

A mother says to her toddler...
Put that down! Put that down!

A wife says to her husband
Pick that up! Pick that up!

My wife was repeating herself... and I quipped
That's redundant!

She smirked
You can say that again...
So I said
That's redundant...
And she said
You can say that again!

We went on like that for while...

Repetition... creates ***emphasis***

Repeating things... attaches importance

So it is with the lectionary readings

Last week, in John's gospel, we heard the calling of the first disciples
This week, Matthew's gospel, repeats the calling of the first disciples

It's even in today's Collect

***Give us grace, O Lord,
to answer readily the call of our Savior Jesus Christ...***

Answering the call... readily... is ***important!***
Answering the call... readily... is ***important!***

So here's today's question... *Why haven't you?*
And the most common excuse... *fear!*

Look around! Troubles and trials abound.
Some things will go badly... that is well established.
But fear things *might* go badly... is the wellspring of worry.

From early childhood... to the day before yesterday
anxiety persists.

A child worries about moving to a new school.
A father fears a loved one's diagnosis.
a senior is devastated in the wake of a spouse's death.
The trouble we face today...
is compounded by the uncertainty of tomorrow.

Last month I asked you...
Which do you think is more important?
More Positive thinking?
Or Less Negative Thinking?
This is not a trick question...
In fact... in 21st century America... it's a *very* serious question
Where do you get most benefit?
More Positive thinking?
Or Less Negative Thinking?
The studies are unequivocal
Less Negative thinking
Most people see these two attributes as different ends of the same scale
Pessimism over there and optimism over here.
Be research tells us
They are not on the same scale
But rather two *different* scales...
I find this fascinating...
It's important to maintain positive... Keep it...

But if you want get real...
Cut out negative thinking...
Cut it down... Cut it down... Cut it down...
That's the villain's voice
That's the critic in your head
That's the demotivator
That's the discounter
That's the one that raises the doubt...
And you can ***shut it up!***
That's right... ***You...*** can ***shut it up!***
It takes practice
It takes some discipline
Some say they're aware of their negative thinking...
But they're not.
70% of our negative thinking goes by unperceived by us
It is so embedded in our day-to-day behavior
we're not even aware of it.
It is just so ingrained in the way we go about our lives...
It's become habitual thinking.
According to the National Science Foundation,
80% of our thoughts are negative...
That is ***a lot*** of negative, repetitive thoughts!

Let me tell you how it shows up...
The ***SNEAK ATTACK*** of the ***Five Cs***
The first one is ***complaining.***
Griping...griping... griping...
It's too hot in Florida...
It ***is...*** but it's ***not*** going to change... if ***I gripe*** about it...

The next one is *criticizing*.

When Ernie Bennet was Canon to the Ordinary

That's the Diocese's first responder to problems in a church

He said... *The problem is never as bad, as the criticism that follows.*

The next one is *concern*...

And I don't mean empathetic concern for people in need...

I mean garden variety worrying

I'm concerned about the economy

I'm concerned about the news

I'm concerned about the government

The next one is *commiserating*...

I sit down with someone

And they start going thru their C's... their C talk...

And I say, *I get it. I understand.*

I'm not doing *anybody any* good.

It's destructive to both of us.

And the last one is *catastrophizing*...

When you're really down, you just blow things out of proportion

The astonishing thing about catastrophizing

Is that according to significant research...

90% of things we worry about... never happen!

We may be surrounded by negative thinkers...

But that doesn't mean we need to join in.

In "The Joy of Worry" Ellis Weiner wrote:

A young woman of high-school age was out late one evening....

Her father fell into an untroubled slumber,

but her mother sat up,

fretting and brooding

and imagining a variety of disasters

that might have befallen their daughter.
 Finally the mother could stand it no longer.
 She looked down, punched her husband, and said,
 “Wake up. It’s your turn to worry,”
 at which point the man took over worrying and the woman went to sleep.

We make light of their anxiety, but there is a kernel of truth.

We are not excused from life’s difficulties
 or the capacity to worry about what may be.

But we are not alone...

This has happened before

The psalm we read is set in a treacherous time
 We don’t know all the details
 But there are valid reasons for anxiety

evildoers who want to *devour my flesh*
An army that threatens my life

There is a fourfold cry for help...

And dire predictions of what may come

and in the midst of this day of trouble
 with persecution bearing down
 comes a surprise... a song of praise and a bold statement of faith.

***For in the day of trouble he shall keep me safe in his shelter;
 he shall hide me in the secrecy of his dwelling
 and set me high upon a rock.***

There is so much tension between fear and faith.

The passage doesn’t question the presence or goodness of God.

Rather it reveals that **fear** is the foe of faith.

The troubles and trials looming over these verses is huge but faith in God gives strength to endure ***The Day of Trouble***

Faith lifts us, carries us, protects us

And there is lots of evidence of faith-born strength.

Here in this church... and around the world
Faith obliterates fear.

Days after a baptism,
the mother of a newly baptized infant visited her pastor.
She told him about her worries during a complicated pregnancy.
She spoke of anxieties during her daughter's earliest days.
Then with her eyes glistening,
she recounts the words she heard during the rite of baptism,
how nothing could separate her daughter from the love of God.
And she searched for adequate words
to describe her newfound confidence in God's care.
And landed in the heart of psalm 27

***The Lord is my light and my salvation;
whom then shall I fear?
the Lord is the strength of my life;
of whom then shall I be afraid?
For in the day of trouble the Lord shall keep me safe.
For in the day of trouble the Lord shall keep me safe.***

The goodness of God is greater than the sum of all of life's trials.

At a funeral service, the ten-year-old granddaughter stood before family and friends and sang Robert Lowry's "My Life Flows On in Endless Song":

*My life flows on in endless song; above earth's lamentation,
I hear the sweet, though far-off hymn that hails a new creation.
Through all the tumult and the strife, I hear the music ringing;
It finds an echo in my soul—how can I keep from singing?*

Life is difficult... especially in the midst of loss, but the gathering of mourners was strengthened that day. By a young girl's courage to sing...

Amid our greatest challenges
In the uncertainty of an unknowable future,
We sing! We sing and make melody to the Lord
because God can be trusted.

God's abiding presence is revealed
in a mother hearing God speak through her daughter's baptism
or a tear shed when a young girl sings of faith at a funeral service.

Today's fear is real...
Anxious questions choke statements of faith.
Will my cancer return?
What if I lose my job, my health insurance?
Will my boy return home safely from the war?

Years ago a man was wracked with worry about his son. He came to church every week, hoping for answers, for comfort. When the congregation sang hymns, he stood without a hymnal. He listened to the familiar tunes, but he had lost his voice for singing. The congregation's alleluias seemed far, far away.

One day he stood and thanked the people in those pews.
for keeping the faith when he could not,
for singing hymns when he could not,
for seeing the goodness of God when his eyes were too cloudy to see it.

He was still concerned for his son...
but recognized that God would always be the source of his strength.

God is my light and my salvation.

God is the stronghold of my life.

I will sing to the Lord.

I have a homework assignment for you this week.

Please take the readings from the bulletin home with you.

Fold it back so the Psalm is on top

When you get home...

Put it somewhere where you will see it often

Put it near to your computer...

Lay in on your nightstand...

Tape it to your refrigerator...

Then read it every day... again and again and again

Let these words of hope wash over you

And guide your hearts to a place of peace

Allow the ***repetition*** to gift you with a fresh perspective

A new understanding

A defense against the 5 C's

So that you can live without fear

And find peace.

***The Lord is my light and my salvation;
whom then shall I fear?
the Lord is the strength of my life;
of whom then shall I be afraid?***

Amen!