

Choose Your Burden Carefully

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[0 : 00] First, I want to draw you a picture of what a Christian looks like. You're going to stay right here, are you? Well, that's good. It's good to have a companion. All right, I'll tell you what you do.

You can be the living lectern here, and you hold that, and I'll preach from it. How's that? No, no, that's me. All right, this is first off a picture of what a Christian looks like.

No, I'm sorry, this person isn't a Christian. This is just a man in the world. He's one of the people that are talked about in the lesson today as carrying a great big burden, and that burden is called anxiety.

Now, what happened to me this week is that I had a week that was full of anxiety, and for all sorts of reasons.

And I met a whole lot of people who were full of anxiety. So I was in real trouble and didn't know what to do about it, and so I decided, well, we better look at this Sunday's sermon and see what it has to say.

[1 : 10] So I looked in Luke chapter 12 that Mr. Owen read from this morning, and if you all turn to Luke chapter 12, you can see what it says there, and it's all on page 70 in the New Testament section.

You come closer so I don't lose sight of you because you're an important person to me at this point. Do you see what it says there in verse 22?

He said to his disciples, therefore I tell you, and what are the next four words? Hello?

What are the next four words? Yes? So I wasn't very happy to read that because I was so full of anxiety, and that's what I felt like, this great burden of anxiety on my shoulders.

And then the New Testament says, Jesus talking to his disciples says, therefore I tell you, do not be anxious. So what was I to do?

[2 : 20] Well, I've read it carefully now, and I want to tell you what I think it says, and what I think it says to me. This is a picture of what a person looks like who is anxious.

They're burdened down with many cares. But I want to give you the picture that this verse starts with. First, it's a school like this.

If you look at the beginning of chapter 12, what do you see in the very beginning of chapter 12 of Luke's gospel? Who was there?

How many people were there? There was a... Of what?

There was a multitude. There were thousands. So many that they were stepping on one another. And so there was a great crowd there.

[3 : 17] But among that crowd, there was a special group to whom Jesus was speaking. And they're spoken of in verse 22. And who are they? They are his disciples.

Very good. So that you've got to recognize that when Jesus says, do not be anxious about your life, he's talking to his disciples.

Because he knows that people are going to be anxious about many things, but he doesn't want his disciples to be anxious. And so he set up a little school for them because disciples are people that go to school.

How many of you are at school? You see, they've all made a mistake out there. They didn't put up your hands like you did because they're all at school too.

Because if you're a disciple, it means that you're learning. And if you're learning, it means you're in a school. And that you need to be learning. And Jesus is teaching his disciples.

[4 : 27] Well, what's he teaching them about? Well, he has lots of things there to teach them with. First, there's beautiful flowers growing by the wayside. Lovely, lovely things.

And if you come and look sort of nose to nose at that one, you'll see how lovely it is. And if you're like me, and you smell that one, and it's got the loveliest smell of any flower that I know of, and just to prove it to you, you can pass it along the row and smell it, just to see, so that he had a lovely flower, then he looked overhead, and there were birds making very funny noises, and they were all black and big, and they were called ravens.

And then he looked out, and he saw the fields, and in the fields there were men working, tilling the soil, and working there. And then as he went by, he heard the sound of clatter, and he saw somebody working at a loom, making material, spinning.

I guess it would be a spinning wheel, wouldn't it? Do you think it would? Okay, they were working at a spinning wheel, and so he had all those things to teach them with, and he saw people building barns, and he saw, and he reminded them of the story of King Solomon.

So that was the way Jesus taught. He taught with those things, so that he didn't need a classroom, in the normal sense, he was able to take the sky, and the birds, and the earth, and the flowers, and the people, and the barns, and teach them from there, so that wherever you are, Jesus can teach you.

[6 : 12] Even if you live your life in the midst of concrete sidewalks, and high rises, and elevators, and cafeterias, and telephones, and computers, I'm sure Jesus can teach you in that situation just as well.

So there was his classroom, and his equipment. Now when he pointed to all those things, he said to his disciples, he said to them, but you're different.

You're different. You're different from the birds, because the birds don't sow and reap, but you sow and reap, and the birds don't build barns, do they?

You occasionally get a very clever bird, like Roadrunner, but mostly birds don't do things, except fly and eat, don't they? So, birds don't build barns, but men build barns, and birds don't have to sit down for long hours at a loom, spinning cloth, and making material, in order to be dressed with fine clothes.

Birds just grow feathers, and it's as easy for a bird as anything, but it's very hard for you to grow feathers, isn't it? You need a sewing machine, and material, and all sorts of things to get feathers on you.

[7 : 30] Well, so he said, you people are really quite different, and even the best of you, he said, like if you were to take King Solomon, he was probably as clever as any of you, and he really worked hard to make beautiful clothes for himself, and even when he had made the best clothes out of the finest silks, he still wasn't as beautiful as that flower right by the roadside.

And then he said, and another thing that man does, which is strange, he said, is that he tries to add to his stature. Could you give them a demonstration of what it's like to try and grow?

You grow up to here while we're all watching you. Concentrate. Well, you grew very quickly indeed, but you shrunk quickly too. So that, he said, but there's a funny thing about the Bible, because if you read it carefully, it doesn't say that he added one cubit to his stature.

He said, the thing people are really worried about is adding one cubit to their life span. How can I live a little longer?

And so that's how Jesus described all these people, how they work, that they had to toil, build barns, they had to sow, they had to reap, they tried to add time to their length of days, they tried to be more beautiful than the flowers of the field, and he was concerned about them because they carried such a terrible burden of anxiety.

[9 : 14] And their anxiety was about where their next meal was coming from, and their anxiety was about where they were going to get enough clothes for all the children, and they were driven by these anxieties.

Now this burden isn't really a burden that Maren carries over his shoulder. Do you know where he carries it? This great burden of anxiety? It's in a great, big, floppy bag that sits right about there. And sometimes it turns cold, and sometimes it gets hot and sore. Have you ever felt it in there? Do you remember the white rabbit?

He had a great burden of anxiety because he was late for a very famous tea party, and he expressed the terrible feeling he had inside when he said, I'm late, I'm late for a very important date. And he was telling about this burden that was inside him. And then I heard that there was a character called Chicken Little on whom an acorn fell and hit him on the head, and he went around full of anxiety, saying, the sky is falling.

[10:25] And he was very upset about that. And so anxiety is something that we carry in here. Do you know what a short word for anxiety is? What?

Anxious. That's not very short. Really short, like say four letters. C-A-R-E.

It's care. And you see, the wonderful thing about people is that they are meant to care, aren't they? If people were care less, how difficult it would be.

People are meant to care. They're meant to care for their pets. They're meant to care for one another. They're meant to care about their fellow man. They're meant to care about the world. They're meant to care for many things.

And you find almost that the most important people are the people who care the most. Aren't they? So why does Jesus say not to care, not to be anxious?

[11:29] Does he mean that you should be careless? Well, the reason Jesus says it is like this. Once upon a time, about a year ago, I went on a mountain trip up in the Princess Louise inlet and we went way up high into the mountains and I'd never been there before and never been on a trip like that before.

And the night before we went, the leader got us all together and he made us lay out everything we were going to take with us. Our toothbrush, our toothpaste, our face cloth, our pajamas, our underwear, our sweaters, everything we had, we had to lay out.

And he came around and he says, you're not going to take that and you're not going to take that and you're not going to take that. And he brought our burden down to about half of what it was going to be and he said, you won't need that and you won't need that and you won't need the other thing.

Now this is what Jesus is doing. We're up to page two. Let's make sure we get there. Let's hope. This is what Jesus was doing with these people.

He was saying, if you've got to carry a burden, be very particular about what kind of burden you carry. Because the Christian shouldn't look like this carrying this great burden.

[12:47] He said the Christian should look like this. And I've drawn another picture to show you what a Christian should look like. Are you ready to see it? He looks like that. Do you see the difference?

What's the difference? Fraser? He what? Well, the difference is what's in the bag.

What? He has a burden. Look at it. But Jesus is very particular about what that burden is. And so he's taught us one fundamental thing.

He's taught us that what we're to do is to make sure that we're not carrying anything we don't have to carry. And he says, worrying about what you're going to eat and worrying about how long you're going to live and worrying about the clothes you're going to wear, they shouldn't be part of your burden.

If you're going to care, care about something that's really important. If you've got to carry a burden, make sure it's the right burden. Because, you see, what happens to everybody is they become slaves of the burden they carry.

[14:11] So if you're somebody who's very particular about how you dress and you must have the finest clothes from the finest shop and that they must be carefully tailored and beautifully cleaned and that they must look really lovely at all times so that you spend all your life worrying about what you're wearing on your back, then that's going to be a burden that will crush you.

So Jesus says, don't carry that burden. It's no use to you. And if you're going to worry all your life about how you're going to, where your next meal is going to come from and what you're going to eat and is there going to be enough, I don't know if he lived now if he would think that was our problem. Most people are worried about how they're going to take the next pound off, not how they're going to put it on. But that this kind of caring about what you eat all the time is another kind of burden.

Then he says, and if you're worried about your life, like how long it's going to last and whether you're going to do this and whether you're going to do that, he says, you don't have to carry that kind of burden either. And so what happens is that Jesus has taught us to lay out everything that we have in our lives and then he comes by and says, okay, you won't need that, you won't need that, you won't need that, you won't need that, you don't have to carry that any longer.

Isn't that good? It's good as long as you want to give it up. But that's what he says and that's really what prayer is so that when you're caught like I am and like many people are with a whole burden of

anxieties, then you go to God in prayer and he tells you what you need and what you don't need. [16:09] Okay? Now he wants you to carry a burden but he doesn't want it to be the burden of anxieties. So what does he want you to do? He wants you to carry this one burden and that is a concern for the kingdom of God.

That's the burden he wants you to care about. He doesn't want you to worry about what you're going to eat or what you're going to wear or how long you're going to live or how you look. He doesn't want you to worry about those things. He wants you to use all the caring that he's given for you for the kingdom of God because he says if you worry all your life about clothes, that doesn't count, does it, ultimately?

And if you worry all your life about food, then that doesn't count ultimately because you become a slave of clothes or a slave of food.

But if you worry all your life about the kingdom of God, what do you become a slave of? You've got to help me at this point or else I'll know I have to start all over again.

[17:27] What do you become a slave of? You become a slave of the kingdom of God, don't you? If that's what you're worried about, if that's what you care about, you become a slave of the kingdom of God.

And ultimately that's really worthwhile because you're going to see that that burden makes it worthwhile. If you're a slave of these other things, all they do is burden you down and make life difficult.

But if you become a slave so that the thing that you want more than anything else is the kingdom of God, you're going to be wonderfully rewarded because when you come to the place that it doesn't matter anymore what you eat and it doesn't matter anymore what you wear, what will still matter? The kingdom of God. And that's the kingdom into which Christ has called us. Now I'm finished but I have two verses that I want you to think about. And those two verses are one which comes from Philippians and it says, Be anxious for nothing but in everything by prayer with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

Check your burden constantly so that you're not being anxious for things. You're being anxious for the thing that matters and the thing that matters is God's kingdom.

[19:04] And then there's another verse in 1 Peter chapter 5 which says, Be anxious for nothing that's the one I just read you cast all your anxieties on him for he cares for you.

And you see what lies at the heart of this whole story when Christ says, Don't be anxious about your life. What he means by that is that he's prepared to be anxious about your life if you will be anxious about his kingdom.

That's why he wants you to cast your cares on him so that there's room in your heart for the things he cares about.

And your heart isn't a constant turmoil of the things you care about. He looks after those. And then you can be the servant of his kingdom.

So I ask you, read on in chapter 12 and see what's required. As the Lord comes and says, You don't need that and you don't need that and you don't need that if you're going to be my disciple.

[20:16] I want to make room in your heart so that you can care deeply about my kingdom and the coming of my kingdom. And if your heart is full of cares about what you're going to eat and how long your life is going to be and what you're going to wear, there's going to be no room for that.

There is no caring for the kingdom. And I just trust that we as a congregation will allow our Lord Jesus to take out of our hearts those cares and anxieties which are simply about ourselves.

Because he says, your father knows you have need of those things. You don't have to be careful about them. He wants to take those burdens away from you so that you can be careful for the kingdom, for his kingdom.

And whenever you meet anybody who's in distress or in trouble or in difficulty, you have to say, well, boy, I'm luckier than they are. No, you're to care about the kingdom in their life because there's room in your heart to care for God's kingdom because he's caring for you.

We're going to sing hymn number 397 as the offertory hymn. Thank you very much, Brian. Brian. Brian.

[21:45] Will you come and take this down for me? There you go. Fraser, would you just put that over on one side for me?

I'm here. I'm here. I'm here. Let's get back inside. Let's get back inside.

We'll see now. First up on May 8th, educating him for the record.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[23 : 26] Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.