

Sermon Notes: Elevate the Elephant!

Sermon Series: Wrestling With Worry And Arresting Anxiety! (Part 3)

RECENT ANXIETY QUOTES. SOURCES TO BE REVEALED!

"The evidence is overwhelming that we live today in an 'age of anxiety' ... The ordinary stresses and strains of life in the changing world of today are such that few if any escape the need to confront anxiety and deal with it in some way."

"The more we worry, the worse our dreams. The more we talk, the more we are fools!"

"Even worse than worrying about real problems, we suffer imaginary anxieties about real problems."

A Poem from 'The Age Of Anxiety'

*"The lights must never go out, The music must always play,
Lest we should see where we are, Lost in a haunted wood,
Children afraid of the night Who have never been happy or good."*

For thousands of years people have been anxious about anxiety and worried about worry. So you are not alone. You are not suffering new. No one can judge you!

ANXIETY & WORRY ARE NOT NEW THINGS.

HUMANS HAVE ALWAYS BATTLED OUR MINDS

We became disconnected from God. We placed ourselves in the center of things - so our minds are now homes of worry and anxiety. Our minds are designed to connect, to imagine. But unmanaged that becomes anxiety. Spiritual warfare mainly means a battle of the mind - wrestling thoughts and feelings and growing maturity and character!

"For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me..." - Romans 7:22-23

0. YOUR MIND IS LIKE AN ELEPHANT

ALWAYS EATING: chewing, consuming, digesting, 16 hours a day.

ALWAYS PRODUCING: 100 kilograms of manure a day, smelly unless managed.

1. DON'T AVOID THE ELEPHANT

How do you deal with the elephant? Many avoid anxiety by escapism: through drink, food, drugs, experiences, bingeing TV, internet doom scrolling etc. Avoidance does not solve

problems. Distracting yourself will work for a time, but the elephant will go back to chewing and producing when you stop. You can't avoid forever.

"In the world you will have troubles. But take heart I have overcome the world." - John 16:33

Aiming for no trouble and stress = aiming for a meaningless life and not following Jesus.

We need to first acknowledge the elephant. Then it can be dealt with (see sermon 1). Anxiety may come, but it will hurt you if you give it power and authority over you...

2. DON'T ATTACK THE ELEPHANT

Don't start a fight with yourself over your worries. Don't condemn yourself for them – you're human after all. Feeling bad about feeling bad makes you feel bad! If you attack anxiety head on with anger or aggression it may grow. Like swimming against a rip at the beach, the more you fight the more exhausted you will be. Like Martin Luther, don't fight the devil yourself, that would be 'waging war in the flesh' – call on Jesus for victory!

"For though we are still flesh, we do not wage war in the power of our own flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but God's power to destroy strongholds..."

- 2 Corinthians 10:3-4

3. FEED THE ELEPHANT SOMETHING BETTER

"Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your mind on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honour at God's right hand. Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth. For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God. And when Christ, who is your life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all his glory." - Colossians 3:1-4

Elevate the elephant! Feed it the realities of heaven. Write down the promises of God, "I am with you always, I will never leave you or forsake you, I go to prepare a place for you!" Read them. Place them somewhere prominent. Feed on the Word of God, the grace of God, with Christ. Replacing anxious thoughts with God's word.

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - if anything is excellent or praiseworthy - think about such things. - Philippians 4:8

The life of a disciple is the life of being filled with the teacher's Word; of eating and drinking the teacher's presence, so that it becomes a part of us.

The TRUE news that we have sinned, but God is NOBLE, God is RIGHTEOUS, God is PURE. The news that God is LOVE, that even though we fret and worry God loves us. This is the news of the ADMIRABLE work of Jesus, our EXCELLENT Saviour, who is WORTHY OF PRAISE!

- Pastor Matt Thiele, Nambour & Witta Lutheran Churches, 31 July 2022