

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

Do You Fear God or Possessions?

Matthew 6:25-34

Keywords: World, worldliness, money,, worship, generosity, giving, fear, anxiety

PowerPoint Presentation included: NONE

SermonAudio Blurb: In this final sermon regarding a missional life, Pastor Henry seeks to show believers exactly what it means to seek first God's kingdom. Jesus makes it clear that we are not to be fearing the things that unbelievers fear. Rather, implied in this is that we ought to be fearing God. But the hard reality is that possessions, the pleasure that they bring, and the fear of losing them too often capture our minds to the point that we lose sight of God and His kingdom. The result? A loss of reward in eternity, a paralyzing effect in our lives now, and a lack of true worship toward our Lord.

I. Introduction.

- A. If I did not believe in the solidarity of the Bible and that it is wholly inerrant and inspired by God I would marvel at how Matt Miller's sermons and mine tend to dovetail from week to week.
 - 1. But in reality the whole of the bible is the very Word of God and it therefore is not in contradiction with itself.
 - 2. And of course it is all profitable in the building up of every person in Jesus Christ.
- B. Matt pointed out in his sermon last week on Psalm 139 how intimately and extensively God knows each of us.
 - 1. In fact, God knows us, is present always with us. He also contains us in His hand and leads us as He wishes.
 - 2. And this is frightening as well as comforting if you truly dwell upon it.
 - a. He knows you better than you know your self. Every sin, every weakness and every thought before it is even formed.
 - b. And yet in spite of knowing us in our sinfulness He also redeems us, adopts us, clothes us in the pure righteousness of His Son and promises to raise us up into eternal life.
 - 3. This is why money and possessions are a huge topic in the bible. They reflect our true theology, which can be quite different from our stated theology.

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4. We are called by God to find our hope, our sustenance, and our comfort in Him and not in things.
 5. But too often we replace God with possessions all the while claiming not to. Today we have a passage that confronts each of us where we are. May God bless it to our souls.
- C. Today I want us to finish out the Sixth chapter of Matthew.
1. This also has much to do with our possessions and our money and our is the region hearts.
 2. In fact, at the very core of it is a concern about what is most “big” in your life. Jesus is stripping away the veneer that we all like to put on, that makes us all look good and clean and neat, and instead, have us look deep in our hearts to see what is there.
 3. What is it that we are seeking after? What should we be seeking after? What prevents us from seeking after the right thing? Well, all of this is answered for us in our passage.
- D. Now I want you to note some things here in our passage.
1. Now it appears that he is speaking about being anxious, but really he is speaking about having the wrong things as your focus.
 - a. Those things by which you orient yourself.
 - b. Those things that help keep you focused and in the direction that you need or want to be going in.
 - c. Example of the man who plows. If he looks at the plow he wanders, if he looks at a spot he is aiming for, it is straight.
 - d. Another example is shooting, keeping the sight picture before your eye.
 - e. Of course, if you have the wrong goal
 2. **The key point he makes is in vs 33.**
 - a. It is a call to be busy pursuing the Kingdom of God.
 - b. **But notice this key point, you can’t pursue the Kingdom of God well if your primary concern lies here in this world.**

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- c. In fact, for many, there is simply no pursuing of the Kingdom of God at all because this world is all they have.
 - d. But Christ is speaking as the Lord. And as Lord he is saying that these things that we tend to focus on are simply not where it is at.
 - e. Rather, these things will be taken care of by God for you, IF you decide that you shall strive and press on toward His Kingdom.
 - f. But, I believe, that if you choose to instead keep these things as your focus he will not help nor intervene.
 - g. And the reason for this is that we are then acting no differently than the unbelievers act.
- E. Now before we look at this passage, let's look another passage, this time from Luke to see this same information said slightly differently (Luke 12:13-34).
- 1. Luke's chapter is all about fear, just like Matthew 6 is all about money, possessions and reward.
 - a. Vs 4—fear of being killed is natural to humans, but our Lord is calling us to a different perspective
 - (1) To pursue the Kingdom of God one has to die here. But this is of little concern if we understand that those who kill are very limited in their ability to affect us, while God follows us into eternity.
 - (2) This is not saying that you seek to be killed, only, if the situation comes to you, to not fear it. Behind all of this is the assumption that you are being killed for the name of the Lord.
 - (3) In vs 19 we see an example of this in the opposite sense. A man has stored up more and more wealth seeking to be safe from poverty, but instead he dies poor before God and goes to hell.
 - (4) He should have been building the Kingdom through the excess funds, but instead he is only building his own comforts here and now.
 - b. Vs. 11—don't rely on your human abilities, lean on God.

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- c. In vss 22ff he then speaks of things our chapter already deals with, being anxious about the basics of life.
- d. The last fear is a key one, and it fits well with our passage. It is verse 32.
 - (1) The fear that really is behind all of these other fears is that God somehow will not come through with His promises.
 - (2) So we begin to hedge our bets a little, keep a little more aside, keep one eye upon this world and the other on the Lord.
 - (3) There is a real fear that people are confronted with when they read passages such as this one, or Matthew 6.
 - (4) For the real believer, there is something deep in them that strikes a chord. They actually have a level of excitement. The Spirit speaks to their soul and says, "Yes!"
 - (5) But their sinful nature steps in as well, their weak faith speaks as well and there is the fear that if they really do pursue the Kingdom of God that they won't be truly happy.
 - (6) They become afraid that God will somehow let them slip through his thoughts. That they will not triumph. And then they will have lost everything.
 - (7) But here we see that joy that the Father, not just God, but the Father (our Father), the joy that He has to have decided to give us the Kingdom of God.
 - (a) No reluctance.
 - (b) No hesitation, just sheer, perfection, infinite gladness.
 - (8) So he calls them to willingly give away their things to charity. To reach out to those in need and share the good things that God has given them. To not be a grasping fool, but a giving wise person.

F. Now, let's go back to our passage and think it through together.

II. Don't let the fears of this world define you (vss 25-32, 34).

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- A. “For this reason” connects what he is going to say with vs 24.
- B. Too often we allow the things of this world define us.
 - 1. This is at the root of so much of our problems. The world defines the latest fashions and the latest music and the latest fads.
 - 2. There is a thinking that this world has that seeks to hold us in its grasp, so that it can turn us wherever it wishes. But we must resist it!
- C. But what is it that is the root thought that the world wishes us to buy into?
 - 1. It is that there is something that this world has that will satisfy our souls and bring us lasting joy.
 - 2. And if you will think about it, this is exactly what so many people spend their life doing, chasing a dream that never truly comes alive.
 - 3. Others achieve the dream and spend their life trying to maintain it.

Now you can find people who are content with what they have and they might easily tell you that they are not anxious. But I would argue that they most likely really are, it is just covered up. When you have your job and the steady income and health and a happy family, it all seems good. But when you watch a child slip into rebellion, when you receive the pink slip informing you that you no longer have a job, when you hear the words that you have cancer, anxiety so often floods the soul.

Now I would say that this anxiety, or to call it another word—fear— this fear was always present, just safely tucked away because you had all these things. But once these things were removed, the fear was revealed. And the counsel that we receive from others is usually centered around getting the right doctor, or finding a new job, or some way to get your son or daughter to return to the family and Lord.

But seldom do we hear counsel to examine our thoughts and fears in this time to see what God might be revealing about the state of our hearts. For it is in those times that our faith is tested deeply and powerfully and even painfully. But it is a time that gives us a chance to see if we fear God more than the things of this world.

- D. Note that there is a key truth that is behind the words in verse 25. He doesn’t actually say it, but it is clearly there.
 - 1. Why do we think so much about food, drink and clothes? Because in them there is **pleasure**, there is **contentment**, there is **safety**.

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2. With the rare exceptions, people don't choose to eat bad tasting food. People like the taste and texture of good food. The same with drink and clothing.
 3. And these things speak of the basic needs and thoughts of life. You have to have these things if you hope to survive.
 4. But then Jesus says that life is more than these things. At least it ought to be.....
 5. If we merely concern ourselves over these basics, then we have failed to fulfill God's plan for us, to be a people who delight most of all in Him. We have settled instead for pizza and health insurance.
- E. He gives us these images from nature to illustrate his point.
1. Birds are pointed to as those who do not have to sow to gain their food, it is provided to them from their Creator.
 2. Now we know that he is not speaking about just sitting around waiting for God to give us our needs, for that is not what the birds do. God makes the food available and expects them to do the necessary things to get it.
 3. But as they grab up bugs and worms, as they pick out the seeds and sip the nectar, all of this is provided to them from God.
 4. What is the point? We are far more valuable than a bird to our Father.
 5. If God honors the instinctive labors of a bird, how much more will he honor the faith-filled actions of His child, who is laboring for His Kingdom?
- F. He speaks then of our length of life.
1. The point here is simply that worrying never helps anyone. Frankly, anxiety kills you. But we know this already.
 2. It is God who shall determine when and how you shall die. Life is in His hands and it is good for each of us to know this.
 3. If we decide to live for the Kingdom of God the fear is that there would be a loss of life for some.
 4. I still remember the man who read the book on the life of Hudson Taylor and was shocked and offended about this man's life. Taylor, for the sake

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of reaching the Chinese with the gospel, buried many of his family in that far land. This man could not see how that was a godly thing to have done.

- a. But who do you pity most? A man who loses all of his children as he labors for the gospel.
 - b. Or the man who has all his children and grandchildren safe and happy, but no care for the Kingdom of God?
5. In all honesty, how often are your decisions related to work, relationships, family and marriage driven by safety or comfort?
- G. He uses the flowers of the field to show the silliness of being concerned over our clothing.
1. The point is that a flower is so transitory, and yet it is filled with such beauty.
 2. Springtime is my favorite time as I see the bulbs rise and the flowers on the trees form. There is such a glorious burst of color after a long season of gray.
 3. And it is all there to remind us that our Father shall clothe us much better than even the flowers. But it all takes faith.
 4. We may have that clothing now, but not necessarily. Notice how Solomon, who was rich beyond comprehension could not compete with even flowers.
 5. So when shall the poor Christians in Sudan be clothed? When shall the people tortured and despised for their faith in Indonesia and China and Egypt have clothing? They lie in jail cells and hide in the jungle, being hunted like dogs. Where is this care that Jesus speaks of?
 6. The care that Jesus speaks of is in His absolutely faithful promise that we shall be for all eternity with Him and His Father in heaven, clothed in white robes.
 - a. We forget this because we have eyes and hearts that are too closely connected to the here-and-now.
 - b. Those who have suffered most for the Kingdom shall be most rewarded. Those who have been rich in this world shall be poor. Those rich in good works and generosity toward the brethren shall be rich before God.

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- H. In vss. 31-32 he restates the fears again and explains that this is wrong because this is the lifestyles of those who do not believe in God.
 - 1. To fear is to put yourself on the same level as unbelievers.
 - 2. To fear means that we don't really think God is there.
 - 3. Or, that God is not true to his promises.
 - 4. Or, that God does not love us as His children.
- I. Lastly, Jesus says that there is no need to be concerned about the worries of tomorrow, for today has enough.
 - 1. Now, this is not to say we worry about the now.
 - 2. The point is this....God has sovereignly ordained what shall come into your life. And each day is set by our Lord. There are no mistakes.
 - 3. Today, there are battles of faith and obedience that need to be fought. And if your heart is filled with worries for tomorrow, you will never enter the battle that is right before your very eyes!
 - 4. God shall not let temptation or trial be beyond what you can handle. He shall strengthen your hand, if you will lean on Him. He shall not fail.

III. Conclusion.

- A. Now all of this is a fight for the faith.
 - 1. We are battling for the Kingdom of God. We are to be busy seeking to have the name of our Lord and Savior spread throughout the world.
 - 2. We are to be busy showing acts of mercy, training up men to preach the Word, building up homes that delight in God, teaching tender minds of children that there is one Awesome God, who can move mountains, split seas, flood earths and save souls.
 - 3. We need to see that our money is not for our comfort, it is for the kingdom. Our money is not for our investments in this world that shall pass away, it is for the kingdom, where is shall never pass away.
 - 4. We need to see that we lose nothing in all of this, if we walk by faith and obey!
 - 5. We need to believe with all our hearts as a church what our Lord said to Peter. Mark 10:28-31 Peter began to say to Him, "Behold, we have left

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everything and followed You." 29 Jesus said, "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel's sake, 30 but that he shall receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life. 31 "But many who are first, will be last; and the last, first."

- B. To struggle in these areas is not an indication that you are not saved. It is an indication that your faith is under fire.
1. Satan is seeking to have you lose sight of the pleasures of God, the greatness of the future, the joys of the Kingdom.
 2. He wants you paralyzed like those who do not believe in Jesus, who do not have Jesus as their true Lord. He wants you eating crumbs, all the while a massive banquet lies above you.
- C. Fear and anxiety are not necessarily sins. But they are part of being human and sinful. But what we do with our fear determines much with how we will order our lives.
1. The foolish thing to do is to being to order our lives around trying to avoid these fears. And again, I believe that this is what many actually are doing while they buy more and more stuff and save more and more money.
 2. The wise things is to respond in the right manner:
 - a. Psalm 56:3. (The assumption is that I will be “afraid.”)
 - b. 1 Peter 5:7ff. (Same assumption, and Satan is behind it all—the antidote is faith!)
 - c. Luke 12:34, be a generous person. If something inhibits your pursuit of the kingdom, then give it away, lay it aside. **Matthew 5:29-30** "And if your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out, and throw it from you; for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. ³⁰ "And if your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off, and throw it from you; for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to go into hell.

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Small Group Questions

- When you think of seeking first God's Kingdom and Righteousness, what are some of the things that normally came to mind for you?
- What are the "things" that shall be added unto you in this text? Are there any implications that you can draw from that regarding what our Father in heaven thinks you need, compared to what you think you need?
- How have you lost sight, if ever, of God's kingdom out of fear of losing or not having things here and now?