

Puppy Eyes of Trust
Philippians 4:1-9
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Earlier this week I was listening to Peter Walsh, a professional organizer and de-cluttering expert. On the topic of clutter, he was saying that all clutter falls into two broad categories. The first one is called “memory clutter”. These are things you have gathered, collected or perhaps inherited and you hold onto. These items have incredibly strong memories associated with them. The fear is if you let go of it you will lose the memory or worse still you will dishonor the memory of the person who gave it to you.

The other type of clutter is the “I might need it one day” clutter. Stuff you hold onto for a whole lot of imagined futures. Like off cuts of timber in the shed. We all know people like that. If you ask them why they are holding onto those scraps of wood they will say, “I may need it one day.”

Peter Walsh was talking about physical clutter, but it got me thinking about what I spoke about last week. Nostalgia is a type of mental clutter of things from the past that we hold onto. Feel-good memories about an earlier time that we keep reliving in our minds. These nostalgic memories are not accurate memories of what it really was like then, but perhaps they carry with them a memory of a person or time we fear we will lose if we stop trying to relive those memories. But in so doing we limit our ability to see and celebrate ways that God is at work in us today.

This week is the other type of mental clutter we accumulate. That is the “what if” clutter. It is similar to the physical “I may need that one day” clutter Peter Walsh talks about. It is all of the things we worry about, and fear may happen. Like physical clutter, these things clutter our minds both with nostalgia from the past and fears about the what ifs of the future.

Peter Walsh says this in conclusion, “When you are trapped in the past or pre-occupied in the future as your focus constantly, it stops you from doing the most important thing you have to do in life which is living - NOW.”

In today’s reading, Paul is imprisoned and awaiting execution. That is a big fear that could have him worrying about a whole host of things. But instead, he reminds the people to rejoice and to not be anxious about anything. Paul is full of gratitude, not for his circumstances, but because God is with him during all this. Theologian William Loader puts it this way, “Paul’s sense of joy is not the absence of pain or fear, but the presence of Christ, in whom he places his hope and trust. The deep human need to belong, the joy of belonging, is met for Paul in Christ.”

Paul shares this insight with us and tells us to take those fears and worry to God in prayer. He says, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

When we focus on our worries, we restrict the power of God’s peace to be fully present with us when we need it most. Paul is not telling us to deny those fears, but helps us to refocus our minds on the present where God is and helps us to see God at work.

Just like as our pets turn to us for reassurance, comfort, so too are we encouraged by scripture time and again to turn to God in times of anxiety and worry. Paul reminds us that a regular practice of prayer brings us the peace and comfort we need in times of trouble. Prayer re-directs us to the source of care and support, reminding us that we are never alone, but God is there with us and at work. This awareness fills us with joy, trust, gratitude and most of all peace to face the unknown ahead.

As Jesus says in Matthew 6:34 “Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own.” Let us stop worrying and start living in Christ - TODAY.