

About a month ago, we were flying home from a family reunion, which always just kind of adds a little extra stress to everything, packing stuff up, making sure you get it checked in to the checked bags and making sure you don't forget anything.

And then taking off your shoes, taking off your belt, trying to get them back on, trying to keep all your stuff, make sure you don't leave anything behind. Right. It's already a certain level of stress, but it was added to in the fact that we also were traveling with our toddler.

And so that made it a little extra stressful. And that means we have to travel with her bags and sometimes carry her and sometimes not carry her. And so we got all the bags checked in which lighten the load, and then she let me know.

I thought, let's carry her up the escalator because she's never done an escalator before. Like this isn't going to go well. She let me know. That was not a good decision. She let about 150 people in the area.

No, she was not happy with me for trying to pick her up and carry her up the escalator. And so we got past that and got on the airplane and we try to have all the what ifs covered.

Like what if she gets hungry? Like, so we have some snacks in the bag. What if she gets thirsty? So we refill the water and have it ready to go? What if she wants to play with toys? What if she wants to watch tablet?

We think we have it all covered. Right? And so we're sitting on the plane. Things are going good again. And they're going over the safety information and the plane starting to back up, getting ready to take off.

And that's when she tells us she needs to poop. So we didn't have a plan for that necessarily. I don't know what you do in that situation. It's going to be a long time until she can actually go.

And so I just said try to hold it, which worked for 30 seconds. And so then at that point, all my worries went to how many rows of people are going to like start turning their heads and looking at us and wondering what's going on?

Is she going to stay happy in this time? And the plane takes off and it actually went pretty decent and I don't think it disturbed too many people. We got up to the level of the clouds and that particular day the turbulence was like crazy.

And so all of a sudden my worries shifted from that situation to the turbulence because I was like, Oh, man, my stomach is feeling this. And actually, I had the thought at the same time, too, if this turbulence gets much worse, there's about six people I can see right now that I'm going to be able to blame the pooping the pants situation on. So that's no longer that's no longer just going to be on us. But from now on, I have a new what if scenario. It's a plan every time we travel, probably until Oakland's very old.

I'll plan for that. But I don't know if you're familiar with a lot of the personality assessments. There's one called the Enneagram test. And on the Enneagram test, I'm a number six. There's nine different numbers that you can be.

So I ranking and number six, which isn't necessarily in any order, but it just describes your personality. And so one place I found says this about it, Enneagram six. They say If you're functioning in healthy ways, I'm productive.

A logical thinker, loyal, honest and reliable. But then it says, if I'm functioning in just kind of the average ways, I question almost everything. Struggle to get out of worst case scenario thinking and I find the world to be unsafe.

That's just kind of average. And then if I'm functioning in unhealthy ways, I fear the world is unfair. Find danger around every corner and have an intense anxiety. I was talking about this sermon, the Pastor John, last week and he said, but the world is unfair and there is danger around every corner.

And he said, But I also am a Enneagram six. So this makes me either very qualified or more likely not very qualified to preach. The last week of our Anxious for Nothing sermon series, my name is Derrick Ninotchka and I'm the director of Family Ministries here at Horizons.

And last time I was on this stage was during our pastor transition. So during that two week period where Pastor Jason was finished up with us and we were anxiously awaiting the arrival of Pastor Mandy. And I just wanted to say I actually had kind of a weird opportunity.

Our family was staying at my parents house in a small town, and Jason's family was staying at his parents house in another small town. And there was one Sunday morning that we both woke up early to head to church.

And it just so happens that in a small town downtown, we ran into each other at an intersection, and so we waved and pulled over and talked to each other for a minute. But he's doing well and thinks of you all often.

And, uh. Yeah. And hasn't it been great to have Pastor Mandy here leading us the last two months? Hasn't been great. Yeah. As someone who gets to see her on Sunday mornings and also in the office during the week behind the scenes, I just wanted to say she's working really hard and leading really well to bring the ministries here, um, encouragement and support and direction. And we are so blessed to have her both here on Sundays and behind the scenes leading our church. So she's been leading us through a sermon series called Anxious for Nothing, and it's based loosely on a max Lucado book by the same name, Anxious for Nothing.

And so a lot of what I share today is going to come from his book. But there's kind of this scale of worries, right? Like on one hand, there's some worries that are good, but then on the other hand, there's some worries that can rule and ruin our lives.

Right? Limited anxiety is helpful. We need to be alerted in danger. But what we don't always need is to live in a state of high alert. Right. And I just want to say this at the start of the sermon, because it was in the book and I thought it was so good and I believe it said, for some of us, God's healing will include the help of therapy and or medication. Do not think any less. If that's you ask God to lead you to a qualified counselor or physician. Anxiety is not so much a storm as it is the certainty that there is a storm coming.

There's always a storm coming. Anxiety is this meteor shower of what ifs. Fear sees a threat, but anxiety imagines one. Fear screams Get out. But anxiety ponders. What if? Fear is attached to a specific thing. The anxiety isn't always.

Anxiety disorders in the U.S. or the number one mental health problem among women, and are second only to alcohol and drug abuse among men. The U.S. is now the most anxious nation in the world. If it were an Olympic event, we'd have the gold medal.

We're tense. And what about all of the personal challenges you or someone you know is facing job loss, fighting cancer, struggling through a divorce or battling addiction? You or someone you know is bankrupt or broke or going out of business.

And then not only do we feel anxious, but then we start to feel anxious about our anxiety. Right? It results in this downward spiral of worry and then guilt and then worry and then guilt. And it makes us wonder, did Paul have any touch with reality when he said, don't be anxious about anything?

Right. That video just a minute ago ended with Philippians four, six and seven, which is where Paul famously says, don't be anxious about anything. Did he even get it? As of 2014, which is the little bit of old classic, but I couldn't find any updates.

The Bible was Kindle's most highlighted ebook, and the most highlighted passage within the Bible was those verses Philippians four, six and seven. And so we're going to look at those verses and we're going to kind of zoom out at a little bigger section of that passage.

And it was being written to the church in Philippi, which would have been the first church in the Europe area, to hear the good news that there was a new king. Jesus, Paul was in prison at the time he was writing this.

And at that time, if your business didn't support you while you were in prison, like Paul being a tent maker, he had no way to make money while he was in prison. You relied on friends and family to support you in certain things.

And so the church in Philippi was raising funds and giving financial support to the mission that they were on together with Paul and the people of the church delivered Paul money and Paul sent them back with this letter that we're going to read.

So if you want to follow along with me, we're going to start in Philippians four four. It says, Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again. Rejoice, let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.

Here comes that famous verse. Do not be anxious about anything. But in every situation, by prayer and petition with Thanksgiving, present your request to God. In the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Anxiety probably would have been a way of life for many in the ancient pagan world. There were so many gods and goddesses and it was hard to even keep track of all of them. And most likely some of them were out to get you and you didn't even know you were committing an offense.

It seemed like something bad was waiting around the corner for you all the time. But with God, there is no guarantee against suffering, which Paul knew well. While there was no guarantee against suffering, there was a certainty that God was in control.

And he would hear and answer prayers on any topic. I like how N.T. Wright says it. He says, If it matters to you, it matters to God. Picking up Paul's words in verse eight. 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. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me or seen me put into practice and the God of peace will be with you. When I read this passage, I can't help but think of a YouTube series that was put out at the beginning of the pandemic,

like right at the beginning of the pandemic, March of 2020. It wasn't so much a time of division yet, as it was just this time of like watching this virus spread. And there was just a general anxiety about it and it was spreading more than people expected.

And on the YouTube comes John Krasinski. Jim, Jim from The Office. Maybe you remember the series, right? It was called He put together a new series from his home office called Some Good News or SGI. And his daughter made a screen backdrop for behind his home desk.

And then he'd shoot off into cell phone videos most of the time with people around the world and what they were doing. And so he'd share a news story and share clips of celebrations for health care workers across the globe.

Or he'd go to a home video of someone setting out free toilet paper and hand sanitizer, both of which were extremely hard to find at the time. They set it out free for delivery drivers to just take, and it showed their reactions as they were like, I can just have this.

Or the reaction of a 15 year old girl who had just finished chemo when her street in multiple streets leading up to her house were lined with family and friends celebrating the end of her treatment. The end of the clip of his first clip of the some good news series, he closed with this line.

He said no matter how tough life can get, there's always good in the world. Paul saying we need to choose what we're focusing on because what we think about affects how we feel. Picking up Paul's words in verse ten, he continued his letter saying, I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. I'm not saying this because I am in need for I have learned to be content. Whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need and I know what it is to have plenty.

I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well-fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in one. I can do all this through him. Who gives me strength? And so what? After seemed like a long time of Paul sitting in prison in the town camps, even if after Titus I watched the YouTube clip how to say his name if he passed the diagnosis. That will give you anxiety, just having to try to say that on stage. But he brought in news to Paul of the church and Philippi. They were suffering and had various difficulties, but they were still firmly loyal to Jesus, and they were still deeply grateful to Paul because he had brought the gospel to them. And so Paul shares with them the secret of being content, whether living in plenty or in one. He rejoiced that they had brought him a financial gift, but he wanted to make it clear that him being content was not based on having that he had already been content before they delivered it. For Paul, being content wasn't based on needing to have more. And Paul would write a similar ideas to the church in Thessaloniki. Read a few verses of the letter he wrote to them. 1 Thessalonians 5:14.

He said. And we urge you, brothers and sisters, when those who are idle and disruptive encourage a disheartened. Help the weak. Be patient with everyone. Make sure that nobody pays back. Wrong for wrong. But always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else.

He says this again. He says, Rejoice, always, pray, continually give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. Each Christian or each group of Christian Christians, a family or a church has a responsibility to look out for the needs of others and to give comfort.

It's not enough to just hope for the best for other people. We must actively pursue what will be good for other Christians and for everybody. And I think it's worth pointing out here, the second time that we've read that, Paul says, rejoice always.

I think I like this quote from Pastor Rich Villegas. He says, The same Bible that tells us to rejoice always has a book called Lamentations. We don't have to choose one from the other. Good, healthy Christian faith is not dualistic, able to hold multiple tensions together.

Early Christians knew a lot about suffering. Paul wanted them to learn how to celebrate in the midst of it. Learning to thank God for whatever he gives is sometimes difficult. But it goes without saying that Jesus is Lord.

So Paul wrote these two letters to two different churches at the time. What should we today here, horizons take away from this? I think the idea we should take away is that we should choose to live in gratitude.

We should choose to live in gratitude. You can pick what you ponder. We can think. We can pick what we think about in the entire book of Philippians. There's 104 verses. Paul wrote 104 verses to the church in Philip II, and in those 104 verses, he mentioned Jesus 40 times.

That's an average of every two and a half verses that Paul, while he was in prison, was thinking about Jesus. And he wanted the church and Philip II to think about Christ as well. It's interesting to think about what would happen if we took our anxieties and brought them into an hour of worshiping.

How our thoughts would change through that. It can often seem like we need more of something in order to be grateful. Right. If I had this, if I had what they had, if I could get this, then I'd be grateful.

But what I have now. Is not enough. But there is a French study that found that that's not necessarily the case. The study of the study found that gratitude significantly contributed to the resiliency of daily hassles and contributed to higher overall life satisfaction.

It defined gratitude as overall positive regard and the role others play in the emotions that we have. And it clarified that this means gratitude needs to be both in our thinking and in our emotional response. But an important note from the study was that researchers found no correlation between increased gratitude.

And decreased frequency of daily hassles. Just because you're grateful doesn't mean you're not going to have equal challenges to the person sitting next to you. In other words, being grateful doesn't mean we have fewer opportunities to choose gratitude.

Max Lucado would say in his book, he said grateful people tend to be more empathetic and forgiving of others. People who keep a gratitude journal are more likely to have a positive outlook on life. Grateful individuals demonstrate less empty materialism and self-centeredness.

Gratitude improves. Self-esteem enhances relationships, quality of sleep and longevity. Gratitude should be deemed a miracle. Sure, it's no wonder that Paul mentions it when he talks about anxiety and we don't actually need more of anything to live in gratitude.

Mexico, in his book, shares a story of his own friend Jerry. A guy named Jerry who's married to Ginger. And Ginger was battling intense Parkinson's in what should have been an enjoyable season of their life in retirement. Instead, it was filled with hospital stays, medication and struggles.

Yeah. Max noticed that Jerry never complained. He still jokes around and has fun. And so one day he asks Jerry about it. He's like, Given this situation, it's interesting that you never complain. And Jerry said, every morning, Ginger and I get up and we choose to sing a hymn together.

And I always let her choose and she always chooses the hymn Count Your Blessings. And so they sing the song together every morning. And then they count them. They count their blessings. Bernie Brown in an interview that she did with Marie Kondo and her team shared that she said In the research, we learned that the most effective way to cultivate joy in our lives is to practice gratitude. The key word here is practice. It's not just about feeling grateful. It's about developing an observable practice. The data supporting this finding was so persuasive that we started a daily gratitude practice in our home.

We now go around the table every night before dinner and share one thing for which we are grateful. Gratitude leads us off the riverbank of if only. And escorts us onto the fertile valley of already. Takes our minds off of the future and into the present.

And worry refuses to share the heart with gratitude. One of the ways we can measure if we're actually choosing to live in gratitude is to look at our generosity. There's a Maryland-based Maryland based organization that helps with meals and nutrition and medical needs, and they shared.

In a sense, gratitude seems to prepare the brain for generosity. Perhaps this is why researchers have observed that grateful people give more our brains create a gratitude, generosity loop. We are thankful for the generosity shown to us, and that thankfulness inspires our own compassion and generosity.

Or as organizational psychologist Adam Grant would say. He said one of the best anti-anxiety medications available is generosity. Helping others reduces stress by helping us feel valued and capable. Talking through someone else's problems can give us wisdom for our own challenges and motivates us to follow through.

We all have the choice to be generous with our resources, with our experiences, with our time. And as Pastor Mandy shared last week, the church is where you take what you need when you need it and give all you can when you have it.

A few years ago. In 2018, I shared a sermon here. And so maybe you've heard this story, but it's been a while, so hopefully you don't remember it super well. And the stories from 2000 like three or four.

And so if I would have had a better experience or a more concrete experience with gratitude and generosity than this story, I would have shared that instead. But it's still the best experience and the most impactful experience I've ever had with gratitude and generosity.

And so I was on a high school mission trip here with Horizons. As a high school student, I wasn't. I was a student in the youth group, and we went to Juarez, Mexico, to build a house for people in need.

And so we would drive up to the neighborhood and kind of the only way that you would know where the road was is because it was an area of dirt that was clear of trash. We were driving into what felt like a landfill, but there is just trash on both sides of the road.

And then we get into a neighborhood and the house that a family of maybe up to six people was living in was often one room. It was cardboard walls, cardboard roof, a dirt floor. And so we have the opportunity to build a house that had cement floor, had two by four walls, had stucco on the walls and an actual roof with shingle material on the top. And it had doors that locked and windows locked. And by the end of the project, honestly, to us it seemed more like a shed. But but to have those locking features was a huge improvement.

And so to fast forward through the next part of the story, the first year we built a great relationship with the family of six that we were building a house for, and we really got close to them. And we as we prepared for the second year, we knew that there was really no way we were going to see that family again. Juarez is a city of over a million people. We should have never seen them again. More ministries that we traveled with built these houses all over the city. So you didn't really go back to the same area, but by some chance we went back to the exact same street, two houses down from the house that we had built the year before. And so people in our group were pop. They were like, let's go see the family that we knew from last year. And so they went over and knocked on the door and whoever answered the door was like, They don't live here anymore.

They actually donated this house to a church, which in and of itself is just an amazing act of generosity. The house that we had built had been modified a little and was now a church. And so on the Wednesday night of our trip, they said, You're invited to come to a service that we have here in this room. And so we went we finished up building the house that we were building that day. Uh, finish up early, got cleaned up, went back for a church service in the house that we had built. It was the cement floor and cement walls, but the back wall had been torn down and it had been connected to the old house with more cardboard so that it would be a big enough room for a lot of people to gather and worship. So it was still a dirt floor, it was still cardboard walls, and the conditions were still very poor.

There was no air conditioning. It was still that situation. But you looked around the room. This people worshiped. And you just saw a different spirit of gratitude. They worshiped with gratitude. Even though to us we thought we would never have gratitude in this situation in the moment.

That stuck out to me most was as the pastor was sharing. A girl in our grade was interpreting for us from Spanish to English, and so he was sharing a message. And at one point, she just kind of teared up.

We're like, What did he just say? She's like he just said how important it was for each of them to continue to give to the poor. It was a powerful reminder to us. That we don't need more of anything.

To choose to live in gratitude and generosity. So next time you have anxiety. Later this week, later today, maybe right now, next time you have anxiety, should you beat yourself up for not having enough gratitude in your life?

Go down that spiral of worry and then guilt and then worry and then guilt. I don't think so. Next time you experience anxiety, I think it's just a reminder to you that you're human and as humans, we experience anxiety.

You know who else experienced anxiety when he was a human? Jesus. He was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, about to head to the cross, and Luke records about Jesus, he says, and being in anguish, talking about Jesus and being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground. Jesus being in anguish means that he was extremely distressed about

something. And drops of sweat like blood falling to the ground during his praying is likely described by a medical condition called emitted process, which is a condition of capillary blood vessels that feed the sweat glands.

When they rupture, it causes them to exude blood. It occurs under conditions of extreme physical and emotional stress, which I imagine Jesus would have if he was accepting that the hour had come for him to be betrayed and crucified.

But it's interesting that the situation that was causing Jesus so much anxiety would also be the reason that you and I can be always grateful. The cross would give us a reason that whether we're well-fed or hungry, whether we're living in plenty, room one you can still have gravity will stop your anxiety every time, not every time. But my challenge to you today is to choose to live in the gratitude and generosity. Let's pray, God. When we talk about anxiety, it's so hard because there's people in this room that some of which I know their story.

And anxiety seems like it can be the only response to what they're going through. Maybe today for them, gratitude and generosity is not their next step. But maybe all they need to take from today is that if it matters to them, it matters to you.

And that whatever they're carrying is something that you want to carry alongside with them. But for those of us that are in between anxiety episodes today, God maybe just help us to choose to live in gratitude and generosity.

We know that it's going to impact our lives, but it's also going to impact the lives of everyone around us. We thank you today for going to the ground, Scott, for choosing to go there. Even though it caused you stress because you love us so much, we can be grateful.

We can overflow with that to the people we interact with in the screen, the people we interact with in the world. Because we have someone we have a God who loves us like you love us.