

Don't Be Anxious About Tomorrow

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[0 : 00] I'm going to read from verse 25 to 34, Matthew chapter 6. Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount, 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.

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?

[1 : 15] For the Gentiles seek after all these things. Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you.

Therefore, do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

Amen. May God add his blessing to that reading from his holy word. As we gather just for a short time, consider these latter words that we read there in the passage where Jesus commands his disciples not to be anxious about tomorrow.

Therefore, do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. And, you know, when we stand at the threshold of a new year, it's always a moment when we have so many mixed emotions, so many reflections, many anticipations, even of the coming of the new year, all these things that really flood into our minds and our hearts.

And certainly for the unbeliever, there's the constant refrain at this time of year, you know, out with the old, in with the new. And in many ways that really carries a sense of resignation, you know, a wiping away of the past and looking forward to a fresh start.

[2 : 42] You can't simply rub out the past as if it's got no consequence. The present is shaped by the past. And the future, the future is only one of newness if you trust in God who makes all things new.

And it's really the concern of the future that's very much at the forefront of so many, of course, as we step into 2021.

The ravages of the pandemic are still very much a real issue. We don't, but are we going to allow such a thing to dominate our thinking?

Are we going to create imaginary scenarios defined by and only defined by the pandemic? Are we going to trust in the Lord of the years?

Are we going to trust in the one who knows the end from the beginning? Because he has no beginning. God has no beginning and no end. Are you going to trust in him who's eternal?

[3 : 45] Because remember, your times, my times, are in his hands. And it's the perspective of the Christian who follows Jesus, who follows Jesus teaching about tomorrow, about the future.

That's the Christian who has that security about the future that brings so much comfort and encouragement that really each one of us needs it at this time. And indeed, at all times, whether we have a pandemic or no pandemic, it's the teaching that Jesus gives to each one of us, not to worry, not to be anxious about tomorrow, not to be anxious about the future.

And just for a short time, as I say this morning, or in the afternoon, let's consider what Jesus teaches here, even in this verse of Matthew 6.

And use this opportunity that God has given us, even the minutes that we have to consider these words, to find a true perspective in the hours, the days, the weeks, the year that lies ahead in his providence, so that we might truly give him the glory for the future, in the future for tomorrow.

And so three things I just want to draw your attention to in this passage. A practice to be obeyed, a power to be heeded, and a perspective to follow.

[5 : 17] A practice to be obeyed. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus has just been teaching his disciples about the dangers of what we might call lifestyle worry.

You know, worrying about all those things that affect our lives, things like security, and comfort, and wealth, and clothes, and food. You know, things that in themselves are sinless, gifts from God.

But when they become our treasure, when they, you know, cling to our heart so that they are, as it were, the be-all and end-all of our lives, when we're so obsessed with these things that they become our care and anxiety, when all our energy is devoted to these things, rather than seeking first, and living for the glory of God, and rather than seeking first his kingdom, well, we have to get, of course, a true perspective on what Jesus is teaching here.

And Jesus is teaching us, giving us a practice to be obeyed, and the practice not to be anxious. In fact, as we were reading the passage there, you may have noticed the number of times that Jesus actually uses the word anxious.

In fact, six times he actually uses this word anxious or worry because, of course, in our sinful natures, we're so prone to anxiety, so prone to worry.

[6 : 43] It's that sin that's such a powerful force that can so cripple your mind, it can paralyse your thinking, it can even loosen and lessen your trust in God.

And of course, when we get right down to the nuance of anxiety, it's really that sin of putting self first. It's that sin of our own determining our future, our own seeking to control events that still to happen, forgetting, of course, that it's God who's sovereign, that it's God who's Lord.

And certainly in the context of a new year, when we're looking forward to what God will give us in this year, then surely we are to abide by the practice that Jesus teaches us here, not to be anxious.

And certainly in the context of this new year, not to be anxious about the future because the future is in God's hands and not in our own hands.

And so the words of Jesus really are to all of us, all of us who worry, who are so prone to anxiety about the future.

[8 : 02] And I pray that these words of Jesus are words in season to help you to look forward in this year, to trust in him and not to be squashed by uncontrolled anxiety.

So Jesus has given us a practice to be obeyed, not don't be anxious. But then when we think of anxiety, very much it's a power, it's a power to be heeded.

Because worry is power. I mean, anxiety is power. Because anxiety, as we've just mentioned a moment ago, anxiety has that power to cripple your actions, to even to weaken your resolve to serve the Lord.

In the past years, even in your own time, just look back at the past year and look back at the many times when you gave in to anxiety, when, as it were, tomorrow became the present.

You know, when you conjured up, and I'm speaking to you as much as speaking to myself, when you conjured up all kinds of scenarios in your mind that actually excluded God and put self at centre.

[9 : 09] You know, when you, when we allow the anxiety to dominate our thinking about the week ahead or the days ahead or the year ahead, and in doing that, by losing your resolve even to deal with present issues, present troubles, the trials of the day that weren't faced because the trials of tomorrow were somehow imagined.

And you gave in, you gave into that power of anxiety and your effectiveness as a Christian diminished because you allowed the sin of anxiety to replace faith.

It's faith in the one true God, faith in Him that's so necessary in your building your life on the rock of Christ rather than building your life on the sand of self.

See, anxiety is a power. And it's a power, yes, of much might. It's a power that can be controlled and controlled under the strengthening grace of God, God who gives to you who are His, God who gives you that enabling to live for Him and in Him in His strength and for His glory.

And it's that strengthening, that strengthening grace of God that Jesus gives us here in His teaching, in His wisdom. What we're seeing here in this teaching is wise counsel.

[10 : 35] It's godly wisdom. It's godly wisdom that enables you to live your life on earth to glorify God and to deny self. And that wisdom then involves a perspective, a perspective to follow, a perspective from getting away from our sinful minds to the sinless mind of Jesus.

as we hear His word, that word that blesses, that word that encourages, His word that instructs us. Therefore, do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself.

Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. Some years ago, I remember hearing of a very well-known minister in our denomination who actually used this verse to address a newly married couple at their wedding.

And it wasn't just our version, the ESV, that he used. It was the old King James, the authorised version, take therefore no thought for the moral, for the moral shall take thought for the things of itself.

Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. And when I first heard of what happened at that wedding, I was actually very surprised that, you know, such a verse should be used in a wedding ceremony.

[11 : 53] But the more I thought about it, the more I realised how appropriate, what wise advice to give a couple on the threshold of their new life as one.

You know, that wisdom from above as they were about to face their future together. And, you know, as we face our future or this future together, as we face the future together, the same words that Jesus has given to his disciples are given for us are words of direction and words to heed and to listen to and apply, certainly for the furtherance of God's kingdom and we might even say for the maximisation of your output as a Christian and the work that God has given you and the work that God has given each one of us.

And it's that wisdom that we find here in Jesus' teaching. We might say it's simple wisdom but it's profound wisdom. It's practical wisdom. It's wisdom to be applied in our daily lives as you seek to honour God in the way that God has given you to live for him.

So let's look at the wisdom then of this teaching. Therefore, don't be anxious about tomorrow for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. I mean, up to this point, Jesus has been stressing the reality of God, God who provides, God who provides for all your needs, God who knows what you need in life to sustain you.

God promises to bless you with all the necessities of life that he gives from his bountiful provision. Therefore, therefore, in light of the fact that God knows, that God cares, that God won't abandon you in any day, at any time.

[13 : 47] Therefore, why worry about tomorrow? Why fear for the future if you know that God is God and that God will take care of your every need?

You might put it like this, I mean, God gives to you each day, each day God gives you all the various cares of that day.

Sufficient for the day is its own trouble they might say. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. So what God gives you each day is given in a particular measure, sufficient for each day to handle, sufficient for each day to deal with, to pray over, and to trust in him for.

And so when we start to add to, as it were, the daily measure of our cares, when we start to add to these things with future cares, we're going to overwhelm you.

They're going to burden you. They're going to crush your spirit. It was the great Welsh preacher Martin Lloyd-Jones who put it like this in one of his sermons on the Sermon on the Mount.

[14 : 52] He said this, Every day must be lived in and of itself as a unit. Here is the quota for the day. We must not go forward and tack tomorrow's onto today's.

Otherwise, it may be too much for us. In other words, tomorrow's quota is for tomorrow and not for today. You know what it's like when we, you know, when we take our eyes of God, away from God, away from our Lord, and forget that it's the same God who helps us today.

It's the same God who will help you tomorrow. Of course, we, you know, we commit to God all that is in our lives, the entirety of our life.

At the same time, we have to commit to him each day, each day that we arise into, each day that we awaken to. Because, as we're told elsewhere in Scripture, his compassions are new every morning.

Because compassions are new to give us that strength to live in, to live for him, to grow in, to depend on him, to seek wisdom from his word.

[16:07] Every one of us has woken up this morning into a new year, not just a new day, but a new year. And in this new day even, even this new year, we have particular issues that we're going to have to deal with, going to have to face, or problems that we are going to have to face up to.

There are many important decisions that we're going to have to make as individuals, as a family, as families, as a congregation. What about your own commitment in these matters?

Did you make it your resolve when you woke up this morning to seek God's grace, to face up to even what God is preparing for you today?

Did you commit to him this day? Did you ask him to be with you even in this new day that's begun, even to help you through this day and to give you hope and not to allow despair even to come into your mind?

What about this morning? Did you resolve even that in facing this new year, all that this new year will under God's providence bring to you? Did you commit not to be anxious about the future, not to be anxious about these days that lie ahead?

[17:23] to remember that you who know the Lord Jesus as Saviour, to remember that he is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

It's the same Lord Jesus who was with you in the past, the same Lord Jesus who was with us in the year that's now gone, the same Lord Jesus who promises to be with you this year, 2021, and indeed all the years that God gives you in the same so resolve then to follow the perspective of Jesus for each day.

It's the wisdom of Jesus to apply in each and every day of our lives and that we can say along with the Apostle Paul that we are to make the best use of the time that God gives us to make the most of every opportunity that God gives us on the side of eternity.

And yes, there'll be times, as we know in the past, there'll be times when we weaken in our failure not to be anxious, not to be anxious about tomorrow. But when you do weaken, when you resolve to apply the wisdom of Jesus, when that resolve is weak, when it weakens, then we're again given comfort from Scripture to do as the Apostle James tells us, James 1, 5 to 6, if any of you lack wisdom, let him ask God who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.

Let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. I pray then that you'll know that wisdom from above.

[19:12] Well, in knowing it, use it. use the wisdom of Jesus and use it well, guard it well, apply that wisdom for his glory, for your good, and for his glory, and yes, live by faith in the Lord of the years.

Remember that the future is in his hands, and so we can have that assurance then that our times are in his hands, and let's not waver in that trust each day, each and every day that you arise, each day surrender that day to your Lord and Saviour, to him who loves you, to him who cares for you in each and every aspect of your life, and give him the glory even this day, this first day of 2021, as we commit even this day and this year into his care and amen.

And again, let us pray. Our Lord, our God, our Heavenly Father, on this day that you have blessed us with, this day that we have in many ways begun as a congregation together, we thank you, Lord, for the privilege of being in this form of service, this form of worship, because truly, Lord, we do worship you, maker of heaven and earth.

We worship you for your grace towards us. We worship you for your kindness, your kindness in sending the Lord Jesus for us, that in that moment of space and time, in that time allocated from all eternity, that Jesus came to save us.

And in his time on earth, the allotted time that you gave him in his earthly ministry, he saved, he spoke, he taught, he healed, he spoke wisdom, taught us how to live for you, how to even live this day for your glory.

[21:26] And so, Lord, we ask your blessing upon us, upon your people, upon your children, upon this world. We pray, Lord, that in all the anxieties that even face us this day, we will know that truly sufficient unto the day is the evil that are.

And so, Lord, bless, we pray this time, this service, help us, Lord, to know that you are with us always, even to the very end of the age.

Continue with us now, Lord, we pray, we ask these things in Jesus' name, Amen. Amen.