

Worried?

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[0 : 0 0] fail in some way. And so I felt drawn to preach on these words from Matthew chapter 6 because! these are words I need to hear. So this sermon I'm preaching to myself as much as to you guys.

But as I was going through the preparation, I realized that there's probably many of you for whom these words would also be an encouragement. So if you have your Bible, you can open it up to Matthew 6 verse 25.

And it will also be on the screen. Let me read you these words of Jesus. He says, Therefore, I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink, or about your body, what you will wear.

Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air.

They do not sow, or reap, or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?

[1 : 2 2] Can any one of you, by worrying, add a single hour to your life? And why do you worry about clothes?

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

If that's how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, 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 all these things.

And your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom, and his righteousness.

[2 : 3 3] 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 has enough trouble of its own. I love these words of Jesus so much. Not only does Jesus tell us not to worry, but he gives us reasons.

And these reasons hold such power. As Jesus piles these reasons, one on top of the other, they persuade us to let go of our anxiety and our worry, and to trust God.

One thing that catches my attention in these words is what Jesus tells us not to worry about. Notice that it's the basics of life.

Food. Water. Clothing. Now some of us might be tempted to think when we hear those things, you know, I'm not really too worried about those things.

[3 : 4 2] I mean, I've got those covered. I'm worried about bigger things. But you know, the more we reflect on these words, the more we realize that these things like food and drink and clothing, these are, in a sense, the most important things.

These are the essentials needed for life. What happens without food and water? We die. What happens without clothing?

Here in Canada, we freeze. In one sense, these things should be our top priority. Before we spend money on entertainment or sports or a new phone, we should make sure that we have enough for groceries and gas to get to work and winter boots.

These things are essential to life. And yet Jesus tells us straight up, don't worry about them. If Jesus can convince us that we don't need to worry about the essentials in life, maybe we'll realize that we don't need to worry about anything else in life.

If we don't need to worry about food and water and clothing, without which we die, then surely we don't need to worry about things of lesser consequence, like what our next job will be, or vehicle, or how we're going to get through next week without forgetting something important.

[5 : 16] As we think of this, we even trace some of our anxiety and our worry about the bigger things back to some of these little things, these essentials.

Why are we so worried about the number that's going to come back for the car repair bill? Well, if it's over a certain amount, will I still have enough in the bank for groceries and all the other bills?

And if I can't get that car fixed, well, then I won't be able to make it to work, and then I'm going to lose my job, and then I won't be able to put food on the table. But if Jesus can convince us that we don't need to worry, even about the essentials, we may realize we don't need to worry about anything else.

And so Jesus starts us off here with this one simple command. He says, Do not worry about your life. What you'll eat or drink or what you'll wear.

And then he begins to reason with our hearts about why not. Reason number one, why not to worry. He says, Is not life more than food?

[6 : 32] And the body more than clothes? As I just said, food and clothing are arguably two of the most important things for life.

And yet Jesus basically says, No, they're not. Life is about so much more than what you eat, or drink, or what you wear.

Those things, which are essential, are actually relatively insignificant. You kind of think about it, food and drink, that's just the fuel for a life.

And clothing, that's just the covering for the body. Far more important than the fuel that goes in the tank is where you're driving with the car. What you're doing with the life God has given you.

Far more important than the covering for the body is the body itself. And what God gave you your body for. What are you doing with the body that God has given you?

[7 : 38] There's almost a sense in which Jesus is saying, you're worried, you're concerned about the wrong things. As important as they may seem, God made you for far more than eating, and drinking, and dressing yourself.

What kind of life are you living? How are you using the body He has given you? That's what you should be focused on. I wonder, how much of our worry and anxiety can be traced back to misplaced priorities?

I was worrying the other day about what would happen if I didn't get all my leaves raked up before the snow came. I spent a lot of time thinking about that.

And of course, there's wisdom in getting at them before they become a snow-crusting pile of ice in the spring. They're certainly faster to deal with and easier when they're dry.

And it's a lot more enjoyable to scoop dry leaves into a bag than wet leaves. But how much mental and emotional energy should I invest into a bunch of little dead things on the ground?

[8 : 52] What's the worst that will happen if they just sit there through the winter? It's the stuff of earth. And meanwhile, I could have been thinking about the stuff of heaven and the things that are most important in life.

Jesus gives a second reason not to worry. And he gives it in the form of an object lesson. Verse 26. He says, Look at the birds of the air.

They do not sow or reap or store away in barns. And yet, your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?

I love this. Look at the birds, says Jesus. Bird watching is biblical. It's a God-ordained hobby.

Look at them. And what does Jesus want us to notice about the birds? Are they planting crops? No. Are they harvesting what they've planted?

[9 : 57] No. Are they storing up in barns the things that they've harvested? No. Are they making sure they have a few thousand dollars in an emergency fund? No.

Do they even work? Kind of, but not really. They just fly about here and there and gather up what God provides each day.

Look at them, says Jesus. Don't worry about tomorrow or next week or next month. They don't dig up seeds and plant them in their own little bird gardens or fields and tend them so that they can make it through the next season ahead.

How do they survive? Jesus answers, your heavenly Father feeds them. God pays attention to the birds and he governs everything in the world just so that each day there's something of his provision there for them.

An insect hatch, a bird feeder in someone's backyard, a soaking rain that brings up worms. my grandmother used to butter a slice of bread and put it out for a grackle in her backyard that had a wounded wing.

[11 : 26] If God takes care to feed the birds, will he not take care of you? What's a bird compared to a human being?

human beings, God has made us in his own image. We are precious to him.

Jesus is saying, you are so much more valuable to God than birds. And if he looks after them each day, will he not look after you today, tomorrow, and the next day?

And so reason number two not to worry is because God cares deeply about you and about me. He already proves his faithful care with the lesser critters of the earth.

How much more does he notice and tend to our needs as our loving creator and father? Reason number three comes in verse 27.

[12 : 30] Reason three not to worry. Jesus asked this rhetorical question. Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? Now there's some translation variation here.

Some say, can anyone add a cubit to his height? Which would be a metaphor if that was the right way to read it. Some say, a day, add a day to his life.

Whatever the case, whatever the right translation is, Jesus' point is the same thing. He's basically saying worrying about things is pointless. When you're worrying about things, you can't actually add or do anything good by it.

It doesn't accomplish anything for you. Your lifespan is as long as it will be. Or in the case of height, it's not going to change by worrying about all this stuff.

Worrying is a waste of time. It's a waste of energy. It's a waste of thought. It's a waste of our emotional energy. It can't accomplish anything good for you, and so, why bother worrying at all?

[13 : 47] Why not just give it up and be like one of the birds looking to God each day for your daily bread? Jesus goes on, verse 28, he says, and why do you worry about clothes?

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

If that's how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, you of little faith?

There's a couple different ways we might worry about clothes. one way is to worry about having the clothes that we need. Clothing can be expensive, especially footwear, jackets, dress clothes for special occasions.

The other way we can worry about clothes is when we care too much about fashion and self-image, appearance, and beauty. Jesus seems to address both here.

[14 : 54] He says, see how the flowers of the field grow. Go out and look at the flowers. Do you see how beautifully they're dressed? They do not labor or spin.

Back in ancient times, many made their own clothes, and it was a lot of work. It was very labor intensive. They used spinning wheels to make their own thread from wool or plant fibers, and then they had to weave that thread into cloth and make their own cloth, and then they could use the cloth finally to make a garment, and they of course didn't have all the fancy machines that we have today, and so it was labor.

It was work. Jesus says, go outside and look at the flowers. See how beautifully they're dressed, and what did those flowers do to clothe themselves so beautifully?

Nothing. They did no work. They spun no wool, and yet even the richest man to ever live on the earth, King Solomon himself, wasn't dressed as well as the flowers in the field.

It was God who gave them that clothing and made them to look like that, so that they look better to the human eye than the richest of kings wearing the most expensive clothes.

[16 : 22] God made them beautiful, and if God made such beautiful clothing for something that's of little more value than grass, think of this, a flower is so beautiful, and yet it wasn't even made to last.

It's here today, and Jesus says tomorrow it's thrown into the fire. Think to that bunch of flowers that maybe you received if you're a lady, or your wife received if you're a man, that bouquet.

It was beautiful the day it arrived, and then a few weeks later, even with water and plant food, the petals and leaves are all shriveled up and dead.

What do you do with it? You take the whole thing and you just throw it in the garbage. Even if it's planted in soil, flowers have their season, and before long they wither and die and are worthless.

But, says Jesus, if God takes care to clothe something worth so little, so beautifully, won't he take even better care to clothe you?

[17 : 35] A precious person made in his own image. And so here's another reason not to worry about things. God cares for us and loves us far more than we sometimes realize.

at the end of verse 30 here, I think Jesus touches a bit of a nerve. He says, will he not much more clothe you, you of little faith?

What's the problem with worrying? It's a lack of faith. When we're worrying about all sorts of things, it's because we're not trusting God the way that we should be.

and in this case, what's Jesus trying to encourage us to trust about God? To believe about God?

He's trying to point our faith at something about God that if we see it, all our worries will just melt away. And it could be that we've not yet known God to be like this personally, or it could be that we've simply forgotten or lost sight of God and how he's like this.

[18 : 47] It could be that we need to just be reminded that he is a good and loving and attentive father to us. He's never oblivious to our needs.

If he pays attention to the birds and the grass, then we are in his attention to. How much more will he meet all our needs with the riches of his goodness and grace if we look to him?

That's who he is. We can count on him and trust him with everything in life. And so it's as if Jesus is, I worry when we have a father in heaven like him looking out for us.

Jesus goes on, he says, so 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.

Jesus restates his imperative. Do not worry. Don't run around in a panicked frenzy, anxious about all the things. Why not?

[20 : 09] God. And Jesus maybe touches another nerve here. He says, that's what the pagans do. Who are the pagans? This word sometimes is translated Gentiles or nations, but I think in context here, it refers to all the people of the world who don't know God, who don't know the one true God.

They run after food and drink and clothing, frantically striving for those things, worrying about those kinds of things. Why? Because they don't know God.

It's as Jesus is saying, worrying is the norm for those who don't know our heavenly father. What comfort do they have?

What assurance do they have? What hope do they have if they don't know the God who made them and loves them? And so there's an implication here too and this is where it may touch a nerve.

The implication that when we worry we're living like the world. We're living like those who don't know God when we worry.

[21 : 24] And of course, that doesn't honor him or please him. Worry actually diminishes our witness to Jesus and to God.

God shows we don't really trust our God or believe that he will look after us. It's yet another reason why not to worry.

Here's a sixth reason to pile on top of the previous five. Jesus says, the pagans run after all these things and your heavenly father knows that you need them. He knows that you need them.

God is never unaware of the needs that you have. He's like a father who sees every need of his child and is totally dialed in. He knows exactly what's happening in our lives.

Earlier in this same chapter in verse eight Jesus said this he said for your father knows what you need before you ask him. In another place Jesus says that even the hairs on our head are numbered by God.

[22 : 31] God knows you even better than you know yourself. He knows what you need even better than you know what you need.

Sometimes in our worries one of the things that swirls around in our hearts and in our minds is this thought that we're all alone in life that nobody fully understands what we're going through.

If they did you know maybe they could help but they don't they can't sometimes in our worries we get thinking about our how it's all up to me this decision that's in front of me and only I truly can understand the decision before me and it's either going to make or break things but none of this is true.

You are not the only one who understands what's going on in your life. You are not the only one who understands the decisions ahead of you.

The things that are causing you stress and worry. God knows. He sees and understands what you need exactly what you need even better than you do.

[23 : 50] So do not worry says Jesus. Trust him. We come now to one of the most famous words of Jesus.

Not quite John 3 16 but almost up there with John 3 16. Jesus says but seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well.

This isn't just a reason not to worry. This is something to do instead of worrying. Jesus gives us something to seek instead of food and drink and clothing and the stuff we need.

He says seek your father's kingdom. Seek your father's righteousness. Up until now we've been told what not to do.

Don't worry. And we might even get the idea that we should be concerned about nothing and that God just wants us to live this life devoid of all striving. A life of just waking up each day to embrace God's provision for the day.

[25 : 00] But no, here Jesus gives us something to seek after, something to strive towards. Seek your father's kingdom. Seek your father's righteousness.

As we heard a moment ago, life is more than food. And here Jesus tells us what that more is. What's worth pursuing with our lives? What's far more important than even the essentials?

And it's the kingdom of God. What's the kingdom of God? I had a little shudder in my office just thinking of how to even answer that question.

This is a big question with a really, really big answer. In fact, I would argue that even to get to a working sense of what the kingdom of God is, we have to read through this whole thing carefully, cover to cover, and pray, and think deeply on it, and talk to God about it.

Seeking the kingdom of God, I would say, is a lifelong pursuit. Both understanding what it is, and how we should live in light of it.

[26 : 16] Jesus spoke a ton about the kingdom of God. It has to do with what God has been up to for thousands of years of human history, leading up to this moment where we are listening to Jesus.

It has to do with many great promises he has made. It has to do with Jesus, the king that God has chosen for his kingdom. And it all culminates in the great and glorious end to the story of our world.

One final glorious kingdom which will never end or fall. Sometimes we call it heaven. But that one word barely even scratches the surface of it.

That should be your first priority, says Jesus. Seek first his kingdom. And there's a second thing Jesus tells us to seek.

Instead of the stuff of this world, he says, seek your father's righteousness. Now some here will point to what Paul says in Romans about righteousness and explain this in this way.

[27 : 21] They would say that we should seek a right standing with God, which we don't have. And we can get it by faith in Jesus. And that's true. That's what Paul teaches in Romans.

But there's another kind of righteousness that is God's. And it has to do with his character and how he does what is good and right. And so when Jesus says, seek his righteousness, I think he's commanding us to strive to live righteously as God our father is righteous.

To be holy as God is holy. I think this fits with what Jesus has already been saying here. Life is about more than the food and drink in your belly or the clothes on your back.

What are you doing with your life? What are you doing with your body? God desires his children, his precious blood bought sons and daughters to live righteously with the life that he has given them.

To be people who do an abundance of good works and who bear much good fruit. People who are honest, who have integrity, who are full of his love and kindness.

[28 : 39] Seek to live this way with the life that you've been given. Do what's right according to God's righteousness in every situation. That's what I think Jesus means when he says, seek his righteousness.

And then there's this amazing promise that comes at the end here. One of the most amazing, liberating promises of the Christian life. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well.

What are we aiming to do with our lives as first priority? Jesus says that if we're seeking his kingdom and his righteousness as first priority, then God will give us all the things that we need.

Everything. Whether food or clothing, a place to live, a vehicle to drive, whatever it is. And it might not be obvious at first, well if I turn my attention to that, then how is that going to look after all this stuff?

It might not be obvious or apparent how that works. And that's where faith and trust come in. God's asking us to trust him. I'm going to give it to you.

[29 : 53] If you seek my father's kingdom and my father's righteousness, I will give you everything else you need.

I'll take care of the rest. Is the kingdom of God your first priority? Is living a righteous life to honor the Lord your top goal?

Have you been seeking his kingdom and righteousness? Or have you been running after the earthly things like the people of the world around us who don't know God?

Finally, Jesus gives us a couple more reasons not to worry in the last verse there, verse 34. He says, Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself.

Each day has enough trouble of its own. There's often that forward dimension to our worry, where we're looking ahead, we're trying to figure out, we're trying to decide, and what if this happens, and what if that happens, and what if they say this, and what if, and should I say this, and we can go on and on and on, and we get all panicked and anxious because we don't know what tomorrow holds.

[31 : 12] Jesus says, just let tomorrow's things be tomorrow's things. Don't worry about them. Give your attention to today, to here and now.

Live in this moment. Tomorrow's things, you can focus on tomorrow. Each day has enough trouble of its own. We weren't meant to try and carry the burden of today, and tomorrow, and next week, and next month, all at once.

Only God knows what the future holds for any of us. And because he does, we can let go of our worries, which pertain to tomorrow. God has it in his hand.

He's in control. So I can focus on today. I can focus on right here and now. I can even look ahead and make plans for tomorrow, and what to do tomorrow, but I need to leave those plans with God, and not worry about them all through the day.

One day's trouble is all we need to manage, says Jesus. Somewhere in the preparing of this, I lost track of how many reasons this was.

[32 : 26] Is that nine reasons? Maybe? Nine reasons not to worry? Well, as we come to the Lord's table this morning, let's make it ten. We may hear all of these reasons not to worry, and yet we may still have this nagging suspicion.

or doubt about whether God will really look after us. Will he really take care of all my needs? One final place to look, Romans 8, verse 32.

Paul writes this, he says, If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all.

How will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? If God has already given us the greatest and most valuable gift that can ever be given, that's Jesus.

How will he not also, along with Jesus, give us all things? everything that we might need. It says, God did not spare him.

[33 : 37] He gave him for our rescue and for our ransom. Jesus' blood was the cost that justice required for our atonement.

His body, he gave willingly. He hung and died on the cross. The innocent for the guilty. The righteous for the unrighteous.

The king for the people of the kingdom. If God gave that for you and for me, what's tomorrow's bread and water? What's tomorrow's power bill money?

What's the next vehicle you need? Or job, or home, or whatever? So let's go to the table now. Let's reflect on the gift that's been given to make us children of our heavenly father.

Let's think about the body of Jesus as he suffered and died for us. Let's think about the blood of Jesus which was poured out for us on the cross.

[34 : 43] Let's have a few moments of quiet to pray. we can confess our worries, the things that we've been worrying about and our cares.

We can confess our lack of trust and our lack of faith. But we can also rejoice and be reminded again of God's love and grace for us. In a few moments we'll have Charles and Dave come up to serve the elements of the table.

And if you've put your life in Jesus' hands, then I want to invite you to join with us and partake with us of the bread and the cup. And if not, then you can just let them pass you by.

We'll wait until everybody's been served and then we'll partake together. Amen.