

Journey to the Cross: Worry Fails - Luke 12:22-34

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[0 : 0 0] If you are a guest with us today, we are in the middle of a series where we are approaching Resurrection Sunday, Easter. And as we approach Resurrection Day, we are in a sermon series where we are looking at the last journey of the Lord from Luke 9 through Luke 19. Then we will look at the Passion Week of Christ, His last week, what happened from Sunday and Monday and Tuesday and Wednesday, Thursday, dying on Thursday, and then we celebrate His Resurrection on Sunday. And so we are in the middle of a sermon series looking at His last journey and then His last week and then His last hour, and then we will celebrate His resurrection on Easter Sunday.

And today we find ourselves in Luke chapter 12 if you want to turn there. And I could not come up with a catchy sermon title other than this, that just worry, just fails. It fails to accomplish anything, it fails to do any good, it just fails in every way. But we are going to find today that there are six truths that worry fails to believe and embrace and comprehend and appreciate that are true in Scripture. And we are going to see that today. But before we do that, obviously the text is going to be on the topic of worry.

The disciples find themselves in a place where the Lord speaks to this topic of worry and being worried. And I find it interesting that in America, one of the most affluent nations in the world, the most self-indulged and comfortable society, yet how good quote unquote America has it, how we often can be a people who are stressed out and dominated by anxiety. No worry in our culture goes unnamed and undefined, uncategorized, and yet worry in our culture often goes unreleased.

I can't help but believe in our secular humanistic understanding in a culture that denies that God even exists and that we and this world and all that we know is a product of chance and blind, unguided, random, purposeless processes that brought about all things including humanity. And in that culture, nothing, no circumstance has any purpose because God doesn't exist, it just happens by chance. And so circumstances happen by purpose. And so can you imagine being with an understanding like a secular humanist type person, I would worry deeply because I have nothing to appeal to, no one to appeal to that is God to any circumstance that happens to me. And I cannot because circumstances are purposeless because they're not sent from a divine person to me, they're just purposeless, I would be stressed out. So what's terrible we'll find, what's absolutely terrible about worry is that when I worry, I look so much like this world. There's nothing really set apart about Scott when he worries than that of the person of this world. And so what are some things that worry just fails? It's going to fail to believe six truths that we'll find out here found in God's word. And so if you have a copy of scripture with you, please turn to Luke chapter 12, we're going to begin reading in verse 22, and the passage will conclude today in 34. If you will read with me our text for today, Luke 12, 22 through 34. This is the word of the Lord. And he said to his disciples, therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat nor about your body, what you will put on for your life is more than food and your body more than clothing. Consider the ravens, they neither sow nor reap, they have neither store houses or nor barn, and yet God feeds them. And of how much more value are you than the birds? And which of you by seeing by being anxious can add a single hour to your lifespan?

If then you are not able to do a small thing such as this, why are you anxious about the rest? Consider the lilies, how they neither grow, neither, they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you even Solomon and all of his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so closed the grass, which is alive in the fields today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you? Oh, you of little faith. And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink nor be worried, but all the nations, for all the nations of the world seek after these things and your father knows that you need them. Instead seek his kingdom and these things will be added to you. Fear not, little flock, for it is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to the needy. Provide yourselves money bags that do not grow old with treasure in heavens that do not fail where neither thieves approach nor maw this destroy. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

[6 : 18] On the topic of worrying, failing, what is the first truth in our passage today that worry fails? It fails to understand God's central concern. God's central concern.

Notice the verse 22 where Jesus begins to speak, it begins with the word therefore. I want us to jump up to verse or go back to verse 15 with me. In the previous context of the parable of the rich fool, Jesus is talking about this man who, what he thought he was going to do. He's going to build storehouses. He's going to do all these things that he can just then eat, drink and be merry and relax after he has pulled in this great harvest, he's built these big barns. But at the end of it, it says that the Lord is going to require this day of him his life and to lay up treasures in heaven not on this earth. That's the context of the previous rich fool parable. But notice in verse 15 it says, take care and be on guard against all covetousness. So I want us to see if as you go home today you can read the previous parable which I just summarized, but I would go home and read it because it's about covetousness. Our account today, our passage today is talking about being anxious or worrying. And what do covetousness and worrying have in common? It is this, it has this same central theme of someone who does not trust the Lord. So Jesus is making the same point using the topic of anxiety or worry as he did with covetousness and he said they both have the root problem. The root problem of both of these is that they do not trust the Lord and we will see that. But that's why he begins with therefore, I'm making the same point, carry that idea with me. I'm saying this because of what I said previously about covetousness and I'm going to make the same point. It ultimately comes down to someone who does not trust the Lord and that's what's so terrible about covetousness.

That's what's so terrible about worrying. So he begins with this word therefore. Jesus is teaching us not to worry. Look at what we're not to worry about. Your body, what you will eat, what you will put on your clothing, your life, your food, your clothing. In the first century church, we know that in the book of 1st Timothy chapter six verse eight, we read if we have food and clothing, we are to be content with such things. Put ourselves in the first century with Roman occupation. In the book of Timothy anyway, by this point, the Jews have been pushed out. The church has been pushed out of Jerusalem and they are in this diaspora season where the church is dispersed through all the nations and Timothy is saying, listen, if you have food, if you have clothing, be content with these things.

So this was very real to the listeners of the first century and he says, don't be concerned about food and clothing, but you had reason to be concerned about those things and do not be concerned about your very life. You had reason to be concerned about these things.

Jesus is communicating. In verse 23, for life is more than food and body more than clothing. Jesus is communicating the priority of his kingdom is to glorify God by fulfilling the purpose for which he had called them. Your life is more than just food and clothing.

[10 : 26] Be about my purposes. That life fulfilling his purposes is greater than any of these temporary concerns. Stated simply, life does not depend on stuff. Therefore, it is useless to worry about stuff. Life is not about the abundance of one's possessions.

It's interesting in the verse 22 when it says, do not be anxious. The verb tense of that, do not be anxious is in the perfect present tense, which is it's a worry that indicates or it's a life that indicates there's an absence of worry that continually characterizes the believer. It's not that do not be anxious one time and then it's okay to go ahead and keep worrying. No, that tense of the verb is communicating. Worrying should be absent from the believer's life. It's to continue. Do not worry and continue not worrying and continue not worrying and continue not worrying. That's the idea when he says do not worry.

Do not be anxious about these things. Why? Because we have a trustworthy, loving Heavenly Father. In 1 Peter, we read this. In 1 Peter 5, verse 6, humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting our anxieties upon him and then it says, because he cares for you. He cares for you. I also appreciate the Psalmist who places his trust in the Lord and this is what the Psalmist says, David in Psalm 56. He says, when I am afraid, I put my trust in you. I was anxious and when I was afraid, when I was worried about my life, I put my trust in you. That's what the Psalmist did. Worry fails to understand God's central concern. Secondly, worry fails to appreciate God's supply in verse 24. Consider the ravens. They neither sow nor reap. They have neither storehouses nor barns and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds? God calls his disciples in verse 24 to consider. The word consider means look, pay special attention, perceive, think it out. It's as if we're to look at a bird as the raven and say, I want to study this. What is it? What is the truth that God has by me to consider this raven? Now first of all, we know the ravens were an unclean bird to the Jewish people in Leviticus 11, but when one considers the raven, there's another animal in the Bible that we are told to consider. These two animals stand in stark contrast to the principle that is being made. In the book of Proverbs, we have the ant.

We could consider, we're told in the Proverbs, look to the ant. We talk about laziness being sluggards and there was a reason for they were to look to the ant for not being lazy.

But here, if we're to contrast the ant with the raven, what does the ant do? It works spring, summer, and fall. Year round, it works to store up food so that it would have food in a storehouse underground that in the time when they could not harvest, they would have food in reserve. But that's not true of the raven. The raven doesn't do that. The raven doesn't have a storehouse. They don't work year round to store up enough food for the winter. And we're to consider this raven. So what is it? The raven has this, it's incapable of generating its own food supply. It doesn't sow, it doesn't plant anything, it doesn't harvest anything. They can't store up anything. They don't possess barns. They're incapable of it. Ravens have to depend upon God solely to be their supply. God has designed and made food available and it's due season for the raven.

[14:58] I took a picture this winter just because it was pretty. I thought it was pretty. And then I was studying for this message today and I thought, that's a fitting picture. So I don't go around taking pictures for sermon illustrations. That's not what I did. I just thought it was pretty. Outside my window in my kitchen is a mountain ash tree. And it's a beautiful tree, green leaves. And it was in that deep snow and there were these red berries on a mountain ash tree. And I remember as a kid, pulling those berries off a mountain ash tree to throw at my brother. And so in addition to throwing berries at a brother, the mountain ash tree exists to feed birds. And about three weeks after I took this picture, two or three weeks in that deep, hard, bitter cold that we had after a snowfall, one day a flock of robins came and within the whole day's period of time, not one berry still stands on that tree. And God fed them. God fed them in the due season. The robins, they can't sew. I know they're not ravens, but work with me. I know there's a difference.

They can't sew. They can't put things in a barn. They have to depend upon the Lord to feed them. And the mountain ash tree is one of the ways that God feeds them in a very bitter time when it was hard to live. And within one day, that whole tree was stripped of its berries. And here's how God is arguing. He's arguing from the lesser to the greater.

Look at the bottom of verse 24. And how much more value are you than the birds? Consider, he says, think about it. Are you not more valuable to the Lord than those birds? So if God cares about those birds who are incapable of storing, planting, and are wholly dependent upon God for their daily existence, and because you're more valuable than the birds, and he supplies for them, don't you think you can trust him for the things that you're worried about? That's the implication. That's what he's saying. And so he's saying, what does worry do? Worry fails to appreciate God's supply. That's what worries do. And so he's saying, what does worry do to appreciate God's supply? It just worry fails. Third thing that worry fails is to comprehend God's privilege. Look with me in verse 25 and 26. And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to the span of his life? If then you are not able to do this as a small thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest? All throughout the Roman world today, you can go to archeological sites and one of the things that you will see in a Roman ruins is a bathhouse. It's very common. You see the amphitheater, you'll see a lot of different things. You'll often find latrines, but among all the things in the Roman world that you may find that was common in Roman world are bathhouses. And you will see them at archeological sites. And I've had the privilege of seeing a few myself. And you could tell that since the beginning of time mankind has had a concern for their health. This was something that you would kind of sit, a bathhouse was something that was like a sauna like experience and it was good for the skin and all of this. And today this concern for one's body has turned into a multi-billion dollar industry with vitamins and food supplements, diet plans, health clubs, obsession with exercise and medicines. And all you need to do is visit social media to see how concerned we are with our body and others sharing how you could be concerned with your body as well. And to be clear it is good to be disciplined and moderate and eating and exercise and concern for one's body, but I want us to remind ourselves that in 1 Corinthians 9 Paul emphasizes it as of greater worth and benefit to be spiritually disciplined than physical exercise. And Paul however while acknowledging the benefit of bodily discipline it's good for us to place greater emphasis on spiritual discipline. And the point of this is that all this obsession and worry about one's physical well-being is foolish and useless. Look with me in verse 25. And which of you by being anxious could add a single hour to the span of your life?

All this being consumed and anxious and you think it's going to add to your life, can you even add one minute to your life by being anxious? And the question is rhetorical. Which of you by worrying could add a single hour to his life? No amount of anxiety could add to one's life span or the life span that God has determined. I appreciate Moses in Psalm 90 verse 10 where he's communicating quite the opposite. He says, so teach me Lord to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom. The Lord has appointed, I will not live one more minute beyond the appointed hour that the Lord has determined for myself.

I won't. And worry will still not add, certainly not add any more length of time to your life than what the Lord has already appointed. So that's why I said to comprehend God's privilege.

[21 : 29] It's God's privilege to have purposed for me and you, all of scripture, we see that God has appointed a time for me to die and that's good. Nobody wants God to live any longer than that. It is good and it's his privilege to determine the length of my life.

So worry will not add one hour to my life. Acknowledging one's days are sovereignly termed by God by the counsel of his will. We read in Ephesians 1:11, helps one live circumspectly and gain a heart of wisdom. That is the point. In verse 26, we read, if then we are not able to do such a small thing as that. Notice what he is communicating. Jesus is communicating. If then you are not able to do a small thing as that, meaning if you cannot add a single hour to your time here on earth by worrying, why are you anxious about the rest? Well, what's the rest he's already said about your life, about your food, about your clothing? Why do you think if you can't add anything to your life, do you think by worrying you're going to add to any of the other stuff? How foolish is that? Worry fails. Fourthly, worry fails to grasp God's love. Worry fails to grasp God's love. And I am accompanying this, the human distinction of being made in his image. But let me read verses 27 and 29 and see how Jesus makes this point. And I am considering the lilies, how they grow. They neither toil nor spin. Yet I tell you, even Solomon and all of his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so closed the grass, which is alive in the field today and tomorrow is thrown into the ovens, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith? And then verse 29, and do not seek what you are to eat or what you are to drink nor be worried. Jesus now departs from his worry about food and he turns his attention to clothing. And he begins with that word, consider again. Before when we were talking about food, he said, consider the ravens. Think about what God has done for the ravens. And now he says, now look at the lilies of the field. Now we're to consider, think deeply about the lilies of the field.

That's the object of our consideration. Pay close attention. The flowers, they don't toil nor spin to make their clothing. They don't, he says, they neither toil nor spin. They don't have any effort to make their own clothing or to become beautiful.

That's not what the lilies of the field do. The most, ten most beautiful people in the universe or Solomon, who had no financial concern to be arrayed with much beauty, even Solomon in all of his glory was not arrayed like one of these. You see those lilies out there?

Sorry, the snow covered. You're going to have to use your imagination with me. Not even Solomon, who had no lack of resources and all the glory that he was arrayed with, was even comes close to the beauty of the lily. Flowers serve for us abundant purposes.

[25 : 36] Chief among them is to inform humanity that God is a God of beauty, that he values beautiful things that are good and orderly and designed with variety. And lilies, through no effort of their own, are so adorned and are clothed with beauty.

And so, he now turns and uses that concept in verse 28, but if God so closed the grass, like the lilies of the field, which are alive today and tomorrow are thrown into the oven, the idea is some in a poverty stricken land that didn't have abundance of trees, you would burn your grass to put in the oven to cook food. And so, it's alive one day, it's chopped down, thrown into the oven to be burned to cook food.

How much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith? He closed the grass, he causes it to bloom. He does all of this and it's here one day and gone tomorrow and he adorned it with such magnificent beauty. Will he not clothe his children? And the implication is, don't be so consumed with fear or doubt or worry because at the end of it and the result of it, if you do so, you're giving an example of your lack of faith and says, oh, you, how much more will he clothe you?

And if you do not believe this after you consider the lilies, then you don't have the faith to believe that. And ultimately, what is the lack of faith? It is ultimately comes from and stems from a lack of trust in God, that he is capable of doing that for me, for you.

What is so terrible about worry, the sin of worry, it is actually like communicating the most unthinkable thing you could to an Almighty God who has done all these things for us.

[28 : 00] And if you do not have the trust, it would be like saying to the Lord, I'm going to worry because I don't trust you.

The root of worry is a distrust of God. A distrust of God simply masquerades as worry. Said differently, worry is the absence of trust.

Matthew 8, we read about Jesus. I pray that we would have an awe and a wonder of who God is. You remember the disciples, they're out on a boat.

It's the storm has come in and this is what we read. Then he got into the boat and the disciples followed him. Suddenly a furious storm came on the lake. So the waves swept over into the boat and Jesus was sleeping. The disciples went and woke him saying, Lord, save us. We are going to drown.

And he simply said, oh, you of little faith. Does that sound familiar? Little faith. Why are you so afraid? Then he got up, rebuked the winds and the waves and it was completely calm. And this is what this last verse, this next verse is what I want us to internalize.

[29 : 27] And the men were amazed and they asked, what kind of man is this? Or even the winds and the waves obey him.

I want us to internalize that phrase. What kind of man is this? What kind of God? That before he even created anything, he chose us before the foundation of the world. I'm just going to personalize it to me. You can personalize it to you if you are in Christ.

What kind of God would choose Scott before the foundation of the world? Then he creates knowing humanity would fall, knowing he would have to provide his son to offer a sacrifice for sin that I might place my faith in and trust in him and be with him for all eternity.

What kind of God would do that? Oh, that we would be like the disciples and say, oh, what kind of man is this on the heels of being accused of having little faith. Oh Lord, we trust you.

And the worry fails to grasp God's love and the human distinction of how he has created us.

[30 : 48] There's a fifth way that worry fails. Worry fails to value the Father's care. Look with me in verses 30 and 31.

For all the nations of the world seek after these things and your Father knows that you need them. Let me just stop there.

What does the world do? The world directly seeks after these things. What are these things in the context? Their life, their food, their clothing.

The world seeks after directly the possessions of this world and the provision of this world. That's what the world does.

That's what we read in verse 30. The nations seek after these things and here's the thing. And your Father knows that you need them. What's very interesting in this passage is this. Often Jesus will refer to the Father as the Father or my Father.

[31 : 55] My Father in heaven. Jesus will say that. But now it's not just Jesus saying my Father. He's saying your Father. Your Father.

My Father. Your Father knows that you need them. Can you imagine a son or a daughter coming home who has tried out for a theatrical play and didn't get the position he or she wanted?

They tried out for an athletic team and didn't make the cut. And they tried out for these things or whatever and they didn't get it. They tried and tried and tried but they didn't get the result that they wanted and now they come home, despaired and full of hardship. I can guarantee this.

That if I heard, hey, let's assume this teenage person were to communicate to me, hey, I tried out for this and I didn't get it. Man, I'm so sorry. I would ask, I would inquire, ask probably five questions, tell me about, and I would hear.

But my sympathy for that news would pale in comparison if that was my child, my son, my daughter who said that to me.

- [33 : 19] Somebody else's child, I might feel one way about it, but I would feel that so much more deeply. And here's what your Father knows. You need those things. You need food. You need clothing. And your very life to exist.

And the world seeks after those things directly, but notice what we're supposed to do. The people of God, disciples of Jesus are supposed to do. Instead, seek His kingdom and all these things will be added to you.

The world seeks after possessions directly in the things of this world. They concern them. Believers in Jesus, disciples of Christ, what do we do? We receive those things indirectly because we seek His kingdom directly. And then all these things may be added to us.

There's a distinction. And so when I worry, and I look, this is why I said earlier, what's so terrible about worry is when I worry, I look a whole lot like the world, then I do like a disciple of Christ.

The implication is that the unregenerate, those who do not know the Lord, those who place their hope in this world, they pursue the things of this world directly. That's all they know.

- [34 : 38] And yet we are to be a people who receive them indirectly by seeking His kingdom.

Paul writes this in Colossians, therefore, if you've been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things that are above where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God, set your mind on things above and not on the things of this world.

The world looks at itself to provide. Believers look away from ourselves to the Lord to provide. And just listen to Psalm 34 as I read different passages of Psalm 34.

Read what the Psalmist says and think about this concept of seeking His kingdom and all these things would be added to you rather than seeking those things directly. Listen to the Psalmist.

Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good. How blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him. Fear the Lord, you who sayings those who fear the Lord and for those who fear Him, there is no want.

- [35 : 48] The young lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they who seek the Lord shall not be in want of any good thing. The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous. His ears are open to their cry.

Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers them out of them all. Let us be a people who seek His kingdom.

Lastly and sixly, worry fails to perceive God's pleasure.

Fear not, little flock. That little flock is an affectionate term, a metaphorical affectionate term for His people, His disciples. Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

We are to seek His kingdom and those things that we're concerned about will be added to us indirectly. And it says, it's your Father's pleasure to give you that.

- [36 : 57] It's His pleasure. He wants to give good gifts. It's in its intention not to withhold. It's His good pleasure to give you that kingdom.

So sell your possessions and give to the needy, verse 33. Provide yourselves money bags that do not grow old with a treasure that is in heaven that does not fail, where thieves approach, no thief approaches and no moth destroys, because where your treasure is there, your heart will be.

So be happy, if you will, to sell all. Be happy to abandon oneself to the Lord. One's treasure is an indicator of where one's heart is.

So when we fail, when we worry, we fail to perceive God's pleasure. And these are the six truths why worry just fails.

In terms of application, I want to share this. Some things as I was thinking about this week, it would be this.

[38 : 19] Possess grace enabled, spirit-empowered effort to overcome sin. In this case, to overcome worry.

All of those words are important. This grace enabled, we only have access to God through His grace. We only are empowered by the spirit, but there also is effort and diligence.

This spirit-empowered effort to overcome worry. Let me just be real personal with you. There is an area of my life that when I put my head on my pillow at night, a common topic comes back to my mind often.

And I am in the process of saying, Lord, even in this one area, I trust you. And I have to remind myself, take that thought captive, submit it to Christ, and say, Lord, forgive me.

I've been preoccupied with this thing too often, all too often. And every time I do, it's a dramatic statement of my lack of trust in you.

[39 : 29] Forgive me. I trust you. I believe you. And let us be a people that take worry seriously.

And when something comes to your mind that reoccurs, I pray in a year from today that if you were to ask me, hey, Scott, how are you doing on worry?

Because in this season of life, I'm being pretty diligent to trust the Lord about this thing. But I want it to be true of my life about worry in general.

Confess and repent of the pride of worry. You can look at these verses later, but worry is prideful in that.

It has at its root this thought that I'm going to be able to provide something for my life. The Lord can't be trusted, so I'm going to take matters into my own hand. It's prideful.

[40 : 31] Confess and repent of the pride of worry. Confess and repent of the unbelief of worry. Oh, you of little faith, and again, at the root of faith is this distrust of the Lord.

Take it seriously. Say, Lord, I confess. I repent of this sin. Confess your trust in the Lord. Confess and trust in the Lord.

Psalms 56-3 reads this, When I was afraid, notice the Psalmist. He was afraid. He acknowledges his fear. So what does he do with that fear? He says this, When I was afraid, I put my trust in you.

When I was afraid, I put my trust in you. And so as I put my head on my pillow and those thoughts come back, I say, Lord, I'm afraid. I trust you.

Next, confess and internalize God's care for you. First Peter 5-7, cast all of your anxieties upon him because he cares for you.

[41 : 37] How much more value are you than ravens? How much more value are you the lilies of the field? Confess, say, Lord, I trust that you care about me so much more than these things.

You care for me. And I pray that we would be a church where it would be defined by its incredible, immeasurable trust in an almighty God.

Fourth Memorial Church, you should talk to them. They don't worry about anything. It's crazy. They have this incredible trust in God. You should get to know them.

Oh, that that would be our reputation. Would you pray with me? Father, thank you so much for your word.

Lord, I pray that first of all, thank you, Lord, that we could approach you through your son, Jesus Christ.

[42 : 44] Thank you for having immeasurable pleasure in providing for your people. Thank you for your immeasurable concern for people.

Thank you for the truths that you say, Jesus, are you not more value than these? So I pray that we would be a people who would internalize these truths that worry would be far from us.

Thank you for the opportunity to look at your word and have it speak to us. I pray this week, this day, we would take to heart what you have said.

Thank you so much for your people. Thank you for your son, Jesus Christ, and for your church. May we be faithful witnesses of you this week. It's in your name, pray. Amen.