

“How Can I Grow Through Worry?”

Matthew 6:25-34

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(Large Group, March 8th, 2019)

Matthew 6:25-34

Do Not Be Anxious

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? ²⁶Look 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? ²⁷And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? ²⁸And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰But 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? ³¹Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³²For the Gentiles seek after these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. ³³But 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.

Introduction

I feel totally unprepared. Honestly, I really think this sermon is going to bomb. For that, I’m really sorry. It’s nerve-wracking to say and be honest about that.

I remember sitting in a sermon a long time ago, hearing a preacher say that and thinking, “Wow, that’s crazy.” I don’t remember anything else from that sermon except the preacher saying, “I think this sermon is going to bomb. I’m so sorry. I feel so unprepared.” That preacher was worried, and because of that, the congregation was worried. My guess is that many of you, just a minute ago, were very worried for me.

Worry invades all of our lives. Some people say human beings are guaranteed two things in life: taxes and death. But I would add one more thing, worry. Worry is the state of anxiety and uncertainty over actual or potential problems. Some people worry so much that they develop phobias about certain things. There’s a list of over a hundred phobias, and the top phobia is arachnophobia. Some people worry so much that it handicaps their ability to live. Did you know that 40 million people in the US today are affected by Anxiety Disorder? That’s 18% of our population, two out of ten people. I believe all of us here, in this room, need to hear this message, no matter what spectrum you fall along in struggling with worry. In today’s passage, Jesus gives the Sermon on The Mount, teaching what kingdom life looks like. In this teaching, he says, “do not worry.” It’s a command, but does this mean that we won’t worry? I don’t think Jesus is saying that, I think Jesus is teaching us how to live for the Lord as we combat our worries.

I. The Analysis of Worry [25-30]

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?”

²⁶Look 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? ²⁷And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? ²⁸And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰But 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?

A. Worry shows what we love – heart [25]

Worry shows what we love – it shows us our heart. Christ commands us in verse 25:

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?”

Notice the first word in verse 25 is “therefore.” That word is continuing the thought of the previous passage. Some people say, when you see “therefore” you should ask yourself, “what is ‘therefore’ there for?” It’s continuing the thought of the previous passage in Matthew 6:24, which says, “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.” Jesus is talking to the disciples. He’s saying you will serve one or the other.

If you go back a little further, Jesus says in Matthew 6:21, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” He’s talking about what we treasure, what we love. Right after he talks about that, he talks about not worrying about your life. We treasure what we love but we worry about what we treasure. Therefore, what we worry about shows us what we love. All of us in this room, we do not worry about everything in this world. If I were to ask you, “how many of you were concerned about the U of I mascot becoming an otter?” I think some of us didn’t care at all because we don’t really care about the U of I to that degree. If you want to see what you love, see what you worry about.

B. Worry shows how we view life – sight [25]

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?”

Our worries show what we think is important in life. Jesus is right when he talks about life being more than food. A person can be fed physically, but is only temporarily sustained. If we worry about the immediate, it is possible the eternal is not in our sight. When we care about the external more than the internal, it shows what we value in our lives. When we care more about the physical world than our spiritual condition and the immediate more than the eternal, it shows us that our worldview on life is superficial and short-sighted. And that’s something to be concerned about.

C. Worry shows who we depend on – faith [26-30]

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?*

The birds are doing nothing that's helpful for their own sustenance and yet our heavenly Father feeds them. Then he talks about the lilies of the field, "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.*" The lilies – they're beautiful, and God is saying, in comparison, even Solomon, the richest man in the world, was not clothed like the lilies of the field. Why? Because God clothes them. Jesus is saying, if God provides for the birds and lilies, don't you think he will provide for you? Our worries show who we depend on. In addition to our worries being a heart issue and a sight issue, it's a faith issue. That's why Jesus is saying "O you of little faith", because if we really trusted God with our lives, we wouldn't worry.

Worrying is about the unknown, and it shows who we depend on with the unknown. The interesting thing about worry is that, if you've experienced success, the next time you're in the same situation, you'll likely to worry a little less. People who are prone to more and more success in life tend not to worry as much. But do those people necessarily depend on God? They may not worry because they depend on themselves. What's my point? As we're looking at this worry in our lives, we can learn a lot about ourselves: what we love, how we view life, and who we depend on. This sermon is not intended to beat you up. What this is saying is that you have to understand all these aspects, because worry has an effect.

II. The Result of Worry [31-34]

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 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.*

A. Growth in one's sinful nature [31-32]

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 these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.*

Worry always leads to something else. I did a word search on that word "worry". Every time it appears in the New Testament, the negative, "no", always appears before the word "worry". Jesus is saying that kingdom citizens, children of God, should not worry; this needs to be our direction. But as sinful people, the truth is that we are going to worry. We need to know this so that we don't go into this over and over again.

Worry can lead to one of two things: either growth in one's sin nature or growth in one's spirit's nature. As you think about what you worry, see what it could head to. Growth in one's sinful nature: in verse 32, Jesus refers to the Gentiles because they were not the people of God, and they

did not live for God. Jesus is saying don't live like those people who don't belong to God. Jesus says in verse 27, "*And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?*" That is true. As you worry, you aren't adding anything of good use to your life. You cannot add another hour, but what you can really add as you keep on worrying is more sin and stress. When we worry, the scary thing is, we may abuse God's grace. Rest is one of the means of God's grace. When people worry, they cannot sleep or rest properly. Or when people worry, they escape to rest and rest excessively to avoid the trouble that is coming ahead. Food is a means of God's grace too. But when some people worry, they just can't eat. Have you ever experienced that, maybe before you give a speech or presentation or have a big project ahead of you, you can't take in God's grace of physical substance? But for others, they escape by eating.

One author said this about worry, "Worry tires a man out more than work." Corrie Ten Boom said this, "Worrying is carrying tomorrow's load with today's strength – carrying two days at once." And that's not how it's supposed to be. It's moving into tomorrow ahead of time. Worrying doesn't empty tomorrow of its sorrow, but it empties today of its strength."

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

B. Growth in one's spirit's nature [33-34]

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.*

We can grow in our spirit's nature as we combat our worries. What does "seek his righteousness" mean? You can have the righteousness of Jesus Christ because he will take care of you. But also, you can grow in his righteousness, because he wants you to grow in his love and your faith in him. As you face this, it's an opportunity for you to grow in your love for God. As we analyze our worries, we learn about ourselves. However, as we view these things, rather than turning to ourselves and our sin, we can take an opportunity to see the beauty of God and grow in Him. No one can stop the troubles and worries in this life – even Jesus was burdened and troubled. But nowhere in Scripture did Jesus ever worry, despite going through much more than us. He knew God was in control. He tells us to turn to God in prayer.

Matthew 11:28 – *Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

As you worry, rather than going to your own vices or avoiding all of life, take it to Christ, because he will give you rest. He will take your burdens and carry it with you and you can grow in your relationship with him. It's an opportunity to see who Christ is as we combat our worries.

I remember a time in high-school when one of my older sisters' friends came over with her five-year-old daughter. My sister and her friend were talking in the living room, but the 5-year-old daughter was just pacing around the house back and forth singing an old Christian song. As I watched her sing, I saw she had a deeply troubled expression on her face. I remember my sister asking her friend, "Is your daughter okay?" because she noticed the same thing. I'll never forget

how the mother responded. She said, “when my daughter is bothered by something, she begins to sing this song, and when she sings it, it becomes her prayer.” So, I listened a little bit more closely. She sang, “I cast all my cares upon you. I lay all of my burdens down at your feet. And anytime that I don’t know what to do, I will cast all my cares upon you.” For a five-year-old to understand that. Now in some sense, I questioned what she was going through – did her toy break? But even though she was young in age, she was mature in heart. Rather than running with our troubles on our own, take them to God, take them to the church, and then we get to see who God is. The goal of life is not to live a worry-free life. The goal of life is to live a God-glorifying life. Because we are sinful, we will worry, but we can learn how to glorify God in our worries. As we give our worries to the Lord, we can glorify him more, love him more, and see life the way he sees it, but it will be a battle. Maybe for some of us, we won’t overcome our difficulties until we get to heaven. But as we face these troubles, these fears, these worries, we can see the face of God and grow within who He is.

III. How Can I Grow Through Worry?

A. Seek God first – heart [33]

There are 5 steps in terms of how we can grow through worry.

First of all, seek God first. In verse 33 it says, ³³*But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*

It’s not talking about chronology, but about priority. Life is meaningless without God. If you have everything else in this world but don’t have God, life is meaningless so keep God first in your life. Two implications of this:

Seek God first, because God is ultimately what you need. It’s in times of weakness that we see our need for God. We see that we will always need God. We can have so many other things, but ultimately, we need God. We need to seek God because God is ultimately what we want.

Seek God first because He is ultimately what you want. God can’t just be what we need; because then, when we don’t need him, we don’t go to Him. But God wants you to say, “God, you are what I want.” Learn in your heart to say, whether you want to or not, “God I need you and I want you.” It’s easy to love God when everything is going your way. But when things aren’t going your way, it’s a means to grow your love for God. I’m thankful for the times I don’t get what I want in my sin.

I am here to worship God. God is my focus, God is the recipient, not me. Even if I don’t receive, that’s okay because God has already done enough for me in my life. For the rest of my life, if I don’t receive anything, if I only get hardship and trouble, that’s fine because God has given me enough, and I just want my life to say, “God I love you”, because God is what I want. God doesn’t need us to love him, but it is his grace that we can seek God first. It is grace that we can grow in our love for him. I think, especially in this society, when Christians succeed and excel, that’s a witness to the world. But when things don’t go well, and

Christians still say, “God I love you, God you are still good” that is also a huge witness to the world. People will start to wonder “what do you have that I don’t”. Seek God first.

B. Plan how to expand God’s kingdom with your life – mind [33]

³³*But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*

Plan how to expand God’s kingdom with your heart and mind. Expand God’s kingdom and not your own. The first implication is: think through how you can be faithful with what you’re doing now to expand God’s kingdom. Kingdom work is doing work out of love for God. In your heart, whatever you’re doing, plan out how you can work for God. Plan in your mind how you can be faithful in what do and make sure you’re planning to expand God’s kingdom with your life.

The second implication is this: if you’re living for God’s kingdom, know that you will be entangled with other people’s worries. The goal of life is to live the way God intended it to be. If you’re trying to live a comfortable, self-centered life, that is something too small, too insignificant to live for. But God says, live for his kingdom. So, plan with your mind how you can do that.

C. See through the eyes of God – sight [26, 28]

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?*

²⁸*And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin,*

Did you know, 90% of the things that we worry about don’t actually happen. I don’t know if you watch horror movies, I don’t. In some of the most horrifying horror movies, the directors of these movies - they play with your mind. They don’t show you anything, but they build up all the suspense so that you don’t even see the horror. The anxiety is just ingrained in your mind, with the music, the setup, and then BOOM.

Learn to see through the eyes of God who loves and provides. Lilies don’t do anything for their existence – they just look good. They have no ability to think or to see, but God sees them. If God sees them, learn how to see with the eyes of God.

Matthew 6:22-23 – ²²*“The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, ²³but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!*

Sometimes we worry because we don’t see with the eyes of God, but that is exactly why we need the Bible. The Bible needs to be the lens by which we see the world. How do you know if you’re seeing with the eyes of God? As you look at the world, creation and people, you should be able to see what the Bible verses mean. Psalm 19:1, *“The heavens declare the*

glory of God.” Genesis 1:26, “*let us make mankind in our image.*” That’s when you know you’re starting to see with the eyes of God, when the verses become reality.

D. Do the best that you can today – hands [34]

Warren Wiersbe said this, “Most Christians are being crucified between two thieves: yesterday’s regret and tomorrow’s worries.” That’s what kills us. Yesterday’s regret – what didn’t go well, what you could’ve done and tomorrow’s worries. Jesus is saying in this passage: just do the best you can today.

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

This doesn’t mean you don’t think about the long term or eternal – you must be wise. But don’t worry about tomorrow’s troubles, take care of what you need to today.

Colossians 3:23 – *Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men,*

Work heartily, with all your strength and heart, for the Lord. Maybe some of the problems we’re facing is because we’re lazy and not being faithful with our hands. We need to learn to be faithful with our hands today. Your hands – they’re finite, we’re finite – limited by time, space, and our hearts. In this broken world, even if you do everything well, it doesn’t mean everything will go well. So, at the end of the day, what I do is evaluate – what I did and how I did it. If I didn’t get the results I wanted, I learn – I check my heart and what I do – so I can make the proper adjustments for the next time.

E. Put your trust in God regardless of the result – faith [30]

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?*

Some of us are discouraged by this. But it should be encouraging, because even faith as small as a mustard seed can move mountains. So, keep on growing your faith. We have faith in Him, because He is dependable, powerful and loving; He desires us to grow in him, and He will take care of you. Sometimes that means we will get the results we desire, and we will see how God provides for us in terms of what we want.

As I was preparing this sermon, I couldn’t help but think about the times God has provided for us. A few years back, we were going to have Friday large group at Wesley, but the electricity went out at the corner of Green and Matthews. We got a phone call that told us we couldn’t have large group at Wesley that night. Mad scramble. By 5 o’clock, we found a place at Judah Christian school. Whenever it rains and we have an outdoor event, people will call me asking if we would cancel because the weather looks bad. At one summer festival, where we host events for the community, it was raining hard. This was the testimony of one of the grillers: they were looking at the watch and it was 3:59 and it was still raining hard. They were grilling with an umbrella over their head. But once it hit 4pm, the rain went away,

the skies opened, and they put their umbrellas away. In the distance, they could hear the voices of excited children over the hill; they saw all the children run across. God provided. Now, whenever I see rain, I have no worries. I pray and believe that God will provide. God's track record is pretty good. But even if you don't get the intended results, know that he is still taking care of you. He is teaching you to trust in him, that he is still loving, powerful, and is willing to take care of you. At the end of the day, He is growing your faith.

Conclusion

“Worry implies that we don't quite trust that God is big enough, powerful enough, or loving enough to take care of what's happening in our lives.” – Francis Chan

Let's be truthful, God is big enough, powerful enough, and loving enough. When things don't go our way, it means God has a plan. We will all struggle with worry on this side of eternity. But it's a beautiful means to grow in our relationship with God. So, keep on pouring the water of God's grace onto your soil and going to Him. See His love, see with his eyes, see what he does, and worship Him. Worship Him when you worry, because God is powerful and loving enough. When you place your faith in him, you turn from a worrier to a worshiper.

1 John 4:18 – *There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.*

The reason why we don't have to worry, or fear, is because God has perfect love. We are made complete in Him. But God also desires to grow our love until it is complete in Him. So, don't worry, because God is also perfecting our love.

I think I've grown a lot over the years. I remember my 8th year on campus, it was my first-year teaching and I was so worried. By the month of October, I was teaching remedial science, I would wake up 3 o'clock in the morning for multiple days because I didn't want to go to school. I eventually got an ulcer and was bedridden for a week. That year passed with the help of physicians and prayers. I remember, at the end of that year, one loving person said this to me, “David, do you know why you got an ulcer?” And I replied, “because my students are crazy.” But he said, “You were just dependent on yourself.” He was right, I was thinking about myself. From that point on, when I faced hardships, troubles, difficulties, and that pain in my stomach, I go to God in prayer. I say, “Life is not about me. With my hands, I want to display who you are.” Life is crazier today; there are a lot of more worries, troubles, and hardships that I face. But God is good, rather than worrying about myself, I think about God's grace and how even through this, it is a good life.

I am limited, I can only be at one place at once. I only have twenty-four hours in a day. So, I seek God first, plan how to expand God's kingdom in my life, see from God's eyes. I do my best today, and I trust in Him. At the end of the day, I go to sleep, and the next day I start over again. What can we do with our short lives? Do the best that you can with your own hands – that's all that God calls us to do. What I have been taking solace in these days is an old song that says, “he's got the whole world in his hands.” You weren't meant to accomplish or do all things. But God with his hands, got dirty and he created you. His hands got bloody, and he redeemed you from your sin. His hands, full of love, will welcome you home

once again. Take your hands, worries and all, do the best you can. Know that He has the whole world and you in His hands.