

Do Not Be Anxious

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[0 : 00] to read from Matthew chapter 6. Matthew chapter 6. We're going to read from verse 25 to verse 34.

Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? 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 which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? Why are you anxious 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 arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, what shall we eat or what shall we drink or what shall we wear. For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

Amen and may God and his blessing to that reading from his holy word. The Sermon on the Mount is the greatest sermon that was ever preached. And that being the case, then we find the greatest wisdom ever preached. It's a sermon that we can return to and must return to time and time again to drink in Christ's wisdom, to drink in that heavenly wisdom as to how we should live as his servants, as his witnesses, as his disciples. Already in our midweek meetings we've been looking at the Lord's Prayer, and of course the Lord's Prayer found in the Sermon on the Mount. And this evening we return to the Sermon on the Mount to find there Christ's wisdom concerning anxiety and that driving out of anxiety from our hearts.

You'll have noticed as we were reading these verses that in the space of these 10 verses, Jesus uses the word anxious six times. Jesus emphasising that aspect repeatedly to his disciples, repeatedly to us.

[3 : 05] Jesus, because as they were so we are so prone to anxiety. And while last Sunday morning, those of you who were in attendance, those of you who were here last Sunday morning when we looked at Paul's call to the church in Philippi to rejoice in the Lord and not to be anxious about anything. So this evening we're going to continue with that theme. We're going to consider Jesus teaching on that subject to reinforce that wisdom as to how we must live when all around and even within our hearts when all around there's that gnawing anxiety when we're tempted to allow our feelings to usurp our faith. When we might be tempted to feel as if we're not in control of events and forget the one who is in control. So we shouldn't be afraid to return again to this theme. In any form of teaching, the reinforcement of a particular theme is important. And certainly that was Jesus' method in his teaching. We've seen that in the verses we read in verse 19 to 24. Jesus mentions this aspect of being loose from anxiety and re-emphasizing that from verse 25, but doing it in a slightly different form. And so we will follow Jesus' method in our seeking to reinforce that teaching concerning the antidote to anxiety. And we do revisit this theme because the reality of fear and anxiety is real is real in the world around us. And so as Christians, we seek to be continually strengthened by God's word so that your faith is bolstered, your trust in God is strengthened, strengthened for today, strengthened for tomorrow, and to show the watching world around us that we are those of faith, faith in the one true God. For most, if not all of you this evening, the level of fear and uncertainty that's around, well, certainly for most of us, we haven't witnessed before. One of my colleagues in the northwest of Scotland, he commented just the other day that he'd been in communication with with someone, one of his congregation who commented that he hadn't

witnessed the levels of fear coming into people's homes and people's hearts since the time of World War II when he was a boy. And certainly in the lifetime of most of us here, there have been world crises when fear levels have risen. Some of the the older ones here will remember the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962. Most of us will remember 9-11. But the current pandemic that we're living through has really brought a new reality to the lives of us all. And to continue the historic analogy, we're living on a home front. We're really on a home front. We're all engaged in, but we engage in that home front, not with fear, but with faith. And so we turn to the Lord, we turn to our Savior for his assurance that brings comfort to the trusting soul and brings hope for the faithful believer. So we're going to look at this passage in two parts to see first of all the causes of anxiety, and then secondly, the antidote to anxiety. So we see first of all the causes of anxiety.

From the first part that we read in that passage from verse 19, Jesus has been preaching against the idol of treasures on earth. That amassing of our hopes and priorities on earthly treasure when these material things bring no lasting value, no lasting security, no true security to our souls, in contrast to the true treasure that's ours in heaven. That treasure of grace, that treasure of salvation, that treasure of being with our Savior eternally. And we saw from the first part of that passage we read from verse 19 to 24, we saw and we read there of Jesus highlighting the lure of earthly treasure. That snare that's so detrimental to true peace and lasting contentment in itself as a cause of anxiety. That storing up for ourselves, these things that we can so prize most dearly, things like our possessions, our wealth that we think are going to bring security. And we tend to rely on these things to to bring true happiness and contentment. But in actual fact, they're the root of all our worries.

When we rely on possessions for life satisfaction and joy, and we know that they bring no true contentment, no true peace. Because the only peace that we have is in the Lord Jesus. It's only in Him that we find true contentment. And so Jesus here is telling that, you know, our anxiety will increase when we try to be double-minded, when we try to serve God, and at the same time, as He says, try to serve money.

In other words, when we devote our lives, or we try and devote our lives on the one hand to serve us to God, and at the same time, have a devotion in our hearts to those material things that bring no value.

As Jesus said, no one can serve two masters. Either he'll hate the one and love the other, or he'll be devoted to the one and despise the other. So Jesus is showing us the impossibility of having a divided heart.

[9 : 36] That impossibility that will not bring true contentment. And indeed, that divided heart that leads to anxiety and worry, when we don't have that single-hearted focus on God and our service for Him alone.

And we all know about that worry, that anxiety, in the context of treasures on earth. And here in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is warning Christians, you know, about what we might call lifestyle worry.

Worrying about all the things that affect our way of life. Things like security and comfort and clothing and food. Of course, things that in themselves, we all have to a lesser or greater degree.

Things that in themselves are sinless gifts from God. Of course, things that Jesus Himself had. He ate, He drank, He wore clothes, He observed creation.

When these things that Jesus is mentioning here, these things, when they become our treasure.

When our hearts cling to them. When we become so obsessed with all these things that they become, our care and anxiety is so measured against these things.

[10 : 54] Then we're not seeking what we ought to seek first. The kingdom of God. We're not serving the Lord Jesus with all our heart. So Jesus says in verse 25, He says, Therefore, I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you'll eat or what you'll drink, nor about your body, what you will put on.

Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Well, this is how He begins. Therefore. Therefore in light, Jesus says, therefore in light of what I've been teaching you so far about your heart.

He's saying, therefore, make sure that your heart is directed heavenwards before it's concerned with earthly things. And Jesus says, therefore, don't worry.

Don't be anxious. We ask why. Why? Because you who are in Christ are God's treasure. And Jesus is telling His disciples, He's telling us, don't be anxious about your life.

And we just have to pause here for a moment and realize what Jesus is saying here. He's speaking of life. We have to remember who has given you your life.

[12:13] It's God. God has given you your life. He's given you that great gift of life. God is the great life giver and life sustainer.

He's given you life. And He provides for you in life. And so you see what Jesus is saying here. If God's given you that gift of life, He's not going to deny you all that you need for life's sustenance and life's survival, the survival of your life in the years that God has allotted you.

If God's given you, the very one to whom we pray to, the one we pray to as our Heavenly Father, then remember He is our Lord, our Savior, our Heavenly Father.

We've been praying in the Sermon on the Mount, praying the Lord's Prayer regarding our Heavenly Father. And just think of the prayer, that prayer in the Sermon, our Father who art in heaven.

We've been praying to the one who is our Father, our life giver. The one whom we call upon as holy. The one whom we've rejoiced in so that we pray that His kingdom, it will come.

[13:27] The one who provides for you in your daily bread. He gives you all that you need. The one in whom you have new life in Christ. The one who forgives you all your sins as He delivers you from evil.

And as you pray these words and use the mortal prayer that Jesus has given us in the Lord's Prayer. And so Jesus promises, He promises a full provision of all that you need in life.

So Jesus is saying, He's saying, you know, why be anxious for that life? If God is your Lord and watches over you in His fatherly love.

So Jesus is telling us here, He's saying, if God has given you life, He's your Father, your Heavenly Father. He's your Father of fatherly love.

He's your Father of God. Then don't be worried about how you're going to be sustained with all the necessities of life. With food, drink, clothing. Even at this time when our need of these things is the more highlighted.

[14:37] We cling to the one who's promised never to leave or forsake us. Never to give us over to want. And so we realize that life is more than food.

The body is more than clothing. There's more to life than food. More to life than the very clothes that we wear. And when we think of that in relation to God, your relationship to God and Christ Jesus, that what truly matters is your relationship with the one who's given you life.

So look beyond the food and the clothes. Look to the one who provides for these necessities. And trust in Him. Trust in Him.

What truly matters. Don't be anxious about tomorrow. Don't be anxious even about tomorrow's meal. The Lord's promised His provision for you.

Your Heavenly Father cares for you. And always remember that you are valuable in His sight. Don't worry about these things. He will provide.

[15:48] And that value that God places on you, on you, His child, that's emphasized in the illustrations that Jesus gives us in verses 26 to 24.

These observations from everyday life that Jesus brings in to teach us. The birds of the air. The plants of the field. God's creation, of course.

But they're not the apex. They're not the height of God's creation. Man, you are His apex. You are the highest point of His creation. And so you see how God provides for, for even these, as it were, these lesser forms of His creative power.

Listen to what Jesus says. Look at the birds of the air. They neither sow nor reap. They're gathering to barns. And yet your Heavenly Father feeds them.

Are you not of more value than they? Listen to these words that Jesus is saying here. Are you not of more value? Are you not more valuable than the very birds whom God provides for?

[16:56] Are you not much more valuable than they? Of course you are. God makes sure that even the very birds, the millions and millions of these birds, are fed through His creative providence, even though they do no work.

You, who are in Christ, are far more valuable than even the very birds that God feeds daily. And then ask yourself, why are you of more value than the rest of creation?

Well, the answer surely is because of His steadfast love, because of His compassion upon you.

Because of His very care for your very soul. And if God provides for His lesser creatures, even the birds of the air, how much more will He provide for you, you who were bought with a price, who

were bought through the very life of the Lord Jesus?

We'll just take that truth in for a moment. Just, you know, as you observe all around you. You know, we've got, in many ways, a greater freedom, as it were, to observe so much around us.

Just observe even the very bird life that you see in your gardens or around the town and villages where you are, even in your daily walk. You know, when you see them, when you hear the birdsong, when you see and hear these marvels of God's creation, well, be reminded, be reminded of that truth that Jesus gives you here.

[18 : 25] You're more valuable than these beautiful creatures. So if God has provided for them, be assured that He'll provide for you in this time that we're living in, whether in lockdown or no lockdown.

Because your very life is in the control of God. We can't add, as Jesus says, we can't add one hour to our life by worry.

We might say we can certainly shorten our lives by worry. But remember, our times, your times are in God's hand. And so let's the more focus our hearts on that truth of our sovereign God's control over each and every one of our lives.

That sovereign control that covers every aspect of your being, even the very provision of your daily need. So don't be anxious about the very basic necessities of life.

But then Jesus uses a second illustration from creation. The lilies of the field that we read there in verses 28 to 31. Let's read them.

[19 : 36] Why are you anxious 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 arrayed like one of these.

But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? And you see what Jesus is doing here is he's been using that illustration from everyday life, the birds of the air.

So Jesus is using another illustration from observable life. In fact, he's using an argument, we might say, from the lesser to the greater. If God's given, as it were, the lesser plant life, a glory that's brief and temporary, a glory, a glory that's passing, a glory not of its own making, how much more will he clothe you, you, the greater creation, you who are the object of his saving love, his treasure possession?

He will provide for all that you need. So we don't need to spend our time worrying about these particular matters. Your heavenly father knows what you need.

Food and clothes, the basic necessities of life, they so quickly become our masters. How we define ourselves by what we eat or what we drink or what we wear.

[21 : 06] Of course, these necessities are important. We even extol the creativity and food and fashion, for example, as gifts from God. But when they become an obsession, when they become that object of worry and anxiety, then we're serving what's material and not serving God.

And what then happens, we'll focus our hearts and minds on these things. Anxiety will flood into our hearts and we'll displace our trust in God with these things.

So there must be and is an antidote to such anxiety that we read there in verses 31 to 34.

Therefore, Jesus says, notice the therefore again.

Jesus says, therefore, don't be anxious, saying, what shall we eat? Or what shall we drink? Or what shall we wear? For the Gentiles seek after all these things. And your heavenly father knows that you need them all.

But seek first. Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. And all these things will be added to you. Therefore, therefore, do not be anxious about tomorrow.

[22 : 16] For tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Well, sufficient for the day is its own. Every cause of illness seeks an antidote.

Of course, not all physical illnesses at present have an antidote. But we have that assurance that the antidote to anxiety is there.

It's before us. That antidote is a God-given remedy, a God-given cure. The antidote to our anxiety is God himself and what he tells us in his word to seek first the kingdom, to seek first his kingdom.

You see how Jesus teaches us this truth in these last few verses, these last verses that we read there when he, in fact, Jesus again speaks of anxiety in a multiple amount of times, three times in these few verses.

He's using again the word anxiety to drive home his message of truth. he's telling us that Gentiles seek after these things. In other words, those who are outside the people of God, outside the Israel of God, those whose values are totally different to the values of Christ-centered living, those whose priority in life is self, God.

[23 : 44] And notice how Jesus refers to those outside the kingdom of God. He says they seek, they seek after these things. He's saying it's their heart's desire, their heart's yearning, always focused on other things, the things that cannot truly give life.

But there's another seeking that does bring life as Jesus tells us here, as he shows us, as he tells us that antidote, that remedy to the anxieties of our hearts.

Jesus tells us in verse 33, seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. In other words, Jesus is saying set your heart on the kingdom of God.

Set your heart on God's reign in your life. Set your heart on what's truly righteous. Set your heart on what truly honors God and therefore in your life seek to obey him in all things.

and that's your priority. It's got to be first in your life and of course in my life. That seeking, that yearning, that heart's desire that the kingdom of God and what's truly righteous, that that's for you to strive for, to attain and where you'll find your greatest treasure.

[25 : 02] That which is of true worth and true value when you put God first in your life. the one who calls you, the one who calls you, is of more value, infinitely more value than anything else in all creation because he is God and because of his everlasting love for you who are his.

Because when you don't put him first in your life, when his kingdom, when his reign, when his rule isn't first in your life, when inevitably anxiety, worry is going to set in.

And Jesus speaks of the futility of worry, the uselessness of worry when we get our lives upside down and our priorities. When our first thoughts are for self, what we'll eat, what we'll drink, what we'll wear, are worrying about the future, worrying about tomorrow.

As Jesus says, tomorrow's tomorrow. Tomorrow never exists in the way that we anticipate. We worry about these secondary matters that we think are so crucial.

But if you're a Christian and you worry in that way and you're not living, I'm not living by faith. We're not trusting our heavenly father who feeds us, who clothes us, who gives us our sustenance, our daily needs, our father who'll never leave us destitute.

[26 : 32] And so we're to live, live day by day for each day, committing ourselves to God's care and God's provision. As Jesus says, sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

As we probably know better, sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. But sufficient for the day is its own trouble. Jesus isn't promising us a trouble-free life.

But he does promise that our anxieties are diminished and removed when our faith in our heavenly father triumphs over fear.

We have so much anxiety when we even anticipate tomorrow's cares. But that anxiety has a remedy. That anxiety has a cure as you commit to God each day what he's gifted you for that day.

As we know that our heavenly father is the one who gives us that daily bread. So, I pray that these words that we've considered this evening, that they will have been an encouragement to you.

[27 : 43] And that you'll know that they are that remedy to the many cares, the many anxieties that each one of us are tempted to have in our hearts. These anxieties that unless we turn to our father, our heavenly father for our trust in him, these anxieties that will take root in our hearts.

None of us could ever have envisaged these times that we're living in at the moment. But, you know, in such a time as this, we look to the one who's our heavenly father and we commit to him each and every day of our lives.

And so, may it be that you truly are seeking first his kingdom and his righteousness, that you truly do rest in his steadfast love and that you trust him for your physical needs even as you trusted in him for your very souls and that you continue to place your faith and trust in your heavenly father. Well, so may God bless to us his word and let's join together in prayer. Let us pray. Lord, your steadfast love is very great.

It reaches heaven high. And Lord, we praise and thank you for your steadfast love seen even in the very provision that you give us for body and soul.

[29 : 13] And so, Lord, we commit to you even our very lives and we pray then that you will remove from our hearts all the anxieties that so creep in and intend to overwhelm us at times.

But Lord, may we look to you and find our trust and strength in you alone, our God, our saviour, our provider. Hear us, Lord, as we continue to worship you.

Hear us, Lord, as we worship your holy name. Continue with us, we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Let's just close in prayer, let us pray.

Lord, be merciful to us, we pray, for before us in all things and now may grace, mercy and peace from God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit rest upon and remain with you both now and forevermore.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Okay, thank you very much, everyone.