

Faith over Worry

Matthew 6:25-34; December 16, 2018

Introduction:

Today we're going to be challenged by Jesus' words about worry. What are the top five things that you're worrying about today? All of us have plenty of things to worry about.

- *Our younger crew (I'm thinking our MS and HS students):* What should I wear to school today? Will I get any compliments? Did I study enough for my math exam? Will I make National Junior Honors Society? Will I make the basketball team? What if I forget my lines in the play? Do I have any real friends? Do people like me? Will I be a Junior Marshall? Will I have good enough grades to get into the college of my choice? How will I pay for college?
- *College Students:* When will I be able to finally get some rest? There's no way this project gets done in time. Where will I live when I graduate? Will I get a decent job? No, will I get a job at all? How will I ever pay off my college loans?
- *Single Young Pros:* Will I get that promotion that I've been working so hard for? Help, my roommates are moving out. Will God ever provide a spouse? What should I buy for this upcoming white elephant party?
- *Married Couples:* Will I ever have enough money to buy a house in Medford? ...anywhere in Massachusetts? The fridge just broke. What will I do now? My car won't start. I think I'm going to get fired. When will we have kids? Will we be able to have kids? How will I pay for their college?
- *Seasoned Couples:* What about my health? Some of my friends are dying of cancer. Is that going to happen to me? When should I retire? Will I be able to retire?
- *And I could keep going on and on.*
- *Everybody gets anxious including me.* Lord willing, my family will be traveling to China the second week of January to bring Calynn home [show picture]. There's plenty for us to worry about.

There's always something to worry about. Some of you are even beginning to worry right now about the very things I just mentioned. Our text *matters for all of us today!!!*

Context:

As we've gone through the Sermon on the Mount, we've seen Jesus tell us how we're to conduct ourselves in the kingdom. He talks about anger, lust, divorce, prayer, fasting, and preceding this passage on worry, he talks about money. Jesus basically minimizes the ultimate significance of material possessions (Read 6:19-20). Given this, you might be thinking, "But Jesus, what about necessities like food, drink, and clothing? Are you concerned about these?" Our passage today helps us think about these things.

Read Matthew 6:25-34

The Point: Crush worry through an abiding faith in God's promises and a relentless pursuit of his kingdom.

I. Crush worry with abiding faith in the promises of God (6:25-32, 34).

What Jesus' doesn't mean:

- Jesus isn't advocating for carelessness, apathy, or laziness. There is a sense in which worry is not only good, but its absence is, biblically speaking, irresponsible. You should be concerned to be faithful and useful to God.

What type of worry is Jesus talking about?

- David Powlison calls this *anxious greed*: "I want something I might not get, so I worry."
- As we think about worry as anxious greed, we see two characteristics of worry:
 - It concerns the *uncertainty* of life. You worry about things that are uncertain, things that you can't be sure of. Health, money, relationships.
 - It concerns things you can't *control*. "Central to worry is the illusion that we can *control* things...Anxiety and control are two sides of one coin. When we can't control something, we worry about it" (*Seeing with New Eyes*, Powlison, 115).

Some things are *certain* and *Someone* is always in control! Jesus gives us six worry-crushing promises to believe today. Crush worry by believing that...

1. God gives you ultimate purpose in life (6:25)

Jesus poses a question here that he doesn't answer immediately (see 6:33) but the answer that follows is simple, "Yes, there is much more to life than food or clothing." If so, then what is life about? Paul says in 1 Cor. 10:31, "So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." We were created for the glory of God, to make much of God. Your worry reveals what you are truly living for. Your life is to be a telescope, where people can truly see what the unseen God is like. When you worry about temporal things, you show to everyone around you, that life is about you and not about God. Have you come to understand the purpose of life? [PAUSE]

Go through your worry list one by one. Jesus promises, "Your life is more than _____."

2. God values you greatly (6:26).

To worry about food and drink is to have learned nothing from the natural creation. Creation testifies to the providence of God. God is so sovereign over the universe that even the feeding of birds falls within his concerns.

Look at the world:

- When you begin to look at the world this way, you will find an abundant array of evidence concerning the providence of God.
- The point isn't that disciples don't need to work. Birds don't simply wait around for God to drop food into their beaks. They work hard to find food every day.
- How does God feed them? Trash picking; raiding your crops. Bird's don't have refrigerators to store food or leftovers. They don't have a storage pantry. They live day by day.
- You are worth far more than birds, created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27). Lesser to the greater: So, if God provides for the birds, surely he will provide for you. Trust him.

Not only that, remember that God is *your heavenly Father* (not the birds' Father).

- These promises were given to disciples of Christ (cf. 6:32)
- Have you become a child of the king? Maybe your greatest concern and worry today should be: Have you received the forgiveness of your sins and eternal life? In other words, have you responded to the gracious provision of God in Jesus Christ?
 - God's gracious provision for us is seen best when we look at the cross. It is on the cross that my greatest need and your greatest need was met, a Savior for our sins. John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that he *gave*..."
 - Have you trusted in the finished work of Christ on the cross and received the forgiveness of your sins. Confess! Repent! Believe!

3. God controls the length of your life (6:27).

- "a single cubit (18 inches) to his stature"; This is used in a metaphorical sense: akin to 'passing a milepost' at one's birthday. In other words, worry will not add extra birthdays (time) to your life.
- Here's the irony: worry is most likely to shorten your life than prolong it.
- Ultimately, God is the one who controls the days of your life.

4. God will make you dazzle (6:28-30).

Look at the lilies: wild flowers so abundant in Galilee

- They are beautiful, without any tending or care except for God's.
- This illustration is different than the first where the birds work but do not worry. The flowers don't toil or spin. Again, the point isn't that Jesus' disciples should be lazy, rather, "God's providence and care are so rich that he clothes the grass with wild flowers that are neither productive nor enduring" (Carson, *Matthew*, EBC, 180-81).

Solomon was the richest and most extravagant of Israel's monarchs. See 2 Chron. 9:13-28: "Thus King Solomon excelled all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom" (9:22).

"The promise is far more than 'God will take care of you.' This is 'God will clothe you in nothing less than his radiant glory!' 'So why do you worry about the clothes you wear? I'll dress you in my own glory! Why do you worry about your health? I'll raise you from the dead to eternal life. Why do you worry about a few dollars? I'll give you the whole earth as your inheritance. Why do you worry when someone doesn't like you? I'll make you live in the kingdom of my love!'...God is giving you a life that is radiant, indestructible, and full of glory. You will *dazzle*" (*Seeing with New Eyes*, David Powlison, 118).

If God does all this for the flowers that disappear so quickly, *how much more* will he do for you?

The root of anxiety is unbelief. Worry demonstrates a lack of trust in God, a shortage of confidence in God who says he will graciously care for "all these things" (6:33). What promises are you not believing?

5. God knows exactly what you need (6:31-32).

Yes, we do have economic needs. You do need a job. It's not wrong to provide for retirement, to pay your mortgage and bills, to own a car. Your Father knows you need these.

- But what are you going to be *about*?
- The word for worry here means to be obsessed, driven, preoccupied.

The Gentiles:

- They are obsessed and driven by these things: food, drink, and clothing. They worry about these things because they don't believe their lives are made for something bigger and better than themselves. For them, life is about temporal things. They have no trust in God's fatherly care and no goals beyond material things. They never even learn to trust God for the basic necessities of life.
- Your lives should be radically different because of your faith and trust in God.
- If you worry like the pagans, maybe it reveals you are pursuing the same things they are.
- Your worry advertises to the world that you don't believe God knows what you need.

6. God provides new grace for each day (6:34).

Jesus here appeals to common sense. You have enough to worry about for today. Why worry about tomorrow, and the day after that, and so on? Why waste energy worrying about something that may never come. As Carson notes, "tomorrow's feared misfortunes may never happen." He implicitly teaches that if tomorrow does bring new trouble, God will provide new grace to handle it. Jesus is calling us to believe that God will be God tomorrow. We should pray, "Lord, give us *this day* our daily bread." Cf. James 4:13-16

Here are five things to use as a game plan when you start to worry (see Powlison, *Seeing...*).

- 1. Name the pressures.** It seems as if a million things are overwhelming you but you're really juggling only six plates—or maybe obsessing on just one.
- 2. Identify how you express anxiety.** The feeling of panic, obsessive thoughts, anger, a headache, downing a quart of ice cream, an overpowering desire for a strong drink
- 3. Ask yourself, "Why am I anxious?"**
 - a. Have you forgotten God? Who or what is ruling in his place?
 - b. What do you want, need, crave, expect, demand, and lust after?
 - c. What do you fear either losing or never getting?
- 4. Remember and believe God's promises.** Which promise of Jesus speaks to you most? Which one is most necessary where you can say, "If I remember _____, I'll be a different person this week"?
- 5. Go to your heavenly Father in prayer.**
 - a. Your Father cares about the things you worry about. Your Father knows what you need. You'll have to leave your worries with him because they are *always* outside of your control! Share your list of worries with him and trust his provision.

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving let your requests be known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:6-7).

"Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you" (1 Pet. 5:6-7).

Reflection: Where have you seen God provide in the past week, month, year? He will continue to provide.

Transition: We've been talking about the negative command, "Don't worry." Another way to think about it is, "Put off worry." Let's conclude by looking at the positive command, what we're to "put on." If we're not supposed to worry, what are we supposed to do?

II. Crush worry with a relentless pursuit of God's kingdom (6:33).

Connect the dots:

- Life is about more than food and clothing; it's about the kingdom of God.
- The Gentiles seek after temporal things (food, drink, and clothing) but you are to seek after the kingdom of God.
- You are not simply to *refrain* from the *pursuit* of temporal things, you are to *replace* such pursuits with goals of far greater significance.
- The imagery of "seek" combined with "first" here suggests a "preeminent and unceasing quest." We are to seek the kingdom with a *relentless pursuit*.
- As we think about this "kingdom" language, reflect on this. God has made himself king over us to take away our worry. When we are the king of our lives, there's much to worry about (because we lack power and control). But when God is king, he has power and he is in control. A big and great God crushes fear and worry.

What does "seek first the kingdom" mean?

- "To seek first the kingdom is to desire above all to enter into, submit to, and participate in spreading the news of the saving reign of God, the messianic kingdom already inaugurated by Jesus (Carson, *Matthew*, EBC, 181-82).
 1. Enter into the saving reign of God through repentance and faith.
 2. Submit to the saving reign of God through radical obedience.
 - i. When you are tempted to worry, you lay down your life and submit to God's kingship and reign in your life and you choose to walk in faithfully and radical obedience to his will with confidence that he will meet all of your needs.
 - ii. Fast, pray, give, love, don't retaliate, etc. – Matt. 5-7
 - iii. Store up treasures in heaven: God's most common way of meeting material needs of his children is by laying such needs on the hearts and consciences of other believers (cf. Acts 2-4).
 - iv. Living this way is incredibly thrilling. John Piper says living this way is "...a thrilling way to live. It's full of freedom and peace and joy and adventure — and hardship, and it's worth it all."
 3. Spread the news of the saving reign of God in joyful boldness.
- To seek first the kingdom is to pray Matthew 6:9-10.

Conclusion:

- What worries need to be crushed in your life today?
- Which of these worry-crushing promises do you most need to believe today?
- Where do you need to die and let God reign supreme?
- How is God calling you to seek first the kingdom of God this week?

The promise: Jesus' disciples are assured that all the necessary things will be given them by their heavenly Father.

The Point: Crush worry through an abiding faith in God's promises and a relentless pursuit of his kingdom.