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**Teaching: Zac Niles**  
**Series: The Sermon on the Mount**  
**Message: Do Not Be Anxious**

**Transcribed Message**  
**July 1, 2018**  
**Matthew 6:25-34**

When have you ever been afraid of what God is asking you to do? What makes you afraid? What has made you afraid? What scared you when you were growing up? Well, mine was this really weird dream that I used to have quite a bit. I still remember it very clearly. I was sitting on my front porch. I grew up in a small town out in the country. I grew up in Perkins, Oklahoma. At my house, there was this bend where you would round the corner and then there's just kind of a straight shot to our house. In my dream, I was sitting on the front porch. I must have liked He-man. Do you remember that action figure He-man? Maybe you don't. Here's a picture. This is one of the bad guys in He-man. For some reason, this guy was like my worst nightmare because literally in my nightmares he would round the corner and there would be a legion of people behind them. Every time I'd dream this type of dream, right where he's about to pounce on me I would wake up and wake up in a sweat. I had that dream repeatedly because I still remember it to this day and I'm almost 40. The interesting thing about that dream is that sometimes I would get in my car to go, fully awake, not sleeping anymore, and I would think what would it be like if that guy rounded the corner? I'd get this weird feeling in my chest because it scared me so much. It was totally irrational. It wasn't a logical fear but it was real. And I felt it. It was irrational but it was real.

Also, the theology of the church I grew up in talked a lot about the rapture. One of the things I used to fear quite a bit was if people didn't come home and they said they were going to come home. I would be sitting in my room thinking oh my gosh, everyone got raptured and I'm the only one left. Have you ever done that? Or you've been on the plane and you think I haven't heard from the pilot in a long time. I wonder if he's asleep? These fears just pop up in us all the time. It doesn't matter if they're irrational. They feel real.

We're talking today about being anxious. A lot of things that scare us or cause anxiety in our lives, things that happened in the past maybe that were done to us. Maybe there are things like that. I hope I don't ever repeat that again or that never happens to me again. You live each day in the moment thinking about that. Or you think about this future that is out there and it scares you to death. If I could just control this. I don't want this particular future to happen. I don't want the disease to come. I don't want the job to end. I don't want the kids to go away and go off and to leave me. It feels like this future is so uncertain. Sometimes the fears are real and sometimes they are completely irrational.

It's almost like we're living two types of stories. The one that we're currently in and then this other story that we tell in our mind. It's a weird type of thing that we do. Francis Schaeffer was a really smart guy. He used to talk about these two ways. He said there are actually really two stories going on, and the stories make up our mind. There are really two stories going on at one time. These two stories were together but eventually they got ripped apart because of something we did. He calls them the upper and lower story. The upper story is the story in the Bible. You know about what happened in the heavenly realms where God is doing something sovereignly and providentially, that He is moving history towards His desired end. That is the upper story. And then there's the lower story. That's the story with all our failures, defeats and victories, all kinds of things happen in this lower story. There is a divide between the two. In the beginning they were together, but because of our rebellion they are separated. So now there are two stories going on.

Let's turn to our Bible in Matthew 6. We're continuing on the Sermon on the Mount. Both of the stories, upper story and lower story, are completely real stories. Last week, Carlon was talking about how we can't serve two things. We can't serve two masters. We can't serve God and money at the same time. I was in here last week when Carlon was talking about and it felt eerily quiet. We know that we can't live both stories, the upper and lower story. God and money. God and controlling our children. God and this future we hope for. Even though we know we can't do that, we still try to live it all the time. When he said that last week, it was almost like the air was sucked out

of this room because we know that in our hearts, we say with our mouths that we can't serve God and money but we live as if we can. When we do that, it's like we're divided.

Today we're continuing on the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 6. He's talking about this in verse 25. We'll just walk through this together. Jesus says: "Therefore, I tell you do not be anxious about your life." What is the "therefore" there for? Every time you see "therefore" you think about what? What preceded it. It's there because He's talking about a divided life between God and money. He says: Therefore, I tell you don't be anxious about your life. That word "anxious" actually has the meaning of being divided. It says don't be anxious about your life, which is a hard thing to say. It's almost like when my wife was having our first child. She was supposed to go in to the hospital four minutes contraction wise. At 3 minutes, I'd ask are we going? At two minutes, are we going? Eventually it got to the point where we were driving to the hospital and he was about to be born. It would have been really stupid for me to say to her can you just calm down? Please don't feel pain right now. Or if you're in a fight with your husband or wife, which probably never happens, and you just say chill. That ain't gonna happen. This kind of feels that way. Don't be anxious about your life. That is a command.

We're swimming in this cultural stream where everybody's anxious, stressed to the max at epidemic levels. Everyone in here is probably sitting sometimes thinking you're telling me not to be anxious? It's almost like telling a pregnant lady not to feel pain. I can't not be anxious. It feels so real to me. But it's a command. How can Jesus command us not to be anxious when everything in us just feels like it is so right to be anxious? He tells us not to be. How do we do that? That's what this verse is going to go in to and it has to do with which story you're going to live out of.

He says, "Don't be anxious about your life, what you eat, what you drink nor about your body and what you put on. Is life not more than food and the body more than clothing?" We're supposed to answer yes. Sometimes we do answer yes, but we live a big fat no. We say yes, life is more than the stuff but every day, week in, week out we live as if the upper story is somewhere out there, that but we're living in this lower story. We're trying to control it and grab it for everything it's worth. With our mouth, we'll say yeah, yeah, life is more than this, but we spend every waking minute thinking about how

to get more and more out of this current life. We feel divided. It doesn't feel right. We're always thinking about what we're eating and drinking. It's consuming.

We live in a culture where we consume all kinds of stuff. The culture He was talking to didn't actually have all the things that we have. I want you to remember something for a second. These people are real people, with all the hopes for their children that we have, all the worry about finances like we have. Sometimes we look at the Bible and we whitewash it. It's like when we look at Facebook, we think everybody's happier than we are. We look back at the Bible and we think it was a lot better then. They had all the same problems that we have. They worried about their kids. They worried about putting food on the table. They had all of that kind of stuff they were worried about and how people were going to look at them. All the things that we worry about. How people will perceive us.

If you're a high school kid, you get up in the morning and look in the mirror and wonder if anyone will ever look at me. It's not the clothing, but it's the way you're perceived. Will I ever feel like I'm beautiful? Maybe you don't have to be a high school person for that. Could anyone love a person like me? They had all those same fears and they're the same ones we have. Life is more than that. All the lower story.

But there's an upper story, and He says this: look at the birds of the air. Look at. Focus on. He's going to make an argument. He is trying to convince you not to worry. So He's going to make an argument from the lesser to the greater. First, He's going to talk about the least. He said look at the birds of the air. There's a difference between looking and really looking. I learned this important lesson when my wife brought home the ultrasound for her fourth pregnancy. She handed me the ultrasound. She says look at it. I grabbed it. I looked at it. I've seen three others before. Yeah, that's great. That's cool. She said look at it! I looked down and saw baby A and baby B. We were having twins. I looked at it the first time, but I didn't really look at it. When I looked at it the second time, my whole world was rocked. There is a difference between looking at something and really, really looking at something, to totally put all your focus on it. He is saying, look! Put your focus on this. This has implications for you. I'm not just talking about being a birdwatcher. It has implications.

“Look at the birds of the air. They never sow nor reap nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?” He’s making an argument like the birds just exist. They go about their business. This is a hard truth. I’m not going to sit here and lie and just say if we look at birds life will be all be okay. Birds sometimes hit windshields. I’ve hit one. I’ve had a bird fall out of a tree and drown in the water. Things happen to the birds, but I just don’t think the birds sit around in their nest and worry all day long, thinking what’s going to happen. Do bad things happen to birds? Absolutely. Because you know why? These things happen because the upper and lower story have been ripped apart. God’s upper story has given for a time the enemy rule and reign in this earth. Awful things happen because of choices we make and because the evil one. I’m not going to sit up here if your son has cancer and say look at the birds and that’s going to solve everything. It still hurts. But we understand that in this lower story things happen. The thing was the birds didn’t just sit around worrying about it. Are bad things going to come in our life? Absolutely.

I think of one person in particular that we should be praying for. We got an email this morning. Mitzi Aylor’s mother passed away last night. We should be lifting her up in prayer. It is really unexpected. This makes me think before I preach this message bad things happen in this world because of the choices we make and because the enemy is real. And it hurts. This life hurts. But we have a lesson to learn from the birds as they focus on getting food for the day. They go about their day. Will things happen? Yes, but they just keep moving forward. That’s what He wants us to do. He says, “Aren’t you more valuable than the birds?” Verse 26.

Here is the thing. Suicide is skyrocketing in our culture. Maybe you’ve even felt this in your life. We should say yes, I’m more valuable than birds but there are certain people in here who might say yeah, life would just be better for my family if I weren’t here. My kids would be better if they weren’t involved in my struggle. People are committing suicide at crazy levels right now. There’s lots of people who actually believe that I don’t have much value. Maybe in your heart of hearts you just don’t feel valuable at all. I just want to remind you. The upper and the lower story. Why are you more valuable than birds? Because you know what? We separated ourselves from God. He could have sat in His upper story and never descended down to us. He could have said

you made your bed, you lie in it. God has such value for you. If you feel like you have no value, I want you to hear this part. He has so much value for you that the God of heaven would descend down, not saying you have to you work your way up to the upper story. Jesus Christ came down as a man. You are so loved. You may not feel loved, but you are so loved by the God of the universe, that He would descend down into the earth. He respects you so much. Maybe no one at work respects you. Maybe no one in your family respects you. The God of all the universe respects you so much that He would lay down His life and die for you when He could've stayed in heaven. But He came down on your behalf. So if you're feeling that way this morning, that you have no value, you need to hear, you need to look, you need to comprehend that you are so much more valuable than a bird. Maybe that's for one person here but you need to hear it. We are more valuable than the birds.

The Word also says this is another reason we shouldn't be anxious: "Which of you being anxious can add a single hour to your lifespan?" You know, the future comes in 60 second increments. It's coming. Every second is the future. How many times are we adding to our life by worrying? We're not. We're actually ripping the present away from us because we're worried about all these particular things. We're still in each moment worrying about this could happen, this could happen. All the while you are just taking all the joy from today. You're stealing it. Not only that, we all know and there are plenty of nurses and doctors in here and they're more apt to tell you that by worrying we're actually killing ourselves. We're actually shortening our life. It doesn't work. You can't fix anything. There are certain things in this lower story that are outside your control. And you can't fix them. You can't add to your height. You can't add a minute to your time. All you can do right now is realize you're stealing. But you can live in the present.

Then Jesus says this: "Consider the lilies of the field how they grow. They neither toil nor spin. Yet I tell you even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today but tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith." He's telling us once again to look. Flowers don't freak out. They don't say do these petals make my stem look fat? They don't compare themselves to one another. But we do that all the

time. If I could just lose 5 pounds, then I would respect myself and other people would respect me. If I could just fit in my jeans, then I'd feel good. If I just looked like that person. If I just had that, people would perceive me this way. Maybe it's not a physical thing. But if people would just perceive me as a man in control. He's saying you're spending all your time on what others think of you and how you measure up. Comparison is a thief of joy. We are living in the social media age. These things actually cause us to look at other people and think if I had that, I'd be happy. It's all about this comparison thing and it is actually killing us. The flowers in the field don't do that. And even Solomon in all his beauty and glory. It makes me think that Solomon was probably dressed out to the nines – whatever that means. I don't actually know what that means. But I think of people like lady gaga or these performers who wear ridiculous costumes for the sake of being looked at. They need everybody to look at them. We do the same thing. He is saying even Solomon, who had it all, wasn't even dressed as beautiful as the flowers.

So He asks why are you focusing so much on what other people think of you? Why do we do that? He said you of little faith. We're not talking about faith in the sense of salvation because you know if you have faith in Jesus Christ, it doesn't matter how much faith you have. It is not how much faith you have. It's what your faith is in. If you have faith in Jesus Christ, He's going to save you, not because your great faith but because of His greatness. and that's one. But He's talking here what about your faith? What's the story you're living out? What do you believe in? what are you putting your hope in? You're putting so little faith in the upper story that you're spending all of your time focused on this lower story. He's saying lift your eyes! Have faith that there's something going on sovereignly. God is moving you to His desired end. He who began a good work in you is bringing it to completion. You don't have to grasp and claw and fight and do all these things to make yourself acceptable because you're already acceptable. You've already got the love and respect that you need. He says you can increase your faith in the upper story.

The story I told you earlier is true. All the love and respect you need is found in Jesus Christ. "So therefore we should not be anxious saying what shall we eat or what shall we drink or what shall we wear. For the gentiles seek after these things and your

heavenly Father knows that you need.” Why did the gentiles seek after these things? People who didn't know God is with us. The gentiles didn't know all this was a lower story. And so that's what they would seek after. If you think life is all there is, then you seek out as much as you can and get as much as you can in the time that you can. That was what Carlon talked about last week. We live in a culture, in a society that believes only in the lower story. Everything promoted through all the commercial messages that you hear is trying to disciple you in the fact that all there is this current moment, this current story, this lower story. We buy it all the time. We say we believe in the upper story, but we live our life like the lower is all there is. Our culture is doing a better job of discipling us then sometimes even the church. Sometimes we get so lost in the lower story we forget that God is doing something and working. Does that make sense? We're not like the gentiles so we have to remind ourselves of the story.

How do you remind yourself of the story? Well, for one you have to read the story. God's Word is the story that is written to you. You have to stop and pray. The Bible says don't be anxious for anything but in prayer and petition and thanksgiving present your requests to the Lord. How's your prayer life? How's your Scripture reading time? Because somebody is discipling you. The culture is discipling you to this lower story or you are being disciplined into the way of Jesus, which is revealed in His Word and if you're connected to it through prayer and petition. If you're not doing those, you are moving somewhere. You're moving in the cultural direction and it's drawing you away to the lower story and you're living there and you find yourself increasingly unhappy.

That being said: “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.” He doesn't say seek exclusively, but seek first. Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you. We have to live in this lower story. God has put us here for the time being. Read Acts 17 about the times and places of our habitation. He has put us in this lower story for a purpose, for a reason. The time, the place, the family, everything's been allotted for you in this time and place. The reason is for you to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. And that may mean what does your schedule look like? What does first look like to you? Seek first the kingdom of God and then all these other things will be added to you. What a hard word.



All of this stuff. I don't know if you're finding it to be true, but it's one of the things that not many people have tried it and found it wanting. Many people have found it difficult and untried. This is hard stuff. I'm not standing up here and saying Zac has it all together. I don't. and I think this sermon is supposed to knock us off our feet a little bit and humble us. Then only when we go forward is God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. This is a humbling message because many of us are not seeking the kingdom first. We're seeking our own kingdom.

But praise God for His grace and forgiveness. God comes to us and He says today is a new day. Maybe you've messed up six days this week, but grace comes, and mercy is new every morning. But it's a new day. Today would you seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and these things will be added to you. "And so therefore, don't be anxious for tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself, sufficient today for its own trouble." It's basically saying trouble will come. Trouble will come. The interesting thing is from the moment this trouble comes, to every day after that, trouble is going to bring new challenges. Some of us spend all our time bringing trouble upon ourselves before the trouble even gets here. We waste all the time between when the trouble gets here and then we're miserable after the trouble comes. If you are not in a time of trouble, maybe that moment hasn't come, why are you ruining every moment up until that point? Because we know it's going to come and it's going to be difficult after that, so why are you wasting your time? The trouble is coming and there's enough trouble of its own. So He said sufficient today for its own trouble. What's in front of you today.

I think He's saying what can I do? For me, I go home and I look at my kids and I love them for not what I hope they will be or where they'll be. I just look at them and say these trouble are going to come, but today, I'm going to love and cherish my kids because today is all I've got. I'm going to give them the Gospel and teach them the kingdom today. I'm going to love my spouse not for what I hope they will eventually give back to me one day or all the ways they failed me this past week. Those troubles are enough trouble on their own. Today, I'm going to focus on going into my marriage with everything I've got. I'm going to cast out all the passive aggressive attitude, out with the aggressive attitude and I'm going to say today I'm going to seek the kingdom in my

marriage. I've been worried about work all week, but today, I'm going to set aside wholly to the Lord and I'm going to be thankful I have a job, that I have money to put a roof over my head and food on the table. Today all those other things will come, but today will you fill me up with everything I need to meet the challenges that come before me. Use this Sunday as the true Sabbath for you connect with the Lord. Take all these things to Him. Say I need you so much today.

Listen to this prayer in light of what we just talked about. Jesus teaches us how to pray. Our Father in heaven. God is in the upper story. He is holy and unapproachable light. Hallowed, honored is Your name. Your kingdom come. What happens in heaven would come down in your life today, the life of your family. I'm praying that Your kingdom would come in my life. Your will be done. What He wants done in heaven will be done in my life. I want that to be true. Give me today my daily bread. I don't have it. I need Your bread today. I need food for my soul and my body. and I thank You for forgiving me my debts. I know I've messed up but help me be a forgiving person in this moment right here because you forgive me. Don't bring me into temptation but deliver me from evil. We have an enemy. This world will knock us down. He's working to destroy your family, to destroy all your relationships. We need to be in a wartime mentality.

I want to take a break for second. If you're a football player, when you get tackled you don't get up and whine that you got tackled. There's an expectation that you'll get knocked down. In football, you get tackled. You don't complain about it. You get up and say next time I'll go forward and you won't stop me. Because you're playing football, you're in a football mentality. We need to realize that we are in a wartime mentality, spiritually speaking. Things will come. We don't have to sit and worry that this will happen. You should expect things to happen to you because you're in a spiritual battle. It's coming. God, would You give me what I need, this wartime mentality, to lead me out of temptation, to move my feet, put me on a separate path, deliver me from the evil one.

And, then this is the verse that we have in this version. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. We are the people, Your people, who are supposed to be the people who are bringing in partnering with God to bring His kingdom into the world. You have two stories going on. The bottom story and upper story. We're

the people in this world that are trying to bring the upper story into the bottom story. Your life matters. Every one of you is a missionary, an ambassador. We go out here as ambassadors and missionaries of the upper story into a world that is dying all around us. We don't come in here just to get a good feeling. We come in here to understand our mission, understand the story we're living in, and pray for one another that we would live faithfully in that way.

Let's pray that God would do a work in our lives. Father, we come to you and I admit that I am often anxious – anxious about the way I'm perceived, anxious about what the future holds for me. God, I don't have it all together. I know I won't until heaven so I thank You that You never leave us, You never forsake us, that when You ascended into heaven You didn't leave us alone. From the upper story you sent the Holy Spirit to be inside of us, to be Christ inside us. God, help us to be full of Your Holy Spirit today, pushing out all those other fears and worries, that we would be completely consumed with what You want to do in our lives and how You want to speak and how You want to move through us. I need that. I need You to take over because I'm just tired of trying to do it myself. If there's anyone in here just so weary that they want to give up, God, right now would You just be speaking to their heart? Would You tell them how much You love them, how much You value them, give them the hope to continue? Give hope to the people who feel like they've just made too many mistakes and are just beyond repair, that no one will ever forgive them, that they can't move past this moment. God, would they hear Your voice today that is inside of them speaking about the bright future ahead of hope. God, may they hear Your voice today. And if someone here has never understood what You've done for them, God, would You come and bring salvation to them? Would You bring that peace that passes understanding that You talk about as they call out to You? I pray right now that You will be saving someone, that You would have another person to be going about your work and your ministry in this time and this place. We know You've set aside people to do that, so we pray that you would save them. We pray all of this in Jesus's name, amen.