

Monday Evening English

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[0 : 00] moments together to the passage that we read in Luke's Gospel and chapter 12. Let's just turn our attention just for a few moments to verses 31 and 32.

So we may read these again. This is Luke chapter 12 verses 31 and 32. Instead seek his kingdom and these things will be added to you.

Fear not little flock for it is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. As we've spent some time together over the weekend I decided really to look at four words with you.

And on Friday evening I took the word courage as we considered Joseph of Arimathea and the honour of that he himself committed himself to at the death of Jesus.

That he took courage. So courage is something we seek to lay hold of. And on the Lord's Day in the morning we considered forgiveness. How Jesus prayed from the cross.

[1 : 19] Father forgive them for they know not what they do. And forgiveness is something that we are called to embrace by faith. And last night we considered the whole aspect of the quest for truth.

Something else we're called to lay hold of. And I think these three words we're encouraged very much to lay hold of all of these things.

Of courage, forgiveness and truth. But I want us to consider a word here this evening. That we're encouraged not to lay hold of.

But rather to let go of. And it's the word anxiety. And I want us to do this. And I know today is the time of our Thanksgiving.

The Monday of our communion weekend is our Thanksgiving. And we give thanks to God for the blessings we received. But it is also the day that we seek to encourage each other.

[2 : 20] As we try and apply many of the practical aspects of living out our Christian faith. Living our day to day faith. And I suppose for many of you, you've already returned back to work.

And already facing the realities of the day to day challenges of living as Christians here in this world. The call to be the salt and the light.

And I hope that maybe just for a short time. As we consider this whole issue of anxiety. That it may be an encouragement in our own practical faith.

As we try to live out our own hope in the Lord. And I come to this because I think that it is a struggle that we all confess that we've engaged in.

Or we've been part of the struggle and the battle with anxiety. Because when we go into the world and as we consider these things. We reflect on how we're to live out our own Christian faith.

[3 : 24] And sometimes we're facing some real hostilities. And real difficulties. And it can happen immediately. It may even be the atmosphere in our own home.

A situation in work or in school. Or wherever we are. That we face real challenges. And they can be difficult challenges for us. And they can feel like battles.

And sometimes it can feel like a war. But then we come to Paul in Romans. And he speaks of the battle that is within him.

And we think that there is something there that resonates with us. That sometimes the greatest conflict and the greatest battle we're facing is within. That this is the great struggle.

And what we're trying to overcome. That the battle is with ourselves. And we realize this too even in the call of discipleship. When Jesus calls us to follow him.

[4 : 23] He calls us to engage in cross-bearing and in self-denial. And how does that self-denial work itself out? How is it visible in our own daily lives?

And what we're coming to here is a challenge for us. And a painful problem for many people. That it presses in.

And it causes other problems too. It is the root to so many problems. We speak about stress. We speak about phobias and fears.

We speak of the lack of control. Or unhealthy behavior. We respond to our anxiety. By having these techniques.

Some people maybe eat too much. Some people eat too little. And all of these different ways in which it manifests itself. And we're trying to control this thing. And manage it.

[5 : 20] And all the time it feels like it's controlling us. And so we struggle with this. And the difficulties that are involved in it.

Yet it's not a modern problem. It's not even a problem just of course for the Christian. Many people struggle with the whole issue of anxiety.

In his commentary on Luke's gospel here. J.C. Ryle. Who is of course in the 19th century. He said there is nothing more common than a careful and troubled spirit.

And sometimes people talk about stress today. And the way it's affecting people. How it's affecting their work. And their relationships. And their health. And people say. I never heard of stress before this.

But here is Ryle. And the generations before us. We know they had this. Careful and troubled spirit. We saw it in them. That they were facing the same battles of anxiety.

[6 : 22] And we come to scripture. We come to David in the Psalms. And we see him there deeply troubled. And we see of course the scripture.

Has many things to say to us. About anxiety. As Paul does. As I hope you'll touch on in a few moments. And of course Jesus does here too.

How do we deal with our anxiety? How do we deal with our stress? And our troubles? And our fears? Can't we do more than just cope?

Can't we do more than just control? Can't there be freedom? And release? Is this not what the gospel has called us to? Freedom?

Is this not what the gospel is telling us? The great freedom that there is in Christ. So I want us just to reflect. As the passage we have here.

[7 : 20] Just on briefly. Just on a few items. And first of all. We have to come to terms with the whole foolishness. Of what anxiety is. And when we look at our anxiety.

And when we measure it. And when we investigate it. We say there's nothing good here. There's nothing positive here. Everything about it is detrimental and negative.

Everything it's doing. It doesn't produce anything. It doesn't build anything up. It's not doing anything. It's not adding any value. All it brings is pain and torment and suffering.

The agony that so many people are under. Because of anxiety. And to spend our time and our energy on it. There's no logic to it.

That we're spending our time on this thing. Rather than something that is positive. And something that builds us up. And something that does benefit us. And Jesus here speaks of this.

[8 : 22] How there's no benefit. He says in verse 22. I tell you do not be anxious about your life. Verse 23. Life is more than food. Body is more than clothing.

Verse 25. Which of you by being anxious. Can add a single hour to a span of life? He's saying what's it doing? What's it actually producing?

It's giving you nothing. And our concern as we reflect on this. Is that we concur with this. We know this. Even when we're going through these difficult experiences.

We're still saying the same thing. That it's very being part of our lives is unhealthy. It leaves such a trail of serious repercussions.

Physically. Emotionally. And spiritually too. Spiritually too. Verse 28.

[9 : 25] Or you. Of little faith. Is this not. Where the root problem. Is.

For the anxieties that we face. And I feel that sometimes. We feel. Little faith is enough. And we become almost content.

With having little faith. And there is a kind of maybe. A false humility. That we've built up with it.

That we'll just have this little faith. And this little corner for ourselves.

And we'll be comfortable there. And we'll live there. And we're still faced with so many challenges.

And so many things that hold us back. So many things that stunt our spiritual growth. But we'll sit there with little faith.

Because little faith will be enough for us. And time and time again. Jesus rebukes the disciples. By saying. Oh you of little faith.

[10:24] And Jesus is saying to them. This is not what I want for you. I want you to have more than little faith. Why is it then. That we are so content.

With what Jesus wants us. To move away from. To build from. To progress from. And to bear fruit from. Our anxiety is a serious problem.

On so many levels. And we have to stop ignoring it. And we have to start dealing with it. And Jesus calls us to do this. By calling us.

To trust. Almost seems too simple. Doesn't it. And you're probably saying. You don't know what I'm going through. You don't know the turmoil.

That I'm going through. How do you achieve. To deal with your own anxiety. Your spiritual difficulties. The Bible is telling us.

[11:23] That this is how it's done. It is through sacrifice. And trust. These great spiritual disciplines. That are so familiar to us.

And in that. A key element. Is realizing our identity. Our identity. Our identity. We have it here. In verse 30.

Your father. Verse 32. Little flock. Your father. And in this.

In this whole section too. That Jesus here. Is making a contrast. Between these people. Who we just mentioned. And verse 30. The nations of the world.

And what he's. Bringing before us here. Is this great contrast. Between the children. Of the father. And the children. Of the world. The different ways.

[12:20] Of thinking. The different ways. Of acting. The different ways. Of living. And the different identity. That belongs. To them. And we expect. The world.

To follow the pattern. Of the world. But we expect. The spiritual people. To be spiritually minded. To be following. The Lord. And to find their sense.

Of belonging. And identity. With the father. And with Jesus. You remember. How. If you were. There yesterday morning.

How we were considering. That great prayer. The first word. On the cross. Father. And. Jesus is saying. Father. Forgive them. There he is.

On the cross. There he is. Suffering. In his pain. And agony. And he still has this. Language. Of this intimate. Relationship. Commitment.

[13:13] To the father's will. A trust. In him. And this is what we're called. To engage with. This is the great. Spiritual. Exercise. That we're called.

To commit ourselves to. To be committed. To God's will. In our lives. That's hard. Because you've got. Your own plan.

And I've got. My own plan. But God. Got a different plan. And this is the challenge. Of the garden. Which we're called. We are going to follow. Is it the kingdom of God.

Or the kingdom of self. Is it my will. Or his will. That's to be done. And it calls us. To trust. And to commit.

The challenge. Of course. In verse 23. Is your life. Not more than food. Is your body. Not more. Than clothing. Verse 25. Can you add. A single hour.

[14:12] To your life. You've got your own plans. And what it is. Is. You're wanting something. That's not yours. Want that food. Want these clothes. Want an extra hour.

Want an extra day. Want extra years. From my life. Want to go on a different path. In a different way. On a different plan. And rather. We've been called. To sacrifice these things.

To sacrifice. The covetous spirit. That is holding us back. And keeping us in bondage. When there is freedom. To ensure. That even though.

Things may be difficult. And even though. We may wish. That we had. Different possessions. Different circumstances. Different life.

A different identity. The reality is. We're called. To find that same. Place. That Paul himself said.

[15:08] By the grace of God. I am what I am. This is where God. Has placed you friend. This is where you are. This is where you live.

He's calling you. To follow him. He's calling you. And so. We're to find our identity. With him. Not following the pattern.

Of the world. No wonder the world. Is covetous. Because it's not satisfied. It can't find contentment. It doesn't matter. What it amasses.

In terms of possessions. Things. It's never enough. There's still this. Great. Empty void. But the Christian.

Is different. Jesus says to his disciples. In that great upper room. As he prepares them. As he's to depart. And to face the cross. He says.

[16:02] My peace. I leave with you. Friend. You've got peace. A peace. This world. Doesn't understand. A peace.

At the very core. Of your being. There's a place. Where you find contentment. Contentment. With who you are.

Contentment. With what's going on. Contentment. With the father's will. And so.

Believing. Is different. Believing. Is different. To the world. Believing. Is different. Because you think. And you act. And you speak differently.

Everything is different. Your life is transformed. You are being renewed. Everything has changed. Everything. Has changed.

[16:57] And you're called. To trust. Verse 30. Your father knows. What you need. Verse 32. Fear not little flock. It's your father's. Good pleasure. To give you.

The kingdom. You're called. To trust. In your heavenly father. Father. What do you think about. When you hear these words. What do you think about. When somebody mentions.

God to you. What do you imagine. God to be like. God is good. God is good.

Isn't that what we're affirming. God is good. The benevolent. Heavenly father. He cares for us. He loves us.

He gives us everything. That is necessary. Isn't this what Paul says. In Romans. If he gave his son. Will he not give you. All things. Why would he withhold.

[17:55] Something from you. He loves you. You are part of his. Little. Flock. His care. And concern. For you.

The great. Wonderful. And beautiful. Language. We have here. Even Jesus himself. Teaches us. This is how you pray. Our father. Our father.

Maybe for some people. Their relationship. With their. Earthly father. Was not a good one. Or maybe it was a good one. But this heavenly father. Is different. Benevolent.

And kind. And caring. God is good. God is good to us. And this is.

Where we find contentment. In him. Not in our circumstances. Not in our things. Not in our positions.

[18:54] Or our possessions. But in him. And he cares. And he loves. And Jesus calls us.

To make sacrifices. When we're following him. When we're following the father's will. When we're following Jesus. The sacrifices. Of self-denial.

And cross-bearing. But the sacrifice too. Of anxiety. Jesus is calling us. To surrender it. To give it over. And leave it there. I know what it's like.

We go there. In prayer. And we think. We're going to give this to God. Just a couple of hours later. It's back there again. He's calling us.

To make sacrifice. And to believe. In God's care. He gives you all things. You remember. Even what the psalmist says. In Psalm 127. And verse 2.

[19:57] He gives us beloved sleep. I'm sure. We've all had times. Where our anxiety. Has kept our sleep. From us.

Because we haven't given this over. To God. The promises. He'll give us sleep. He'll let us rest. In his care. And his commitment. And concern. For us. But he's calling us. To trust in him. To trust in his will.

We're often. Asking this question. What's God's will? You know. What God's will is. You're living it. You're living it. Every day.

God has a purpose. In your life. In every day. In every situation. In every relationship. You're in. God has a purpose. And a meaning. For where you are.

[20:51] He is calling you. To live. As the salt. And light. Of this world. As you're engaging. And meeting with people. As you're facing. Real life. The real world. And it's pain.

And hardship. And agony. And God's got a purpose. For you there. In that very moment. The purpose is to shine. To shine.

In a twisted. And crooked generation. To illuminate. This dark world. It can be difficult. It can be hard.

It can be heavy. And I'm sure. That you. Can probably say. I know little. Of your situation. And I know little. Of how hard it is. For you. And that's probably.

Very true. But I'm just here. To encourage you. With regards. To what the scripture. Is saying. And what Jesus himself. Is saying. And even. The example.

[21 : 47] Of. Of the apostles. You remember. In first. Peter. In chapter five. He says. Cast. All your cares. On him. He cares.

For you. You know. That scripture. But it's not enough. For us. To know these things. We're to live. By them. We're to respond.

To these things. We're to cast. All our cares. No matter. How heavy. And hard. The burden is. No matter. How difficult. Things are. You cast. Your care.

On him. On him. You sacrifice. Your anxiety. And you know. That God. Will meet you. God.

Will meet you. There. In verse. 24. How much. More value. Are you. Than the birds. Isn't this.

[22 : 42] Wonderful. That the God. Of heaven. Values you. He's put. A value. On your life. And he meets you.

In your need. In verse. 28. God. So clothes. The grass. Which is alive. Today. And tomorrow. Is thrown. Into the oven. How much more.

Will he clothe. You. How much more. Will he do this. For you. A benevolent. And caring. God. Who demonstrates.

And displays. His love. To you. He is doing this. Constantly. He is calling us. To engage. With this. It is the reality.

Of our day. To day. Experience. It is where. We are living. And in each. Situation. The call. Is to have. Faith. To trust.

[23 : 37] And hope. To believe. That God. Will meet me. That God. Knows. What I need. And God. Will provide. That he himself.

Will suffice. That he. Is. Enough. You remember. How. The disciples. Came. On that great day. To Jesus. And.

They looked at. These. Multitudes. Of people. Thousands. Of people. And Philip. Says. There's not enough. Food. To feed these people. It's just. Not enough.

Because. All Philip. Sees. As bread. And fish. And Jesus. Is calling him. To see the unseen. Jesus. Is calling him. To see the greater reality.

Jesus. Is calling him. To see. Who is there. With him. And not to be. Trusting. On his own.

Resources. On his own. Initiative. But to trust.

[24 : 33] On him. To trust. On Jesus. And to see. When we have him. It is enough. Enough. Because.

Little faith. Never. Says enough. Little faith. Says. I want something else. Little faith. Says. I want more. Little faith.

Says. I want different. Circumstances. Little faith. Says. I want a different. Situation. Little faith.

Says. I want more. Things. And Jesus.

Says. Why? Why? Why are we. Of little faith? Jesus. Rebukes. Little faith. He wants. To give you. More. He has given you.

His peace. And he is. Calling you. To learn. Contentment. And me. Also. That we would. Learn. This. And how. Do we do this?

[25 : 30] To surrender. Our anxiety. And to receive. That contentment. Well. It's Paul. That teaches us. This. In Philippians. Chapter 4. He tells us. To do this.

By prayerful. Sacrifice. Philippians 4. Verse 6. Do not be anxious. About anything. But in everything. By prayer.

And supplication. With thanksgiving. That your requests. Be made known. To God. And the peace. Of God. Which surpasses. All understanding. Will guard your hearts.

And your minds. In Christ Jesus. That's what the apostle. Says. He says. Don't be anxious. But in everything. By prayer. And supplication. With thanksgiving.

Let your requests. Be made known. To God. And then he goes on. In verse 11. To say. I am not speaking. Of being in need. I have learned. In whatever situation. I am.

[26 : 25] To be content. Content. I think this is. Can be quite a painful process. For us too. Learning.

Contentment. Finding the satisfaction. In every situation. Of the peace of God. That reigns. That it would reign. In our heart.

And reign. In our soul. So that we would stop. Holding on. To our problems. That we would stop. Insisting.

That things go my way. Not God's way. And that we would realize. That the great challenge. That we're facing. Is still that conflict. Between the kingdom of self.

And the kingdom of God. And we're being called. To follow God's way. And God's will. Not trusting. In our own resources. But realizing.

[27 : 22] That we're being called. To hope. The challenge. Of this chapter. Of course. Really begins. Well. It begins with. Hypocrisy. And then. It goes on. To speak of.

This great reality. Of having this hope. And no fear. And then. There is this parable. This interruption. As Jesus is speaking. He is interrupted. And then. There is the parable.

That speaks of. The challenge. Between the foolish. And the good. And there is this. Contrast. Here. Between. Eternal treasure. And temporary.

Treasure. And Jesus is challenging us. Here. In verses 33. And 34. To this great reality. Where is our heart? Where is our treasure? What is it? We're living for.

Are we just like that man. In the parable? Are we invested. In this world? Is the reason. We're losing sleep. At night. Because we're thinking. We need bigger barns.

[28 : 17] We're worried about. What's inside the barns. We're worried about. Our substance. And our possessions. Worried about. This world. And never saying. We have enough.

The challenge. Of verse 34. 33 and 34. Is. The challenge. Not to engage. In that kind of greed. Poured in these things. See the threat.

That they pose. Rather than. The trust. That we should have. In the Lord. Because God. Has created us. For something better. He's got a greater purpose.

For us. Than these things. That rust. Corrupt. Waste for the using. And created. For something far greater.

For the kingdom of God. Not the kingdom of self. And he's challenging us. Are we living for it? It's a great test.

[29 : 15] In our heart. How do you test. How somebody's. What somebody's living for? Well. One of the first things. He would look at was. The bank account.

What are we spending. Our money on? That's what's important to us. Something else. We spend. Our time. What do we spend. Our time on?

That's what's important. What we spend. These valuable. Commodities on. You see. Jesus isn't teaching. In verse 33. About neglect.

Or laxness. Or being destitute. In any way. The whole context is. The context of priority. What is our life. Fixed on? What's our life. About? What's really important.

To you. And to me. What is our treasure? Where is our heart? Is it something. That is abiding? Or is it something.

[30 : 11] That is temporary? Are our sleepless nights. About these barns? Our ■■■s. Or are we finding. The contentment. Old Welch. The contentment. And of our trust. And commitment.

Upon that. Eternal treasure. Have we found. What is worth. Finding. the great possession and the provision of Christ that has been given to us.

Fear not, little flock. It's your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. I think there is a challenge here in terms of how we deal with anxiety with regards to our faith.

A challenge in everything in life comes to our faith. It's the most important thing. It is who we are and our identity. And Jesus is calling us here to stop obsessing about what is temporary.

What's lasting is what's important. What's eternal. Our relationship with him. Our treasure in heaven.

[31 : 21] These are the things that do not fade away. And it's here for you and me. If we would just embrace these things and let go of the things that hold us back.

Paul speaks in that kind of language. Speaking of leaving behind every weight and sin. Not just sin, but everything that's an obstacle to him. He wants to leave it behind. Christ.

This great possession. This greatest thing of all. And your heavenly father. Is he not freely giving you all things? Is he not challenging you and calling you to possess these things?

To be able to be like the psalmist and say, I shall not want. I shall not want. Do we really know the assurance of the father's love for us?

Do we really know the assurance that the father knows what's best for us? And are we willing to make the sacrifice to walk this way?

[32 : 31] To face the challenge in our day to day. And the battle that is within. Battle that is within. The call to sacrifice anxiety.

To live by peace. And to know. What contentment is. May you and I likewise. Consider these things. And may the Lord bless us. In terms of what we've considered together. Let's pray together.

Gracious God. We come before you in confession of the many hours and days.

That we waste ourselves in. What is a futile exercise. Grant us Lord. Not of a little faith. But to increase in our faith. And to live out our faith. And it's practical observance.

In our day to day challenges. To be the people of God. To be the children of our father who is in heaven. To acknowledge and know that his way. Is what is best for us.

[33 : 30] Bless us then we pray. With a renewed desire to know more of him. To be encouraged by the great wonder of. Even the apostle. In a prison in Rome.

Himself. Kept apart from. This world's goods. Positions and possessions. And yet they are saying. I've learned to be content. Bless us then.

And forgive us. In Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.