

ELIMINATE WORRY: PUT FIRST THINGS FIRST

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Matthew 6:19-24

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INTRO.

-- Jesus' Sermon on the Mount is not intended for everyone. It's a sermon for Jesus' disciples, a sermon about how disciples are to live, a sermon about life in the Kingdom of God. Last week and this week we're looking at the heart of that sermon, Matthew 6:19-34, and what would be a surprise to many people is that this passage that is the core of the Sermon deals mostly with money and material possessions. What would be even more surprising to many is just how much Jesus talked about money. Nearly half of His parables deal with money. In fact, Jesus talked more about money than heaven and hell combined. That ought to give us a clue that Jesus considered the issue of money and material possessions to be a critical discipleship matter. And we see that clearly here in this key section of the Sermon on the Mount.

In verses 19-24, the passage we looked at last week, Jesus tells us that discipleship involves making the right choice:

Between 2 treasures (the disciple must choose treasure in heaven over treasure on earth.

And between 2 visions (the disciple must set his eyes on the unseen things above rather than on the seen things of earth)

And between 2 masters (the disciple must serve God rather than "mammon," money and material possessions)

-- Jesus goes on in the rest of the chapter that we will be looking at today to tell us that by making these right choices the disciple can eliminate worry from his life.

Read vv. 25-34

Three times in this passage Jesus instructs us not to worry:

v. 25 "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life…";

v. 31, "So do not worry…";

v. 34, "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow…";

-- The Greek word for worry has the idea of dividing; it depicts worry as pulling us apart and tying us up in knots. Interestingly, the English word "worry" comes from a root word that means to seize by the throat. Worry is like a choke hold on you - it makes you panic. Worry does all this because it sets its sights on and magnifies your problems. Worry is like those distorted mirrors at amusement parks that make your head look gigantic or make your legs look like stilts. Worry obsesses with your troubles and makes them appear even bigger than they already are. Worry magnifies your problems and makes them appear overwhelming.

-- Jesus doesn't just tell us not to worry. He gives us three keys to eliminating worry from our lives: truth, treasure, and trust.

I. Truth (vv. 25-32)

-- In verses 25-32 Jesus gives us the truth that has the power to break the strangle hold of worry: the truth that God cares for us. When we really understand and appropriate that truth so that it fills our minds and hearts, it will set us free from the stranglehold of worry. What causes our worry is not so much what we believe about God's power; most of us believe God is able to whatever He wants to do. The problem is that we're not sure that He cares or at least sure if He will take care of us.

A. Story of the Disciples & the Storm on Galilee

-- Remember the incident when the disciples were rowing across the Sea of Galilee, and Jesus was asleep in the back of the boat? A violent storm suddenly descended on them and threatened to sink the boat, but Jesus continued to sleep. Afraid they were about to lose their lives, the disciples woke Jesus up, and do you remember the question they asked Him? Not "Are you able to do something?" The

question they asked was "Don't you care that we are about to perish?" That's a picture of us. We can know that God is with and that He is able to deliver us, but we still worry because we don't know if God cares.

B. truth of God's care Presented two ways

-- That's the question that Jesus is answering here in this passage from the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus presents the truth of God's care for us in two ways.

1. First, He refers to God as "your heavenly Father" (vv. 26, 32). Jesus is the primary one who teaches us to think of God as a father. At the beginning of this chapter Jesus gives us a model prayer that we commonly call "the Lord's Prayer." Actually, it's the disciple's prayer - it's an example of how we should pray. How does Jesus instruct us to address God in verse 9? "Our Father in heaven." Addressing God as "Father" starts with Jesus in the Bible. No one in the OT addresses God that way. Jesus instructs us to come to God as our Father because Jesus is the One who makes that relationship possible.

John 1:12 Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God

-- Referring to God as our Father reminds us of the intimate relationship with God that Christ has made possible and stresses to us the love and concern that God has for us who are His children.

-- But Jesus doesn't just refer to God as our Father but as our "heavenly Father," emphasizing that the God whom we know and come to as Father is the sovereign Lord, Creator and ruler of heaven and earth.

2. Jesus illustrates how our "heavenly Father" cares for us is by using two object lessons: birds and flowers.

a. Birds (26-27)

While birds are very industrious, God is the one who provides the food that the birds find and eat and take back to their nests. Every berry, every insect, every worm comes from God. Jesus makes two truth points for us in this illustration:

(1) Our value to God (we alone were created in God's image, and it was for our salvation that Christ came and died).

(2) The uselessness of worry (worry can't add even an hour to your life but it might rob your of many)

b. Flowers (28-30)

Jesus' second object lesson is from wildflowers. Flowers are even more dependent on God than birds. After all, they can't do anything to provide water and sunshine for themselves; only God can do that. Not only does God provide those basic needs, but God also adorns them with a marvelous variety of beautiful shapes and colors.

The truth point that Jesus emphasizes in this illustration is our eternal lives. The flower is here today and gone tomorrow, but we were made for eternity.

The truth about God's care that Jesus is presenting here has inspired someone to write a little poem:

Said the robin to the sparrow:
"I should really like to know
Why these anxious human beings
Rush around and worry so."
Said the sparrow to the robin:
"Friend, I think that it must be
That they have no heavenly Father,
Such as cares for you and me."

II. Treasure (vv. 25, 33-34)

-- The second key to the elimination of worry from our lives is what we treasure. We worry because we choose the wrong treasure.

-- Look again at the command not to worry in verse 25.

v. 25 "Therefore, I tell you do not worry about your life"

The word "therefore" points us back to what Jesus has just said in verses 19-24, where He instructs us to spend our lives storing up treasure in heaven over treasure on earth.

Jesus tells us the same thing, just in a different way, in verse 33.

v. 33, "But seek first [God's] kingdom and his righteousness"

What we treasure is what we seek first. It's the top priority in our lives. It's the primary passion that drives us. In verse 24 Jesus tells us it is God whom we are to serve as our Master, and here in verse 33 Jesus tells us that means that His Kingdom and His righteousness must be our top priority. To seek God's Kingdom means that nothing is more important to us than His glory and His will. To seek God's

righteousness means that we desire nothing more than having Christ-like character and Christ-honoring conduct.

Worry is like a spiritual "Check Engine" light; it tells us something is wrong inside, that we aren't putting God's Kingdom and righteousness first. Why do we worry? We worry because we want our plans more than His will. Why do we worry? We worry because we're more concerned about our comfort than His glory. Why do we worry? We worry because we're seeking our pleasure more than His character.

If I have a crisis in my life - losing a job or facing a serious health problem - if my first concern is about my needs or my plans, then I'm going to worry. But if my first concern is submitting to God's will and desiring for Him to be glorified in this circumstance, then there's no cause for worry. My part is to honor and glorify Christ and then to trust Him for everything else.

And that is the third key to eliminating worry: trust.

III. Trust

-- Trust is an essential key to free us from worry. In verse 30 Jesus indicates why His disciples are worried about various needs.

v. 30, "...O you of little faith."

That's the same thing that Jesus says to the disciples when they wake Him up in the boat on the stormy sea, asking if He cares that they are about to lose their lives. He commands the storm to "Be quiet," and then turns to the disciples and says, "You of little faith. Why are you so afraid?" (Matt. 8:26). The problem wasn't His care; the problem was their faith, their failure to trust in Him.

Fear and worry indicate a lack of trust. We aren't trusting that He is who He says (the heavenly Father who knows and cares about our needs) and that He will do what He promises (give all that is needed to accomplish His will in our lives).

Why is it easier for us to trust God to forgive our sins than to provide for our needs? Remember the story of the men who brought a paralytic friend to Jesus? Jesus looked at the man and instead of healing him says to him, "Your sins are forgiven." The religious leaders were naturally shocked and whispered to one another. Just who did Jesus think He was that He would dare to pretend that He could forgive anyone's sins. Jesus then asked them which is easier: to forgive the man's sins or heal him. While Jesus had the authority to do both, it was, in fact, easier for Him to heal the man than to forgive his sins. Healing the man could be done at Jesus' command to rise and take up his bed, but forgiving the man's sins required Jesus to set aside the glories of heaven and come to earth as a man and to die for the man's sins. When you struggle to trust God to provide for your physical needs, remember that Christ has already forgiven your sins, something that by comparison, was much more costly and difficult. To forgive your sins Christ had to come into a sin-darkened world and then take the pollution and judgment of our sins upon Himself in His death on the Cross. To provide for your physical needs all He has to do is to speak the command.

Faith, the ability to trust God, is a gift from God Himself, but it's a gift that we must nurture and exercise for it to grow stronger. Jesus tells us how to get started: by trusting God to provide for us one day at a time.

CONCLUSION

There was another time when the disciples encountered a storm that threatened to take their lives on the Sea of Galilee, only this time Jesus wasn't in the boat with them. Instead, this time Jesus came walking to them on top of the raging waters. Remember what Jesus said to them on that occasion? "Take courage. Don't be afraid. It is I." Their security wasn't in their ability to swim or in the strength of their boat. The security that delivered them from fear and worry was Christ. It still is.