

Always Something to Worry About

How do You Know? Part II

From *Headlines that Shaped History* (9/14/2007) USA Today (updated for the last several years' BIG worries):

2008	Financial Crisis	1995	Oklahoma City bombing
2007-08	2008 presidential election	1994-95	O.J. Simpson
2005 - 08	High gas prices	1994	Rwandan genocide
2005 - 08	Hurricane Katrina	1993	Branch Davidians
2005	Terri Schiavo	1991-92	Rodney King
2004	Asian tsunami	1991	Persian Gulf War
2003-	Iraq war	1990	Nelson Mandela
2003	Gay marriage	1989	Fall of communism
2001	Afghanistan invasion	1989	Tiananmen Square
2001	2001 terrorist attacks	1988	Pan Am Flight 03
1999	2000 presidential election	1986-87	Iran-contra affair
1999	Columbine massacre	1986	Challenger explosion
1998-99	Clinton impeachment	1986	Chernobyl disaster
1997	Death of Diana	1983	Beirut Marine barracks bombing

In contrast, Jesus said (and says):

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. ^{Mt 6:31 – 34}

If there is a benefit to worry, it will only be in teaching us to consider who is right and who is wrong – how, and to what, we would be wise to devote our time and emotions and those issues (and commentators) not worth the drain of our limited time and emotions. The common features of the above “big stories” are that they:

- did consume a lot of time and attention,
- were all spectator issues – not really requiring any efforts on our part, and
- as macro issues, for all these costs, the time and emotions “invested” generated no personal benefit.

And since time and emotions are limited resources, using them in areas of little benefit takes away from efforts, activities and opportunities that would make a meaningful difference. Listening to the “talking heads” discussing macro issues (the

latest hypothetical crisis) is admittedly easier than looking at the personal, “micro,” issues and challenges:

Spiritual Development/Eternal destiny
Marriage
Children
Health
Development of Skills/Job
Debt Management . . .

Isn't it interesting that Jesus' teachings of 2,000 years ago are far more meaningful to having and leading a worry-less and happy life than all of today's "news?"

Jesus does not deny there are real crises nor does he say we don't need an understanding of news, the times and possible answers to cope with these issues – he simply offers a 180 degree alternative to Fox, CNN, ABC, CBS, NBC, CNBC. We can sit, watch, worry, wring our hands, complain, find fault . . . with no impact on these macro issues or positive benefit to ourselves. This listening may cause us to do stupid things (buy when the “experts” are trumpeting the dawn of a new era or sell when the same “experts,” a few months later, tell us the bottom has fallen out of life – “Sell! Sell! Sell!” they shout), but this is the best we can hope from this foolishness.

All the while, Jesus calmly and consistently proclaims the Good News that there is an option to this day-to-day worry and vacillating – he says what would rightly be judged as ultimate foolishness (and a great risk to his personal credibility) if it does not work. Instead of sitting, watching, worrying, he says:

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” Mt 11:28 – 30

“So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.” Lk 11:9 – 10

Financial crisis? Where? Who told you? And even if there are macro financial issues, they are certainly gnats compared to the personal crises crying out for help, time, emotions . . .! No one should have to tell anyone of these personal problems – they are self-evident and always before us!

So, we must each decide what we consider important – and what and how we should invest to make our life better!

Joshua saw the challenge and best solution:

“Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped . . . and serve the LORD. But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.” Jos 24:14 - 15

“I don’t have time to serve God,” many say. But we do if we believe Jesus who says:

“Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things [ALL our daily needs] 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.” Mt 6:33 - 34

“Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.”

Then they asked him, “What must we do to do the works God requires?”

Jesus answered, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.” Jn 6:27 - 29

The misconception (even heard from many “Christians”) is that this serving of God is one more thing to do on top of what we already have to do - a sacrifice now for a promised benefit tomorrow (or, more rightly, in eternity). This is not the Bible meaning of this term: “serving,” in the Bible, means having “faith in” – doing what He says – and while Jesus makes great promises for eternity, these promises are built on what He promises to do NOW IF we serve Him (believe in – do what He says) NOW!

While adding a little religion to our present life, to hopefully secure a safe place for eternity, is a common approach, it is not Christianity as outlined in the Bible. Jesus was, is and will only be for those who recognize their need of hope and help NOW (“Heaven can wait!”) and ask, seek and knock at His door (rather than the door of Fox, CNN, ABC, CBS, NBC, CNBC, the government, education, money, pleasure . . .) for answers.

It is interesting that (in contrast to the constant drumbeat we too often expose ourselves to – worry about) Jesus was heralded as Good News:

“Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.” Lk 2:10 -

11

Jesus called a little child and had him stand among them. And he said: “I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” Mt 18:2 - 3

The crises, problems, issues that will most affect us (now, tomorrow and forever) are personal, micro, concerns – not the latest macro crisis! This is the emphasis, promise and hope of Jesus Christ – He says and promises little about “macro” issues while offering ALL hope and help for the personal (internal and external) crises everyone faces, and will encounter, until death do we part.

So, do we choose to focus on, devote time and emotions, put our hope in the many macro “stars” to properly align or do we, instead, look within ourselves and say: “With the help, by the grace, of Jesus Christ I can and will meet the next trial and challenge surely confronting me!”

The economy may be bad or good, we may have “leaders” that are faithful or self-serving, general world conditions may be worrisome or peaceful, the weather may cooperate . . . but if we are hurting and failing personally what does it matter? If, on the other hand, someone promises (as only Jesus is bold enough to guarantee – well politicians promise, but who believes them?) “all these things [food, clothes . . . eternity] will be given to you,” based on a single and simple condition, wouldn’t it be wise to test Him? For this is surely the only reasonable test of His being who he said He is and can and will do now – and what He could and would do for eternity!

Many, many have tested Jesus and found Him faithful to His word – it would be wise that we do so as well. For, think for just a moment, what are the options and what are their greatest promises?

How do and can we know? Focus on and worry about the bad news peddled by Fox, CNN, ABC, CBS, NBC, and CNBC – No! Seek the good, personal, news available only in The Bible – because the Bible tells us so? YES!

Joshua saw the challenges and the best and only reasonable solution:

“Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped . . . and serve the LORD. But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve . . . But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.” Jos 24:14 – 15

Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life.” Jn 14:6

Remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded . . . without hope and without God in the world. Eph 2:12