

CS – Living for a Higher Purpose

9/24/23

Matthew 6:19-34

Sunday AM

I love humorous/clever church signs.

- *Tweet others as you want to be tweeted*
- *Forgive your enemies – it messes w/ their heads*
- *Don't give up! Moses was once a basket case too*
- *Don't let worry kill you... let the church help!*

Question. *What stresses you out? What keeps you up all night and anxious all day? Based on recent trends, it appears we're a society drowning in anxiety/worry.*

STATS – the avg. person is anxious about nothing:

- 40% on things that'll never happen
- 30% on things in the past that can't be changed
- 12% on the mostly untrue criticism of others
- 10% on health/financial issues and ambitions
- 8% on real problems that most of us face daily

We're 3-weeks into our ***Come and See*** journey learning how to follow Jesus – and I'm so thankful for how the Lord is moving among us. If you've been following in the QT Journal, this week we've been in the SOTM – where Jesus elaborated on the true meaning of the Law/Prophets. In particular, today, I want to camp out in **Matthew 6:19-34** to see what Jesus had to say is key to following Him.

Read **Matthew 6:19-34**

In a nutshell – Jesus was saying that the key to life, no matter whatever challenges we might face, is learning to prioritize the eternal over the earthly – and what will last over being worried about things that'll pass away. It's learning to ***trust in Him, steward His blessings, and seek first His will*** in all areas of life.

In this text, Jesus outlines (5) truths essential to stewarding our lives in a way that honors God instead of living consumed by the worries of the world.

I **VALUE** the Eternal Over the Earthly

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths/rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths/rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Whenever I read this text, I'm reminded of the **true** story of a wealthy widow at a church in AL who was asked to make an advanced commitment to a building fund to encourage others to support the effort. Initially, she committed very little, but then something occurred on her way home that caused her to call the pastor and insist he come to her house. When he arrived, she confessed that she'd committed little to the campaign but that something happened to change her mind. Asking the pastor to quote Matthew 4:19 – *Don't lay-up treasures on earth where moths destroy...*

She stopped him mid-sentence and said, "You're not going to believe what happened. When I arrived home and opened my purse to get my house key, the biggest moth you've ever seen flew out. I have no idea how it got there, but God used that moth to remind me how I needed to trust Him and not my riches. So, hand me another card, I

want to triple my commitment.” After that, every time she saw the pastor, she’d say, “**Remember the moth!**” See – before the moth, she was only concerned w/ what she could keep, but after the moth, she became passionately concerned w/ how she could steward her blessings b/c she finally understood how to value the eternal over the earthly.

Simple truth – we’re either living for ourselves or for someone/thing else. We’re living for the earthly or the eternal – and Jesus says – *only a fool prioritizes the earthly at the expense of the eternal*. And b/c everything in the here/now is certain to pass away or get left behind – **Jesus is inviting us to live for things w/ eternal value**. He surmises that like w/ most things in life – *the heart of the issue is an issue of the heart*.

SEE – when Jesus said – *Wherever your treasure is, there your heart will be* – He was explaining that our focus in life is ultimately a matter of the heart, b/c what we *prioritize serves as a clear indicator of who/what is God in our lives*. Thus, if our heart is rightly focused on things above instead of on things of earth, we’ll be gladly generous towards the things of God. If not, then we will be consumed by the worries of this world. *Now Jesus isn’t saying that having possessions is evil and we should all live as a pauper* – but He is saying that it’s unhealthy to live focused on earthly things that don’t matter and will eventually pass away.

Nor is He saying wealth is to be despised/avoided and saving for a rainy day is evil – quite to the contrary, God wants us to enjoy life and make the most of it, yet always using our blessings for eternal purposes.

I think Jesus is saying there’s something greater than living for the **good** – and that is, living for **God**.

Opportunity – \$25k Church Planting Match

II **ASSESS** the True Motives of Your Heart

The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light w/in you is darkness, how great is that darkness?

In many ways, *our eyes are the portal to the soul* and the great influencer of what we deem important in life. So, John warned us to never drop our guard to the lust of the eyes as a means to gratify our flesh – b/c our eyes *fuel our appetites, blur our values, and drive our ambitions/actions*. So, we must regularly audit and measure our motives/perspectives.

SEE – Jesus is saying that the key to not succumbing to the *lust of the eyes* and the desires of the world is by making a conscious decision to *singularly* fix our eyes on Him and God’s kingdom/righteousness.

Since we’re surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles – and let us run w/ endurance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus...

Hebrews 12:1-2a

Our focus matters! If laying up earthly treasures is our priority, it’ll distort our spiritual awareness and blur our ability to value the things God values.

III **CHOOSE** Daily Who or What will be God

No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you’ll be devoted to one and despise the other b/c you can’t serve both God and money.

no one can serve – means... not one person has the ability to become an indentured slave to (2) masters.

In ancient times a slave was nothing more than an object or tool w/ no personal rights. His master could do w/ him as he wished – *sell* him, *beat* him, *cast* him out, and even *kill* him – b/c as a slave, he was fully subject to His master. Jesus is saying – we all have a master – which one are you going to be indentured to?

So, Jesus makes a simple – we all have to make a choice b/c only **ONE** person or thing can sit on the throne of a person's life at a time. In this instance, it's either the living **God** or the **god** of money/materialism.

Either you're living for the *earthly* or you're living for the *eternal*. You're living for the *applause of man* or for the *blessing of God* – but you **CAN'T** live for both. Either you will serve God, or you'll serve yourself... You'll choose God or you'll choose money – but you **CANNOT** serve both at the same time.

NOTICE – Jesus didn't say you couldn't HAVE both God and money but that you can't have both as the top priority or driving force of your life. Only one of them can be your MASTER.

IV **PREFER** Wonder Over Worry

Therefore, I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that's how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will He not much more clothe you – you of little faith? So, do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.

Most of us worry over the things we want but can't have or have but we know we can't secure.

worry – etymology – to strangle or to lacerate by the throat w/ your teeth (refers to how a wolf kills its prey)

do not worry (*merimnao*) Pres. Imp – stop allowing yourself to be pulled in all directions or strangled by the non-essential burdens of life.

Jesus isn't saying that we won't have earthly concerns, but He is saying that when we have a correct view of God and a willing spirit to trust His person/provision – then the cares of this life won't have to get the best of us. **AND** if they're getting the best of us, it's b/c we've decided to focus on the wrong things.

Worry...

- ...gives a small thing a big shadow
- ...is the interest we pay on tomorrow's troubles
- ...is an indication we think God cannot look after us
- ...is a guest admitted who quickly becomes our master
- ...is practical atheism – living as if God is not present

WHY? It's b/c worry shifts the focus of attention from trusting in the all-sufficient power of God to trusting in our human insufficiency, inability, and insecurity.

Worry is the darkroom where negatives are developed.

Which brings us to God's solution to worry...

V **SEEK** God's Way Over Your Way

But seek first His kingdom/righteousness, and all these things will be given to you. Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough worry of its own.

seek (zeteo) search to uncover or discover – it is a passion pursuit to find what you're looking for. In this case, it is seeking the Lord and His will. It's choosing to make His priorities/purpose your priorities/purpose.

Jesus is saying that the antidote to worry is making Jesus and His kingdom the object of your affections, ambitions, appetites, and actions. It's stewarding your life w/ absolute trust in Him.

Spurgeon added that the remedy to worry is seeking the Lord as prescribed in **Psalms 139:23** – **search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in your everlasting way.**

Notice all the verbs – *search, know, try, see, lead* – all of them speak to our trust/dependence on the Lord.

Do not fret b/c of evildoers, and be not envious of wrongdoers. For they will wither like the grass and fade like the green herb. But trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness. Psalms 37:1-3

Look around and be distressed. Look inside and be depressed. Look at Jesus and be at rest. *Boom*

Many of you knew Charles Stanley. What you might not know is that when he became pastor of FBC Atlanta in 1971, his first few years were full of turmoil, criticism, and opposition – to the point that he almost resigned due to the struggles/criticism he faced. At one of his lowest moments, an elderly church member asked him to stop by her house. Thinking he didn't have time, he procrastinated. Yet b/c she so persisted, one day he gave in and made the visit. When he arrived she said, "Pastor you need to see this." She showed him a framed print of a famous painting – *Daniel in the Den of Lions*. It showed Daniel standing in the lion's den looking up at the light coming thru a window w/ the lions behind him. She asked, "Pastor, what do you see?" Impatiently, Charles said, "Daniel in the lion's den." She asked, "What's Daniel doing?" He replied, "I told you, he's standing in the lion's den." But she persisted, "But what is he DOING?" Exasperated, Dr. Stanley said, "Why don't you tell me what you think he's doing?" She said, "Pastor, Daniel isn't looking at the lions, he's looking up at the light. She then put her hand on Dr. Stanley's shoulder and said, "Pastor, you need stop looking at the lions who are threatening you right now, and just keep your eyes on Jesus." Dr. Stanley said he left her home in tears – and that visit became a turning point in his ministry, b/c on that day, he stopped looking at his problems and started focusing on Jesus – his problem-solver.

What are you doing today w/ your blessings? What are you seeking? Are you looking at the lions or the light?