

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW



Matthew 6:25-34

Worry

3/3/2024

We are going to Matthew 6 today.

We'll read today's passage:

Matthew 6:[24] “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

Matthew 6:25–34 [25] “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?

[26] Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?

[27] And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?

[28] And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, **[29]** yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. **[30]** But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is

thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

[31] Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’

[32] For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.

[33] But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.[34] “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

So Jesus has said you cannot serve God and money. You can only have ultimate allegiance in one place. It’s either God or something else, and we said last week that money uniquely elbows its way into that God position in our lives if we aren’t alert.

And right after telling us we can only serve one master, Jesus says in verse 25, “THEREFORE,” Do not be anxious.

So if we serve God ultimately, then the things that seem like they should be ultimate to us (necessities like food and clothing), are no longer the things we think we need the most. So we don’t need to be anxious.

And a number of times in the Bible we are commanded not to be anxious people:

Philippians 4:6–7 [6] do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made

known to God. [7] And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

1 Peter 5:6–7 [6] Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, [7] casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

Why is this such a big deal?

There are other sins that we would think are a much bigger deal than anxiety. Anxiety is mentioned in the new testament more than stealing, more than getting drunk. If you confess theft to a friend they would feel like that was a weighty sin, if you confessed anxiety they might think, “Not a big deal.”

In fact, anxiety might even be desirable to keep you working hard, to keep you alert to danger, to keep you responsive.

Why does Jesus care so much that we not be anxious people?

It has something to do with us not being able to serve two masters.

Our “god” is the thing we must have to be ok.

And when we are anxious, it is an indicator that we think we need something that we don’t have to be ok right now.

When Jesus is our God, it isn’t that we don’t sense any other needs. But the ultimate need is met.

Anxiety shows that we are believing a false gospel of relying on self, or relying on something that is not Jesus. And that always only feeds a vicious cycle where we become more anxious.

When we trust in Jesus, it is always life-giving and freeing.

When we're anxious, it is because the good news of the Gospel has shrunk to us, and something else has become bigger. It's an indicator that something is going wrong in our faith.

And though this passage doesn't mention it, our anxiety is also contagious. It affects others. We just lived through COVID, a time when most of us participated to some degree not only in the spread of the virus, but in the spread of fear and anxiety. And so we had the damage the virus did to people on top of the damage our anxiety about the virus did to people, compounding the issue.

It's common for a parent to go home from work with all the anxieties of the day weighing on them and to, without trying, spread that anxiety to a spouse or a child, and the home feels anxious. Churches and workplaces can start to feel like anxious places, almost inexplicably, when our anxiety spreads. And that blocks our joy, distracts us from the Lord, saps our strength, damages our minds and our bodies.

So Jesus gives us a whole cocktail of remedies for our anxiety here.

None of this rules out some of the physical remedies: sometimes we need better sleep, or better diet, or often more exercise or occasionally maybe medicine. But we are a whole person, spiritual affects physical and vice versa, and let's not ignore the spiritual needs that are often underneath many physical symptoms.

Matthew 6:25–34 [25] “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?”

Jesus here is making an argument he makes all throughout this passage from greater to less. If God does the greater thing, He can do the smaller thing. (He keeps using the word “more” - life is more than food, you are of more value than birds, God can be expected much more to clothe you than the lilies...)

The greater feat proves his ability to do the smaller feat. And God’s being for us in big ways proves his willingness to be for us in small ways.

You might have seen clips of some of the world’s strongest man competitions, where the competitors accomplish major feats of strength like pulling busses and planes. It’s probably a safe bet that their wives can be very confident that they will be able to open that stuck jar for them. The jar isn’t hard compared to the bus pull.

And here Jesus is saying, “God gave you life and a body. That’s really hard.”

Scientists have had to put hundreds of years of study and effort into trying to create life, and they still can’t do it from scratch - they have to use existing building blocks of life. Creating life is hard.

But those same scientists can go grocery shopping. Because getting food is relatively easy.

And Jesus says, “God gave you life and a body. So don’t you think he can give you food and clothes?”

And whether this works to diminish our anxiety all rises and falls on whether we believe in Him at all, whether we trust that He is who the Bible says He is, and whether we trust in Him to care for us.

Anxiety, then, reveals a lack of trust in the existence of God, the nature of God, or the love of God.

God can do big things, and God loves you, how much more can he handle making sure you have food and clothes?

Matthew 6:[26] Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?

So again, Jesus argues from greater to less. It's a big deal that God cares enough to feed birds. It's a smaller deal that God would care to feed you.

God feeds birds every day, so why are you worried about God feeding you every day?

In Luke's Gospel, he records a similar talk that Jesus gave, toward the end of his ministry just before going to the cross, and there, Jesus made this point in an even stronger way:

Luke 12:24 [24] Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! (ESV)

There, Jesus not only points out God's care for birds, but God's care for Ravens, which were listed in Deuteronomy among the unclean birds, the kind you can't eat, the kind that might appear to be good for nothing.

And God cares for them. Every day, with no worry at all, the dirty ravens go out and find enough to eat because God feeds them.

Now they're not lazy - they go out and work all day. They're the first ones up in the morning. They don't just wait for God to drop worms in their mouths.

They don't lay in the nest rubbing off scratch-off tickets hoping to get provision there. They work hard all day, but without any anxiety. They just know there will be provision.

Those unclean birds are pretty good theologians.

And Jesus here also argues from our worth to the Father.

You're worth more to your Father.

Those of us who are reformed in our view of Christianity have the doctrine of total depravity as one of our big truths that we cling to.

This is the idea that we are sinners by nature and by choice. We are rebels against God, and sin has permeated every part of us. We deserve God's punishment and hell. We are in such desperate condition apart from Jesus that our only hope is a Savior, not our own efforts, and we are unworthy of that Savior.

Which is all true.

But it doesn't mean that human beings have no worth. We are made in God's image. All of us are made in God's image. There is deep and abiding worth in even sinful people like us.

So we sing, "Two wonders here that I confess, my worth and my unworthiness."

Jesus taught us about our sinfulness. And about our worth.

You might, on a dark day, not want to approach God with any of your needs because of your sinfulness. You might wonder about your worth. You might

think, "At least those ravens aren't as bad as I have been." But Jesus reassures us: You are worth more.

And notice how woven throughout this passage about anxiety are Jesus's reminders that God is our Father. It's not just that God feeds the birds in verse 26, but your Father feeds them. It's not just that God knows your needs in verse 32, but your Father knows your needs.

You have a Father. A Father in heaven, with no limits on his power, who gave you life, and He thinks you are worth more than the birds. And He feeds the birds. So surely, He will feed you.

I think it's safe to say that if we really knew and really believed how much our Father loves us, we wouldn't worry about anything.

But we doubt that, don't we?

And sometimes we doubt his existence. But more often, we doubt that He loves or cares about us.

We can all find the reasons in me that make me unlovable.

Sure, God loves her. When it's time to confess our sins she confesses that sometimes she gets too joyful and sometimes loves people too much. I've got real issues! I've got the same besetting sins for 30 years, I've got faith that is dangling by a thread, I've got a history. So I'm on my own, and therefore, my anxiety is justified. I disqualified myself from God's love, so therefore these promises don't apply to me.

Or maybe we think God's love is something He was forced in to - Jesus died for my sins, so therefore God could love me, but He didn't really want to, we just negotiated this deal.

But remember, God so loved the world that He gave his son. He loved to begin with, and sent His son to pay for your forgiveness, because He loved you. His love for you was there before He sent His son.

Romans 5:8 “8 but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

His love for you didn't start when you ceased to be a sinner. You never were worthy of His love. It was never something you earned.

Your Father loves you.

And listen to this argument from the greater to the less:

Romans 8:32 “He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?”

If He loved you enough to give His son. How much more can you expect Him to give you everything else you need. If He gave His Son out of love for you, what good thing could He possibly withhold from you?

So the arguments for our worried hearts so far are:

God gives you life, He can give you food.

God feeds the birds, and you're worth more than birds.

You have a Father who loves you

And the next argument is a simple one:

Matthew 6:[27] And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?

The argument here is that worry doesn't help anything anyways. What does it accomplish? You're not going to live one hour longer because of it. (In fact, it probably shortens your life.)

**God gives you life, He can give you food.
God feeds the birds, and you're worth more than birds.
You have a Father who loves you
Worry doesn't accomplish anything**

Matthew 6:[28] And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, [29] yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. [30] But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

Jesus says, "Are you worried about clothes? Take a walk through a field of wildflowers. Look how God clothes them. And they aren't worried!"

Nobody walks through a field of flowers and says, "These flowers are so anxious! They're all uptight, they just exude anxiety! It stresses me out just being around these flowers."

The flowers are pretty chill. And they're dressed like kings. By God.

So what are you worried about?

And the how much more argument: that grass that God clothes with flowers is temporary. It springs up, turns brown in the summer, and gets burned up. That's in a single year.

You, however, live forever. And if God cares enough to clothe the temporary fleeting grass of the field, how much more will he clothe you!

**God gives you life, He can give you food.
God feeds the birds, and you're worth more than birds.
You have a Father who loves you
Worry doesn't accomplish anything
God provides for smaller and more temporary creations than you**

[31] Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' [32] For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.

People who worry, even about food and drink and clothes - essential things, are Gentiles, which in Jesus' context were people who don't believe in God.

He says when we worry, we are not believing in God. We can point our fingers at atheists all we want but we are practical atheists when anxiety dominates us.

But God is not indifferent. He knows our needs!

**God gives you life, He can give you food.
God feeds the birds, and you're worth more than birds.
You have a Father who loves you
Worry doesn't accomplish anything
God provides for smaller and more temporary creations than you
Your Father knows your needs**

Matthew 6:[33] But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

The call here is to occupy ourselves with the cause of Jesus on earth, not freaking out about our smaller needs. We care about the needs of others, the souls of others, the reign of Jesus over our lives. And not only will we

tend to forget many of our worries when we're busy with His cause, we also have more of a confidence that they'll be provided.

[34] “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”

You have grace for today's troubles. Not for tomorrow's yet. So worry about tomorrow's troubles tomorrow.

**God gives you life, He can give you food.
God feeds the birds, and you're worth more than birds.
You have a Father who loves you
Worry doesn't accomplish anything
God provides for smaller and more temporary creations than you
Your Father knows your needs
Your Father will provide all you need for his kingdom's cause
You don't have enough grace for tomorrow's worries yet, so don't worry about them.**

We have a Father, so we don't need to worry.

Now one big objection might be, “This is all nice sentiment. But has it really proven to be true?”

Have no Christians ever starved?

Have no Christians ever been so poor as to not have adequate clothing.

We might be able to say we've never seen that, in the US in 2024. But 10% of the globe is in extreme poverty. Every day 25,000 people die from hunger.

None of them are Christians?

Of course some of them are Christians.

So does that mean God has not kept His promise?

People have died of starvation clinging to God's promise that He will feed and clothe them.

And if you only have eyes to see what's on earth, you might think it was a failure.

But they were fed by every word that came from the mouth of God, and then a second after their death, stood before the Lord, clothed in the righteousness of Jesus.

How much more will he clothe you!

God doesn't always fulfill His promises as we expect Him to, but He never underdelivers.

Nobody who goes all in on Jesus is disappointed in the end.

Prayer of Confession:

Adapted from a prayer entitled, Peace, from the prayer book Prone to Wander by Barbara and Wayne Duguid, page 200-201.

Father, We confess we much time toiling, troubled, and distressed, you are forever at perfect peace. Your plans cause you no fear or anxiety. Your power knows no limits and your loving goodness no boundaries. As you rule over the intricacies of this universe, come and reign over our fearful hearts and minds. Though we should trust you, we are prone to walking through life with worried hearts and chaotic minds. We worry about our health, finances, friendships, work, and families. We fret anxiously about losing all the good things you have given us, forgetting to thank you often. Father, forgive us.

Thank you for our precious Savior, who put off his glory and put on our sin so that we could put off our condemnation and put on his robes of joyful obedience. Show us Christ, walking through this chaotic and sinful world, bringing peace to creation, stilling waves, and quieting souls with equal ease.

Show us Christ, forever standing before your throne, wearing our flesh and pleading for us, protecting and defending us. Oh God, melt our hearts with this truth until we delight to obey you, with hearts overflowing with thanksgiving and unshakable joy. In Jesus' name, amen.

Assurance:

Psalm 34:4–7

**[4] I sought the LORD, and he answered me
and delivered me from all my fears.**

**[5] Those who look to him are radiant,
and their faces shall never be ashamed.**

**[6] This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him
and saved him out of all his troubles.**

**[7] The angel of the LORD encamps
around those who fear him, and delivers them. (ESV)**

Group Discussion Questions

1. As you have thought about the sermon, what needs in your life evoke anxiety in you?
2. In what ways have you seen anxiety spread in a community?
3. What has caused you to doubt that God is greater than your worries? Is your doubt tied to the existence of God, the nature of God, or the love of God?

4. How can we encourage one another to trust and not be anxious? Is there anything mentioned during question one that we can be of help with as a group?

5. How could a lack of anxiety and worry be a witness to others?