

Depending on our Heavenly Father

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[0 : 00] What a great time of worship together celebrating God and who He is.! Let's just come and bow before God as we come to His word now.

! Father, we just come to You this morning and we acknowledge our need for Jesus. We need Jesus in our lives, in every part of our lives.

And we thank You that we can have such confidence to know that You are with us. When we put our trust in You, You are there with us every day through everything that we're going through and we can trust You for that.

I pray now this morning as we come to hear from Your word that You would speak clearly and powerfully into our hearts. Not from my words, but from Your word, God.

It's Your word that changes people's hearts and it's Your spirit that works powerfully in us. So would you just speak to us this morning, I pray now. Amen.

[1 : 03] Amen. Well, you're all very welcome again and it's great to have you with us this morning at Amazing Grace. Beautiful way to start off to start of spring together.

And actually last month for our family service, Rob was speaking about birds, about geese, and I'm going to continue on a little bit more in that theme this morning, looking at birds as well.

And we're going to look at the book of Matthew and Matthew 6, verse 24 to 34. If you have a Bible, it's Matthew 6, verse 24 to 34.

If you have one of the church Bibles, it's on page 971. And I've asked Daniela, she's going to come and read it for us this morning.

So thank you, Daniela.

[2 : 06] No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one or love the other, or you will be devoted to the one that despises the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

Therefore, I tell you, do not worry about your life and what you will eat or drink, or about your body, what you will wear. It is not life more than food or drink, and your body more than clothes.

Look at the birds of the air. They do not sow or reap or store away in the barns. And yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?

Can anyone of you be worrying at a single day to your life, or a single hour to your life? And why do not worry about clothes?

See how the flowers in the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendors was dressed like one of these.

[3 : 08] If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is the throne into the field of fire, he will not much more clothe 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 these things, and your heavenly Father knows what you need them.

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself, each day enough trouble of its own.

Great. Thank you very much, Daniela. That was great.

As we just hear God's word being read to us and speaking into our hearts. And, yes, so I was thinking about this passage and what kind of came to my mind is, I think in Ireland, we are one of the things we've become more and more as a nation.

[4 : 18] We've become more and more aware, especially since the pandemic anyway. We've become more and more aware and concerned about our mental health. And I think it's fair to say that people are becoming more and more open to talking about and discussing with their family and friends about their mental health.

Discussing their struggles and their challenges and seeking help, both from friends and family and from professionals such as counselors as well.

And there's a lot of studies being done over the years on this idea of anxiety and having anxiety.

Anxious thoughts. And in Ireland, there's a charity called Aware.

And they had done a couple of surveys over the last couple of years on this whole idea of anxiety and surveying people about it. And they found that 80% of people get anxious thoughts at times.

I don't know what the other 20% of people do with the rest of their lives. But I would think, and I'd say it's probably, if the truth be told, it's probably closer to 100% of people have anxious thoughts at times.

[5 : 26] But they also found that 20% of people, or one in five people, find that their anxiety is so bad that they can't actually function in their daily lives.

And it found that Ireland is one of the top 10 countries in the world where we have people medically diagnosed with anxiety disorders.

The Children's Ombudsman of Ireland, they've done a survey as well recently, and they found that a similar percentage of our young people, of teenagers and children, they also struggle with their anxiety.

And they found that the main issues that teenagers and children struggle with and are anxious about were exams, body image, friendships, and social media.

And so it's a problem that we all have, being anxious from whether you're very young to being very old.

[6 : 26] And these verses that we're looking at today, they were designed by God, said by Jesus here on the Sermon on the Mount. And they are a template of how we should react when those anxious thoughts come into our minds.

Because actually, these words that we read here, these words that Jesus spoke on the Sermon on the Mount, He was speaking to people, ordinary people like you and me, 2,000 years ago.

And that should encourage us to see that God is not indifferent to our struggles with anxiety, with worries and cares in our thoughts. Yes, the people listening to Jesus here, they probably weren't having anxious thoughts or worries about social media or exams or those kinds of things.

But what we do see here is that people at that time, they struggled just like we do with anxious thoughts. Sure, it was different. They were struggling with anxious thoughts, it seems, with how are they going to have enough food to eat?

How are they going to have enough clothes to wear? And so these verses are just as relevant to us today as they were for people thousands of years ago.

[7 : 45] And you know, it's easy for us to dismiss people's anxiousness and to say, well, look, just don't be anxious, don't worry about it. And if we only had what Daniela read from one verse of verse 25, if Jesus has simply said, don't be anxious to people, well, that isn't a whole lot of help, is it?

Because the more people tell you don't worry about it, the more you probably do worry about it, don't you? But Jesus doesn't simply say, don't worry, don't be anxious.

He shows us why and how we shouldn't be anxious. He understands that people get anxious, but he doesn't simply leave them there.

He shows them why they don't need to be anxious. And firstly, he shows them that God is sufficient for everything that we need in our lives.

You know, when we look at these verses, Jesus, he's addressing the worries and the anxious thoughts of the crowd listening to him. And understandably, these people, they're worrying about food and clothing.

[8 : 57] You know, many of them probably lived on or even below the poverty line. And I'm sure for a lot of them, it wasn't about, you know, having enough money to buy steaks for dinner.

It was more, have I enough a couple pennies to be able to pay for a loaf of bread for dinner to put before the family. You know, it was about survival.

But Jesus tells these people here not to worry or to be anxious. And he does this by showing them how God provides for the birds of the air. He tells them, look around at the birds of the air.

See how they don't store up food for the winter. Look at how they don't plant any seeds or they don't tend to crops in a field to be able to harvest later. They solely rely on God to provide for their needs during all the seasons.

And then he says, if you're worried about having clothes to wear, look at the lilies. Look at the flowers around you in the fields and see how beautiful God makes each one of them.

[9 : 59] And he says that if God does this for the birds of the air and he creates all this beauty with all these different flowers, has he not also the power to provide for all your needs too?

And Jesus could have given, you know, I'm sure many other examples. He could have told the people about how God provided clothing for Adam and Eve back in the Garden of Eden. He could have told them how God provided manna and water and meat to eat for the Israelites as they walked around for 40 years in a desert.

He could have told them about how God provided for a poor widow and our son who were on their last meal together and how God provided for them. And all over the Bible, we see and read of a God who is able to provide a God who will not fail to keep his promises.

The Apostle Paul says in Philippians 4:19 that my God is able to supply all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

God has more than enough for all that you need. And these needs, they're not simply limited to food or clothing. These include those things that we get anxious about today.

[11 : 19] It includes our maybe our need for friendship. It includes us helping us as we sit our exams. It includes our need for maybe feeling that feeling of belonging. The anxious thoughts of maybe who I am as a person, my identity.

God is more than able to meet all your needs. He has done it with people before and he can do it again.

And don't doubt the power of God to be able to provide for all your needs. Whether they're physical, whether they're spiritual, whether they're mental, emotional, whatever they are, God can provide them.

He is so much more vast and powerful than you can ever imagine. But saying all of that is no good. Saying that God has the power to provide for all your needs.

That's no good if he doesn't actually care about you. If he actually doesn't have your best interests at heart. There are many governments and rulers around the world who are very, very powerful, have plenty of resources.

[12 : 29] But they do not care for their people. And so they don't have the people's best interests at heart. And so secondly, what we see Jesus saying here is that we see a heavenly father who cares for his creation.

He places great value on each one of us that he has created. He says, look at the birds. Look again and see how your heavenly father provides for them.

And if he values these birds this much and provides for all their needs, how much more will he care for you and your needs? You know, I was thinking about back in Genesis when God created everything first.

He created the birds and the animals and the fish and the whole earth. And at the end of each day, he says, and it was good. But he comes to the last day where he creates Adam and Eve.

He creates mankind, human beings. And he comes to the end and he says, and it was very good.

We were the pinnacle of his creation. And so Jesus is arguing, well, look, if he's going to care for the birds that much, how much more will he care for each one of you in your lives?

[13 : 46] And so if he cares for you this much and always wants to do what is best for you, and as we've just said, has the power to be able to do that, then that should encourage us to trust him that we don't have to worry about anything, but instead be able to leave things in his hands.

And just as parents, you know, generally parents want to do what's best for their kids. And what's best for their kids after the beach, after you've been to the beach, is to buy a 99.

That is, that was my favorite memory growing up, going off to Barley Cove, coming back through Goline and into the shop for a 99. That was the epitome of it, of a great day.

But there are also times where parents would find it unwise to give their kids a 99. Like, probably just before bed. Parents think it's probably not the wisest thing in the world for my kids to have a 99.

And I'm sure at times the child doesn't understand why can I not have ice cream just before bed.

And why don't they allow me to have it?

[15 : 03] And they don't understand that it wouldn't be good for them to have it at that time. And we, you know, we know as parents that we sometimes get it wrong. We don't know all things. That we aren't all powerful.

We know there's times probably that we give our kids ice cream when we probably shouldn't give them ice cream. But in general, as parents, we try our best for our kids. And the difference between parents and a heavenly father is that as parents, we try our best, but we don't always know what's best.

But the difference is God, as our heavenly father, he always knows what's best for us. And he is filled with a perfect love for his children.

You know, we are told in the Bible to cast all our anxieties upon God because he cares for you. You know, all your worries, all your anxieties, all your problems, big and small, we are called to cast them onto him.

And this word cast, it's actually only used one other time in the New Testament. And it's used when Jesus is about to ride into Jerusalem on a donkey. And it says that the disciples, they threw or they spread their cloaks over the donkey so that Jesus could ride on it into Jerusalem.

[16:23] And this is the image of how we are to bring our cares and our anxieties before God. Not to simply throw them away and throw them out and try and forget them.

It's not about trying to suppress our anxious thoughts. It's about that idea of spreading out our problems before God, throwing them over to him and handing them over.

It's about telling God, God, look, I am struggling with these anxious thoughts. I am really struggling with, you know, what this person has said about me or maybe how I feel or how I look or how I'm going to prepare for this exam or for this work meeting or whatever it is.

And I don't know what to do. And I don't know what to do, but I'm giving them over to you because I know that I can't do anything about it. It's about acknowledging before God and giving them over to him, not just simply throwing them away or suppressing them.

It's about that willingness to depend upon God. And then finally, Jesus, he calls us first to seek his kingdom in these verses.

[17:38] He starts off in these verses by saying, you cannot serve two masters. You cannot serve both God and money. But then he concludes and he says in verse 33, but seek first the kingdom of God and all these things will be added to you.

And he makes the distinction and shows the difference on how we as Christians, as people who want to depend upon God are called to act in our lives and who we are to depend on in comparison to how the world acts and what it chases after.

You know, Jesus says here in verse 31, he says, 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. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well.

And this is this has always been the way, you know, we can go right the way back in the Bible. And this is the way that you can see someone like Noah and he obeyed God's command to build the ark.

[19:00] He trusted God. He put I don't know how you'd say that he sought after the kingdom. He stuck after the kingdom of God in comparison to the rest of the world who mocked and laughed at Noah for building such a crazy contraption in the middle of the desert.

You know, we see God calling the Israelites to depend on him for everything that they needed for their food, for their water, for all that they needed to survive.

And when when God's people do depend upon God, God provides for all their needs. And this is what Jesus calls each one of us to do today to seek his kingdom first.

It's not about trying to get your life in order first before you can come to him. It's about coming to him now, just as you are, whatever is going on in your life, however you're feeling, whatever doubts or struggles are in your mind.

He calls you to seek him first. You know, even when you feel at your wits end, at your the end of your tether, we are called to seek him first of all.

[20:15] That's my challenge for us this morning is in those times where we are struggling, where we have those anxious thoughts come into our minds. Will we seek him first or will we try to do it ourselves?

And that's what I want us to all know this morning, that we can depend upon God, our heavenly father, because he will give us all that we need.

He's sufficient for all our needs and he cares so much about every single anxious thought you're having this morning or during the week. You can depend upon him and you can trust him for all that you need.

So let's let's pray together. What a heavenly father you are, oh God.

That we can come to you any time of the day or night with all that is on our hearts and we can lay it all before you, spread out all our problems before you and give them to you.

[21 : 25] And we can do that safe in the knowledge that you listen to us and you hear us and you care deeply about whatever we're feeling at any moment in time.

You care about our well-being and you know what is best for us. And you have the power to be able to provide all that we need. And we praise your name this morning that we depend upon a God like that.

A God who is able to satisfy all of our needs. And I pray this morning that everyone here as we go into a new week that you would help our eyes and our hearts to when we struggle with thoughts or things come into our mind that we would simply give them to you.

And that we would just be filled with the strength and the power that only you can give to know that you are in control and you will help us.

You will satisfy us. And God, maybe not always in the ways that we expect or want, but God, you as a perfect Heavenly Father know what is best for us.

[22 : 46] And so help us in those times where we maybe ask you for something and we don't always get it. We want to trust you to know that as our Heavenly Father, you do know what is best for our lives.

And that we can trust you that in the right time, you will provide for us. So God, we just praise your name this morning. We thank you for who you are, a God who we can depend upon.

And we pray that you would bless the rest of our time together now. Amen.