

## ***No Worries: Lion King Three***

A Sermon Preached at Lawrence Park Community Church

Matthew 6:25-34 and Hakuna Matata

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We are going to take a look at the *Lion King* scene in which the song, “Hakuna Matata,” occurs. But before doing so, I want to say something that you need to keep in mind as I go through this sermon.

There are two kinds of worry: first, the kind of worry you can do something about through self-awareness, or meditation, or by talking with friends to get a reality check. Every day kinds of worries that we all have, all the time. That is the kind of worry today’s sermon is about.

But second, there is another kind of worry, one that is debilitating, that drains your life of pleasure that may lead to depression or paralysis or worse. According to a recent study, as many as one in ten Canadian suffers from this sort of debilitating anxiety. A commentator on that study suggested that the real number is probably twice as high. If this sort of worry is part of your life, a sermon isn’t going to help you much—it might even make you angry, because it will seem that I am making light of your anxiety and don’t understand. What can I say? This sort of significant worry is something you should see a professional therapist about. He or she will discuss the many ways modern medicine and counseling can really help you. There is a lot of help available, and I hope you will seek it out, because it can make all the difference.

But on with the sermon—a sermon about the everyday worries we all struggle with. We’ll start with a clip from the animated movie. In it Simba, the child lion, thinks—mistakenly—that he is responsible for his father’s death.

Anyway, weighed down by guilt, and not knowing what to do about it, Simba runs away, almost dies of thirst, and is saved from death by the meerkat Timone and the warthog Pumbaa. They nurse Simba back to health, teach him how to eat slugs and bugs instead of antelope meat, and generally sing, swim, and saunter through life without a care in the world. Simba forgets that “I Want to Be King.” Simba, Timone, and Pumbaa live an aimless life of pleasure. And their anthem is “Hakuna Matata.” Let’s watch it now.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xB5ceAruYrI>

Well, that seems pretty nice to me! No rules, no responsibilities, but most of all no worries. A problem free philosophy! Right!

Reminds me of Bobby McFerrin’s song “Don’t Worry, Be Happy.” You probably remember it:

Don't worry be happy  
In every life we have some trouble  
When you worry you make it double  
Don't worry, be happy.....  
Ain't got no place to lay your head  
Somebody came and took your bed  
Don't worry, be happy  
The land lord say your rent is late  
He may have to litigate  
Don't worry, be happy  
Look at me I am happy  
Don't worry, be happy

In fact, nearly everybody who is a somebody in world history has said pretty much the same thing, one way or another. Mark Twain. The Dali Llama. Deepak Chopra. Corrie Ten Boom wrote: "Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow, it empties today of its strength." Also, Voltaire. Billy Graham. "Worry is interest on a debt that you don't owe," said Winston Churchill. And so on. No worries!

How dumb. All of them. Bobby McFerrin, Pimbaa and Timone, even Winston Churchill. Worry is an inescapable part of life, like the probiotics in your stomach, or the colour of your eyes. Telling people not to worry is like asking them to make their heart skip a beat. Pindar, a Greek poet who wrote 2500 years ago said, "at the last, only death can free us from worry."

I worry. This past month Irene and I have been using the services of an independent financial advisor, to make sure we are set for retirement seven or eight years from now. We were worried. I worry about answering my email in a timely way, about the future of this church, about the job prospects of my kids, and on and on it goes.

Of course we worry. Jesus suggests that we don't need to worry because if God feeds the birds of the air, he will certainly feed you. But, well, really, is that true for everyone all the time? Is that something we would dare preach in Ethiopia, today, where they are facing famine on a massive scale? Will God drop maize and beans from the air for them, like he provided manna in the desert? Don't worry? Get real!

Which brings us back to Simba. He's on the run because he's worried people will hate him for playing a role in his father's death. And even though he learns to sing Timone's and Pimbaa's "Don't worry" song, we see, a little later in the movie, that his worry about what people back home really think of him is like a poison that is slowly killing him, a poison that almost gets in the way of

true love and saving his pride of lions. Don't worry? In Simba's life, singing that song is an act of denial, of hypocrisy, and of stupidity.

And why shouldn't we worry? Worry is an evolutionary adaptation that has made humans one of the most successful creatures on earth. Worry is a sort of ignition switch for the brain that forces us to pay attention to stuff that matters. Worry helps us set our daily agenda, plan for a better tomorrow. Worry gets in the way of denial, so that we don't go through life pretending.

So what do we make of the sung command, Hakuna Matata? Of Jesus' command, "do not worry?" Of Bobby McFerrin?

Well, we ought, in the first place, realize that "Do not worry," isn't a moral command, like "Do not kill," or "Do not covet." Do not worry, rather, is a bit of wisdom that is generally true, but that we need to take with a grain of salt. Like most proverbs, it is both true, and not true.

Let me offer an example. In the book of Proverbs, we're told: "Do not answer fools according to their folly, or you will be a fool yourself." But in the next verse it says just the opposite, namely, "Answer fools according to their folly, or they will be wise in their own eyes." Well, which is it? Do you answer a fool or not?

One more example, this time from popular culture. Is it, "Absence makes the heart grow fonder," or is it, "Out of sight, out of mind?" Can both of these bits of wisdom be true? It depends.

You see, proverbs are not commands. They are bits of wisdom that need to be applied appropriately, depending on the situation. "Do not worry," is like that—a bit of wisdom to keep in mind—if the situation warrants it.

In Jesus' situation, we learn from chapter five that he is delivering the Sermon on the Mount only to his disciples. Matthew tells us, that Jesus climbed the mountain, in fact, to get away from the crowds that irritated him. So, finally alone with his disciples, Jesus tells them—and only them—that they should pray the Lord's prayer, that they should turn the other cheek, that they should not store up treasures on earth . . . and so on.

Jesus is trying to turn his disciples into travelling evangelists to continue his work when he is gone, after all, and so in the Sermon on the Mount he is calling them to a very high bar, one much higher than the PMO office had, apparently. And, in part, Jesus can afford to tell his disciples not to worry about what they eat or wear because we know from the Gospel of Luke that Jesus is being followed around by a number of rich women who are looking after his and all the disciples' needs. Nice! Jesus can tell his disciples not to worry because whenever he goes to town, Jesus is met by rich people who want

to sit and dine with him. And Jesus can tell his disciples not to worry because Jesus really does believe that ultimately God is going to provide for the disciples' needs as they seek first his kingdom. When they do so, people would provide. So—in that context—why should the disciples worry?

But, at the same time, Jesus also knew that there were appropriate times to worry. He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, for example, that God would somehow provide him with a way out of the crucifixion. He was worried about what was to come. Similarly, in the Gospel of John, Jesus tells his disciples that his soul is troubled. Jesus worried too—but only about the big stuff.

So, the bottom line? Well, it depends on the situation. If you don't have to worry . . . don't. If you are able, do not to sweat the small stuff. It will leave you in better shape to focus on what really matters—maybe what Jesus calls the Kingdom of God, maybe what we today might call our vision for shalom, or maybe whatever we believe to be our life's great over-riding purpose.

In the end, for Simba, as long as he sings the song “Hakuna Matata,” he missed out on his life's great calling—to be a king, to save his people, to fall in love. In his situation, he should have worried more about these things, so that he could have faced up to his shame at the role he thought he played in his father's death, but didn't, until it was almost too late.

So don't worry . . . unnecessarily. Don't sweat the small stuff when you don't have to. Don't fret your life away. Plan appropriately but focus on the real issues, the big issues, so that you can be all that you want to be for yourself, and others.