

Do Not Worry

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[0 : 0 0] oh let's pray the father we ask that by your powerful spirit that you would speak to each one of us through your powerful word and we ask this for christ's sake amen well a man went to see his doctor in quite an acute state of anxiety doctor he said you just have to help me i think i'm dying i mean everywhere i touch it hurts i mean i touch my head and it hurts i've touched my leg and it hurts down there when i touch my stomach it hurts when i touch my chest even that hurts doc i mean i'm just hurting well the doctor gave him a complete examination top to toe mr smith it's an original name um i've got good news and i've got bad news for you the good news is you're actually not dying the bad news is that you've actually got a broken finger now friends it's not just uh it's not just health concerns it's kind of subtle it's not just health concerns that generate anxiety stress and worry in our daily lives living in the 21st century in fact could be described as the age of anxiety 5 000 uni students were surveyed in an online poll about four years ago they were simply asked do you believe that there'll be nuclear war in your lifetime and 40 percent of them responded yes and when you think about that given the current tensions in the world this poll was taken certainly before the iran and west confrontations and well before the recent testing by the north koreans issue would be if that poll was taken this week this weekend what would actually be the response do you expect nuclear war in your lifetime be way more than 40 percent the circular the secular media is in fact talking about our time the time in which we live as the age of anxiety and they then sort of attempt to analyze well what's the impact on us of seeing this age as an age of anxiety two weekends ago a social commentator wrote this she said in the early part of this century that is the 21st century only one clear narrative has emerged terrorism she went on she said so how do we explain the binge drinking and drug taking her answer to that is simply blame nihilism that is that end of days feeling when every night on the news you're confronted with suicide bombers asio raids terror training camps and the war in iraq she says this and in such an age of anxiety people are looking for physical kicks and highs but they actually don't want any emotional impact so she went on and she wrote the yearning that we have this deep need to connect it's still there in fact in fact in some ways it's stronger than ever but to express the need to be loved in fact is to risk rejection it's to make yourself vulnerable and in an age of anxiety we've already reached the vulnerability threshold that's a social commentator and jesus commands his followers and he says do not worry i mean is that is that realistic is it realistic in a world where anxiety producing news simply bombards

our eyes and our ears constantly don't worry is it in a realistic to say that in a world of such insecurity do not worry i mean on the surface this is a big ask i mean when i just sort of flicked through my internet news service a few days back these were the sort of headlines just bang bang bang down the screen u.s threatens north korea over nuclear test the worst drought in living memory court allows u.s eavesdropping program bagged bombings at a new high up to 90 000 displaced persons in southern afghanistan no deal in the iran nuclear talks but friends it's not only these sort of international issues that can cause us worry that can cause us anxiety i mean there's just actually lots of everyday things what i'm just simply going to call tonight stuff everyday things that can be anxiety producing what do i mean by stuff well things like relationship issues both within married couples and those who are single health problems the sort of anxiety that seems to be immediately generated when the doctor says hmm well i'm concerned i think you better go off and get an mri scan impending exams concern over whether you'll get a uni placement at your preferred university work pressures employment vulnerability a recent survey a random sample of employees revealed that 20 percent were worried about losing their job 20 percent other anxiety producing events we're just thinking early sort of the acronym is ape ape anxiety producing events is simply how do you pay off your mortgage or for many and probably for many in this congregation how on earth do you accumulate enough money for a deposit even to get an apartment or a unit for some

people it's just simply trying to find enough money to pay for their weekly groceries and for many and probably in the eastern suburbs this is more the case than the groceries in our fashion conscious world anxiety seems to cling to us like a speedo swimsuit if our clothes are not in line with the fashion of our peer group and that's certainly not restricted to the teenage years so Jesus says to his disciples and the Holy Spirit says to each one of us here tonight who is a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ verse 22 page 847 if you'd like to look at that with me therefore I tell you do not worry about your life what you will eat or about your body what you'll wear I mean Jesus here is he's continuing on after telling the parable of the rich fool the rich fool is what I sort of regard as a barn builder I mean his philosophy was actually very western for an easterner the one with the most toys at the end of his life is the winner and in verse 20 God said to him you fool this very night your life is being demanded of you and the things you've prepared whose will they be so it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God and having said that Jesus now turns to his disciples and he says this if you like my paraphrase don't be worry warts don't spend your life worrying about stuff Jesus is referring there to a constant attitude of anxiety so the follower of the Lord Jesus is to be characterized

by a lack of anxiety about our basic daily needs and in this passage Jesus simply spells out four reasons for why he gives that command don't worry why in fact we ought to implement that in our lives so the first reason if you look with me is verse 23 Jesus says for life is more than food and the body more than clothing it's important to keep a balance here Jesus is not saying don't enjoy God's creation but he is saying don't be consumed by stuff that is there's much much more to life than simply food and clothing in fact if it's food and clothing and that sort of stuff which is just our preoccupation our focus then we'll in fact lose focus on the most important thing in our life and that's our relationship with God and if you think about the seven o'clock congregation worrying about stuff is represented through all of the age groups applies to teenagers but not just teenagers certainly young adults middle ages and those who might be just heading north of middle age right across the age spectrums and God's word to us is this simple it's just don't be worry warts don't spend your life worrying about stuff well why I mean why would he say that and he goes on simply because life is more than food and the body more than clothing and in fact he just uses a series of illustrations and they're taken from the sphere of nature to amplify that command don't worry and the first illustration he gives at the beginning of 24 consider the ravens they neither sow nor reap they have neither storehouse nor barn and yet God feeds them ravens just simply crows were considered in Palestine to be unclean creatures you can read about that in Leviticus 11 these were the least respected of all birds so what's the point that's being made here God's care is actually comprehensive I mean God even cares for ravens so if you think about how Jesus is sort of interacting with the disciples he starts off and he gives them this imperative he gives them a command he says to them do not worry and then he follows up with a reason because life's more than stuff and then he gives them an illustration I mean God cares even for crows and then having done that he just sort of wraps it up at the end of verse 24 and he gives the principle of how much more value are you than the birds you see it's this simple the followers of Jesus are far more important to God than birds so Jesus says to the disciples don't worry and he goes on to say I'm going to have to give you a whole variety of reasons for this and he gives a second reason in verse 25 I mean can any of you by worrying at a single hour to your span of life rhetorical question that he poses to the disciples that is worrying is absolutely useless I mean nothing is gained by it in fact worry is more likely to cause major health problems the United States Public Health Service issued a in fact it was called a don't worry appeal and in a statement presenting statistics on nervous diseases and showing the tendency of the worry habit to in fact

shorten life this is what the public health service said they said so far as it's known no bird ever tried to build more nests than its neighbor no fox ever fretted because he only had one hole to hide in no squirrel ever died of anxiety lest he should not lay by enough nuts for two winters instead of one and no dog ever lost any sleep over the fact that he didn't have enough bones laid aside for his declining years I wouldn't have thought the United States Public Health Service was quite creative as that but that was their brochure so how are we going then with Jesus reasons not to worry because the first one is he simply says don't be consumed by all this stuff life is much more than just these things and secondly he says I mean you're not going to gain anything by worrying and then the third reason he gives us for not being worry warts is in fact in 26 if then you're not able to do so small a thing as that referring to adding to your life why do you worry about the rest that is what he's saying is it's just simply dumb to worry and then Jesus again goes on and gives another two illustrations to

back up that point verse 27 consider all lilies how they grow they know the toil nor spin yet i tell you even solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these you see it's just saying god cares for the flowers well if he cares for flowers you can be absolutely certain that he cares for you and then he goes and gives another illustration and it's a sort of a how much more illustration just like he used the illustration of the raven but if god so closed the grass of the field which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven so he sets up the illustration and he's saying listen i mean the grass is here today it's gone tomorrow it's pretty insignificant don't you reckon and yet god actually still attends to that part of his creation and so again after he's given these illustrations at the end of 24 he draws out another principle how much more will god clothe you and then a rebuke you of little faith so let me ask you this i mean do you think that in our fallenness that being anxious is actually just pretty normal if you like the normal part of our fallen humanness just the regular part of how we are i think the answer to that is absolutely getting anxious about things worrying about things just seems to be part of our fallen condition but the teaching of scripture is that living in a state of anxiety is actually not to be the lifestyle of a disciple of the lord jesus this is clearly not an easy message for us to well intellectually to comprehend it's easy enough but to actually apply in our life because look at how jesus needs to just keep emphasizing and re-emphasizing the point look at verse 29 again it comes back again on this not worrying but starts with and do not keep striving for what you're to eat and what you're to drink and do not keep worrying readers of a magazine were asked to respond to the question what's your strategy for coping with stress and the answers range from creative things like eat a chocolate chip cookie to have a stiff drink but one reader it's unlikely that you'd know him he's from minnesota Don Betts but you could look him up in the internet telephone directory he offered his own unique solution he said listen on the first of the year on january 1 i give my wife a dollar and she worries about everything for both of us but he went on he said but listen that's not that's not the whole plan if someone else wants to be worry free they can also send her a dollar i mean this is this is a strategy isn't it i mean combine our propensity for worry with just good old fashioned western brackets US capitalism well Jesus emphasises his command to the disciples do not keep striving for what you to eat and what you to drink and don't keep worrying well he's given three reasons he's made the command twice and he goes on and gives a fourth reason to stop worrying in verse 30 for it's the nations of the world that strive after all these things and your father actually knows that you need them you see the security that we can easily look for in possessions or what we're just simply describing tonight as stuff that security that we look for it is in fact only found in the living God so what's

[17:30] Jesus answer then to dealing with anxiety to dealing with worry or the most basic level it's simply to trust our heavenly father trusting God wasn't mentioned on the internet site entitled managing your anxiety here's their advice pick a place and a time to go and do your worrying make it the same place and the same time every day spend 30 minutes thinking about what's bothering you and what you can do about it try not to think about what might happen focus more on what's really happening then let go of the worry and just get on with your day well when I was sort of reflecting that I thought I guess what the psychologist is simply saying is you need a worry corner and for those with kids you'll know that that seems to relate pretty well at least pictorially to a naughty corner on the super nanny the psychologist's approach to anxiety is go and find yourself a worry corner and worry corners friends will do nothing to solve the problem trusting the living God on a moment by moment basis is actually what's required and I want to say to you that I appreciate that dealing with anxiety and worry isn't just as simple as me standing up saying well the answer is just simply trust God although that is certainly true we need to trust God and dealing with anxiety and worry in our lives isn't sort of just repeating trust God trust God trust God a bit like a mantra in my own life as I reflected on this in our family's life there have been and there still are some issues that are pretty easy to cause us worry they can be anxiety producing events they can be apes and what

I've found is that what I need to do is regularly remind myself from scripture about the character of God and this is not meant to be an all inclusive list but things like God's extraordinary power his faithfulness God's trustworthiness his amazing love for his children his sovereignty his sovereignty is such that he's working all things through for the good of those who love him they're the sorts of things that I find myself regularly reminding myself of from scripture what I also do and I think nearly at a stage at the subconscious is to remind myself of what God has done back through history and ages past as recorded in scripture but it's not just that in the subjective realm in the sort of

experiential realm I remind myself of how God's worked in my life how he sustained me upheld directed provided for me and for our family so

God's character what he's done in ages past and then very personally what he's done in our own lives so Jesus speaks to the disciples and the Holy Spirit through God's word speaks to each of us tonight and it's simply this don't strive after the things in the world because actually that's what people who are outside the kingdom of God do that's not the way we operate that's not our lifestyle as a disciple of the Lord Jesus rather strive for his kingdom and these things will be given to you as well do not be afraid little flock for it is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom think about that Jesus calls us to if you like replace things seeking with kingdom seeking and when you do that he's saying do it without anxiety that you're actually not pursuing stuff do you see the point replace things seeking with kingdom seeking but then don't be all anxious about the fact that you're actually not pursuing things the follower of the

Lord Jesus in fact is to focus on spiritual payoff not on money payoff and that is just demonstrably counter cultural in our western world Jesus says don't be afraid of not seeking stuff and he refers to his followers if you like the Holy Spirit refers to us as little flock I think that's pretty appropriate isn't it given that sheep are just like that so easily frightened don't be afraid of not seeking stuff but just simply be generous sell your possessions and give arms and that's actually the fourth command the fourth imperative that Jesus has given in this short little section so let's just remember what they were two of the commands are the same one don't worry verse 22 and verse 29 and then strive for God's kingdom verse 31 and verse 33 be generous don't worry strive for God's kingdom and be generous and being generous with our stuff with our things in life is going to mean that we're providing verse 33 purses for yourselves that don't wear out an unfailing treasure in heaven where no thief comes near and no moth destroys when you think about the treasure the treasure is the consummation of the kingdom of God well the kingdom of God was brought in by the Lord Jesus excuse me we enter it by faith in the Lord Jesus so brought in by him we enter it by faith in Christ but the kingdom of God has not come yet in its fullness it will come in its fullness it will be consummated when Christ returns so I want us just to then think back through those last few verses because back in 31 we're actually instructed to strive for the kingdom and in verse 33 the idea seems to be one of good works doesn't it in our generosity so baby raised the question in mind does that mean we can actually buy our way into the kingdom can we buy our way into the kingdom verse 32 is just so plain it is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom see the kingdom of God it's a gift it's not a purchase it's given it's not earned it's a gift if you like to those who want it more than they want stuff it's a gift for those who seek it more than they go out and seek things it's a gift for those who fear missing it more than they fear not having earthly security which is actually no security at all and I've quoted him

[24 : 59] I know a number of times in the past but John Piper the American pastor simply says this the kingdom of God is a gift to those who trust the king more than the dollar the kingdom of God is a gift to those who trust the king more than the dollar so friends the way that we actually handle possessions in our daily lives reveals very clearly unambiguously it shows us where our hearts are and I want you just to think that through with me because when we repent of our sins when we trust in the Lord Jesus Christ the son of God as our saviour and Lord we are secure in God what are the consequences of that I mean if we have security as followers of Jesus in the living God then doesn't that just simply free us to be generous to be generous with our possessions and to be generous with others we're secure in God through our faith in the Lord

Jesus Christ so how we actually use the resources that we have just it's like a loud speaker it's like an audio visual it just communicates our values where our heart is determines whether we're actually saved or not and whether you're saved or not actually determines whether you'll inherit the kingdom so the progression of Jesus teaching to his disciples it's the Holy Spirit's teaching to us tonight through his word where your treasure is there your heart will be also most basic level we're actually loyal to what we most value so if we're loyal to ourselves what do we do well we just go keep pursuing stuff and the stuff that we pursue has no lasting value it's got absolutely no eternal worth and more than that when you go and sort of pursue that stuff in this life what happens anxiety producing events why do I say that here's some simple illustrations you're sitting there and you're saying to yourself boy

I mean how can I just get some more money money and the sort of relentless pursuit of money whether it's I've got to change this job take a double job a triple job whatever it is that relentless

pursuit is anxiety producing in our lives or it might be just simply gee I really wish I could have a whole new wardrobe because the reality is all of my friends have got gear which is much more upmarket than me it'll be anxiety producing in your life or the one that would certainly have great application through Doncaster and Templestowe we really need to trade up homes especially if we're going to entertain people from the office I can relate to this I can wind the clock back I know exactly that thought and then you say but how can I afford a bigger mortgage I mean I actually feel sick in the stomach about how we're going to actually meet a bigger mortgage but anyway we'll find a way to do it because we have to do it we need to trade up and physically your stomach is going to be turning in two and twisting and you'll be consumed by anxiety and worry so God's word to me tonight God's word to each one who's here who's a follower of the Lord Jesus is simply this worry isn't to be the characteristic of our daily lives anxiety is fruitless it's pointless and what it actually does is it reveals an absence of faith rather we're actually to seek God's kingdom and his will we're not to be so attached to things on the earth that we actually cease caring for God and for those whom he's created worrying is just simply it's sort of the ultimate case of self focus real lasting treasure real lasting treasure is found only in God and our service to others well what's the summary of that what's the key to dealing with worry as we looked at what was it Mr.

[30 : 04] worry how do we deal with anxiety and worry which is just such an aspect of our fallenness we do it by trusting the Lord we do it by living our lives literally on a moment by moment basis focused on him and not on ourselves the reality is each of us and I suspect this will be the case for everyone who's here tonight we have a deep longing for security indeed as we've already heard social commentators describe this time the time in which we live as the age of anxiety people looking in all sorts of different places for security and yet true security is only found in God the Father's tender loving care so I want to ask you tonight have you actually done that that is have you placed yourself in the

Father's tender loving care because if you haven't done that let me just what should I say plead with you I think is the right expression not to pass up the opportunity tonight living with worry anxiety knowing that you're not in relationship with the living God let me encourage you at the end of the service just to speak to one of the staff about that but again in the group the majority have actually placed their faith in Christ as their saviour and Lord and by doing that you are actually in the loving care of God the Father that's the reality well the challenge is for each of us then to live out that reality in our daily lives you see when anxiety and worry inevitably arise and springs up in us what should we do exercise our wills our wills that are actually being as

Christians transformed by the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives I think it was me in the morning or night spoke about the Puritans preaching to themselves so my suggestion one that I seek to apply in my own life is this preach to yourself preach to yourself about God's character preach to yourself about what God has done back through time as recorded in scripture does it make sense to be a worry wart with the God of the Exodus and preach to yourself about God's faithfulness in your own life his character what he's done in history and in your own experience God does care for needs he cares for the needs of the natural order the natural creation well he's got a particular love and concern for his children his children who've actually been redeemed out of a kingdom of darkness transferred into the kingdom of the son the

Lord Jesus Christ as the result of trusting in Christ and his death and resurrection the passage says a lot about God's care and God's care is actually a model for how we're to care for others friends as I finish God does understand what our needs are and he understands what his call on our life will actually require of us he sustains us and he provides for us by his grace and I think God's word tonight is simply this you can count on that because that's what God says to us from his word Amen

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