

## **Anxious**

**by Reverend Victoria Ney**

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We've certainly had our share of gloomy weather this spring (which hasn't helped or improved our anxious moods!). We were given a little taste of sun and warm, and then it went back to cold and windy—especially last weekend. Actually, I think the fear we feel right now is a lot like the cold wind that won't stop howling.

For a long time, before we ever heard of this Covid-19 virus, we felt anxious anyway. Terrorists were lurking somewhere. There were opioid addictions. The economy and the market were good, but can they keep going up? Well, we know that answer! Will good kids get in trouble? Will the other proverbial shoe drop? And then it did! In ways we could never have imagined.

Right now I think we feel like we're part Chicken Little and part Eeyore. A sense of dread hovers over us. What's going to happen next? One of my favorite Christian authors, Max Lucado, once wrote that fear and anxiety are cousins but not twins. Fear sees a threat. Anxiety imagines one. Fear screams, GET OUT! Anxiety ponders, WHAT IF?

Scientists tell us that fear results in fight or flight. And we all know that anxiety creates doom and gloom. We just need to turn on TV or read reports (conflicting ones no less) of doctors, politicians, "experts" and we are filled with fear AND anxiety—certainly doom and gloom. It's not fun!

Wouldn't you think that we, as Christians, should be exempt from worry? But we're not. We've been taught that the Christian life is a life of peace, and when we don't have peace, we assume the problem is with us. Not only do we feel anxious, but then we add guilt *about* our anxiety. It feels like a downward spiral of worry, guilt, worry, guilt.

It's enough to cause us to get anxious all over again!

When you read the verse in Philippians 4 (verse 6) where Paul says, "Be anxious for nothing," don't you wonder if he was out of touch with reality or something? It might have made more sense if he simply said, "Be anxious for less," or "Only be anxious on Thursdays." Or maybe even, "Only be anxious if there's a pandemic!"

But no. That's not what he says. There doesn't seem to be any wiggle room here—nothing, nada. Could he really have meant "be anxious for nothing?" But Paul, with all this sheltering in place, our hearts feel weighed down with worries and anxieties right now.

Let me quote Max Lucado once more: He says, "The presence of anxiety is unavoidable, but the prison of anxiety is optional." Are you sure? How can that be?

Let me reintroduce you to Paul's scripture passage—a slightly longer part of the sentence I quoted before. You might want to add this to your list of favorites along with Psalm 23, the Lord's Prayer, and John 3:16. It's Philippians 4:4-8.

Listen to these wonderful words: "Rejoice in the Lord always, Again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentleness be known to all people. The Lord is at hand. Be anxious for nothing 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 minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are

lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.”

Five verses with four recommendations for us that lead to God’s peace:

- Celebrate** God’s goodness. That’s the “rejoice in the Lord always” part (v. 4).
- Ask** God for help. “Let your requests be made known to God” (v. 6).
- Leave** your concerns with him. “With thanksgiving” and prayer (v. 6).
- Meditate** on good things. Think about the things that are good in your life that are worthy of praise (v. 8).

Celebrate. Ask. Leave. Meditate.

How about that? The first letters spell the word CALM

Do you need some calm? A lot of us do, right now. Know that God is ready to give it. With God as your helper, you can regain your confidence, you can give up feelings of dread, you could even get a smile back on your face again. And you probably will be able to sleep better tonight.

Let me close with a little story from a minister friend of mine from his childhood. He said he remembered that every night around 10:30 pm, his dad would go downstairs in his pajamas, get a glass of milk, and then check the front and back doors—checking to make sure they were locked. Then he would step into the bedroom where my friend and his brother slept, and say something like, “Everything is secure boys. You can go to sleep now.”

I really believe that’s how God loves us and care for us. He’s checking on us, making sure we’re safe. God oversees our whole world. God monitors our lives. He doesn’t need to check the doors—because he, indeed, is the Door! He says to each of us, “Everything is secure. You can rest now.”

By God’s power, you CAN be “anxious for nothing” and FEEL “the peace that surpasses all understanding.”