

Respectable Sins: Worry

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 19 September 2021

Preacher: Kent Dixon

[0 : 00] Well, welcome here for this Sunday, September 19th. Now, I'm sometimes given homework. So I had a few people say to me after last Sunday's sermon, Pastor Kent, that was really great.

I was scrambling looking for a pen or paper or anything. A few people said they were writing notes on their phones. So sermon notes. Connor has a basket of them and a basket of pens. So don't feel guilty if you don't want it. But if you do, put your hand up because he'll come and hand one out to you. So the back is blank. So don't feel guilty about using the back. So this is something that we're going to try and make sure we have handy every Sunday. So it's encouraging to me as your pastor to hear people say, I wanted to take notes. I wanted to write down the scripture reference. This is amazing. This is a very, very good thing that we're feeling challenged by things that we're learning together. So last week, Connor will continue as I continue.

[1 : 02] Last week, we began our new series, Respectable Sins. And we began with an introduction. We considered that the idea of sin, and even the word itself, has become watered down, really.

Right? Has become completely sidelined by the world. And even, we have to admit, many churches and preachers. We recognize that the reality of sin must be a central focus for us as followers of Jesus.

We consider that sin can be defined as any failure to conform to the moral law of God in act, in attitude, or in nature.

That's pretty comprehensive, right? We also recognized last week, as theologian Wayne Grudem put it, sin includes not only individual acts, which we talked about, such as stealing, lying, committing murder, but also attitudes.

Attitudes that are contrary to attitudes that God is requiring of us. So we can recognize that sin can definitely be reflected in our actions, and in our attitudes, but also in our moral nature.

[2 : 24] And this is the part that makes people nervous, I think. The internal character of who we are as individuals. One commentator suggested that, at its root, sin is essentially selfish disregard.

Disregard. Choosing what we want over anything else. Selfish disregard. Seeking to fulfill our selfish desires over the needs of someone else.

Or over, even worse, the will of God in our lives. Sin is a serious issue for God because it represents things that are completely contrary, contrary, we looked at this, to His holy nature. But we also recognize that sin is not just a characteristic of God, but it's a calling for His people as well. Scripture tells us, Be holy, God says, for I am holy.

Sin isn't something we can just brush off or minimize. It has serious and eternal consequences. But thankfully, we do recognize that our sin can be forgiven by God.

[3 : 40] But only one way. Right? When we confess our sins to God, we receive His forgiveness. And as I said in our prayer this morning, that forgiveness was only made possible through the death of Jesus Christ on the cross.

That was the high, high price that needed to be paid. And as we continue in this series over the coming weeks, we're going to approach the topic of sin from the perspective of sins that we may commit in our lives that we may tend to minimize.

Sometimes we even discount them. And this is why our series is titled Respectable Sins. I still have people saying to me, Respectable Sins, have you lost your mind?

But I think you get it, right? These are the sins that we go, Oh, that's not so bad. So we're going to start to dig in to specific topics as we move forward.

It's helpful, I think, to think of it this way. Respectable Sins are the ones that we tend to minimize, disregard, or at the very least, tolerate.

[4 : 51] And we'll see how we tolerate them in ourselves. We tolerate them in other people. We don't challenge them. We don't call them out. So I have a confession to make to you this morning.

I am a worrier. Not a worrier. Hope to be that as well. But a worrier. Myrna said to me this morning, Is this going to be a real personal sermon?

In some ways, sure, it is. I worry about being late. I worry about what may or may not happen in a given scenario.

There is a t-shirt in my Amazon wish list right now that says, Give me a minute. Let me overthink it. And that's how I'm wired. I worry about what may or may not happen.

I worry about having enough money to pay bills. I worry about whether people will feel like I'm a good pastor or a good preacher. And that's not because I'm being prideful, because I want to pat on the head.

[5 : 56] But I worry about whether I'm fulfilling God's calling in my life to care for the people of our church. I worry about those things. That's a deep thing that is on my mind and on my heart.

I worry about the people who have stepped back from our church since COVID started. I worry about when people will come back. I'm not the only pastor, surprisingly, maybe not surprisingly, I'm not the only pastor who's thinking this way.

Will people come back? Who? When? If? Right? That is the reality of the COVID church. And I even worry about this too, when the pandemic eases sufficiently for people to even consider coming back.

Right? I worry about being a good husband and a good father and a good provider. I worry about the fact that our house needs to be recited and our front sidewalk could stand to be repored.

I worry about my eavesdrops until I fixed that yesterday. I worry about what we're going to have for lunch today. It's a tiny worry in the back of my head. And that all sounds fun, right?

[7 : 08] This is your window into your pastor's brain. And I'm not constantly anxious, but those things are always in there. So having said this, I don't want you to now go away worrying about me.

Okay? Because I'm good. God is working on that in me. And so is Michelle. Michelle is unshakable faith. And so she is my God filter sometimes.

But I've come to recognize that part of my tendency to worry stems from a gift in a way. An ability. I have a discernment spiritual gift.

So I am able to see in a moment all the possible options in a given scenario. The good, the bad, the what ifs, the whatabouts.

So great in marketing career, right? Where I came from. Great in a media relations career where you need to be anticipating things. So the anticipation part of it, the being prepared part of it, is not necessarily bad.

[8 : 13] So I can see clarity. I can see direction in lots of circumstances and situations. Some of which might actually paralyze another person.

And so I am grateful for that. But then my human fear of the unknown, my occasionally shaky self-confidence, can often turn that gift, it's a gift, right?

As I said, into a tendency to worry. So maybe you can guess our topic this morning. It's pretty obvious, right? Worry. Are you already thinking, Pastor Kent, I am worried.

I'm worried that you're going to say that worrying is a sin. Well, I want to be clear about something right away. Worry and anxiety can actually be issues that have deeper things that underlie them.

If we can identify the root cause, we can address those things. But there are ways in which worry can be considered a sin. And that's what we're going to be focusing on.

[9 : 22] But I also want to recognize that we need to be aware that particularly with anxiety, when people have that, it may be a symptom of a mental health concern.

It may be something that needs professional assistance with. So I'm not a believer in the idea that every single human condition, every affliction can simply be prayed away.

And as I say those words, I can hear people that I know, if they heard it, go, oh, blasphemy, right? But God has given us science.

God has given us doctors and skilled practitioners. He has made people smart and wise. People who can help others manage issues in their lives that may otherwise be completely debilitating for them.

So I believe that's true. There are also, to me, worries that manifest themselves as phobias for people. Part of how they're wired.

[10:29] And that's absolutely true. I shared a few weeks ago when we had the 18-foot scaffolding set up in the sanctuary, Kevin Gilday and I, who are both terrified of heights, were the ones up there.

And he kept saying to me, it's going to be okay, buddy. It's going to be okay, buddy. And I kept saying the same thing to him. My palms are sweating just thinking about being up there. But that's the reality, right?

People are afraid of, worried about, enclosed spaces and heights and spiders and even clowns, right? At times, I'm worried about my wife.

That's a phobia. Nobody laughed. That was supposed to be a joke. You can laugh. It's okay. But some people are afraid of speaking in public. As Jerry Seinfeld has said, some people are more afraid of speaking in public than they are of death, which means they'd rather be in the coffin than giving the eulogy.

Right? Can you see that, though? People are terrified of being up here talking to a group of people. And friends, I don't believe that personal phobias or mental health issues are necessarily sinful in any way.

[11:51] That's what I want to really affirm to you right now. Confirm that I'm not grouping everything together and I'm recognizing that there are differences. And I believe that all of us may tend to worry in certain areas of our lives.

Some people don't worry at all. And they're crazy. But it's human nature, right? We can recognize that worrying is human nature in many ways. So what are some of the things?

Let's have some audience participation time. What are some of the things that can personally cause you to worry or might cause anyone to worry? So you don't have to be too vulnerable. But just say some things to me.

COVID. Yeah. Being on time. You must be your father's son. Kids' choices. That's a good one. Any other thoughts? Other worries for sure. So maybe you're the kind of person, as I touched on a moment ago, maybe you're the kind of person for whom worry is not really that significant.

[12:59] Not an issue in any significant way. And I know people, my aunt is one, whose faith in God is so deeply rooted that they don't seem to be affected by anything in a good way.

You know, they're not shaken. They're not like a boat in a storm. Certainly not like I am. So when you hear that, is your initial reaction a sense of envy, perhaps?

We're going to get to envy down the road a bit. But seriously, when I see that in other people, that unshakable anchor, it's inspiring to me.

It's very inspiring. But I'd suggest for many of us, though, that worry can be as easy as breathing. Can it? We don't have to be taught to do it.

Do you recognize that? You don't teach someone to worry. We may have, perhaps, as in my case, have modeled it for your children. Or it's been modeled for you by adults in your life, and you can recognize that in your own past.

[14:07] And worry seems to be fairly natural, right? We can even argue, in some ways, it's a sense of responsibility, right? It's of taking things seriously, of holding up your end of the bargain in life, responsibility.

So if that's how we may think about worry, in those kind of positive ways of being responsible and punctual, how can that be considered to be a sin?

Well, as we considered last week, I mean, isn't the tendency to worry just so someone may be wired? I'm a worrier. You know, I've come to terms with that.

This is not me, although it could apply to me. Isn't it unfair or somehow too judgmental to suggest that someone who is a serial worrier, particularly a Christian, is giving in to sin?

Is that unfair? Is that unkind? Is that too judgmental? I have a question for you, my friends. Is there, can you recognize any time in your life when worrying about something made any kind of difference?

[15:26] That one punched me right in the face as I prepared this sermon. I cannot tell you of a single time when lying in bed at night worrying about something made any difference.

And that struck me so personally because I had to answer, no, not once. So as I stepped back and sought to be objective on this, I recognized that I likely spend, well, I do spend, a great deal of

mental energy worrying about things over which I have zero control. worrying about it won't reside our house, right? I have to call a guy. It won't pour a new sidewalk. It won't make my lunch, right? Let's be real. So as one quote you may have heard before about worry says, if you can do something about a situation, why worry? And if you can't do something about a situation, why worry? Do you see that? Just basic logic there. [16:46] Another quote attributed to Walt Disney, this one, says, why worry? If you've done the best you can, worrying won't make it any better.

Right? Can you see that? So again, if you find yourself in a state of near constant worry, or even worse, more severe anxiety over things, that leads you to panic attacks, that leads you to an increased heart rate, sweaty palms, other physical issues that seem to be a root cause or trigger, in those situations, you may need to reach out to someone for help.

Because if you can't see the root cause of what's causing your anxiety and your worry, there may be a deeper issue. And that's what doctors are for.

The pandemic has exacerbated worry and anxiety beyond the level at which any of us, I'm sure, could have imagined in our wildest dreams.

And for most, if not all of us, that unknown is very real struggle. So don't struggle alone. Okay?

[18:02] Do you hear me say that? If you are struggling with the unknown, particularly of the pandemic, talk to someone. You're not being tough by not reaching out.

Does that make sense? Give yourself grace. So how is it that that average tendency many of us have to worry about, have to worry in a situation, how is that sinful?

Well, first, point number one. When we worry, we are seeking to take control away from God.

Do you hear that? We're seeking to shoulder responsibility that my friends was never ours to carry.

And as we've recognized before, if worrying has never changed your circumstances, aside from maybe helping you to lose sleep or creating acid reflux for you, why do we still do it?

Have you ever been able to worry yourself into getting a new job? Have you ever been able to worry into covering an unexpected expense or even completing a basic task?

[19:23] We said no. Right? So for me, at least, much of my tendency to worry stems from a false sense of responsibility.

I recognize that. A false sense that I alone need to make something happen, need to provide, need to be punctual and dependable, not to let anyone down ever.

Is that the same for you? See how crazy making that is? Another personal story. So when I was in seminary, one of our courses required us, or gifted us, really, with the opportunity to see a spiritual director.

So the spiritual director that I saw was actually also a friend of mine at the time. So I missed an appointment with him that he and I had booked. So I was a busy student.

He was a busy guy doing his stuff. So the next time I saw him, I apologized, right? I texted him and apologized. I left him a voicemail.

[20:36] So the next time I saw him in person, I said, I am really sorry again. And he smiled and he looked down and he looked back up at me and he said, do you know how many times you've apologized for missing that appointment?

And I said, no. And he said, I think that's 10. And I said, wow.

And he said, so I have a question for you. Do you have those expectations of anyone else? I said, no.

And he said, would you not, knowing you the way I do, would you not extend grace to anyone else?

And I said, yep. And he said, you and God need to work on you extending grace to you.

So I want you to, here's some homework. I want you to go home this week and I want you to scour your Bible. I hope you scour it at the best of times, but scour it because you won't find a single place in the word of God.

[21:47] I'm kind of cheating because I'm giving you the answer. You won't find a single place in the word of God where it says, you better figure this out. You better have all the answers.

or anything even remotely related to everyone is counting on you, so don't you dare let them down. Look for it.

You won't find it. Friends, we are definitely called to use, to invest our gifts and our talents that we've been given wisely. But we are called to seek God's guidance and direction for that.

We're not called to figure it out on our own. You may be aware that Jesus directly addressed the human tendency to worry.

And we're going to look at that in Matthew 6, 25 to 34. This passage will likely be familiar to you. So, go ahead and turn to Matthew 6, 25 to 34, or you can listen.

[22 : 51] Therefore, I tell you, Jesus says, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink, or about your body, what you will wear.

Is it not, is not life more important than food and the body more important 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? Who of you, hear this, who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?

And why do you worry about clothes, Jesus continues. See how the lilies 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?

[23 : 59] Oh, 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 these things.

And your heavenly Father knows that you need them. Here it is. Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well.

Therefore, do not worry. I love this verse. Do not worry. Second, therefore, do not worry about tomorrow for tomorrow for tomorrow will worry about itself.

Each day has enough trouble of its own. Right? Second, when we worry, we're drifting away from God's promises to us.

At its root, worry, if we can see this, is about not trusting God. Not trusting that he'll show up.

[25 : 16] Not trusting that he'll deliver on his promises. Can you recognize that? If you can believe that God created you, if you can believe that he has a plan for your life, do you honestly think he can't handle the details?

Come on. If you reflect on your personal tendency to worry, can you recognize how much energy that takes? I talked about sleepless nights.

Can you recognize that by worrying, particularly worrying about the future, you're actually using time and potentially other resources that you could be putting into action today, right now?

Worry causes us to feel, I believe, a false sense of urgency sometimes as well. It causes us to feel inadequate and incapable to question what God has given to us rather than thanking him for it and asking him to guide us in using it.

Can you recognize something else? We tend to worry about what? Well, things we may ultimately have no control over, right?

[26 : 45] And we also, this is me again, particularly, we worry about things that might happen. Can you relate to that?

you begin to overthink and overanalyze and you begin to worry about eventualities that may never come to be. Again, how crazy making.

Can I get everyone this morning who has a time machine or a crystal ball to raise their hand? No one? Really?

That's interesting. No one. Hmm. So we worry about an unknown future or unknown events or circumstances that may never happen. And more than that, the future is not even in our grasp. Right? As one quote that I've always liked, which seems to find, it seems to be fine to find the source for this, because it's, with lots of quotes that are attributed to multiple people, I think people just try and take credit.

[27 : 52] So this quote says, the clock is running. Make the most of today. Time waits for no one.

Yesterday is history. This is the part that may be most familiar to you. Yesterday is history.

Tomorrow is a mystery. Today is a gift.

And that's why it's called the present. Friends, living one day at a time keeps us from being consumed by worry, keeps us from being overwhelmed by our circumstances and the unknown of the future.

Third, when we worry, fundamentally, we're denying our identity and our calling. If you've ever recognized Jesus as the son of God, if you've declared him to be the lord of your life, do you truly believe that you were then a child of God and that he loves you?

It's not a rhetorical question. I hope you know. That is your identity. Ultimately, it's not the expectations or the standards of the world that determine who you are, but your identity and your calling as a child of God.

[29 : 28] That's it. That's all that matters. I believe that worry may also reveal, this is such a convicting sermon for me because it's like, yep, yep, God, got it, got it, got it, got it.

I'll try and do better. See, I'll try and do better. Garbage. It's not what it's about. But that popped into my head, right? Worry, to me, suggests that we're not actually trusting God.

We're not trusting that he created us. We're not trusting that he cares for us and loves us deeply.

You begin to pull the loose thread of that sweater, folks, it unravels pretty quick.

We're not trusting that he sees us, that he will provide for us according to his plan, not ours. Or that we may not even be sure that he's capable of doing that.

Do you hear that? Does that make sense to you? That that's what it kind of reflects. If we worry because we believe that we're ultimately responsible for our circumstances, ultimately responsible for providing for ourselves, ultimately responsible for what does or doesn't happen in our lives, for our future, I'd suggest that we're fundamentally showing a lack of understanding of God's character, his nature, his capabilities, his power over all things.

[31 : 05] Can you see that? As Jesus said in Matthew 7, verses 7 to 11, 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.

Which of you if his son asks for bread will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish will give him a snake? If you then though you are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him?

God sees us. He sees you. He will provide for us.

He hasn't forgotten about us and he never will. I hope you've come to recognize this morning that worry can definitely be sinful.

[32 : 20] That it can be a warning sign as well as a reminder for us to turn back to God. If you're a serial worrier like I am, as soon as they pop into your head, don't let them grow roots.

We need to trust that God sees us, that he will provide for our needs and that that truth can encourage us, should encourage us, and that we can be freed by it.

Are there things in your life right now, in your circumstances, whether it's COVID or otherwise, that are causing you worry? Friends, bring them to God in prayer.

I mean that sincerely. Ask for his help with them. Don't be bogged down by the futility and frustration of the never ending wheel of worry.

Sounds like the worst game show ever, doesn't it? Wheel of worry. The words of 1 Peter 5 verse 7 have always been a great source of encouragement and an important reminder to me.

[33 : 41] Sometimes I quote this verse in my head, in the moment. Cast all your anxiety, some translations say, your worries, on him because he cares for you.

Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. These may be hard words for us to hear, but they're true.

Carrying all your worries, carrying all your stress and your daily struggles, friends, it doesn't make you tough or brave or resilient or reliable, it actually shows that you haven't fully trusted God with your life.

Letting God have all our worries calls for, believe it or not, an active approach, not a passive one. Because it takes humility to recognize that we need help.

It takes humility to recognize that we need to turn to God, to be reminded that we need to turn to God and to others that he has brought into our lives to help us.

[34 : 53] You hesitate to accept someone's kindness, someone's offer to help, someone's offer of recognition, doesn't make you humble.

Don't submit to your worries. Don't submit to your ever changing circumstances. And a future that at least from your perspective is unknown, is uncertain.

Instead, submit to God who controls all of it. This week, I want you to seek to be aware of the worries that pop into your head.

And I'm taking this advice myself. Confess them to God. Consciously give them to him. And even more than that, this verse says, cast.

That's active. You imagine a heavy net as a fisherman? It takes effort and strength and intentionality to cast a net.

[35 : 55] So cast your worries on to God because he cares for you. God and as we journey through a deeper exploration of some of these specific respectable sins together over the coming weeks, I want us to say the words of 1 John 1 9 together each week.

And even if they don't come to you naturally, they will because we're doing them every week. 1 John 1 9 reminds us that, ready, if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Let's do it again. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Amen.