

Look at the Lillies!

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[0:00] Well, we want to begin our time in the Word this morning with a discussion question.! It's not usually interactive at this point in the sermon, but we're going to try it a little bit for just a minute or two.

What are the things in life that we are most likely to worry about? Health.

Money. Dying. Yes.

War. Family members. Our neighbors.

There's lots of things, eh? Where we could sort of ask a similar question that might bring up some others. What are some things that have been causing you stress?

[1:15] A wolf trying to eat you.

Yeah. That could cause you stress for sure. Well, today we're going to hear from Jesus very specifically about worry and anxiety.

Let's pick up the story from the Gospel of Luke. We're in chapter 12. And we are in verse 22.

Verse 22. Then Jesus said to his disciples, Therefore, I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear.

For life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. Consider the ravens.

[2:41] Birds. They do not sow or reap. They have no storeroom or barn. Yet God feeds them.

And how much more valuable you are than birds. Who of you, by worrying, can add a single hour to your life?

Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest? It's good for us to take a moment and remember how we got to this part in the story.

Earlier in this chapter, we read about how Jesus was teaching on the subjects of hypocrisy and greed. First, he had an encounter with the Pharisees, and then he went on to warn his disciples about hypocrisy.

Then there was this man who called out to Jesus, asking Jesus to tell his brother to divide the inheritance with him. And so Jesus began to warn his disciples about greed.

[4:10] And he told them this parable of the rich fool. This guy who got a bountiful harvest and then replaced his barns with bigger ones so that he had room to store all of his surplus grain and goods, thinking to himself that he was set for life and could take it easy and could now eat, drink, and be merry for many years ahead.

But then God tells him that his time is up, that he will not get what he has prepared for himself. And we talked last Sunday about how this man was an example of selfishness and greed.

Well, it's here that Jesus shifts to talking about worry. But this is all kind of related. Notice the word therefore.

Then Jesus said to his disciples, therefore, I tell you, do not worry about your life. What was the rich fool looking forward to with his life?

He was looking forward to eating, drinking, and being merry with what he had stored up for himself. And now, what is Jesus telling his disciples not to worry about?

[5:35] Eating. Verse 29. Drinking. Verse 33 and 34. Storing up things for ourselves here on earth.

And so this teaching about worry really comes with the warning against greed. The two are kind of related. And as Jesus gets into this, we notice, I love it when he does this, he gives us his main point right out of the gate.

I tell you, do not worry about your life. That's his main point in this whole section. Much of what follows and he says after answers the question of why.

Why shouldn't I worry? That's what the next six verses are about. But let's just zero in on that main point for a minute. Do not worry about your life.

First, we notice how Jesus sort of expands on that. Don't worry about what you will eat. Don't worry about what you will wear. Don't worry about your body.

[6:53] Jesus picks two things in life that are common to us all as examples. Things that we're prone to worry about. Food and clothing.

Things that we, both of them, we need to live. And he says, don't worry about them. Now he's not saying don't even think about what you will eat or take no thought as to how you dress.

We know that because there's plenty of other passages in the Bible which tell us that we should take some thought to our eating and our drinking and even to how we dress.

God tells us elsewhere that gluttony and drunkenness are sinful. He tells us that we should dress modestly and appropriately to the occasion.

And so Jesus is not telling us to just go through life giving no thought or care to these things at all. The word Jesus uses here for worry means to be anxious about something.

[8:04] What he means is don't be anxious about your life, what you will eat or about your body, what you will wear.

Don't be anxious about the things in life that you need. don't fret or fear or let your mind just sort of race in an anxious worry about those things.

That's Jesus' main point here to his followers and to us. Do not be anxious about your life. Jesus forbids us to fret and be stressed out over things.

And so I think the first thing that we need to do here is just stop and get honest with the Lord and have a conversation with him and ask, Lord, have I been doing this?

have I been anxious about things in life? And if so, what are those things that I've been worrying about?

[9:22] What are those things that I've not been trusting you with? Worry is kind of a tricky sin. It doesn't promise us pleasure or happiness like other sins.

It works differently. It dangles before us the promise of safety, security, control, peace, maybe even success.

And it really operates out of fear. We incessantly think about things or plan about things or imagine things because we're afraid of meeting the unknowns.

We're afraid of being out of control in a situation. We're afraid of being exposed or we're just dreading what we know is ahead.

and another tricky thing about worry is that we often don't realize that we're doing it until we've started.

[10:44] We don't usually sit there and, you know, am I going to worry about this or not? Hmm. No. We often just sort of find ourselves doing it and slipping in and out of it as we think thoughts throughout the day.

Now, don't hear me wrong. I'm not saying that we're not responsible to God for all of our thoughts. We are. Wrong things that we do unintentionally are still wrong even if they become automatic or habitual.

And that brings us to another tricky thing about worry. Worry is a thing of the mind. It's a thing of the heart. It can lead us to take physical actions or make decisions.

But at its core, being anxious about things in life is a sin of the heart. Let's just peek ahead to verse 29 where Jesus restates the main point using these words.

He says, and do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink. Do not worry about it. Do not set your heart on it. Quite literally, don't seek after or devote yourself to what to eat or what to drink.

[12:17] And so, we notice here that worry isn't just something that happens to us. Something that we have no control over. it might seem like that because it's become such a habit.

But according to Jesus, being anxious about things in life is something that we do. It's not just something that happens to us. And it is something with God's help that we can choose not to do. If we were completely helpless as followers of Jesus to stop ourselves from worrying about things, if it was something we truly had no control over, would Jesus tell us to stop worrying about our lives? The truth is we can, by faith, with God's help, we can take control of our thoughts and refuse to be anxious. and how to do that is what the rest of this passage is about.

It's what Jesus is about to tell us. So let's just keep listening to Jesus. We've heard the main point, don't be anxious about your life. Now let's hear some of the reasoning that goes with it.

[13:37] Verse 23, Jesus says, for life is more than food and the body more than clothes. The lie that we're tempted to believe is that life is mainly about food and drink and clothing and getting the things, having the good stuff.

That's what it means to really live. Think back to that rich fool for a second. what was his great ambition? To eat, to drink, to take it easy and to be merry, to just sort of live to please himself with food and drink.

Life is about pleasure. It's about entertaining and pleasing myself. That's the lie. And Jesus gives us some truth to just bust the power of that lie.

He says, life is more than food. Your body and what God gave it to you for matters more than the coverings that you put on it.

In other words, there's some misplaced priorities going on here. It's not that we don't need food or clothing.

[15:07] it's that we place too much value and importance in those things. We give too much of our heart towards those things.

In reality, food is just the fuel for the life. I think the analogy of a car is kind of helpful here. where you're driving to matters far more than what grade of fuel you put in the tank. And sometimes we get so fixated on whether the fuel that we're putting in is premium.

Can you imagine sitting down and planning an entire road trip for you and your family around where you can get the best snacks and gas? rather than who you're going to visit along the way and what you're going to do in those places and when you arrive who you're going to be with and what you're going to do.

And yet that's what we're doing when we put an inordinate amount of our heart's attention into eating and drinking and clothing and transportation and what kind of tools or tech I have.

[16:27] And the list can go on. Jesus says life is more than that. The body matters more than the clothes that cover it.

And so since that's true the question that we kind of moves us to words is well then what is life really about? Why am I really here on this earth?

Jesus is going to answer that question more as we go on. But for now let's just reflect on this for a moment. Are my priorities straight in life?

Am I valuing above all the right things? Reason number two not to be anxious.

Verse 24 Jesus says consider the ravens. they do not sow or reap. They have no storeroom or barn yet God feeds them.

[17:38] And how much more valuable you are than birds. Another lie that we're tempted to believe is that if we don't put a lot of our time and attention into getting all the things that we think we need then we'll go without.

We will starve. We'll be uncomfortable. We'll be miserable. We'll suffer scarcity and maybe we'll die. And so there's really two kinds of anxiety about food and clothing. We can be anxious over having the good stuff. That's one kind. or we can be anxious about facing scarcity and we can worry about not having enough of those things.

Maybe you've been struggling to find work or your job pays low or your spending has been sort of, we'll say, undisciplined and the debts are piling up so we can be worried about how to pay the next bills.

will there be enough left over for the things that we need, the groceries? And we could easily lose sleep over that. And that can gnaw at us.

[19:07] Well, Jesus gives us another truth to bust this lie. He says, consider the ravens. Look at the birds. they don't sow or plant in the fields.

They don't take off a harvest from the work they've done. They don't store up all they can into barns and storehouses to prepare for the future. What do the ravens do?

It's sort of implied they just go out and find what God has put out for them each day. Jesus says, God feeds them.

And I love how personal that is. Like, they don't get what they need by chance. God feeds them. He himself is orchestrating and governing even the natural world deliberately to ensure that ravens have their sustenance.

birds. He wants there to be birds on the earth. He values them. And so he looks after them and provides what they need to flourish on this planet.

[20:19] And Jesus says, if God is so tuned into the needs of the birds, is he not tuned into your needs?

Don't you know that to God you are so much more valuable than birds? I mean, birds are like feathered flying rodents.

Who cares about them? Jesus says, God cares about them. And if he cares so well for them, is he going to let you starve?

starve? You are precious to God. You are made in his own image. And so don't be anxious about not having enough or about going without.

You can count on God to provide what you need because you are valuable and precious to him. and so stop worrying about those things and trust him.

[21:33] A third reason not to be anxious comes in the form of the question, the next verse. Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life? Another lie that we believe is that worrying is somehow beneficial.

we tell ourselves that if we keep thinking about it over and over and over, keep going over that conversation again and again or that decision that we made again and again rehearsing what we'll do or say if this person says this or does that.

We tell ourselves the more we go over it, the more it will help us. The better prepared we'll be. It'll save me time having to figure out what to do or say.

But this just isn't true. Jesus busts this lie too. Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life?

And the answer of course is none of you can. And his point here, anxiously worrying about things accomplishes nothing for you.

[22:51] It doesn't even give you one extra hour of life. In fact, Jesus didn't say this, but it actually takes hours off your life.

It's a waste of our mental and emotional energy and of the time that we spend worrying that we could be thinking about other things. of course we know it worsens the health of our physical bodies too.

And that consistently doing it can lead to misery and depression. Some of you maybe know a person who has put themselves in the hospital because of stress.

stress. Now there are various factors for stress, but much of stress is about what we do in our hearts and in our minds with the challenges that come our way.

And do we bring our troubles to God in prayer? Are we trusting him to look after us and to lead us through those difficulties?

[23:57] these? Or are we attempting to carry all of our troubles on our own back and come up with our own solutions for the things that only God can remedy?

Solutions that don't even work or do more damage. Worrying about things does nothing good for us. And Jesus follows this up with a question in verse 26.

Since you cannot do this very little thing of adding even one hour to your life, why do you worry about the rest? I love that.

It's a little thing for God to add an hour to your life. For us, not so much. Our influence over how long we live is limited.

Ultimately, how long we live is in God's hands. And Jesus says, since we can't by being anxious at even one hour to our lives, why worry about the rest of our lives?

[25:03] The whole thing is in God's hands. And not so much in our own as we sometimes think. To reinforce all this, Jesus gives another object lesson.

This time he shifts to clothing. Verse 27. Consider how the wild flowers grow. They do not labor or spin.

Yet I tell you, not 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 was thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you.

You have little faith. I was sitting in my backyard on Monday morning as I was reading this for the first time this week and I looked up right after I read this and I saw this right beside me.

And it doesn't look quite as good as it did when I looked at it. It was brighter. And then I started looking around the yard and I said, wow, all the different kinds of flower, such variety, such beauty, so many colors, all arranged differently on their plant.

[26:32] Amazing and beautiful. Then I got to thinking I should Google around on this a little bit and see what else I can dig up. Apparently there are over 350,000 known species of flowering plants on earth.

To put that into perspective, according to one source, it means that for every species of animal with a backbone on this planet, there are roughly 10 species of flowering plant.

Who knew that within the rose family alone there are almost 5,000 different species? Within the orchid family, there are around 28,000 different species.

32,000 different species of daisy or sunflower. Unbelievable variety and diversity. And Jesus says basically God put his creativity, his attention and his effort into clothing all these different kinds of plants so beautifully and they're just grass.

They're just plants. Would he do all that to dress up the relatively worthless grasses and plants of the earth but let you go naked and freezing?

[27:59] Even the richest man to ever live, Jesus says, King Solomon's clothes didn't compare to what God has done for the grass of the field.

How much more will he clothe you? How much more will he give you what you need? So don't be worried. Don't be anxious. Don't worry about your life, not even the things you need the most.

Don't set your heart on what you will eat or drink. Do not worry about it. If you think God doesn't really care about you or see you such that you need to look after yourself, it's not true.

He does care. He does see you. If he cares so much about grass and plants and flowers and birds, you better believe he cares about you.

So don't be anxious about your life. And Jesus just keeps going. Another couple reasons. Verse 30, for the pagan world runs after all such things.

[29:08] And your father knows that you need them. Two more reasons. Anxiously worrying about all the less important things in life is what those who don't know God do.

Think about that. But knowing God, being in a restored relationship with the Lord, takes away all the reasons we have to worry.

He assures us of His love and His care for us. And He lifts our eyes to the greater things in life, to what life's really about.

And Jesus reminds us on top of all that, your father knows that you need them. don't worry, He knows what you need.

And I love what Jesus calls God here, your father. Jesus reminds His disciples that we are all children of God, those who believe in Him.

[30:23] And God is like a father to us. Let me ask you this, do you notice when your child needs a haircut, or has a scrape on the knee, or when they have a bruise, or when they're overtired and need sleep.

Yeah, we notice all of those things. We make the decisions for our kids to try to meet those needs and do what's best for them, and sometimes they don't agree with those decisions, and we say, well, just trust me.

God is our father. He knows our needs, just like we know the needs of our kids.

He knows we need food. He knows we need clothing. He knows the one kid in the family needs new shoes. He knows we need a way to get to work. He even knows that sometimes we need to go without good things for a time so that we grow in our faith.

My eight-year-old may think he needs a cell phone or a pound of candy every day, but I know that he will be happier and healthier without both of those things.

[31:45] Do you trust your father to provide what you need? Finally, we come to the big thing here at the end.

In this whole passage, we've heard a very strong do not from Jesus. Do not be anxious about your life. But now he gives us a do. I'm going to call it the second half of his main point.

Verse 31. seek God's kingdom. But seek his kingdom and these things will be given to you as well. Seek God's kingdom.

Here's that answer to the question we heard before, what life is really about. It's about our relationship with God and how he has made his son Jesus to be king over all.

people. And it's about how God has graciously invited us to be citizens in his kingdom. And we do that, of course, starting now by embracing his son, the one that, the king that he has sent, Jesus.

[32:57] And of course, we are looking forward to the end, to the culmination when Jesus returns to fully establish God's rule and reign over everything. It's difficult to explain in just a brief moment what the kingdom of God is because there's just so much to it.

The Bible is full of God telling us about it. Much of Jesus teaching and his parables were about it. It's the great thing for which we were made.

Relationship with God forever in his coming kingdom. Just like we say in the Lord's prayer, your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.

So don't be anxious about your life. Don't anxiously strive after the things of earth, but seek, strive after the kingdom of God. That's what you should set your heart on, says Jesus.

That's to be your great priority in life. And of course there's this wonderful promise that goes with it. Do that.

[34:12] Seek his kingdom and these things will be given to you as well. The things, the food, the clothing. Isn't that a wonderful promise?

If we seek his kingdom, God's promise is that he'll take care of the rest. the food, the clothing, the place to live, the vehicle, whatever.

Are you seeking God's kingdom? Is that your main priority? we don't need to worry.

We don't need to be anxious that we'll lack anything if we're seeking his kingdom. Because the one who feeds the birds and has clothed the flowers has promised to feed and clothe us.

We are precious to him. He loves us. And so don't be anxious about all the things. Tell God about those things. Ask for him to provide, for him to help, and trust.

[35:28] Be worry free. Stress free. We're going to turn our attention now to the Lord's table.

Each month we eat bread and we drink a cup in remembrance of Jesus. And it's not just a tradition, but it's something Jesus commanded us to do.

The bread represents Jesus' body. The cup represents Jesus' blood. And how he gave up both when he died at the cross for us.

To make atonement for our sins. God not everyone partakes of this table, but only those who have repented and put their faith in Jesus. As we remember Jesus' death this morning, let's consider a few things related to what we have just been talking about.

First, there's some good news. For every time that we have committed the sin of anxiously worrying, Christ Jesus died so that we could be forgiven of that.

[36:44] We don't have to live with the guilt of all the times that we failed to trust God in the past. And for every moment and decision that we've made to seek after the things of earth, whether motivated by greed or by fear of not having enough, Jesus bled and died to atone for that too.

all God asks is that we acknowledge those sins to him, confess them, ask for his forgiveness, and it's ours.

Jesus took the punishment we deserve for all of that. And it's good news. Second, what God did for us at the cross is yet another reminder of why we don't need to worry.

I love these words of the Apostle Paul in Romans 8, verse 32. He, that's God, 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?

God has already provided for our greatest need. he's already given us the most precious and costly gift, his own son, to die on the cross for us, to reconcile us to God.

[38:17] And so, if God was willing to give us that, and he did, then how will he not give us all the other things that we need in life as we look to him for them?

him. And finally, Jesus reminds his disciples, as we heard earlier, that God is their father. If you are a disciple of Jesus, God is your father.

And that's something that Jesus' death brought about. Though all of us had wandered away from God and alienated ourselves from him, at the cross, Jesus made a way for us to become home and to become part of God's family again.

If we receive Jesus and believe in his name, he gives us the right to become children of God, born supernaturally into his family. But that couldn't be without the cross, where Jesus dealt with our guilt and our sins.

love and truths that we have just heard from Jesus.

[39:40] It's the proof that we are precious to God, that we are valuable to him. The cross is the evidence that he does love and care more for us than we can even imagine.

So I want to invite you in these next moments to look at Jesus, to think of him hanging there, and whether you have anything to worry about.

Let's quietly reflect and pray. We're just going to have a moment where you can confess, repent, give thanks, praise God.

once we've done that for a few minutes, we'll have Dave and Rod come up and pass out the elements. And if you have trusted in Jesus as your Lord, join with us and participate with us.

And if not, please just let the elements pass you by. We'll wait until everyone's been served, and then we'll eat and drink all together.