

Jesus Says Do Not Worry

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[0 : 00] Let's pray. Lord God, as we approach your word this morning, we pray that you will give us real humility. Humility to hear what you have to say.

Let it have authority over our lives and to obey it. For we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Now I am going to do something very, very terrible to many of you.

I'm going to mention one of those songs that when you start to think about it, you can't get it out of your head for the rest of the day. Now those of you who know the song will have a chance to beat me up as you walk out.

Those of you who don't, I advise you not to look it up. It's the song by Bobby McFerrin, who was, and it was popular a few years ago, and it was, Don't Worry, Be Happy.

Well, actually I'm going to be kind to you as well because I'm not going to sing it to you. But its philosophy, well, that was it. That was basically, there wasn't anything else.

[1 : 16] It was, if you have problems, don't worry, be happy. The landlord says that the rent is late. He may even have to litigate.

Don't worry, be happy. So any of your problems, avoid them. And think positive thoughts. Be happy. Everything will be okay.

This isn't the approach of Jesus. Jesus talks about, he says, don't worry. But he gives us something much more profound to think about than just be happy.

So let's turn to Matthew chapter 6. You have your Bibles. If the prayer book is the green guide, I guess this one must be the black guide.

But turn to your Bibles. It's page, it starts on page 787 of the Pew Bibles. Matthew chapter 6, verse 25. Therefore, I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear.

[2 : 31] Is life not more than food and the body more than clothing? Now, when I was a young Christian, I was involved in some Bible studies and the leader of those Bible studies gave me a little hint.

He said, whenever you read a passage and it says, therefore, always ask, what is the therefore, therefore? This passage starts with therefore.

And it gives us a clue of what the whole passage is about. What is about to be said is a consequence of what has been said before.

And Jesus has just been talking about making sure or making that choice between who is going to rule your life, who is going to be your God, what is going to be your God.

Is it going to be money and the pursuit of money? Or is it going to be the living God? And he makes it very clear, you can't serve both of them.

[3 : 37] You can't have both of them as your God. You will either hate one and love the other or vice versa. And because of that, because you, if you have made the choice of having the living God as your, the ruler of your life, therefore, because of that, don't worry about things, about the stuff that you need.

You can, you have reason not to worry if you have chosen the living God. And I think that the little rhetorical question at the end of the verse makes it very plain.

It says, is life not more than food and the body more than clothing? Jesus isn't just saying that your life is better than food or that your body's worth more than clothes.

the context makes it clear that it's saying, well, first of all, who gave you life? Who built your body?

And if our answer is God, then the next part of it kicks in. Which of them is more wonderful? The life that you have been given or food?

[5 : 19] The body or the clothes you put on it? The logic of it, you see, is if we believe that God creates life, he can sustain it.

And if we believe that God made our bodies, he can clothe them. So you see, the issue here is an issue of trust, of faith.

Do we believe in the sustaining God as well as the creating God? Worry about these things is, in effect, an expression of lack of faith that the creator God is also a sustaining God.

in the prayer that Jesus has just finished teaching his disciples earlier in chapter 6, there is a line that says, give us this day our daily bread.

Now to worry whether, having prayed that, to turn around and worry whether God can do that or not, is actually a direct expression of mistrust in him. but, the problem for us reading this in our comfortable 21st century middle class Australia is that we're a bit removed from this question.

[6 : 54] It usually isn't a pressing daily question, will I have enough to survive for most of us? We have savings, superannuation and jobs and if they fail we have the welfare state and if that fails us then we have a number of charities to fall back on.

We have a buffer zone between us and this question, will I have enough to survive? Now I'm not saying that there are no people in Australia that face the imminent danger of starvation or nakedness but we're pretty well insulated from that.

But there are a couple of observations that can be mentioned and made here. First of all, the fact that we aren't on a need to survive basis doesn't stop us from worrying about these things.

we worry about them at a different level. That's all. We just have a different standard of what we need to get by.

So we think of basic necessities as being cars and education and gadgets and all those sorts of things, even computer systems.

[8 : 30] And secondly, I think that this speaks to us because many of us are what I would call practical atheists. We confess God as creator quite okay, but we don't really see him at work in the world.

world. We pretend maybe that there is such a thing as a Christian self-made man or woman. We say, well, God has put me here and we may even say God has saved me.

But what I have achieved is mine. I have done, well, look what I have made of my life. We act as though it has come from us.

And really, this is a problem of a world view, of an understanding of how the world works. It's as if we have thought of God in the sense of the old-fashioned heresy of deism, the thought that God created the world and then just stepped back and watched all the systems he put into place work themselves out like somebody winding a watch up and letting it run down.

You see, in many ways we become people who refuse to believe that God is a sustaining God as well as a creating God.

[10 : 09] Now, Jesus gives us a couple of illustrations to help us understand this. Verses 26 and 27, look at the birds of the air.

They neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you, by worrying, add a single hour to your span of life?

the birds live and eat what they find in the day, and they don't worry whether there will be enough for tomorrow.

That's what it seems like. And Jesus says, they neither sow nor store in barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Now, Jesus isn't trying to say that we shouldn't do any agriculture here.

He's not trying to say that at all. And in fact, the modern equivalent might be they neither shop nor stock their pantry nor have a credit card, yet your heavenly Father feeds them.

[11 : 22] Birds do work hard though. You watch birds trying to get enough food. They scratch around and do all their birdie things and they eventually, sometimes, pick a worm or a seed or whatever.

It isn't an easy life, but they don't have to worry. God makes sure that they have enough to eat. And so the question is that Jesus puts to us, are you not worth more than they are?

If God bothers to feed them, won't he look after you? You see, God supplies what we need just as much as he supplies the birds.

Just because we use jobs, money, supermarkets and all those sorts of things to put food on the table doesn't mean that those things don't genuinely come from God.

Now I remember as a child where every day, every meal time, we would pray and thank God for the food that was put in front of us.

[12:42] And I remember at one stage starting to ask that question. Well, hang on, God didn't put the food on the table, Mum cooked it. and if I trace it back further, I know that the things that Mum used were bought from a shop and if I think about it more, the money that bought that came from work.

So how can we talk about God doing it? This is exactly what Jesus is saying. Those things don't automatically happen.

God is at work and God supplies the work, he supplies the wherewithal for us to eat. Yes, we have to do things in order to make it food on the table, but God supplies what we need.

God is the supplier as well as the creator. Now, verse 27 goes on to say something that should be obvious to us.

Worry that doesn't or even worry that can't lead to action is worthless. Worrying about things that we don't want to change or we don't choose to change or things that we cannot change is useless.

[14:18] how many of us can make our lives longer by worrying? Look, if we do some really concerted worrying here, close your eyes, worry hard for a minute and you'll add an hour to your life, you'd think I was a loony.

You might think that anyhow. But that's what it's saying here. You can't do that. And in fact the way that it's written it could mean that by worrying you can't add an inch to your height or the other way of interpreting it, add a little bit to the span of your life.

In either case they are beyond our control. so why worry about it? God is the one who is in control of those things.

Let's leave those things to God. Now there are some sorts of worry that can be good.

But I want to use differentiate that from what Jesus is talking about. I'll use the word concern.

[15:37] It's a less emotive word but it's really talking about the same kind of thing. We can have constructive concern for things.

Concern for the good of others. A passion for godliness in our own lives. Those sort of things, yes, let's be worried.

And if you read the letters of Paul, he talks about how his chief amongst all of the hardships that he goes through is the concern that he has for the churches, the constant concern of how the churches are going.

And we can be concerned for those around us. And those things lead us to act. And that's what we're supposed to do.

I think that's why God gave us worry glands, so that we do have concern, does lead us to godly action. Concern leads us to act, worry grows ulcers.

[16:53] But this isn't all that Jesus wants to talk about, about worry. He now turns to one of the other big physical needs that we have, that of clothes, in verses 28 to 30.

And why do you worry 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 clothed like one of these.

But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, you of little faith?

Again, you see, notice that it's all about faith. the wild flowers, so short lived and easily destroyed, yet they're made to look so beautiful, so well clothed, so to speak.

How much more us? us. Solomon's kingdom was the economic and cultural high point of the Jewish nation.

[18:18] His court was the most opulent and rich of all of the kings of Israel and Judah. So Solomon in all his splendour was the highest measure of luxurious dress and snappy dressing.

That is the ultimate. And so if the grass, which grows for a little while and then is burned and is gone, is made to be more beautiful than the best from the wardrobe of Solomon, how could God not care for us who are eternal beings?

As a bit of an aside, the figure of Solomon I think is all the way through this passage right since the first mention or the passage that we had last week even which talked about treasure etc.

because the life and the career of Solomon can be seen as a tension between the choice between worldly wealth and godly things.

And Solomon made some good choices in the beginning of his reign and then later on got swamped by the trappings of wealth and got lured away from godliness later.

[19 : 57] We'll talk more about Solomon in a little bit but let's get back to this idea that God is a provider. How can we keep it in front of us?

How can we keep reminding ourselves that God is not just a creator, he's a provider? How can we stop ourselves from forgetting? Well I think that a useful way is to thank God when we eat and I mentioned that earlier that get into the habit of thanking God, not just to be a habit but to be something that we really believe in and mean.

Reminding ourselves more than anything that it is God who has provided. We can even do that when we put on our clothes. Just pray, thank God for what he has provided.

Recognise him in even those everyday things. So verse 31 starts to sum it up.

Therefore do not worry saying what will we eat, what will we drink, what will we wear. For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things and indeed your heavenly father knows that you need all these things.

[21 : 24] Another therefore this time summing up the two illustrations and pointing us back to the first statement in verse 25.

Don't worry about all these things. You see worry is for the non-believers. In here it's the Gentiles but that's talking about those who don't know God.

Those who don't know the creating sustaining God, they need to worry. If you believe that the highest principle that guides our lives and our world is natural selection and the survival of the fittest, then you are right to be worried because you may not be the fittest.

If you believe that you have to please God to a sufficient extent to give you and your family what you need to live, then be very worried because whatever God you follow, they're very hard to please.

If you believe that your life is at the mercy of capricious spirits or the movement of the stars or whatever, then you have cause for all kinds of worry.

[22 : 49] But, if you know that you have a loving Heavenly Father, who knows that you need all of those things, and who loves and treasures you greatly, God's powerful enough, God knows enough, and God loves you enough.

And so you can turn your concerns to more important things. And that's what the next verse talks about. Matthew 6, 33, but strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

I think the way that I memorized it is the best translation. Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all of these things will be given to you.

So this is the alternative, seeking first God's kingdom and his righteousness. Now seeking God's kingdom is not like seeking for a lost geographical destination like the lost city of Atlantis or the lost kingdom of Shangri-La or one of those things.

It's seeking the reign of God in this world. kingdom of God, you see, is that which was inaugurated by Jesus in his death on the cross, by his rising to new life, making it possible for ordinary people, who are in fact extraordinary creations, to live as we were created to do, to be subjects of God who is the king.

[24 : 50] That is the kingdom of God. That kingdom has already started amongst those of us who have turned to Christ, who have accepted his way out of the mess we were in and acknowledged his kingship.

It's already started. It's something that's here, but not here fully. I've entered into it, but God's kingship doesn't hold sway throughout every area of my life, I have to confess.

God's kingdom is growing in the world, and yet there are many millions of people who have not acknowledged Jesus and God as their king.

and that's why, because of those two facts, that's why we have to keep seeking it. We need to look for ways to make it more part of each of our lives.

We need to seek opportunities to make more people more aware of the God who reaches out to them. And that's what this is saying.

[26 : 04] Seek that first. if we do that, seeking his kingdom, seeking a right relationship with God which is his righteousness, then that will take up all of our concerns and God will take care of all the other things that we need, little details of eating and clothing and all those sorts of things.

Now that was the choice of Solomon, of course. Solomon, at the start of his reign when he first became king, he had a dream, a vision where God came to him and said, ask for whatever you like. Now imagine the all powerful, all, you know, the God, the almighty sustainer of the universe came to him and said, whatever you want, it's yours, ask for it.

Imagine if you were given that choice. If you were given that chance to ask for whatever you want, what would you ask for? Well, Solomon said, I'm in a, I've been made the king of your people and I don't know how to do it.

give me the ability to reign well. He sought God's purposes first and God said, since you've done that, that delights me.

[27 : 50] I am so pleased that you put my concerns first, beyond your own. And so, I'll give you other things as well, but that was sort of a side issue.

That wasn't what, and so Solomon's first choice was the choice here, putting God's kingdom and God's righteousness first and God took care of other things for him.

God promises, though, to supply our needs, not our wants. Notice that.

God promises to supply everything we need, not our wants. Now, somebody asked me, how does this work with people who are on the bread line, who are living hand to mouth?

surely there are people who are godly and yet still go hungry, still go naked. And yes, there are.

[29 : 03] And it's the testimony of Scripture that Paul himself describes how time to time he was, he has known nakedness and he has known hunger and all those things, even in the pursuit of the gospel.

But I tell you, my observation is from people that I have known in that sort of position, God supplies in amazing ways.

Now, we probably won't be put to that sort of test. We probably won't be placed in a position where we're hand to mouth.

But a useful exercise for us would be, think of the things that are most concerning you in your life. You can do that now, you can make a list, you can go away and it's a useful thing just to try and unburden your mind.

What are the things? And there will be all kinds of different things, some trivial, some devastating. What are the things that are really concerning you? On a global level, on a personal level, on a secret level, what are the things that really concern you?

[30 : 31] And when you've made that list, whether mentally or physically or whatever, try and categorise those different concerns. Are they kingdom concerns?

Concerns for the good of others, for the advancement of God's kingdom, for the growth of your own personal godliness? Are they those sorts of worries, those sorts of concerns or are they worldly worries?

And Paul in writing to the Philippians has some really practical advice for us of knowing how to deal with those sorts of things.

This comes from Philippians chapter 4. Do not worry about anything, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. All of those things, when we made that list, when we put, unburdened our minds, so to speak, we can then bring them before the throne of the almighty, all powerful king of the universe.

[32 : 05] With thanksgiving. Don't forget that. Don't neglect that. Because there's so much that we have to be thankful for. And then the promise is that the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Jesus finishes this section with an admonition to not let our concerns get ahead of us. God holds the future.

Today, seek his kingdom. Seek his righteousness. righteousness. Today. Let tomorrow worry about itself.

Tomorrow we'll have problems, yeah, sure. But let's wait till we get there. Let's face what we are facing today. Let's seek his kingdom and his righteousness.

So you see, Jesus isn't saying, don't worry, be happy. Jesus is saying, don't worry, be godly. Be godly.