

You may be seated. Well, good morning. Well, we if you're alive, you probably have experienced change at some point. Maybe today, you know, maybe you've had a new pastor or your kids are going into a new school or a new grade.

They have new teachers. Maybe you started a new job recently or bought a new house. Right. All of these things are new and are a change. Now I'm going to admit that I am one of those people. I am one of those people who like change.

I embrace change. I love change. I love redecorating and rearranging my house. I get that from my mom. Like every day I came home and the furniture was rearranged or there was new pictures on the wall or something like that.

New paint. I've been accused of changing my paint colors in my house more than I clean. I don't know. Maybe it's true. I. We recently moved into this new house, and I bought a new TV, completely unnecessary purchase, but I bought it because it was the frame TV.

And so it looks like artwork on your wall and you can change it as often as you want with just like a click of the remote. It is so cool. Now change can be good, right? Even good change, though, always, always comes with some anxiety.

It just does. And so today we're going to beginning this new sermon series, anxious for nothing. And if you have no anxieties or no worries or no stress, you are you are free to leave and join us in a few weeks.

I'm guessing most of you will stick around. And I hope you do, because I think that we'll be able to learn from one another through this. Now, feeling anxious is kind of a there's kind of a range of emotions.

It's kind of a spectrum of when you're feeling anxious. And sometimes we use different terms, like interchangeably when we talk about these feelings, like we'll say, I'm stressed or I'm anxious or I'm worried or I'm fearful. Now, I think fear and anxiety are two different things.

And here's my example. So I am afraid of mice. I just am. I know it's an irrational fear, but I am afraid of them. And I experience anxiety knowing that there's probably a church mouse or two wandering around this building.

Right. So when I think about this or when I turn on a light in a dark room, I feel anxious knowing that there might be something scurrying around. That's anxiety. Thinking about something that that could possibly happen. Now, fear is a feeling that would overcome me if I actually encountered the mouse.

Now, if there was ever a mouse up on stage during my message, like, you would be able to see firsthand what fear is like. Now, most of the time we feel anxious and not fearful. Anxiety comes from our response to a stressful or possibly threatening situation.

We all have stress. But how we deal with stress varies. So when we worry about what might happen, we tend to be less productive. We tend to be unhappier. Chronic anxiety can be completely debilitating, and it can bring on all sorts of different health issues.

Now, of course, there are bigger things that we are anxious about instead of just maybe little changes that we have or little fears that we have, some of us are dealing with some family issues or some uncertain uncertainty of what might come next.

You know, some of us are caring for a loved one who is sick. The economy, right, is sometimes something we are anxious about. School is starting and there's some level of anxiety for us with if you have young kids like OC, not only will they adjust to their new classroom or their new teacher, but will they be safe in their classroom? These are these are big things that are in our life that we think about. So our passage today of Scripture might provide a foundation for us to start with as we talk about dealing with anxiety.

So we're going to be in John chapter eight, starting at verse 31. It says, then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.

And they answered him. We are decent descendants of Abraham and have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean by saying you will be made free? Jesus answered them very truly, I tell you. Anyone who commits sin is a slave to sin.

The slave does not have a permanent place in the household. The sun has a place there forever. So if the son makes you free, you will be free in deed. Now I want to focus on the word *truce* for a minute.

Now, I've used this image here sometimes when I teach confirmation class about the difference between truth and true. Now, that middle object represents truth. It's what is actually happening. The reality in the shadows, on the wall are true.

From whatever angle that you are looking at it. Right. But when you're standing in one direction and you see one shadow, you don't have the whole picture. It is how you perceive it. Another example of this, the difference between true and truth.

I could say, man, it's I'm cold. It feels like it's 50 degrees in here. Now, that's true for me. And someone right next to me at the very same time could say, Man, it is hot in here. It feels like it's 90 degrees.

Right. That is true for them. But the truth is, is that the thermostat is set on 72 degrees. True. Is someone's perceptive. Perceptive of the truth. Perspective. That's the word. Someone's perspective of the truth. Now, I use this image when talking about the Bible, especially when we think about those Old Testament stories.

Okay. Are they true? Is it true? Like what? What is this? Did. Did God create the world in seven days? Six days? And on the seventh day, he rested? And if so, was it 24 hour day like we think about a day now?

And when we think about the creation stories, did it take place in the order like we find it in Genesis one? Or did it happen in the order that we read in Genesis to write different creation stories, write back to back?

So how can both creation stories be true? Well, we can debate what is true until the end of time, because we all hold different perspectives of what is true. Now, the author of Genesis wrote What Was True for them, and these would have been stories that would have been passed down for generations and generations before someone actually took time to write them down. But here's the thing. The amazing truth from those first two stories in Genesis is that God created everything. That's the truth. God is the creator of all. Now, exactly how it went. Right.

That's debatable. But the truth will always remain the same. Now, here Jesus is talking about this truth again. And in John eight, it says, Jesus said, If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.

Now change happens, right? We all know this. Years ago, there was a popular book out called Who Moved My Cheese. Right. It was all about adjusting to change. And there are so many books out there on how to deal with change.

But the truth is that God doesn't change. And that's where we have to focus on when we are feeling anxious. So what is the truth that Jesus is talking about? Now the truth can be hard to come by, it seems, relative in certain circumstances, but Jesus himself is the truth.

In John 14, Jesus says these words I am the way and the truth and the life. Like Jesus says, I am the truth. And when we talk about Jesus being the truth, we have to understand and know the entire story.

Theologian And to right. He is a great theologian. He is a New Testament scholar. He has these amazing works. But he talked about this passage and about Jesus himself being the truth. And he says that we can't forget that the Jesus who is described as the truth is, is the it's the whole story of

Jesus and John. The gospel, according to John, is telling us that above all Jesus the truth is the one who died on the cross. And this dying on the cross was a supreme act of love for all of us.

And the act was the father's glory revealed. That is the truth, that that that God conquered sin and conquered death. Now, the truth which Jesus shows us is in illuminating the real values, the important things of life.

It's the things that we are supposed to be worrying about or focusing on and letting go of some of the things that are not important. Now the truth doesn't change. The truth will always remain the same. That God's love is with us and for us.

And it's just an unimaginable truth. So we always can come back to that when we are feeling anxious. But how do we do that right? How do we not forget about the truth? Well, back to that same verse again, where Jesus says, If you continue in my word, right?

If you continue in my word, then you'll know the truth. It doesn't say, just know my word. It says continue on in my word. So it's a process whether you are a Christian or an atheist, what you believe in God, you don't believe in God.

It's a process. You don't just wake up one morning and say, this is what I believe. Right? You study and you think and you seek and you talk about it and you process what you believe. So, you know, we have to be in in the word.

We have to be in the word. We have to continue on knowing what Jesus is talking about. But picking up the Bible can be intimidating. Like, where do you start? It's intimidating for me. Sometimes if I don't have a plan or an idea of which book I'm going to study, it's like, What did you just flip open the book and what is this all about? In my preaching classes. One of my preaching classes years ago, the professor taught us, told us about this book called Bird by Bird, and it's Bird by Bird Instructions on writing and Life.

And it's a short book. And he wasn't required, but he suggested that we buy it. And so I bought it and I read it. And in the book, there was this first story, and the author is describing something that happened to her early in her life.

And she had a brother who was ten years old at the time, and he was trying to write a report on birds. And it was due the next day. Now, he had three months to prepare for this report, but you waited until the day before.

And she was describing how they were sitting at their family cabin. And he's her brother is sitting at the table and he's anxious. He's like almost like frozen with fear and anxiousness. Like, how am I going to do this?

He's surrounded by paper and pencils and all these unopened books on birds. And she describes that her dad, her dad went to the kitchen table and her dad sat down next to her brother. And her dad put her arm put his arm around her brother.

And he said. Bird by bird, buddy. Just take it. Bird by bird. And when I read this, I told my husband, Tom, I was like, Tom, like, this is like an amazing story, right? Like. And then I told him about it and how I was excited about it.

And I just told him how it was powerful. And so for four years now, when I get overwhelmed by my to do list or what I need to do or things start piling up and I start getting anxious, he simply says, My husband simply says to me.

Bird by bird. And it calms me, right. It reminds me of one of my favorite Bible verses found in Matthew Chapter six. And it says, you know, Jesus says, therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow has enough worries of its own right.

Tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. It brings me back to the little baby steps that we can take. And of course, that doesn't mean that we don't plan for the future. We have to think about the future.

But it means that if we're feeling anxious or we're starting to worry, we think about the next right thing that we can do in this moment, and that will often bring us back to the truth. If you're looking for the next right thing to do when thinking about how to study the Bible, I invite you to check

out a study that the sermon series is kind of based on. And it's called Anxious for Nothing by Max Lucado. And it's on right now, media. It's a video study. There's also books that you can purchase. But if you go to Horizons Dot Church in on the little dropdown menu of of next steps, click on life groups

and scroll down. You will see right now media and you have access to right now media. Right now media is kind of like Netflix for Bible studies, right? So you there's all sorts of different categories. There's family and parenting and relationships and all sorts of different things.

There's even a kids channel on there. And this is a gift that Horizons provides for you. It's free to you or anyone that you want to share it with. And this is a great first step to get into the word.

Now it's normal, right? It's normal to feel anxious about things. And sometimes I think as Christians, we think, well, if I'm anxious about whatever, then I must not have enough faith in God. Have you ever thought that, like, Oh, I shouldn't be worried about this?

Right. If I had enough faith in God, I wouldn't be worried about it. Jesus says that this truth that the truth will set us free. But that doesn't mean that we are free from the normal stresses that life brings.

The Christian life is not about escaping. It's about staying grounded in the hope of Jesus. And sometimes Christians, I think, have their head in the sand and they think, okay, well, God is in control, so I don't have to do anything.

But if we think that, we're kind of only fooling ourselves. One of my pastors. Said this one time. He said, if the symbol for Christianity was a happy face. I wouldn't be a part of the church. Putting your faith in Jesus doesn't mean that we will never be anxious, doesn't mean that we will never deal with stress

But it does mean that when we feel uncertain that we have a foundation to rest on. And that foundation is the truth. Living in that truth of Jesus and what Jesus can do for us provides this inner peace within us that can kind of help with the fears and the anxiety of life and in the world.

See, the truth is, is that God is Redeemer. And Creator and sustainer. That is the truth. That is what we come back for. And knowing the truth is, is the first step in conquering our anxieties, giving us this inner peace that will get us through the stresses of life.

Bird by bird. That's how we take it. Bird by bird. Would you pray with me? Gracious and holy God. Life is good, but life is also hard and challenging and stressful. But God, we know that we have this this foundation, this rock that we can come back to.

And so I pray as we start to feel that that feeling of anxiousness building in us, that we can take a step back. And we step into the Word of God that we continue on into the word of God so that we will know the truth.

Had we can't just say that we believe in Jesus and then stop. We must continue on. But, God, we need your help. We need your guidance. We need you to. To push us. We need to feel the Holy Spirit with within us.

So that we can keep going. We can keep going with. With the strength and courage that. That only comes from you. That we can love our neighbor. And love our enemies. Because of the strength that can only come from you.

God, you are the truth. Jesus is the way and the truth and the life. Allow us to feel that. To know that. To live that. We say all of this in Jesus name. Amen.