

MAGNOLIA MINDS: The nameless grave

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The mass of men worry themselves into nameless graves while here and there a great unselfish soul forgets himself into immortality. – Ralph Waldo Emerson

The entire universe revolves around me. You need to know that. I am the most important being to ever draw a breath of life. You – yes, YOU – only exist as a bit player in my autobiography. I'm that important. I'm that significant. I'm grateful you get to occupy the same continent as I do.

I hope you recognize snark when you read it, because this is the attitude some people exude. Narcissism abounds. Self-centeredness is the name of the game, and it may just be that these tendencies manifest themselves in simple, pure, unadulterated worry.

Dear reader, I'm sure this isn't true of you, any more than it's true of me. And yet... and yet...

What is worry, anyway? Isn't it a form of self-centeredness? Do we worry because of some real or imagined, looming crisis? Do we fret if – God forbid! – things don't go as we like?

Let me hasten to point out that I'm making a distinction between legitimate concern and irrational worry. If your child goes missing, best you'd worry! That sort of worry should lead to action and not some idle brooding.

Emerson, the great transcendentalist, nailed the opening quote of this commentary. The guy was brilliant. I realize he was most likely a non-believer, but truth is truth wherever you

find it.

That phrase, "... men worry themselves into nameless graves," is a haunting one. The implication is that most people generate fear out of nothingness, or at best out of a perception that "something bad" may happen. It generally doesn't.

The reason I'm calling out worry as a form of self-centeredness is because worry is a solitary task. It implies that the worrier is carrying some burden alone.

It smacks of unholy doubt that God, Who is sovereign above all things, has been given an issue too big for Him and you're responsible for taking up the slack. Just in case God fumbles the ball, you're close by to pick it up and run.

In other words, it's all about you and not anyone else. Even Him. It's a subtle form of disbelief.

Before you beat yourself up, realize that worry does indeed send one just that much closer to a nameless grave. I mean, it's self-evident that worry simply isn't healthy.

Worse still, it doesn't help but some folks embrace it, marinate in it, and feel good because they feel bad. Worry is evidence that they "care," by golly. And it kills. It's slow-motion suicide.

So Emerson suggests a cure in the same breath: *...while here and there a great unselfish soul forgets himself into immortality.* No more nameless graves.

That's lovely. I'm glad Emerson was here to walk amongst us mortals for a while and give us such wisdom. The call here is for us to be simply unselfish, to shift our focus from ourselves, how we feel, and what we fret over... and release it. (Yeah, I know. One does not simply "let it go.")

To forget oneself, to lose ourselves in a cause bigger than ourselves, to cast our lives into the arms of One Who alone

can give us comfort – man alive! Isn't that something worth aspiring toward?

This is what banishes worry. If you're a believer, you have to accept that God is bigger than you, that He has a supernatural vantage point on whatever your situation is that you can't possibly understand, and He isn't bound by time and space.

He sees what instigated your worry, what you're doing in the midst of it, and what the resolution will be – all at the same time. (Good luck wrapping your head around that!) It is forgetting yourself, looking to Him, and releasing your concern like a helium balloon.

Re-read the Emerson quote. It's magnificent. Take comfort in the ancient script found in Philippians 4:6-7 which, according to data released by Amazon, is the most highlighted passage in Kindle ebooks and has comforted untold millions:

...do not be anxious about anything, 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 your minds in Christ Jesus (ESV).

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