave the hospital and asked, "What's the matter?" The man said, "I heard the nurse say, 'It's a very simple operation, don't worry, I'm sure it will be all right.'" "She was just trying to comfort you," said the security guard. "What's so frightening about that?" "She wasn't talking to me," exclaimed the man. "She was talking to the doctor!"

The truth is that many of us have problems knowing how to stay unworried. There is no clear cut line that separates concern from worry. We have trouble with

boundaries. For example, we are concerned about a spouse who is on a business trip. This is a legitimate concern. But then we worry about them flying in poor weather. The fact is that we cannot do anything about the weather, but this doesn't stop us from worry. What is it about worry that takes us to the worst case scenario? Worry happens in our minds when we imagine that our worst fears would come true. Then we begin to feel the emotions that would arise if that worst case scenario would actually happen. How can we live with less worries in our lives?

Making a list of worries and concerns is a good place to start. There are a few other steps that can help us deal with worry. One is to hang around hakuna matata people. As you think about your circle of friends, who among them seem to be non-worriers? Usually the people who don't worry very much are the ones who are the most spiritually grounded.

This is why it's important to be with people who have learned the spiritual lesson Jesus is teaching here. Don't worry about our clothes and such things. Don't worry about tomorrow. Live fully, not in the past or the future, but in the present moment.

A businessman ran into a friend of his--a stockbroker who had always had problems with ulcers and high blood pressure. "How's your health?" the man asked his stockbroker friend. The stockbroker said, "Great! My ulcers are gone and I don't have a worry in the world!" The man asked, "How did that happen?" The stockbroker said, "It's easy. I hired a professional worrier. Whenever something comes along that I need to worry about, I tell him about it and he does all my worrying for me." The businessman couldn't believe it. "That's incredible. I'd be interested in something like that. How much does it cost?" The stockbroker replied, "He charges \$100,000 a year." The businessman asked, "How in the world can you afford to pay him \$100 grand a year?" The stockbroker said, "I can't. But it's not my problem. I let him worry about it."

Sometimes we can live a hakuna matata life only if others do our worrying for us. Surely we all have covered for a coworker or family member who bounced through life like Snoopy's silly dance. It can be annoying to feel like the responsible one while others dance through life.

Another way to decrease the worry in our lives is to learn to let go. How good are you at letting go of things? Have you had any experience of releasing your grip on people or things you wanted to control? Some people struggle at retirement to let go of their work. Parents have trouble letting go of control over teenagers. Others of us cannot seem to let go of angry feelings when we have been mistreated. Can you point to a time when you consciously let go of the rope that kept your work, your child, or your emotions under your supervision?

Jesus is telling us to learn to let go of our worries. He is saying there is a connection between letting go and trusting God. Those who learn to let go of their worries are people who experience the benefits of trusting in God.

But this was not Jesus' dissertation on worry. He's not Dr. Phil giving us a prescription for how to avoid anxiety. His main point is this: "Strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." *Strive* for it. "Strive" means to exert energy and effort toward a goal. Jesus is saying we should actively work for the spread of the kingdom. And as we do, some of the things we fret about are going to become non-issues because we've got more important things to be busy with.

Maybe this is the key to it all. Replace worry with God. Think about God and what God is doing in the world and there is less time to spend in worrying.

Robert Burdette wrote this piece called God's Days. There are two days in the week upon which and about which I never worry -- two carefree days kept sacredly free from fear and apprehension. One of these days is Yesterday. Yesterday, with its cares and frets and pains and aches, all its faults, its mistakes and blunders, has passed forever beyond my recall. It was mine; it is God's.

The other day that I do not worry about is Tomorrow. Tomorrow, with all its possible adversities, its burdens, its perils, its large promise and performance, its failures and mistakes, is as far beyond my mastery as its dead sister, Yesterday. Tomorrow is God's day; it will be mine.

There is left, then, for myself but one day in the week - Today. Any man can fight the battles of today. Any woman can carry the burdens of just one day; any man can resist the temptation of today. It is only when we willfully add the burdens of these two awful eternities - Yesterday and Tomorrow - such burdens as only the Mighty God can sustain - that we break down.

It isn't the experience of Today that drives people mad. It is the remorse of what happened Yesterday and fear of what Tomorrow might bring. These are God's Days ... Leave them to God.¹

And you thought God's day was Sunday! Clearly Jesus does not want us to be burdened with worry. He wants us to be at peace and free from the fears that cripple us. He wants us to cast our cares upon him.

One family got a paper bag and wrote "God" on it, and taped it up high on the back of their kitchen door. They would write down each concern on a piece of paper and place them in the bag. The rule was that if you started worrying about a matter of prayer that you had turned over to God, you had to climb up on a chair and fish it out of the bag.

You and I do this all the time don't we? We place a worry, one of those God responsibilities in God's bag. Then sometime later we take them back. We allow our fear to make us believe that God can't be trusted. We just feel better when we imagine ourselves to be in control.

In a few minutes during the last hymn you will have a chance to write a worry or two on the paper provided. I will ask you to come forward and place your worry in one of the baskets at the foot of God's table and leave it there. Leave it there! And perhaps you can do a Snoopy dance back to your seat. Perhaps you can live with more trust in your heart for God. Perhaps you can live a hakuna matata life!

¹ Retrieved on May 21, 2008 <http://www.storybin.com/builders/builders163.shtml>