

One of the core beliefs that we have as Christians is that Jesus was a human being just as you and I are while he was also the Son of God. When Jesus resurrected from the dead and ascended into heaven, there were many speculations and questions among Christians about who Jesus was: "Was he really a human?" "How could a human being live again after death?" "No, he must have been a ghost or an angel or some sort of divine being which was totally different from us." Questions like these were asked by many people.

So scholars belied that the Christian community had to respond to these questions. One of the points was that Jesus was born out of a woman's womb; another example was when Jesus was a little boy he went to the Temple in Jerusalem with his parents just like other kids did; when he was in Jerusalem, his parents even lost him and they had to go find him. But these are not all; Jesus also spent a lot of time eating with people. He even cried just like normal people do.

Jesus was the Son of God; the wisdom he had, the teachings he gave, the life he lived, and the miracles he performed were proof of who he was. He was not like humans; he was the one who came from God.

But Jesus was definitely a human being; he had to work, he had to eat, he had to sleep, he had to laugh, and he had to cry and so on.

To me, however, this is what really makes me believe that Jesus was a really human being—Jesus also worried.

When Jesus was about to be arrested, he went to Gethsemane mountain to pray. But he could not focus on himself; he could not calm down; he was very sad and the word used in Mt 26:37 was "troubled." According to the dictionary, the Greek word for this "troubled" is *adhmonein*. And this word is the strongest expression of human distress.

That means Jesus had a terrible time dealing with what would happen to his life. Can you imagine what you would do if you were to go

through what Jesus went through on the cross? And Jesus already knew it ahead of time!

The question is-- if Jesus, the Son of God, was troubled facing the dangers and sufferings in his life, who wouldn't?

The bottom line is—it is absolutely normal for us to worry and be troubled when we have challenges in our lives. I would say that is quite biblical.

It is natural to cry! It is very normal for us to worry when things are not going well. Even Jesus did the same thing.

Worrying is a part of life; we worry about food; we worry about job security, money, Gas prices, health, the future, kids; we worry about this and that.

But Jesus also says today: don't worry! What? Yes, he says, "Don't worry." What do you mean? Didn't I just say "it was normal to worry"?

How do we not worry?

I know there are many people who have to worry about many things in this economy: lost jobs; lost homes to the current mortgage crisis; and they still have to pay their bills...

Yes, it is hard not to worry.

But today Jesus is asking us to go a little deeper. He is asking us to list the things that bother us and see which is the most important of the list.

The reason why we worry about things is because that has a value to us. But Jesus wants us to see what we value the most in our lives.

Money is important. But would you trade your life for money? Jesus wants us to know that we still have life. We have the most important thing which money cannot buy. So "Why worry?" Jesus asks.

What to wear or what to eat is important. But would you trade your body for them? Focus on what you have and be thankful.

Look at the birds in the sky; do they have what you have? No, but they do not worry. You should be better than the birds!

In a way, life is a continuous worry test. For some reason we are given this test all the time. I have to tell you; I also worry many times. But I know when I worry. I worry when I get mixed up in my priorities. I worry when I forget what is most important in my life. I do not worry when my mind and thoughts are focused on God.

Throughout the years I have been in ministry, I had times I only had only \$10 or less left in my checking account; I had times I had to deal with tough situations. But I did not worry. I was happy doing what I had to do. No problem!

But I had times in which I was in trouble; I worried a lot. I remember I did, not because I did not have money or I did not have a job but because my eyes were focused on things rather than God.

In today's Isaiah text, the people of Israel are in the Babylonian exile. They were in captivity in a foreign land. But they were not living in prison. In fact, they had a good life there in terms of what to wear and what to eat because Babylon had a better economy than Israel.

But they were not happy. They had a longing to return home. They could not worship God the way they used to in their home land.

Babylonia had its own gods; as they were staying there so long they saw their kids intermingle with the culture there and marry the people of other faith. It was more than they could take. They worried; their souls were just exhausted.

It was like a big test for them-- a worry test. At one point, they even felt they had been forgotten by God.

But here the prophet Isaiah says to them:

“Come out, you people in the darkness, show yourselves!” Sing for joy! Can a woman forget her nursing child or show no compassion for the child of her womb?”

God not only cares about his people; He wants them to come out from darkness in their lives.

If we are focused on things, we get into this darkness; we lead ourselves into worries and concerns.

No matter how much we have, no matter how big of a house we have, we want more and more. We will never be satisfied.

But if our thoughts and minds are focused on God and his kingdom, we can be happy and satisfied even if we have nothing. We can be happy because we have the most important thing.

Everyone worries.

Jesus worried. But he never worried about earthly things; he never worried about what to eat or where to live. Rather, he worried about his call from God; he worried about the kingdom of God.

Jesus says, “Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all other things that we need will come to us as well.”

This is a test. God is giving us this test, a worry test. We have to pass this test every day. This is a battle. And we have to win this battle.

This is a war. We need to fight hard to win this war. The enemy is not outside; it is inside. It is within you; it is within me.

*"The Worry Test"; Isaiah 49: 8-16; Matthew 6:24-34; May 25, 08; Albany UMC*

The good news is that we are not fighting alone; God is helping us; he is on our side.

What we need is our determination. God cannot help us unless we want to help ourselves.

We need to turn our heads to God's direction;  
we need to change our thoughts and minds from things to God;  
we need to turn from what we want for ourselves to what God wants from us.

Let's focus on God; let's open our eyes to God and pass this test.  
Amen.