

# Jesus' Answer to our Anxiety

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Preacher: James Ross

[ 0 : 00 ] Amen. Let's begin by acknowledging a reality that I think we're all aware of, that in the UK! and in the Western world, we have an anxiety problem.

! And those numbers are going up ever since COVID. 20.2% are recognized as having a common mental health condition, anxiety, depression, or a generalized anxiety disorder.

A mental health foundation in 2023 did some research on one age group, the 18 to 24 category, and 86% of those that they surveyed expressed high levels of anxiety in that previous two weeks. 58% of them felt that their anxiety was impacting their daily life. 58%. NHS data from last month, June, this health harm rate among young people today stands at 10.3%.

They estimate now that there will be one trillion pounds lost in lifetime earnings due to the childhood mental health crisis.

[ 1 : 42 ] 58%. Those are statistics that tell us we have an anxiety problem. But again, you and I know we can tell our own stories. So many of us live with worry and anxiety.

Sometimes it impacts us on a daily basis. There are a wide variety of factors, but you and I, if we don't know it right now, certainly someone in our circles will.

Picture Jesus on that hillside some 2,000 years ago, giving this teaching and recognize that he knows us.

And he speaks to you and to me directly. To listen to Jesus is to listen to one. You get that sense. He knows me.

Here is someone who is able to speak into my fears. And wonderfully, he doesn't just diagnose the problem because I think any of us could diagnose the problem.

[ 2 : 44 ] He provides answers. Ultimately, a cure for anxiety in spiritual terms.

In this little section, we have some of the most vital and powerful teaching for the Christian as it relates to our worries and our anxiety.

It acknowledges that the children of God, we will worry. There will be things that trouble us. And into that experience, Jesus calls us to remember our Father in heaven.

And he invites us to turn our attention to seeking his kingdom first as the answer to our anxiety. I'm sure you know as well as I do, it's really easy for those worries and troubles to overwhelm us, to look like the mountain.

And it's all that we can see. But what Jesus does in this section is he invites us to widen our horizons, as it were, to look up. To remember, Christians, we have a Father who loves us and who is for us.

[ 4 : 01 ] To take heart in that, to draw confidence in him. Maybe you're here today and you're not a Christian. Maybe you're visiting. Maybe you're exploring. You're new to Christian things.

I imagine you also have worries and anxieties. Let me invite you to listen in, to recognize here is a window into who Jesus is and to what Jesus offers as you and I seek to navigate life.

Well, let's begin with this most basic idea. First of all, that Jesus diagnoses the problem. And the problem is our worry. It's there. He gets straight to the point. Verse 25. Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life.

Why does the Bible tell us so often, do not fear, do not worry? Because we do. It's interesting to see where Jesus places this teaching. So, at the beginning of chapter 6, he's been encouraging us to enjoy our relationship with our Father in heaven.

And then after that, he's taken us to consider our relationship with money. And he's inviting us again to trust God rather than money.

[ 5 : 11 ] And now it becomes clear that those choices of enjoying life with God, putting God first, living with him as Lord, they will have a bearing on how we approach worry.

But to just take a step back, Jesus in this whole section is helping us. He does something really important for us. He helps us to name some of our worries. So, if you were to scan back with me to the first 18 verses of chapter 6, you would see that Jesus, in a sense, is addressing some of our relationship issues.

In particular, that fear of man that we can live with. Because here are some Pharisees, the really religious people, and what's most important to them is not, how am I before God?

But it's, how are people seeing me? What do people think of me? Can I earn the approval of others? And can I keep it? Maybe that's our worry.

But at the same time, in those verses, he's also talking about the worry that we can have as it relates to our religion, our life before God. And maybe the worry that we have is that we struggle to trust our Father in heaven.

[ 6 : 27 ] Maybe we've never really learned to rest secure in His love and in His grace. Perhaps we find ourselves thinking, well, I need to do well today in order to earn His favor and to keep it.

Or maybe we just struggle to believe that there can be grace beyond this moment. And then He takes us to money.

Money is a huge source of worry and anxiety for so many people in our society and no doubt in the room. We have bills that need paid, debts that pile up. We worry about providing for needs for ourselves and for others.

That can cause us great anxiety. Verse 25, getting to our text, we can worry and have anxiety about our physical needs. For some of us, this is very real.

Will I have enough at the end of the week or the end of the month so that I can have enough food to eat, so my house can stay warm, so I can pay all my bills? But maybe for many of us, especially in the comfortable West, maybe those questions about food and drink and clothes is an anxiety.

[ 7 : 36 ] Am I on trend? Will I have enough to keep up with the people around me to have the new car and the foreign holiday and the nice looking house? Troubles and anxieties.

To go to the end of our text, look at verse 34 with me. Jesus says, Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Are your worries principally about the future? So many of us, we can be troubled by uncertainty on the horizon. And so we have a dread when the phone rings.

Or we have a dread of when the contract might end. Or we live constantly worried that we might lose that relationship. It has been said wisely that anxiety does not empty tomorrow of its sorrows, but it does empty today of its strength.

I wonder if a hypothetical future leaves you feeling weak and powerless and anxious. Do you struggle to trust that God has future grace for you, whatever might come?

[ 8 : 57 ] Jesus does us a favor by naming our worries. But I wonder, are your worries on Jesus' list? Because this isn't an exhaustive list. What other worries would you and I add?

Is it worries about our children? Or is it worries as children for our parents? Maybe it's anxiety to do with education, with grades, and where we're going to go next.

Maybe it's our career prospects. Maybe it's anxiety over our performance. Do I do enough? Am I enough? Jesus' words are an invitation to honesty.

God says to us so many times, do not fear, because He knows us. So He knows there are things that you and I cannot handle.

He knows there are things that you and I get anxious and worried about. He understands that sense of desperation, and we're not sure if we will cope.

[ 9 : 56 ] And what Jesus wants is for that honesty to lead us to humility. That's why Jesus talks to us about our Father in heaven, so that we would remember His power.

We would rest in the fact that He is present with us. That He has made wonderful promises to us that He must keep, because He cannot fail in His character.

And He invites us to learn to trust Him. So Jesus looks out on the crowds then, and He looks out on us today, and He knows us.

And Jesus moves us beyond, do not worry, to seek to persuade us and to teach us that there is hope in Jesus.

So if we struggle, if we would say of ourselves, I'm a warrior, keep listening to Jesus, there is hope. Well, what is Jesus' answer for that anxiety that we feel?

[11:13] He invites us, doesn't He, to remember our Father in heaven. So a few weeks ago, I mentioned the missionary who works with street children.

And that sadness, when children who've been taken in from the streets, and they've been given a home and place in a family, they still hoard their food.

They would still avoid affection. And they would often, at any opportunity, run from home. What's the problem there?

The problem is that difficulty to change how one thinks. And so they couldn't trust. They couldn't find security. They couldn't rest in the love of that family.

And as Jesus teaches us about worry, He sees that we wrestle with that same street child mentality.

[12:17] We will still, as Christians, at times struggle to trust that my Father loves me. That He really will provide what's best.

What is for His glory and for my good. We struggle to find security and peace in the fact that He cares, and He invites me to take my fears to Him.

We struggle to grasp this wonderful reality that He provides Himself as security and strength, so we are never alone. And so Jesus' first answer to our anxiety is to invite and to persuade us to see our Father in heaven that we would get to know Him and to know Him better.

And the first way that He does this, I think, is by echoing the message of His Father. Because all throughout the Bible, we hear that message, do not worry, or do not fear.

So as Jesus, God's Son, as Jesus, the King who comes to bring in God's kingdom, speaks to His followers, He invites us to hear again that same message that His Father has spoken in the Bible, do not fear.

[13:36] Go to the book of Joshua. Here's the new leader for God's people. He's got to follow on from Moses and take the people into the promised land. And what does God say? Don't worry, I'll be with you.

I'll never leave you. You will lead my people into the promised land. Go to Isaiah 40 through 43, and you'll find so many times God's speaking comfort to an exiled people.

Do not fear. I am with you. I will uphold you. I am your Redeemer. I am mighty. I will take you by my strong hand.

Your Creator is your Redeemer. I have called you by name. You are mine. I am with you in trials. You are precious and loved.

And Jesus comes and says, Amen to all that. It's still true for the child of God today. The one who says to us, sitting on that hillside, do not worry.

[14:45] He's not our well-meaning friend. You know the way we say that to someone? They're troubled. Perhaps they're grieving. We say, don't worry. Everything will be okay. And we know as we hear it or we say it, we can't guarantee that.

That's not Jesus. Jesus is more like looking to the boat captain in the stormy sea. And we are anxious, but we look at him and he says, don't worry.

I know what I'm doing. I will get you safely to shore. You can trust me. Because the one who speaks is the king of the universe. And he cares for you.

The one who speaks is the redeemer. And he is committed to love and keep and be with you. And so Jesus reminds us in his words that the Father says, do not fear.

And Jesus says, do not fear. And then secondly, recognize how Jesus invites us to see that our Father actively cares and shows generosity to us.

[15:49] It's there in this opening section, 25 to 30. First of all, he says, look at the birds of the air. They don't sow or reap or store in barns. Yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?

This summer, in one of the trees in our garden, we had some baby magpies nesting. And I like it when it's relatively warm in the morning to take my coffee, take my Bible, and sit outside in the garden.

And every morning for about a week, I was treated to this really cute little display of, I'm guessing it was a mom and a dad magpie with two baby magpies. And they were doing that.

You know that dance that they do on the ground to try and get the worms and the bugs up? And they would do it every day. And they would get their food for the day from our garden.

God cares for those magpies. And he provided the bugs and the worms. And Jesus says, we're far more valuable. His eyes on the sparrow.

[16:52] And I know he's watching me. Then he turns to the flowers that he sees on the hillside. Why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow?

Oh, they don't labor or spin yet. I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. There's something wonderful, isn't there, about a good wildflower roundabout.

You are driving maybe to a new place and you come to one of those roundabouts where there's just that explosion of color and variety and shape. I love a wildflower meadow as well.

And it's a reminder, God didn't just make a functional world. He could have. He has made a beautiful world. Reminding us that God provides generously.

And Jesus says to us, listen, if God provides so generously for a flower, which is fragile, which is here today and gone tomorrow. So, verse 30, will he not much more clothe you, care for you?

[18:00] And having said that, remember your father says don't fear. Remember your father's care and generosity. He invites us also to see that our father invites us to trust him.

Look at the question of verse 27. Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? In a sense, he questions some of our worries.

Now, do you really think you have the power simply by agonizing and worrying to change the future? But to think about it another way, as Jesus talks about our father, he's saying to us, can you live trusting that your time, your life is in your father's hands?

And if we can do that, then some of that restless worry will disappear. Again, it comes down to, do I know the character of my father?

Do I trust him as my good and gracious king? Do I believe and live out the reality that he is both powerful and personal?

[19:19] Can I live today and every day recognizing my father knows what I need and he is able to supply it?

John G. Payton. Some of you will know his story. He was a missionary to the New Hebrides in the 1860s. He was somebody who got it.

So he went, gladly, to an island that was known to be full of cannibals. Many to us. And they worshipped false gods.

And on the island, his wife died of illness. At least one of his children died also. He was hated at first by the locals.

He was hunted by them. A famous story of him having to stay all night in a tree while tribesmen were surrounding his property.

[20:16] And he would get letters from home basically saying, you're crazy, you need to come home. But John G. Payton and all of that could say this. God is too loving and too wise to make any mistakes in anything he does or permits.

God is too loving and too wise to make any mistakes in anything he does or permits. There is somebody who knew and trusted his father in heaven. Again, notice the end of verse 30.

As Jesus talks about the father who clothes the flowers and who will much more clothe you, he says, you of little faith. So again, Jesus knows that you and I will struggle sometimes to fully trust our father.

And in those moments, our hearts will be somewhat divided. You know, I'd like to trust my father will care for me, but maybe I should place my hope and my money for my security.

Maybe our hearts in those anxieties become divided. Does God really know me? Does he really care about me right now? Will he really do what's best? The life of faith is a life of growing to discover, to lean on, to discover again, to trust and depend on our father in heaven, in our worries and in our anxieties.

[21:57] Now at this point, it's by way of a wee sidebar, some of us might be asking the question, and maybe all of us have asked it at some point. Well, if what Jesus says is true, what about the Christians today who are starving in Africa or in Gaza?

Christians who lose everything in a fire or a flood. How can Jesus say this when his disciples were hungry? Jesus himself was homeless.

To be a Christian for any length of time is to understand that our father doesn't, he doesn't draw a line around our properties or around our bodies to mean that we never have any troubles.

That's not how things go in the Christian life. So how do we make sense of this? I think there's a little clue in verse 25. As much as he's told them, do not worry about your life, what you'll eat or drink, your body, what you'll wear, he says, is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes?

And so it's an invitation to recognize that there is something more basic. There is a need more fundamental, even than the food on our tables and the roof over our heads.

[ 23 : 16 ] While it is absolutely true that our father genuinely does care about our daily needs, and you and I have known thousands of times when he has provided, tens of thousands if we're old enough, he wants all of those evidences of his care to point us to something still better.

What's better? It's nothing less than himself. He invites us to know the greatest thing, the greatest resource, the greatest hope, the greatest answer is to know God through knowing Jesus, our Savior, to find our life and strength in him.

Now, just before we move to one last thing, just four practical takeaways, because honestly, I think the issue of worry and anxiety is such a big one in our world, and without question, it's a big question in our own hearts and lives as well.

So four things that I hope will be helpful. One takeaway is this, take your anxiety to God in prayer. Do you ever have that feeling where all you're doing is replaying in your head, your worry, your anxiety for today or tomorrow?

Let me encourage you, stop talking to yourself and begin talking to your father. Somebody wisely said, anxiety is wasted prayer if we never turn it to God.

[ 24 : 47 ] The God who is real, the God who hears, and the God who keeps his promises. But also, as I was saying to the boys and girls as well, take time to read God's word.

Because what happens as we read God's word is we are listening as he reveals himself to us, as he would give grace to us, as he would remind us that he is great.

There's an answer to an anxiety. We're not alone, and the one who's on our side is the God of the universe. Thirdly, take time to be thankful.

That's Philippians 4, 6 and 7. We need to learn to put our worries in perspective by focusing at the same time on the character of God.

To not lose sight of what he has done for us in Jesus. How he has provided for us in the past. And he will be faithful in the present and the future.

[ 25 : 52 ] And fourthly, as Christians, we can take the opportunity to be a witness. So again, many people around us, deeply worried, deeply anxious, whether for themselves or for the world at large.

Going in circles, seeking relief, not sure where to find it. There is a real power. We can do people a real service if as Christians, we can live as a non-anxious presence in an anxious world.

Great title of a book by Mark Sayers. We can talk to people about how our faith in Jesus helps us to cope. How we find strength from knowing our God as our Father.

Well, let me briefly say one other thing, really important thing, is Jesus gives an answer to our anxiety. First, he's invited us to remember our Father. The second thing, he invites us to seek first his kingdom.

Verse 33, Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well. Let me share a really simple worry story from my past.

[ 27 : 05 ] Many years ago, myself and my brother went to watch a R.E.M. concert in Stirling, days before mobile phones. It was a long time ago. During the concert, we got separated.

I was at the back, my brother was at the front. We had to find our way back to the car park in the center of Stirling because we knew that the gates would get locked up by midnight. He has a sense of direction at that point.

I didn't, still don't have a gray one. And I was walking blindly, following the crowd, trying to find this car park, realized I was getting nowhere. I decided, do you know what I need to do?

Instead of walking, I need to run. So then I started running in total panic, running in circles around some part of Stirling. I had no idea where. It took me ages. To remember that I could pray.

My seeking was just leading me around in circles and just leading me in a total blind panic.

Thankfully, I did get out of that car park and we did get home and I did live to tell the tale. But as Jesus closes this teaching on worry, he draws attention to two different groups of people who are both seeking.

[ 28 : 11 ] Seeking answer for anxiety. One group goes around in circles and one has real hope. Verse 31 and 32, there are those who are described as the pagans.

See verse 32, for the pagans run after all these things. That's literally for the pagans seek after all these things. It's the same word. And your heavenly Father knows that you need them. So don't be like the pagans because here's the problem. People without Jesus, they don't have God as their Father in heaven. So then all that you've got is your own resources. All that you can rely on is your own solutions. And that's a bit like my experience in Sterling. Going round in circles, getting in a panic, not really sure where in the world to go. Let me say, if that's you today, if you're not a Christian and you struggle with anxiety, listen in as Jesus offers a better way. When we are concerned, what do we do?

[ 29 : 17 ] We seek first His kingdom and His righteousness. What does He mean by that? Well, certainly at one level He means there is only so much room in your heart and in your mind.

So that as we would let thoughts of God in, as we would focus attention on living for Him and following Jesus and wanting to be more like Him, that's going to drive out some of those fears. If we think about a garden and we think about weeds in a garden, there's two ways of dealing with the weeds. One is to pull them up one by one. Another is to plant more and more flowers so there's no room for the weeds to grow.

We need to fill our heart and our mind with who God is and choosing to set our mind on His kingdom and living for Jesus. So Jesus moves us out of anxiety by drawing us into something better, the kingdom of God, giving our attention to how can I love others today?

How can I seek to benefit and bless my neighborhood today? In the midst of my struggles, how can I encourage a Christian friend who I know is going through a hard time today? How can I spread His word and His comfort and His hope?

[ 30 : 36 ] And Jesus calls us to trust and to follow Him. Think about Jesus' life. Jesus faced troubles. Remember Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane praying, sweating drops of blood as He thought about what it meant to be the sin bearer of the world and go to the cross?

And yet He lived with trust in His Father. Not my will, but yours be done. And because Jesus has lived with trust and with faith, He has gone to the cross and so He has forgiven our sin.

He has given us new life with God. Our King is now our Father. And so in Jesus, we have God's great answer to our anxiety. He has given us life with Himself.

We have His love and care. We have His powerful presence. So when you and I worry, the next time we worry, Jesus would say to us, remember, remember how much your Father loves you. Remember that Jesus is with you and for you. as Robert Murray McShane used to say, for every one look at ourself, for every one look at our worries, take ten looks at Jesus, our Savior, and our loving Father in heaven.

[ 31 : 58 ] And then you find holy holy