

Real Focus

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[0 : 00] Do keep your Bibles open to Matthew chapter 6 on page 6. We're looking through verses 25 through 34. Those of you who are visiting here for the summer, we're in a series on these chapters of Matthew's Gospel looking through the Sermon on the Mount.

And so we come to this wonderful teaching on anxiety. This is for all the worriers in the congregation. If you're someone who lives a life that is worry-free, this sermon is not for you. You can have coffee. When I was growing up, you know, when my mother would get anxious about things and would start worrying about it, my dad would say, Oh dear, stop worrying so much! And I swore that that would never happen in my marriage. So now when I start worrying about things, my wife says, Stop worrying! I think something's being passed down the generations. But we do live in a world that often is an anxious world.

And we often have things that we worry about. We can be busy and stressed. Career, family, finances, health, relationships, they can take a toll of worry and anxiety in our hearts.

[1 : 14] We all at moments in our lives face worry and anxiety. And sometimes that can be overpowering. A dominant force in your life.

How we need to hear Jesus' words from verse 25, Do not be anxious about your life. Do not be anxious about your life.

And Jesus isn't just writing us off with the simple, Don't worry about it. Do not be anxious about your life. We live in a city that trumpets its laid-backness and relaxed way of life.

Yet so many of us live anxiously and stressed, worried about the present, worried about the future. When my children were a bit younger and I used to hang around in the playground, yakking with the dads, one of their biggest worries that I heard over and over again was of the future.

Often the distant future. Will I have a pension plan? That's good enough to sort of fund my lifestyle. Will I ever have financial security? Some of the moms that used to hang around with at the playground would worry as they were raising their families.

[2 : 33] Worry about their careers that they placed on hold as they were raising small children.

Family life holds enough cause for anxiety and worry. Everyday life, in our careers, in our families, there are many things that we worry about.

They are real things. And Jesus would not put us down for being people who worry. The purpose of Jesus' words is not to simply cast us aside and say don't worry, but to free us.

To free us. To live the life He wants us to live. Jesus says, do not be anxious about your life. Do you think that's realistic?

Do you think that's possible? Well, in order to understand what Jesus is saying, we just have to look back very briefly because verse 25 is the end product. He says, therefore, I tell you, do not be anxious.

That is the end product of a life centered where it needs to be. This is the result. Therefore, do not be anxious. So let's look back. If you look back at verse 19, He says, just really at the top of the page there, He says, do not store up treasures on earth where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.

[3 : 57] See, He's pointing out where is your heart? Where are you investing? Are you investing here on this earth where things are passable, temporary, corruptible, or are you investing in the kingdom of God where things are eternal and true and just?

You see, if you are preoccupied with the things of this world, see, that's a recipe for worry. Are you anxious about things of this world?

Are you driving after a career? Are you driving after an identity? Or verse 24, He says, no one can serve two masters. You can't have a divided heart.

You cannot serve God and mammon. See, it's the same thing. Who or what is pulling your strings? What is the driving force of your life?

Is it God? Is your mind set on the things of heaven which are eternal and sure or on the things of earth which are temporary and passing?

[5 : 01] You can't serve two masters. You see, that's the distinction Jesus is trying to make in these verses. A life lived for the kingdom of God or a life lived for the kingdom of men.

Because in the end, if your heart is set upon material acquisition, if your identity is centered on your career or how you present yourself to the world, if you are driven by the need to build in this life, see, all of that is what is going to be a source of worry and anxiety for you.

That's what you're driving after. And you will not be satisfied. Your loyalties will be divided. You can't serve God and mammon.

Therefore, verse 25, I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body what you shall put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?

See, you can't serve God and mammon. Therefore, do not be anxious about your life, but rather, verse 33, seek first His kingdom and His righteousness and all these things will be yours as well.

[6 : 19] So you see what Jesus is saying. He's not writing off the need for things in our lives like food and clothing and daily provision. But He's saying, run after the things of God.

You can't serve God and mammon. So seek first His kingdom. Put your heart where God is. Where God is active. Because the kingdom of God is built in righteousness.

It's built in the salvation of men and women. Put your heart there. And God will take care of the rest. An undivided loyalty. A will that is unalterably fixed on the kingdom of God.

A life that is lived preeminently for Him. And God will take care of the rest. It's not that these other things are of no importance. Food, drink, clothing.

These will be yours as well. And Jesus sums it all up with that penetrating question in verse 25. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?

[7 : 23] I mean, is that not the most current question you could possibly ask? You might be asking yourself that question. Isn't there more? Isn't there more to life?

See, it's one of the things about being, you know, as men we're very goal-oriented. And when you set yourself on a goal, say it's to get a career, there's two risks that are going to happen. One is you won't make it.

The other is that you will. And you find yourself saying, is there more? Is there more? Everything around us tells us that food and clothing are vitally important.

Go down to Yale Town or Robson Street or Metro Town. That is exactly what it is all about. Food and clothing. Eating, drinking, shopping.

Everything around us screams at us that it is important that the body is for food and drink and clothes. I saw a magazine cover yesterday that says this, top tips for great style, great hair, great sex and great abs.

[8 : 29] I'm working on that one. You see, everything tells us that food and clothing and physical perfection are important.

So what drives you? What God do you serve? Is not life more than this? How do I live a life?

I'm not anxious about these things. Worry free. Well, let's unpack Jesus' teaching a little bit because Jesus goes into some more detail and he does it in three ways.

He tells us to look at the birds, to smell the roses, and look at the others. Let's first of all, look at the birds. That's verses 26 and 27. Jesus takes an example to illustrate this from ornithology.

He says, look at the birds. They neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father, underline that, your heavenly Father feeds them.

[9 : 30] Now, notice what Jesus is not saying. He's not saying that birds do no work and simply fly around all day and everything's provided. We do have the phrase, don't we, the early bird catches the worm.

So birds actually work very hard for their food. So the point is not that we should not work for a living, that we should not work hard. But the birds, you know, they work hard for their food, but they're not stressed out about it.

They're not anxious about it. They're not worried about everything. They live in the present. They don't gather into barns. See, it's ironic, isn't it?

It's the birds are the ones who aren't gathered, who aren't bothered about having a little nest egg. Oh, I'm so glad you got that. You know, they're not strategizing for their retirement. They're not building an empire for themselves, projecting an image. They're not worrying about tomorrow. And that's why Jesus says at the end of the passage, do not worry about tomorrow. Today has enough trouble for its own.

[10:35] I mean, all the parents in the room would say, I'll amend to that. Live in the now with your heavenly Father. See, look at the birds. God has arranged for their survival and He takes care of them.

So how much more is He going to take care of you? Jesus says, are you not more valuable than they? And the answer is, yes. You are more valuable than they are. You see, and He says, it's your heavenly Father who feeds them. You have a heavenly Father. He is not their heavenly Father. He is their Creator. But the birds of the air do not have a relationship with God as you do.

He is our heavenly Father. And the point here is about God's fatherly care of His people. If you belong to Him through Jesus, you have a heavenly Father who cares for you.

This is something Jesus has been driving home throughout these chapters. 17 references in the Sermon on the Mount to God's fatherly care. Chapter 6 and verse 8, He says, Your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.

[11:48] And then in verse 32 in our own passage, Your heavenly Father knows you need them all. Now you see, right there is the basis for a life lived without anxiousness for our daily needs.

We start just with your daily needs. Do you realize that God is able to meet your needs? It is through your relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

You have a Father who cares for you. It's a relationship Jesus is talking about here. If you are a Christian, you have a heavenly Father who knows your needs before you ask.

Who is involved in your life and who is able to care for you. And do you see that Jesus doesn't want to condemn us for worrying? He wants to free us from worrying.

It doesn't mean that we live passively or unwisely. But be clear. Know this. God loves His people and cares for our daily needs.

[13:00] I've been a father for seven years now which is long enough to be completely humbled by the whole thing. I'm sure I'm not the best father in the world but every day with my wife together we take care of our children.

It's just basic, isn't it? I mean, our children never go to school without having a breakfast. They have gone to school once without their lunch but that was an accident. They are always dressed, always taken care of.

Now, sometimes they want extravagant things from us and we say no. But we take care of them every day. Of course we do. And if parents fail in that duty it's shocking to us. And you see, that is the point Jesus is making that God takes care of your needs.

Your heavenly Father takes care of you like an earthly father does, only way better. You may need to know this for yourself today.

You may not know this. That God knows your needs and He wants to care for you. So you don't need to worry. After all, verse 27, which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his span of life?

[14:12] That's right, isn't it? We can't add to our lifespan by worrying. Jesus doesn't want you to worry. He wants you to enjoy a relationship with God the Father.

Look at the birds. Second, smell the roses. Verses 28 to 31. From ornithology to botany. Jesus is making a similar point here, but the issue is about clothing we put on our bodies.

Verse 28, 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 is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you?

Now the point Jesus is making here, it's again about God's provision for us, but it's the kind of care, the kind of attention God wants to lavish upon his people. Consider the beauty of the flowers.

[15:12] I love the cut flowers on our table in the church. I was going to make a point about that. When they're there, they're stunningly beautiful.

And I love to be asked to take them home sometimes at the end of the day. They're beautiful, aren't they? Flowers. But of course, they're going to wilt within a week, aren't they? They're just passing

things.

They bloom and they pass. They're gone. Same thing with grass. It's here today, then tomorrow it's mown and thrown into the fire. And just to make the point, Jesus compares that to Solomon.

Solomon in his time, the richest of men, with the best of clothes. Yet even he was not as well dressed as the grass in the field, which God takes care of. You see, and the point that Jesus is making is that if God takes that much care over the grass in the field or the flowers, which last but a moment, how much more is he going to care for you, who belong to him, his people.

You see, God takes care of his people. He wants to take care of you. He does so lovingly. See, I think there is much anguish and anxiety afflicts us because we don't grasp this.

[16:31] Because we do not believe that God is our Father and that he lovingly cares for us, for you. This doesn't mean that God is going to fulfill all our wants.

When I was in consumer education in grade 10, the teacher said to us, you must learn to distinguish between your needs and wants. Quite right, isn't it? We're not talking about wants here. God is talking about needs.

And he will fulfill your needs. I think for the people in Jesus' time that must have represented more than they were accustomed to. I think for us, as we do live in an incredibly affluent era, it might feel like less.

But you know, when I look back at my own life and see the hand of God meeting my needs, it never looks like what I might have imagined or what I might have even wanted.

but it is always better. And it always moves his purposes forward, not mine. Do you fundamentally believe that God wants to take care of you, that your life is in his hands, and that he wants good for you?

[17:55] Because he does. Do we believe that as a church, that we are in his hands, and that he will provide for us the next step?

I think we would all be a lot less anxious in our lives as we took time to smell the roses and live in the now. And so, let God meet our needs in his way and in his time.

You see, it's always right and it is always perfect. Look at the birds. Smell the roses. And lastly, as I close, look at the others.

Verse 32 and 33 brings it to a close. For the Gentiles seek all these things, and your Heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well.

Hear again what Jesus is saying. These things will be yours as well. God is involved in the details of your life.

[19:03] God wants to provide for you. This is the God he is. But Jesus takes us out into Robson Street. He takes us down to Yale Town. Imagine yourself standing there.

Look at how people are rushing after these things. This is not current stuff that Jesus is giving us. Vancouver runs on this kind of thing. It's all about what shall we eat?

What shall we wear? Read the magazines, the preoccupation with clothing and food and lifestyle. It's very important to people. It screams at us. You must wear this.

You must eat here. You must do this. Now there's nothing wrong with clothes. And I love being invited out to fancy restaurants for lunch.

Fitness is a great thing to pursue. There is nothing wrong with working hard in your life and building a career, building a business. But ask yourself, are you anxious about these things?

[19:59] Are you driven by these things? Are they the guiding force in your life? Or are you centered where God is and on what He is doing?

Are you concerned with trying to project an image of yourself through your clothes or the people you hang out with, wearing the right labels, being seen in the right restaurants, with building a career for yourself, building a nest egg?

Are you anxious and driven by those things? What is the most important thing in your life? Because that is the key to living a life without worry.

Jesus says, do not be anxious about your life. See what He is saying here? He says, go out to Robson Street. Go to Yale Town and see the people rushing around after food and drink and clothing.

Yes, they are doing that. But not you. People are building their identities and what they wear and drink and do. But not you.

[21 : 09] Because if that is what is driving you, it means you do not trust your Heavenly Father. isn't there more to life? God knows what you need.

Hear the words of Jesus for you and for us. Because in the end the key to a life free from worry is simple. Seek first His Kingdom. Put your heart in Heaven where God is.

Seek His righteousness. Seek the things of God. It's a relationship. It is that relationship with God your Heavenly Father through Jesus.

That is the key. It's all relationship. You can't serve God and mammon so serve God and don't be anxious.

The rest will follow. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and strength. He wants good for you.

[22 : 13] Live it. Receive it. Amen.