

Do Not Be Anxious

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Preacher: Matt Cry

[0:00] Heavenly Father, it is good to sing to you. It is good to gather in this place with your family. God, it's good to hear from you in your Word. That's what we turn to now.

And I pray that by the power of your Holy Spirit, God, you would meet each and every one of us where we are. God, you would impart wisdom and you would impart life through your Word. We ask it in the name of and for the glory of Jesus. Amen. Amen. Is anyone in the room worried this morning? Anything on your mind that's kind of a distraction?

Maybe you're in a rush to get your kids out into church on time. You're wondering if you locked the front door. Or maybe there's unresolved conflict and relationship in your life.

Or maybe you recently lost your job. Maybe there's a real major health issue that's just ongoing and there's no end in sight. You worried about anything?

[1:06] I wonder if, is there anyone in the room that is prone to worry? Does life tend to tempt you towards anxiety and distress?

Or maybe if we took a poll of your friends and family, those closest to you, they would say, oh, so-and-so is, he or she is a worrier.

Not just prone to worry, but yeah, that's how I would identify. Daily fears and stressful future unknowns. Is the easy button in the commercial is actually a panic button that you just keep repeatedly hitting as troubles come along?

Or maybe you're here this morning consumed under a weight of worry that seems to have no way out. You're despairing of life itself.

Well, I'm not sure where you're at this morning sitting in these pews. But I know this based on my own personal experience and in relational dealings with other people and because of the amount of time the Bible speaks over and over about worry and fear and anxiety that worry is a temptation common to man.

[2:23] We're experienced with it, right? Very experienced with it day after day after day. We understand what it means to worry. Now, I don't know what emotions rise in your hearts when you open to Matthew chapter 6 and you see in verse 25 that Jesus tells us, do not be anxious about your life.

I don't know what wells up in your heart when you hear those words. Is it dread or is it hope? Is it fear or is it joy? Is it futility or freedom?

Well, regardless, friends, regardless of where you find yourself today and what type of emotions well up in your heart when you hear those words, regardless, know this.

Jesus' words here are full of grace for you today. He's not here taking out his club and starting to thump people over the head for being anxious.

No, these words here are meant to set us free from worldly worry. These words here are meant to provide a God-honoring, faith-filled alternative to the way that we might be tempted to live our day-to-day existence.

[3:40] This text is meant to be music to the ears of people who tend to fret about life like you and me. And it's because of this that we need to remember before we get into reading this passage and looking at it that Jesus here is doing more than just giving us some psychology.

He's not inviting us to sit on his couch and saying, oh, that's interesting. Well, let me give you a couple of tips to sort of correct this worrisome behavior. No, he's not just offering self-help to us.

This isn't Jesus' version of the seven habits of highly effective people. No. Jesus here, just like throughout this whole Sermon on the Mount, is addressing our hearts and saying that if you want to be free of worry, you need God to transform your heart.

You need him to change you from the inside out, or else worry is going to keep plaguing your life. So let's not get that wrong at the outset. Worry is a business of God to fix.

And Jesus here is going to give us grace for it. So if you haven't, turn in your Bibles to Matthew 6. Let me read for us these verses.

[4:56] Remember, a couple weeks ago, Mike had preached on verses 19 to 24, kind of talking about where's your treasure? Is your eye healthy?

Are you serving one master exclusively, or are you trying to serve two? Jesus ultimately says in the verses right before our text this morning that you've got to give God your everything.

He's got to be central to your life. That's what the therefore that starts verse 25 is there for. So listen to these words.

This is Jesus' truth for us today, and it's really, really good. 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? Look at the birds of the air. They neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.

[6:10] Are you not of more value than they? And which of you, by being anxious, can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing?

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 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?

Therefore, do 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 you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

[7:15] Therefore, do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. Wow. Wow.

So there's a lot here. I've been tempted in the preparation process to be anxious about how much there is to cover, but let's do our best to see what Jesus is saying here.

We're going to cover it in four parts, and it goes something like this. It's command and its rationale, part one. Command and its rationale, part two. Part three is command and promise.

Part four, command and its rationale. So four commands, and then Jesus kind of unpacks those commands in different ways. And I think I'm going to hold off on giving us the main idea here until the end, because I think it's going to be obvious as we go.

But just in case as I go I'm confusing and it doesn't become clear, I'll give it to us at the end. So point one, we look at verses 25 to 30, and just a warning, this is by far the longest point.

[8:31] So if you're worried about the clock as I'm going through this and it's kind of lingering on, we'll be okay. But we've got to unpack this first one really well. Well, essentially Jesus in these first five or six verses says, cease from worry.

Cease from worry. First thing we need to see in verse 25 is even before we see the command, therefore I tell you. Jesus is emphatic here.

He takes the time not to say, don't be anxious, but I'm telling you something important. I'm telling you something really important. Listen carefully. So we need to examine and say, who is this guy that's saying this?

You may be seeing me up here and saying, who's this young 34-year-old whippersnapper who's trying to tell me and all my issues to not be anxious? Well, don't hear me say it.

Hear the risen and exalted and eternal Son of God telling you, do not be anxious. It's emphatic. Jesus wants us to listen carefully. So you notice, simply do not be anxious.

[9:39] And what does he tell us about? What is it that he's speaking to? Well, food, drink, clothing. These seem to be the essentials of life, right?

Well, we need to make sure that if we have our essentials met, we have no need to be anxious about them because we have full refrigerators and full closets full of clothes.

Don't tune out. Because when Jesus talks about the essentials, what he's really doing here is saying, if there's anything in life that may actually justify worry, it'd be the essential things.

And do not be anxious even about those. So if we have the privilege of being anxious or tempted to anxiety over luxuries, over non-essentials, over treasures, then clearly those do not justify our worrying either.

If even the essentials can't justify worry, then nothing in our lives can either. There is zero in our lives to justify worry.

[10:46] Worry. That's what Jesus is getting at in his first command. So what is this worry? What's Jesus talking about? Are we to be sort of carefree and irresponsible and just never plan ahead and not go about our lives thinking carefully about anything?

No. No, he doesn't want that. When Jesus talks about worry, he talks about a behavior that turns temporary things, turns lesser priorities into greater things than they really are.

It's taking temporary and less significant things and troubles of life and making them the central focus of setting our eyes on things that are here and now or maybe tomorrow.

Things that don't ultimately amount to what life's all about. And maybe this is only a passing temptation for you or maybe it characterizes your whole life.

Either way, Jesus is forbidding it. He's saying don't be anxious. But he doesn't stop there. And that's what I love about this. He doesn't just issue a command and say, okay, get to obey in it.

[11:58] Listen to the rationale that Jesus is going to use here. This is profound. It's profound. It's profound. There's several lines of it, so we're just going to walk through them one by one here.

The first one is found at the end of verse 25. And let me encourage you at the outset as we go through these four or five strands of rationale. Let the combined weight really do what Jesus means it to.

Let the combined force of these strings of rationale really sink into your heart this morning. This is God's goodness and grace. So the first rationale he gives at the end of verse 25 is through a question.

Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Essentially, Jesus is saying if God has created you, Christian, if God has given you life, if he's made you in his image, if he has sent Jesus to reveal himself and die on a cross and shed his blood so that you might be forgiven of all your sins, so that you and God's relationship might be reconciled and restored, then worrying about anything, even the essentials, is to reduce your life beneath what God has defined it to be.

It waters it down. It dilutes it. Well, we can sort of imply from this, if we really want to know what life is about, we don't have far to look in Scripture.

[13:26] John 17, 3 speaks this way. This is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. Or the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 6, 19 and 20 says, You're not your own, for you are bought with a price.

We're citizens of heaven. We're heirs of Christ. Life is much more valuable than to worry about these little things.

Peter gives me hope, the Apostle, a guy who's slicing off people's ears and rebuking Jesus for talking about his death.

He seemed to know a thing or two about worry. And yet, this Apostle, after some time and after the resurrection, was able to write a letter to exiles who were really fearing for a lot of things in their life, and he was able to say, cast all your anxieties upon the Lord, for he cares for you.

Peter gives me hope as I look at his life, because even somebody like Peter can be transformed to not be anxious, to not worry. Jesus says in this first strand, don't be anxious, for life is more valuable than to worry.

[14:44] But he goes on, verse 26, if you look there, he says, look at the birds. Look at the birds of the air. They neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them.

Are you not of more value than they? I see these little birds day after day hopping around in the grass, sort of pecking and grabbing these worms that I don't even know are there.

These same birds wake me up at five in the morning in the spring, even before the sun comes out, chirping their choruses outside my window. Birds are worry-free in their work, aren't they?

Never heard an anxious sparrow, like, where's my food going to be today? No. There's no anxious chirping. They extend the effort, and they're provided for.

God feeds them. God feeds them. Now, of course, we don't want to look in this first and say, well, farming's bad, right? Jesus isn't here condemning agriculture.

[15:51] He's not aimed at that. He's saying, no, look at the birds. They don't do that, and yet they're still fed. If you're a farmer, farm. Sow, reap, gather in the barns. That's part of farming.

Don't think he's outlawing that. But sparrows, robins, blue jays, crows, woodpeckers, the rest, the birds, God provides for them from his sovereign hand.

And Jesus asked that question. Aren't you of more worth than a bird, dear Christian? Won't your needs be met if the birds are fed?

Well, the plain answer is, of course. Of course my needs will be met if God feeds the birds. Jesus goes on, verse 27, to ask another question.

And which of you, by being anxious, can add a single hour to his span of life? There's a footnote in the ESV that talks about a cubit, or this 18 inches. There's a little uncertainty about whether Jesus is talking here about adding to one's height or adding length to the number of one's days.

[17:07] Well, either way, the essential question underlying it is, what does worry profit you? If you took a survey of every person who's ever worried about anything, what profit would you find?

Ulcers, high blood pressure, crabbiness? But essentially, Jesus is saying, who could conclude that worry profits a person?

What does it profit anyone to worry? In fact, worry actually reduces the time we have to actually get about resolving the things that tempt us to worry.

Well, he goes on in verse 28 through 30 to offer another illustration from creation. This time, instead of birds, he's talking about lilies of the field.

Consider how they grow. Now, this word here, consider, notice it's not just look at him. He doesn't say just look at him like he does birds. No, consider. Because what Jesus is saying is, at first glance, if you look at a flower and then you look at a king decked out in all his royal majesty, if you just kind of look at him in a quick glance, you're going to be wowed by the king.

[18:23] You're going to be wowed by his clothing. But if you stop and smell the roses, if you kneel down and examine the intricacies of a single flower, you're going to be wowed.

Because much more than a seamstress making a garment for a king, God's creative wisdom in a flower is breathtaking. That's what Jesus is saying here.

If you look at a flower, it's more glorious and more splendid than King Solomon. One of the richest kings who ever lived, one of the wisest men who ever lived of Israel.

He had people bringing him fabric from all over the known world. And yet Jesus says, The splendor and wealth and riches of King Solomon cannot compare to the way God's sovereign wisdom formed one single flower.

But if grass gets flowers greater than the glory of Solomon and perishes tomorrow only to be used for kindling in an oven, won't God clothe you?

[19:32] Won't God clothe you if grass that's going to be burned up as soon as the hot Palestinian sun rises the next day?

Won't He clothe you, His child? The one whom He loves? The one whom He sent Christ to die for? Won't He clothe you? Well, it's no wonder that the address that Jesus gives to those listening to Him on that rock at the end of verse 30 is, Oh, you of little faith.

Jesus names His listeners. It's not a good name, right? It's not one that I would care to be labeled by. And yet the good news for His listeners is He doesn't say faithless.

He doesn't say you who have no faith. He says little faith. There's a sprout in there somewhere. And Jesus is touching on that. He's talking to His disciples, to people who know Him, who want to be obedient to Him.

And so these words even are gracious. Ultimately, Jesus says here that worry is rooted in unbelief. It's when we're prone to doubt God's promises and tempted to ignore what He said in His Word.

[20:57] And just like them, just like those first hearers, we're prone to lack that same faith today, aren't we? It reminds me of the father of the demon-possessed son that we see in Mark chapter 9.

This father runs up to Jesus and says, Lord, if you are able, help. Look at my son, help. Jesus replies, If you are able, all things are possible for the one who believes.

And this man cries out, I believe. Help my unbelief. I believe. Help my unbelief. That's where we're all living as Christians. We believe, but we still have a ways to go to fully receive all the promises of God and trust in Him completely.

We all tend to doubt. There's good news, isn't there?

I hope you're seeing that as we go, Jesus' rationale for issuing this command is full of grace. It's designed to help us. So we've looked at this first command.

[22:01] Now we will move more quickly through these final three. The second command found in verse 31 and 32. And it's basically saying, Don't start being anxious.

Now that we've sort of eliminated the need to worry and told you to stop being anxious, now I'm going to tell you, Don't start now. Take all this rationale that you've just heard and apply it to anything you face today and in the future.

Don't start being anxious. Don't begin to worry. Don't start now.

Let the above rationale prevent the start, the startup of worry. Well, he has two more kind of rationale.

We see in verse 32 this two-fold new instruction. The first one, you see it there, For the Gentiles seek after these things. And your Heavenly Father knows that you need them all.

[23:06] Jesus says essentially that it's the worldly people, the godless people, the pagan people, who run after all of these things in life.

And Christian, you don't want to be like them. You don't want to reflect a Gentile attitude with your life.

Notice Jesus goes on and says, Your Heavenly Father knows that you need them all. We heard right back when Mike preached on the Lord's Prayer, the verse directly before it, chapter 6, verse 8 says, Don't be like the Gentiles who kind of heap up these empty phrases.

Why? Because your Father knows what you need before you ask Him. We have a Heavenly Father who knows our needs. If you're in Christ, you have a Father who loves you unconditionally and will provide each and every need you have.

We never need to doubt that. God knows Him. He promises to provide. And so our response is, we trust Him with all of it.

[24:19] We trust Him. Well, the third command, Jesus has done two negatives. Don't be anxious. Don't start being anxious. And now He replaces it with a positive.

Verse 33. Listen carefully to this. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Well, it seems that there's probably two senses in which we can view this command. There's an ultimate sense that is required of each and every person on the planet to come to terms with whether or not God or self will be the one who dictates things in life.

There's the ultimate sense of, am I going to put God on His throne of my life, or am I going to continue to rule and call the shots?

That's one sense. The second sense is, if you've determined that God is the ultimate reality and your life exists in Him and for Him and through Him, then there's this sliding scale in the life of a Christian where more and more as we're sanctified, as we adopt Christ-likeness and God changes us, we'll begin more and more to prioritize the kingdom.

[25:45] My sense is most of us in the room are on that second one today, but I don't want to miss the opportunity to say, if you haven't made that initial decision, you need to make it.

You need to prioritize God above all things because that's what He's declared as right and good.

Well, this verse has been one that personally has revolutionized my life.

It's changed me from the inside out. I was in the Navy, and I was stationed in Japan in 2008, so just over eight years ago.

And I heard a dear brother preach this verse, and for the first time ever, I actually heard, God gave me ears to hear what it actually said.

And I realized that for many, many years, I was refusing to obey this. I was rejecting it by my life.

[26:46] It said, seek first the kingdom. I was like, no, I want to seek first Matt. Matt's more important than God. Matt's a higher priority than God. And by the grace of God that night, when I heard, seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, God broke in and said, Matt, you've got to obey.

You've got to pursue me. You've got to pursue my desires and my kingdom and my righteousness, or you're never going to be satisfied. By His grace, I did.

He changed me that night. And I thank Him for that. So if you're a nonbeliever, if you have not put your faith and your trust in Jesus Christ today, make no mistake, there's a day coming when you will answer for that.

God wants you right now to prioritize His kingdom and His righteousness. And He offers it today to anyone who would ask.

But if you're a Christian, let me just ask you this. How are you doing prioritizing the kingdom of God? How's it going for you in your day-to-day existence?

[28:05] How's your hunger and thirst for righteousness? Something to think about. But notice the promise in this verse.

I love this. Jesus says that if you seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, all your needs will be met. God will provide all of them. Well, brother, sister, if you are in the room this morning and you are worried about the essentials of life, food, clothing, shelter, this is an invitation for you to trust God at His Word.

See if He won't fulfill this promise that He has made. But prioritize Him. You've got to seek Him with everything you've got.

Watch Him provide. Watch Him provide. Trust His promise here. Well, my guess is that most of us are not there this morning.

And so let me just offer this. how might God fulfill this promise to meet the essential needs of His children through you?

[29:21] How might God be wanting you to use your resources in the lives of those who are lacking the essentials? One of the primary ways that the body of Christ is called to be the body of Christ is to love one another.

And I think this is a really practical way that we can ask God to give us eyes to see real needs of our brothers and sisters to care for them. Well, just as a brief aside before we go on, maybe there's some asking this question, well, what about all the starvation and the poverty and the suffering around the world?

Let me just say this, that God cares very much about all of that. He cares very much about seeing people made in His image suffering, brokenhearted, starving.

And it's right to question what are we to do about that? Well, there's other Scriptures that speak directly and more directly to these type of things, these horrific things than our passage.

Here in this specific passage, Jesus is speaking strictly about His disciples and how their Heavenly Father will provide for their needs.

[30:48] So we've made it to the final command here. There's one more verse, so we've run out of things to say, but here it is. Don't worry about the future.

Verse 34, therefore, therefore, do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. So, Jesus, in His master-teacher form, realizes that maybe we're convinced that we shouldn't worry about the day-to-day necessities.

Maybe the essentials, oh, Jesus, you're right. Don't need to worry about those. Well, Jesus knows how crafty this snake-like worry thing can be.

And He knows that if we get everything kind of sorted out for today, that worry's just going to slither on into tomorrow. That maybe we're not worried about the essentials of today anymore, but that future, man, that, that's something to be anxious about, right?

Worry is an ever-present danger, whether it's showing up in our day-to-day necessities of life or future unknowns. I love how one of my favorite theologians, Martin Lloyd-Jones, speaks of worry. [32:09] He says, worry has an active imagination. And that's essentially what worry has to do, right? To start thinking about the future. To start wondering and processing through all these different outcomes that may or may not happen.

What's that? Don't let worry get your imagination going about the future. Don't be anxious about tomorrow. Jesus says right here His rationale, there's enough going on today, right?

We know this. Our lives are full of experience of this. There's enough today. Don't start imagining the potentials that may never happen tomorrow.

This too is fruitless, lacking in faith, and ultimately focused on self. So we've explored these grace-filled words of Jesus and hopefully the nugget of truth that Jesus is calling us to has sort of just come about here.

Let me try and summarize it this way. Jesus here is calling us to replace worldly worrying with a faith-filled pursuit of God's kingdom.

[33:28] To replace worldly worrying with a faith-filled pursuit of God's kingdom. Jesus forbids anxiety, and He points us to a much sweeter and God-glorifying alternative.

Prioritize the kingdom of God. spend your life, exhaust your strength on seeing the kingdom advance in the name of Jesus praised and worshipped. Don't be anxious.

What is it? Profit. It lacks faith. It's what the world does. Be salty and bright instead. So as I conclude, let me just offer two points of application.

Well, clearly this is a pretty timely word as on Tuesday we will elect the next president of the United States. I think if Jesus were wanting to speak directly to us today, I dare try and say that I think this is what He would say about it, that regardless of what happens, church, God still reigns.

Determine to pursue the kingdom of God even if things go the exact opposite of the way you're hoping they would. Keep on praying the prayer, Thy kingdom come, Thy world be done on earth as it is in heaven.

[34:59] Keep prioritizing the kingdom of God. That's where true change and true greatness lies. Lastly, if you're wondering today, how can I replace worry with a kingdom pursuit?

Let me just suggest this. Take an inventory of your life. Examine your day-to-day existence.

Examine the future concerns that you're tempted to be worried about, whether it's sending kids off to college or going off to college or retirement or job search or transition and a move.

Whatever it may be, find one or two ways that you can replace that worry with a kingdom-seeking priority. Maybe you will resolve to ramp up your devotional time with God.

Or maybe you'll join a life group where you can be in fellowship and be held accountable for how you live before God. Maybe you want to invest some of your monetary resources in supporting a missionary who's on the front lines preaching the gospel to those who need Jesus.

Or maybe you want to partner with a local group like Care Net who cares for the unborn and is making an impact in our city. Let me encourage you to take a step today. Take a step of faith towards prioritizing the kingdom, towards banishing worry from your life.

[36:25] That's what Jesus has called us to. And ultimately, we can trust God that He's going to prove faithful as we seek to replace our worry with a pursuit of His kingdom.

Let's pray. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank You so much for these words. Lord Jesus, You truly are brilliant, and You truly are the one we need to empower us to obey.

God, would You meet each and every person where they are today, where we are. God, would You speak into our hearts that we would live a life pleasing to You, prioritizing Your kingdom above all else.

God, as we respond in song, would Your Holy Spirit, fill us with joy and gratitude for who You are. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.