

# Why God doesn't want you to worry

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, if you haven't guessed already after singing that song, that hymn, we're in Matthew chapter 6. And we're in the section of verse 25 through to verse 34.

And as you're making your way there, let me set the scene. And in verse 13, you'll notice that Jesus is speaking to three types of people in the Sermon of the Mount.

Three contrasts. He speaks of the religious. He speaks of the Gentiles. Do not be like the Gentiles who seek after these things. And then, of course, the people that he is speaking to are neither.

They're neither Gentile. They may be of Gentile origin. They're neither kingdom people. So, Jesus has just been saying, you know, lay up your treasures, but don't lay them up on earth.

Lay them up in heaven. Nothing wrong with laying up treasures. Just lay them up in heaven. And the reason is, is because nobody can serve two masters. Because if you try to serve two masters, you might fall in love with the wrong one.

[ 1 : 16 ] And that's devastating. Therefore, verse 25, 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?

And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. They neither tall nor spin. Yet I tell you, even Solomon in all of 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?

[ 2 : 26 ] 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 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. Well, may God bless his word. Now, we're going to come back to that.

But if you have your Bibles with you, please open them again to Matthew 6. Now, having been through the Sermon on the Mount before in the church here, when you look at it a second time, you're kind of embarrassed about what a poor job you made of it last time.

In rereading the Sermon on the Mount, I began to realize that there are some things that are quite difficult when it comes to reading it, and some things which are hard to put in its place in the world in which we live today.

[ 3 : 42 ] Now, you can arrive at the answers, but sometimes they take a lot of working out and a lot of explaining. This evening, however, we're going to focus on the main part of the part that we read, which is about how you, as a believer, can be released from anxiety.

Now, it's assuming that believers have anxieties. It's also teaching that there is no reason for a believer to have anxieties.

But the anxieties spoken of here have a detrimental effect other than just giving you perhaps an ulcer.

Now, there are some people who worry so much, it might be said, that their hair fall out. I don't think mine fell out because I was worried, but when it kept falling out, I began to worry.

But no, not too much. The kind of anxieties spoken of here are very specific, and this is one of the issues that we need to get to. I've often said before that God answers prayers, and people say, you

know, well, what about when God doesn't answer all of our prayers?

[ 4 : 58 ] And there is that kind of tension with God. Well, if I do everything that God wants me to, then these things should follow. And the reason people are allowed to think like that is because the Bible does teach that, and it does teach it here.

And therefore, it must be taken seriously. Not everything can be reduced down to, well, you know, if the Lord wants me to have it, He will give it to me.

The reason being is this, that sometimes believers only get God's will if they have prayed for it.

And sometimes God gives it at a much later date than when they have actually began to pray.

And why God does that, there's a number of reasons. I call it the sense of humor of God's sovereignty, which would take some explaining. But God sometimes does things that you just have to laugh because you know that it's His sovereignty at work.

[ 6 : 08 ] Well, Jesus is teaching here the reason for not to be anxious, and then why you shouldn't be anxious because of the detrimental effect that it has.

Jesus then goes on to say that He demands us not to be anxious, therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow. And that's spoken from the perspective of the kingdom of God.

So this is one of the things we need to do as we begin. You this evening are living in the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is growing on earth.

And worry shouldn't be found in God's kingdom. Anxiety should not be found in the kingdom of God.

Now, what I'm not going to do is go into all the reasons why a person suffers from anxiety. There are plenty. No personal structure or a bad structure, you know, to their life.

[ 7 : 05 ] No clear rules. All of these things can add to a person's anxiety. But the list is endless.

What we're going to address here is the type of anxiety that comes from living in this world in particular, when it comes to living in this world with God.

Because atheists have worries. But the worry here stops us from doing something that we don't see, because we're worried about other things.

Now, those who really want to follow God will be blessed by God. There's the promise. And those who will be blessed by God will be blessed by God in God's way, not in their own way.

And there's the condition. And some people will say, well, there are no conditions in the New Testament. There are actually quite a few. But they're not conditions in the sense of conditional love or conditional this.

They're conditions in the sense that, you know, you have not because you've asked not. You know, you can't expect to have something if the only way to get it is in answer to prayer.

[ 8 : 15 ] And if you have not prayed, then you have not because you have asked not. Well, that's a condition. That's something that a believer must fulfill. Well, the same is true here.

Here, seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and then all these things will be added unto you. And too often, we want the added unto you without having to go through the seeking first.

Okay? We want the added unto you without having to go through the seeking first. We want the prize at the end of the finish line without having to run the race. We want the medal at the top of the hill without having to climb the hill.

And what God is saying here is that those blessings do come, but notice where they come. They come at the end of seeking first the kingdom and his righteousness.

So, we need to understand a couple of other things before we get into a summary. Here's the first one. That the work of Jesus is what's called vicarious work, which means that when Jesus saves you, you did nothing to get saved.

[ 9 : 25 ] He did it all for you. No work is required on your part. You need to do nothing. He does it all for you. But when God the Spirit comes into your life, his work is often cooperative.

In other words, if you, by the Spirit, put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. In other words, as you live in cooperation with the Holy Spirit, you will live.

As you live in cooperation with the Holy Spirit, your life will produce the fruit of the Holy Spirit. In other words, while Jesus does it for you, the Holy Spirit doesn't. Okay?

While Jesus does it for you, the vicarious death of Jesus Christ on the cross, I will do this for you.

The Holy Spirit doesn't do it for you. Now, the Holy Spirit does much on his own, but a lot of the Spirit's work is for you to cooperate with.

So, if you, by the Spirit, put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. In other words, the deeds of the body will not be put to death unless you make a conscious effort in your walk with the Holy Spirit to put them to death.

[10:36] And that really must be understood. We cannot blame the Holy Spirit for not being different. Because the Holy Spirit is saying back to us, well, I'm doing my part.

What about you? Now, that must be understood, especially as we come to a passage like this, where Jesus is clearly teaching us to seek first the kingdom of God.

He's not saying that it will be done for us. He's asking us to do it. And therefore, we must know what it looks like to seek first the kingdom. In other words, if I can put it slightly a different way, Jesus is Lord.

I am convinced that all of you believe that statement. I really do believe that all of you believe that statement. But I'm not fully convinced that necessarily everyone in the church here knows what that means.

And Jesus doesn't want us just to believe a statement, which happens to be true. But he wants us to know what that statement means so that we're able to follow it.

[11:46] So, I don't want you just to believe the statement, seek ye first the kingdom of God. I want us all to know what it means. Because their belief should not rest on just believing statements of the Bible.

There's no forward motion there. We're believing in all the right things, don't get me wrong. But there's no progress. There's no movement. There's no, to put it in Christian terms, biblical.

There's no growth. There's just a belief in a statement. So, here's the summary of what Jesus is teaching here. Number one, Jesus has set the context by saying, you're allowed to lay up your treasures.

There's nothing wrong with laying up treasures. But make sure you understand where's the place to do it. Don't lay up your treasures on earth where moth and rust can destroy and thieves can break in and steal.

Rather, lay them up in heaven. Okay? So, Jesus has got nothing against you storing treasure. What he wants you to identify, though, is the type of treasure that needs to be kept and where it needs to be kept.

[12:52] Okay? The type of treasure which needs to be kept and where it needs to be kept. And the reason for this is because nobody can serve two masters. Nobody can serve God and money.

You cannot serve God in money for this simple reason. Either you believe God will take care of everything or you believe that you have to take care of 50% of it. Either you believe God will take care of everything or you believe that you must take care of it yourself.

And so, what happens is that you begin to serve money in order that money will serve you. And you Christianize it by saying, I'm being a good steward. Well, there's a limit to being a good steward. And that limit goes very, very quickly over into hoarding and then even quicker over into greed. It can get there very, very quickly.

You can start off with a very Christian motive and end up in greed even though your starting point was right. And the reason being is because the temptation of money or rather the love of money here can cause us to serve it.

[14:05] And God is saying, Jesus is saying, no one can serve two masters. You could fall in love with the wrong one and hate the wrong one. You could end up hating God and loving the master you shouldn't love in money.

No one can serve two masters. Therefore, do not be anxious about your life. Understand that God's going to take care of you. So, don't feel that you have to take care of yourself by laying up treasures yourself on earth.

And that's one of the reasons why people do it. I'm pretty convinced, according to the words of Jesus here, that one of the reasons anxiety exists in the life of people is because they don't believe 100% that God will care for them.

So, what they do is they store up things on earth in order to take care of themselves rather than live that type of life which Christ requires to deny ourselves, take up our cross, that sacrificial life which leaves us entirely vulnerable.

Because vulnerability happens when you have less money in the bank compared to quite a lot of money in the bank. My mum used to point out a man who used to walk around Snorstall in

Charlestown.

[ 15 : 23 ] He was quite a young man. He always used to walk around in shorts with this man bag before they were famous, allegedly, not that I have one. And I don't.

And this hat. And he used to walk around without a care in the world. And I used to say this to my mum. He's just, wherever he is, he just walks as though he's not got a single care in the world.

My mum said very wisely, yes, but he can afford to. He's got enough money to be able to walk around and not have the pressures of being at a job on time and all of this.

And so that kind of lifestyle can bring great comfort. Or the money can bring great comfort to you. The wrong kind of comfort, fair enough. But it can make life very, very easy. And God's aware of this. That material wealth, which you need, can give you comfort.

[ 16 : 26 ] And this is why God promises that he will add these things to you, but he will add these things to you in proportion to how much you're seeking him first.

And that's a crucial point here. The reason why people store up treasures on earth is because they have a hidden anxiety about tomorrow. They don't want to go all out because they don't know what tomorrow might bring.

And so what starts off as safeguarding and just a little bit of wise stewardship ends up eventually in greed for some people.

Not for all people, but for some people. And Jesus spoke about this, addressing the Christian in this way, when he said the good seed, do you remember the parable of the four soils and the seed?

And you'll notice, if you read the parable carefully, that only one seed in the soil produces abundant fruit. The others disappear.

[ 17 : 30 ] The only thing is the others don't disappear. Only two disappear. The other one's still there. And this is what Jesus had to say. He said, it's like the good seed sown on the ground, only for then to be choked out by the cares of the world.

And the image that Jesus Christ is giving us here is a plant that is barely alive, but is being choked out by the weeds around it.

And Jesus is sort of picturing this person who is trying to seek first the kingdom of God, but failing miserably. Where he or she is trying to live for God, but their anxiety is so great, the cares of the world is choke out their commitment and their devotion to God.

In other words, their anxiety about normal things actually have a negative effect on bearing fruit for summary. Here's the summary in short.

That God will make good on his promises. That God will take care of those who seek first his kingdom.

[ 18 : 44 ] And God will always take care of those who seek first him. But anxiety destroys you in a way that it's like a slow death.

It's that parable. You're being strangled out by the cares of the world. You're just worrying about everything as if God can't take care of it.

And that's a problem. To worry about things to the extent where God can't take care of it. Let me put it a slightly different way. Let's say God gave you a skill, a particular skill.

Let's say of an artist. And you realize that you have this gift of being an artist and now you're going to have to make your living being an artist. The danger would be to trust in the gift that God has given you to provide the income rather than trusting in the God who gives you your income.

And it's very easy to mistake the two. To love the gift more than the giver. To trust in the gift more than the person who gave you the gift.

[ 20 : 00 ] And the reason that we do that is we realize that we have these things, we have these skill sets, I must make good on them, and then we begin to trust in them. And that's when we're serving mamma.

Because we're trusting in those things to create change tomorrow. We're trusting in those things so that we don't have any worries tomorrow. And God is saying, I've given you those things to benefit your life, to bless your life, but I've never gave them for you to trust in them.

I give you money, but not to serve it. I give you money so that you can buy stuff with, food, clothes, and everything that you need. But the danger is when you begin to trust in the things that God has given you rather than in the God who gave them to you.

And Job understood that when he said the Lord gives and he takes away. Job understood. Here's a few observations then to be made as we go through. The moment you realize you live in the

kingdom and you don't just believe the statement, but you believe the reality, you actually experience the reality, you're going to have to see things differently because the kingdom demands you see things differently.

And one of the things you begin to see differently is that blessing and demands always go side by side. God is making here a demand that you seek first his kingdom. But then right alongside the demand, he offers you the blessing.

[ 21 : 27 ] Seek first the kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be added unto you. In other words, God understands your psychology. He understands that not only do you need to hear what you need to do, you need to have the assurance beforehand before you do it.

So God is saying here, seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all of these things will be added unto you. What things? What things will be added unto you?

Well, we'll get to that bit in a minute. Jesus knows that you're going to worry or you could worry about what you'll eat, what you'll drink, what you'll clothe yourselves, where you'll live. And of course, this is different for different people.

This is different for different people. Okay? I'm at a stage where I could possibly worry about where I'm going to live when I retire. Okay? But those of you who are already retired, okay, that's, God's answered that for you.

But the issue's the same. Okay? I don't have reason to worry about it just because you've got the solution that I haven't yet got. But you can understand how easily it could happen.

[ 22 : 41 ] The other thing to notice here is that the assurance that God gives, he always gives alongside the demand as well. So this is how he puts it.

Seek first. There's the demand. The demand is that you seek him first, the kingdom first. Here's the assurance, and all these things will be added unto you.

There's the assurance. It will happen. And when they have been added unto you, there's the blessing. So the demand, the assurance, and the blessing are all found in this one statement.

And we need to hear that. I need to know that if I'm going to follow God, that God isn't going to back out 50 yards down the road.

Now, I only know that God won't back out 50 yards down the road or a couple of years down the road because he's proven himself through many people difference lies who are his, that he hasn't done it and that he won't do it.

[ 23 : 46 ] And that's why I can trust him. Because God doesn't do that type of thing. There's also something else here to notice, another observation to make, and that there is an important difference here between that having no worries and having no trouble is not the same thing.

Having no worries and having no troubles are not the same thing. What Jesus is teaching here is a solution for how you can be released from anxiety but not necessarily the trouble.

Okay? Jesus is saying, look, in trouble, there's no need to worry. Okay? What Jesus is offering here is not the trouble you face, a solution to the trouble you face, but rather a solution to the anxiety you feel despite whether or not there's trouble that comes with it.

Each day, Jesus says, has enough trouble all by itself without you adding to it with your worry. So there's a few observations.

The demands, the assurance, and the blessings go hand in hand and that in that, what God is concerned about is releasing you from anxiety, not necessarily the trouble that comes with living in this fallen world.

[ 25 : 07 ] We live in a world where there's always going to be trouble. The question is, are we going to worry about it or not? So releasing you from anxiety.

God wants you to release, you to be released from anxiety for a very simple reason. And the reason is this, is because if you are not released from anxiety and you're still worried about your security and you're still worried about a number of other things, you are not wholly devoted to him.

You cannot be. God doesn't want you to be released from anxiety just because he doesn't want you to worry. There's a much bigger reason to it here.

God doesn't want you to worry because it stops you from trusting him. Anxiety stops you from seeking first the kingdom because you're always worried about if I do, then what about this?

You're always worried about making that demand a reality in your life because of what the cost that it will demand of you. So what Jesus is saying or what rather he is pointing out is that if you are going to be a person that really does seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, a person

that is wholly devoted to God, then you must be a person who is anxiety free because the anxious person is caught up in their anxiety.

[ 26 : 47 ] Jesus doesn't want you just to be released from your worry because it's not doing you any good. Jesus wants you to be released from anxiety because you are unable to be completely devoted to him and that's the issue.

The reason Jesus will release you from anxiety is so that being released from anxiety, you're able to give yourself wholly and completely to God.

Let me put it this way. Imagine a pastor, okay, who is in a position where, you know, he's on the, a few years down the line he has to retire and he's got nowhere to live.

And imagine that pastor begins to worry about it so much that he thinks, I know what I'll do, is I'll get a second job and of course the pastor would probably have to ask permission of the congregation and with the second job I'll be able to put the money away in a pension and then I'll have this sort of, well, what is it?

Is it security? Just because I'm able to put a little bit of money into a bigger pension to secure it and then maybe it will mature enough for me to be able to have a house at the end of it.

[ 28 : 10 ] What do you think begins to happen? What do you think is the first question that the congregation is going to ask of that pastor? It's obvious, is it not?

Can he do two things? Can he do both? Can he really be devoted to two things? Now, of course, pastors like I am here are supported well enough to not have to worry about that.

But in some cases, that may not be the case for some pastors. But here it's not a worry. But that would be the first, and that's exactly the pressure that you ought to feel here when God talks about anxiety in your life.

Can you really do both? Can you really worry and seek me at the same time? Can you really do both? And you'll go, just like the pastor.

Of course I can. Got the time, got the energy, got the... Right? But there's always the nagging question. Why? Because we all know that the single devotion has now been divided into two separate devotions.

[ 29 : 25 ] And that's what God is asking of the church. Are you going to be totally devoted to me? Because if you are, I need to release you from the anxiety that you feel. And the way that I'm going to release you from your anxiety is by getting you first to seek first the kingdom.

And secondly, by me adding all these things unto you. That's how I'm going to do it. Okay? But you go first. And there's the step of faith.

So here's the exhortation as we sort of bring it to a close. There is a big difference between having no worries and having no troubles. What Jesus is promising here is that there is a way to live the Christian life where you can live it in such a way where you can be free from anxiety.

And the way to be free from anxiety is not to let go and let God, but it is rather to seek God first in all things. Seek his kingdom maturity in all things.

In other words, does this look like a kingdom decision? Buying this house, does that look like a kingdom decision? Doing this job, does that look like a decision that will enable me to grow in the kingdom and proclaim the kingdom?

[ 30 : 44 ] Does that look... And of course, if you're not asking those questions, not only is there an issue with your understanding of the kingdom, but there's also a larger issue of whether or not you can be wholly devoted to God.

So there's a big difference between having no troubles and having no anxiety. God wants to release us from anxieties so that we are able to give ourselves wholly and completely to God.

God's sake brings us to one conclusion in particular and it's really the only conclusion that you can arrive at. And it's this, that Jesus Christ takes care of those who seek first his kingdom.

But he does not take care of those who don't. That may sound a little bit harsh, but that is what Jesus is saying.

That Jesus takes care of those who seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and for them all these things will be added unto them. And for those who don't, they won't.

[ 32 : 01 ] And that may be a harsh reality. But to be honest, it's no more difficult than some of the phrases you get elsewhere in the Testament where it says, well, if you don't work, you don't eat.

If you're not willing to contribute, not earn money, but if you're not willing to contribute, you can't come and sit at the table and enjoy everybody else's contribution.

You just can't do it. That's not the way the kingdom works. Here's the conclusion then. God wants us to live a life that pleases him and the life that pleases him is a life that doesn't worry.

And that's said to a bunch of people who are worrying. And God promises a solution to their worries. And the solution is this, that you go first.

You go first. Seek first the kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be added unto you. You mustn't treat Jesus like your five-year-old best friend who used to say to you, you go first.

[ 33 : 09 ] No, you go first. And you would then say to him, well, if I go first, how do I know you'll go? Right? And sometimes we treat God like that as if, well, if I jump, are you going too?

Well, I'll jump and then you won't. I had a friend. He's still my friend. In fact, he's more than a friend because he's a relation who's a Christian. And a few years ago, we agreed to buy the Ten Commandments on tape from America.

And it was a bit expensive and it was going back a long time because they were going to, they did five commandments at the beginning of the year. They're going to do another, the remaining five at the end of the year.

And to ship the tapes over from America was a little bit pricey and of course, it was good stuff. And I said, well, I'll buy the first five, you buy the second five.

And it was his idea to go halves on the full Ten Commandments. Bearing in mind, we're talking about the Ten Commandments here. Okay? I can't stress how important that is. So I said to him, fine, we'll go 50-50, I'll buy the first five, you buy the second five and that'll be great.

[ 34 : 18 ] And of course, I bought the first five and I said, well, you know, they've arrived at your house, why don't you listen to them first and then pass them off onto me and then later in the year, come October, you can buy the second five.

No problem. Well, he listened to them and found them difficult. So guess what? That's called sin. And for the sake of the tape, I will not mention his name.

God's not like that. God is not asking you to go first and then he goes, I'm not sure now. I don't think I can go through with it.

No, God is asking you to go first. He is demanding you to go first but remember, his demands always come with assurances and blessings. Okay? Every single one of God's demands are always followed by assurances and blessings.

So seek first his kingdom. And his righteousness. And when you do, you will find the surprising joy of being released from anxiety.

[ 35 : 26 ] It'll just, you think, wow, it is a surprising joy to be released from anxiety. And when you are, the knock-on effect is that you'll find that your life has already begun a deeper devotion to God only thus to be improved by the absence of anxiety.

Amen. Amen. Amen.