

Do Not Be Anxious

Matthew 6:25-34

Rev. Tobias Riggs

November 9, 2025

It's great to see everyone here this morning. For those of you who don't know, my name is Tobias. I'm the Associate Pastor here at Christ the King, and once again it's my privilege to get to open God's Word for us this morning as we continue with our study of the Sermon on the Mount. And last week we looked at Matthew chapter 6:19-24, and if you were with us, you'll remember that this is where Jesus told his disciples not only to store up treasures in heaven, but more than that, he told them that they cannot serve two masters. They cannot serve both God and money. They had a choice to make, and of course the choice was a clear one. Disciples of Jesus, kingdom people, must choose to serve God and God alone. Well, as Jesus continues teaching in our passage this morning, we're going to hear him begin with the word "therefore" and of course, this tells us that what he's about to say flows directly from what he's just said. In fact, what I think we're going to see is that Jesus is now anticipating a question, a question that naturally is arising from his disciples' resolve to listen to him, and to choose God as their master, and therefore to place their source of security in heaven and not on earth.

You see, it's not hard for me to imagine that their resolve to serve God rather than money was already beginning to waver, and they'd begun thinking to themselves something like, "okay, Jesus, we understand. We know that we must serve God and no other, but who's going to take care of us on a day-to-day basis here on earth if we are called to be so heavenly-minded?" And you know, on the surface, it sounds like a good practical question, doesn't it? I mean, we all have daily needs that need to be met, and the disciples were no different, but in the context, Jesus understood that any such question wasn't an innocent one. No, it betrayed a lack of trust in God as their provider, and so he directs his attention to address it and to give his disciples a picture of the provision of the Lord that they desperately needed to hear, and I think you and I need to hear as well, and so I invite you to open your copy of God's Word to Matthew 6, if you haven't already, and we'll be looking at verses 25 through 34. This is God's Word.

"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? And 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. 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? 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 all 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." (ESV)

Friends, this is the Word of the Lord. Let's pray.

O heavenly Father, we bow before you, grateful that we can meet here today together to praise you, to lift your name on high, to read your Word openly, and to be fed by it, and that's what we ask, Lord, that you will feed us by your Word. We ask that by your Spirit you will open our eyes, that you will unplug our ears, that you will attune our hearts to what you have to teach us today. Remind us, Lord, remind us that you are our heavenly Father and our great Provider. Oh, Father, may the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight. O Lord, my rock and my Redeemer. Amen.

Well, since last week Penny opened with a reference from Tolkien, one of those great inklings, I thought I'd follow suit and begin with something from one of their other members, little known guy, C.S. Lewis. One of my favorite books he wrote is *The Screwtape Letters*. And as I know many of you know, in *The Screwtape Letters*, Lewis imagines rather daringly a sort of diabolical mentorship taking place through an exchange of letters between this senior devil, or really a demon, named Screwtape, and his young nephew and protege, the lowly Wormwood, who's been given the task of tempting and deceiving a recently converted Christian young man known only as The Patient. And if you've never read it, I highly recommend it. I know that at least one of our community groups has used it in their discussions. Anyway, in the sixth letter, Screwtape writes to Wormwood, he gives him the following advice. And before I read it, keep in mind in the twisted upside-down world Lewis is imagined, when he uses the word enemy, since it's the devil, Screwtape, who's supposed to be writing the letter, it's a reference to God.

So listen to Screwtape's advice. He says “this, my dear Wormwood, I am delighted to hear that your patient's age and profession make it possible, but by no means certain, that he will be called up for military service. We want him to be in the maximum uncertainty so that his mind will be filled with contradictory pictures of the future, every one of which arouses hope or fear. There is nothing like suspense and anxiety for barricading a human's mind against the enemy. He wants men to be concerned with what they do. Our business is to keep them thinking about what will happen to them.” Friends, what do you think? What do you think about Screwtape's advice? Have you ever thought about Satan's temptations in this way? That it's his business to keep us thinking about what will happen to us so that he can barricade us against our Lord? I have to confess, I don't know how often, at least on a practical level, I consider this. Instead, I think I'm much more prone to think it's Satan's business to hit me with more obvious frontal attacks, like actively tempting me to lie or lust or gossip or hate. But this, this, I think, is a much more subtle strategy, one that draws on our natural, oftentimes good instincts for self-preservation. And it aims at keeping us from questioning if there's anything wrong with our preoccupation with what the future holds.

And because of this, I think it's a strategy that not only leaves us particularly vulnerable to Satan's attacks, but I also think it's a strategy that he employs often. Because he thinks in his desperate self-deception that it'll yield him victory. After all, if the Lord's people are consumed with worry about their own survival, how much good can they do for the Lord's kingdom? And you know, I think it's a pretty good strategy. After all, we as human beings are kind of consumed with worry, aren't we? Just think about it for a moment. Story after story on our news feeds tap into it. Social media enables us to become voyeurs to the worries of others, or to indulge our own worries and broadcast them to the world through our posts. Politicians capitalize on our worries to garner their constituencies. Worry infiltrates our family rhythms and interactions, especially as we seek to care for our children. And worry even fuels culture and the arts that we consume on a daily basis.

I mean, take for example the hugely popular, at least for some, genre of dystopian novels - stories whose settings are almost always a grim and dark future world. Books like *Fahrenheit 451*, *1984*, *A Brave New World*, *The Children of Men*, *The Hunger Games*, or movies like *The Matrix* or *Blade Runner*. I don't know about you, but stories like these are ones I've been drawn to since I was a kid. I just recently reread, I don't know how many times now, Ernest Cline's *Ready Player One*, which paints a bleak picture of a global energy crisis and a struggle between the haves and have-nots in the not too distant future. Now don't hear what I'm not saying. Dystopian stories are not from the devil. But why are they so popular? Why are they so successful? Well, I think they tap into our worries. And I think they tap into two things in particular that we struggle with on some level. You see, if we're honest, I think we all fear the uncertainty of the future. And, to a greater or lesser extent, I think we all think that the shape of the future is somehow in our hands to control. And so in the midst of our fears, we trust ourselves or we trust others. But, because we know our own or others' limitations, or because we recognize the fallen state of the world, we worry. We worry what will happen to us.

You know, it was really no different with Jesus's disciples. You see, it's not that here in this passage they were merely concerned with responsibly providing for their own and their family's welfare, for their food and shelter. If they had been, there wouldn't have been anything to object to. After all, this is good. This is right for us to do. Just think of the passages in Proverbs that direct us to look to the ant and its diligence. Or to the portrait of Lady Wisdom in Proverbs 31, who tirelessly and industriously provides for her family. Nothing wrong with that. No, Jesus's disciples weren't simply concerned with faithful planning and provision. They'd fallen prey to worry, which revealed a fundamental lack of trust in the Lord's provision. This is why we hear Jesus address them as, O you of little faith, in verse 30. We need to pay attention to that. And this is why we hear him say three times in the space of this small passage, in verses 25, 31 and 34, "do not be anxious." "Do not worry."

I think we need to be careful here. You see, I think it'd be easy for us to hear Jesus' command here, "do not be anxious", as a mere self-help technique. Almost as if he were doing little more than peddling the callous and out-of-touch advice of the fictional psychologist, Bob Newhart. You might remember his skit, where he famously told this poor woman who'd come to him, hoping for help in overcoming her slew of irrational fears and worries. What did he say to her? He said two words to her: "Stop it." Just stop it. Is that what Jesus is doing here? No. You see, the solution to our problem with worry isn't self-help. What we need, and what Jesus's disciples needed, is something that will turn our attention off of ourselves, and away from our misguided sense of control. Something that will nurture within us a deep and daily trust in the Lord's provision. And friends, this is precisely what Jesus gives us in this passage.

And I think in particular, there are three ways he does this. First, he illustrates the character of God and our value to him. Second, he undermines the power of worry and exposes its root cause. And finally, he reminds us of our calling. So, let's start with the first one. How does Jesus, in this passage, illustrate the character of God and our value to him? Well, basically, he just directs his disciples to consider what they knew, both about the natural order and about the work of God. Notice what he says in verse 26. He says, "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?" Take a look at verses 28-30. He says, "and 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. But if God sow 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?" Friends, do you see what he's doing here? On the one hand, Jesus is simply underscoring the Lord's sovereign, powerful, and creative care for his creation. And this wasn't something new. This was something that was well known and cherished within the Jewish community. In fact, Psalm 104 is a hymn sung in praise of the Lord's providential care. Just think about some of the things that that psalm says. "You, Lord, cause the grass to grow for the livestock. The trees of the Lord are watered abundantly. In them, birds build their nests. O Lord, how manifold are your works. In wisdom have you made them all. The earth is full of your creatures. These all look to you to give them their food in due season. When you give it to them, they gather it up. When you open your hand, they are filled with good things." It's beautiful.

But Jesus wasn't just reminding the disciples of the Lord's providential care. Instead, he was making an argument from the lesser to the greater. He was urging his disciples, in the midst of their anxiety about the future, to see their value and to connect the dots. It's almost as if he were saying to them, "My dear friends, you know that the Lord takes care of the birds. You know that he's the one who's clothed these beautifully grassy hillsides all around us. Don't you know that you're worth far more to the Lord than all of these things? He's fed them. He's adorned them. Surely he'll do the same for you. Stop worrying. You have nothing to fear." You know, in this light, it's striking to me that twice in this passage, in verses 26 and 32, Jesus uses the phrase, "your heavenly father." Did you catch that? You see, it's striking to me because I think it highlights a fundamental reason for their anxiety about the future.

They lost sight of their relationship with the Lord, that he was their heavenly father, and that they were his beloved children. In a couple of weeks, we'll hear Jesus say in Matthew 7:11, "if you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him?" Friends, in the midst of their fears and worry, the disciples had lost sight of this, and they needed a rich and powerful reminder of their value and of the character of the Lord, and so do we. Well, the second way Jesus encourages us to stop worrying in this passage is by undermining the power of worry and exposing its root cause. Take a look at verse 27. He says this, "and which of you, by being anxious, can add a single hour to his span of life?" Corrie Ten Boom once said that "worry is a cycle of inefficient thoughts whirling around a center of fear." Think about that for a moment. I think she's got it exactly right, and I think it captures Jesus's point here. You see, Jesus' words in verse 27, they seem to reveal that the disciples were ultimately fearing death, and so they'd begun to worry about it. Could worry add to their life? Jesus understood that worrying's not the answer. It accomplishes nothing. It's powerless to affect what we want, and it certainly can't extend our lives. No, our lives are in the Lord's hands.

After all, listen to what the psalmist says again in Psalm 104. He says, "Lord, when you hide your face, they are dismayed. When you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust." We can't save ourselves by worrying. It's powerless, but Jesus doesn't just undermine the power of worry. He exposes its root cause. Notice what he says in verses 31 and 32. He says, "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 all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all." So how does this expose the root cause of worry? Well, I think we need to focus on the fact that Jesus says it's the Gentiles who worry about these things. You see, although the Gentiles were religious, they didn't worship the one true God. Instead, they worshiped idols, gods of their own making, who were ultimately powerless to affect any good

in their lives. In fact, this was the prophet Habakkuk's point when he said in chapter 2, verses 18 and 19, "what prophet is an idol when its maker has shaped it? A metal image, a teacher of lies, for its maker trusts in his own creation when he makes speechless idols. Woe to him who says to a wooden thing, awake, to a silent stone arise. Can this teach? Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all in it."

You see, the Gentiles busied themselves with worry because they worshiped powerless idols. And so here, I think Jesus is exposing idolatry as the root cause of worry, and giving his disciples a not-so-subtle warning about going down that path. Richard France puts it this way. He says, "the Gentiles are men without God. Such men have no knowledge of a heavenly father, and so they have no antidote to anxiety and a consequent materialism in their outlook." You see, the Gentiles had no other option. Apart from turning to Jesus, the Gentiles had no other option than to worry about providing for themselves. And here, Jesus wanted his disciples to see the futility of such pursuits, and the danger that awaited them were they to follow in the same idolatrous path of worrying. But friends, he also wanted to remind them of the security that they already possessed as those who were in the loving hands of their heavenly father, who knew all their needs.

The last thing I think Jesus urges us, the last way he urges us not to worry in this passage, I think is by calling us to remember our calling. Three times we've heard him give the negative command, "do not be anxious." But in verse 33, he gives a positive one. Verse 33 says this, "but seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." Friends, this is the antidote to worry. And in many ways, I think it's just Jesus's way of simply reminding us to embrace our calling as kingdom people. But what does that look like? How do we, here and now, on a practical level, seek his kingdom and his righteousness? How do we do that?

Well, for starters, I think it means that we take our eyes off of ourselves and put our trust in Jesus, who has already ushered in the kingdom of God, and who began his ministry proclaiming what? Proclaiming good news to the poor, liberty to the captives, and the year of the Lord's favor. This is how he started his ministry. Friends, if we begin with this, what is there ever to worry about? But beyond this, I think seeking his kingdom and his righteousness also means that we take seriously what we've already heard Jesus say from the very beginning of this Sermon on the Mount. And so it means things like this. It means that we consider our spiritual poverty a blessing, not a curse, and not something to worry about. That we extend mercy and pursue peace, and that we hunger and thirst for righteousness. It means that we love our enemies, even when they've wronged us, and we're not concerned about the consequence. It means that we give generously to those in need, since we trust in the Lord's provision, and we don't worry about our money. It means that we value the Lord's kingdom above all else, like the merchant who sold all he had to buy that pearl of great price. And it means that we pray fervently for the Lord's heavenly kingdom to be manifest here on earth. Thy kingdom come, Lord.

And friends, although Jesus says that in embracing this calling, "all these things will be added to you," we need to keep in mind that he's not promising us a life free from hardship. After all, one of the first things he said in this sermon is, "blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake." And what's more, later on in Matthew's gospel, he's going to say, "if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." Friends, he's not promising us a life free from hardship, but he is promising us that our loving

Heavenly Father will take care of us, giving us the things he alone knows we need, according to his infinite wisdom and in his perfect timing. This is why we need not worry.

Well, in light of all this, perhaps it's surprising to you the way Jesus ends this passage in verse 34. I mean, it kind of sounds like a downer to wrap it up with, sufficient for the day is its own trouble, doesn't it? But friends, I think to see it this way is really to miss the point. You see, Jesus' focus here really isn't on the trouble. In light of our fallen world, he just takes it, its inevitability for granted. Instead, his focus is once again on turning us away from worrying and onto the Lord, whose grace is more than sufficient to overcome the troubles of each and every day, but only as they come to us and only as we trust him for his daily provision. Corrie ten Boom once said, "worrying is carrying tomorrow's load with today's strength, carrying two days at once. It's moving into tomorrow ahead of time. Worrying doesn't empty tomorrow of its troubles, it empties today of its strength." And again, I think she's exactly right. You see, to move into tomorrow ahead of time, with our worry, is both to presume that tomorrow will come for us, and friends, we can't know that, and it's also to ignore, perhaps even to be ungrateful for, the Lord's gracious provision for today.

So friends, what is it that makes you feel like you can't trust the Lord's provision? And you need to worry about what's going to happen to you instead. I know, I know that many of us are suffering greatly, and I can't honestly say that I know what it's like to walk in your shoes, and to experience the enormity of the daily challenges you are facing. But friends, I know this, if you've put your trust in Jesus, if you've turned to Him in repentance and faith, friends, you are part of the Lord's family. You are a beloved child of the King, and you have a trustworthy, capable, powerful, heavenly Father who's calling you not to worry, but to cast all your anxieties on Him, because He cares for you. Let's pray.

Almighty God, we bow before you. Oh Father, we pray and confess our worry. We confess that we so often take our eyes off of you, you alone who provide for our needs, and we worry. Oh Father, keep us from that. Remind us that you are our powerful, loving, heavenly Father, and that you take care of all that we need. Help us to trust you, Lord. And we pray all this in the precious name of Jesus. Amen.