

"No Worries" Matthew 6:25-34

Wednesday 8/7/19 – Jeff Lyle

There may be no greater commonality for human beings than our capacity to experience the activity and emotion of anxiety. Most of us have a worry impulse within us. We have a potential to worry about a whole host of things that comprise our lives on earth. Jesus did not ignore this reality and in this portion of His Sermon on the mount, He addresses this unhealthy reflex that lurks in most of us. Christians are not immune to worry, but we certainly do not need to tolerate it in our lives. Jesus reveals the weapon against worry, and it is within the arsenal of every one of His followers. In this message, Jesus invites us into a regular pattern of living that contains no lasting worries.

I. Jesus Invites His Followers to Exit Worry (25)

A. Jesus gives us a command - "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life..."

Could this potentially be the most-often-disobeyed command from Jesus found anywhere in the Bible? While none of us would dismiss any moral command given to us by God, we tend to overlook this specific call from the Master to refuse to worry. Western Christians have far more than the original audience who heard these words from Jesus. What is interesting is that neither their relative poverty nor our relative prosperity serves to immunize us from the possibility of anxiety. We can worry about our health. We can worry about our wealth. We can fret over our pasts and experience anxiety about our futures. Even those of us who have confessed Jesus as our Lord and Savior can fall prey to different degrees of anxiety about what is happening in our lives. To all of us, Jesus declares that He desires our hearts to be anxiety-free zones. He literally commands us not to worry about things.

B. Jesus gives us clarification - "...what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on..."

Not to leave us with any lingering questions concerning what He was actually referencing, Jesus hits two specific needs that His original audience had to wrestle through. Those people lived in a hand-to-mouth reality where they depended upon God for their daily food. Survival was actually an essential matter for people who gathered to hear Jesus. There were no conveniences in His day. Food had to be grown or killed, therefore they were dependent upon God for things like weather to grow their crops and health for their livestock to produce milk, eggs and milk. Jesus also mentions the possibility of being anxious over clothing. Most people in Jesus' day would have owned and worn two primary garments. There would have been an undergarment and an outer garment. These garments were not luxuries but necessities. To lose one, outgrow one or have one irreparably damaged would make a large negative impact for adults. This negative potential could provide opportunity for over-caution, inward anxiety and outward

actions that exemplified that their fear of losing their essential garments was occupying their minds. Jesus simply commands these people not to worry over their necessities in life.

C. Jesus gives us a consideration - "...Is not life more than food, and the body than clothing?"

Jesus then reasons with His followers concerning their potential to worry over their material needs. He seems to be asking them to consider that there is far more to this life than moving day to day in hopes of having our physical needs met. In essence, Jesus is arguing from the greater to the lesser. If Jesus has committed as Savior and lord to give us the greater gift of life itself, is it not reasonable to believe that He will give the lesser things which sustain that life? He calls us to raise our aim and expect greater things than mere spiritual survival. He is asking them and us, **"Isn't there more than your most basic needs that you could be considering?"** We might do well to consider these three questions for our own lives when we are susceptible to worry and fear:

1. Are there not more lasting things than physical things?
2. Are there not more rewarding things than physical things?
3. Are there not more important things than physical things?

II. Jesus Illustrates the Possibility of Living Worry-Free (26-30a)

A. Think about the birds (26-27) - "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? 27 And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? "

In what is a very humbling illustration, Jesus educates us by calling us to learn from the ways of birds. The birds have no anxiety over their futures. For their entire existence, all the varieties of birds have never worked a field out of their own wisdom and skill. Yet, these birds have survived and eaten and lived from age to age. Jesus declares that this is because their Creator provides for them. Note how helpless the birds are apart from God:

1. Birds have limited ability - "...they neither sow nor reap..."
2. Birds have limited foresight - "...nor gather into barns..."
3. Birds are well taken care of - "...and yet your heavenly Father feeds them..."
4. Birds have limited value - "...are you not of more value than they?"

Jesus' summary statement in His illustration of how birds operate in dependence communicates to His followers that they have much more value to God than birds do. Jesus wants the people to know that, if God provides what the

birds need, they can rest assured that He will provide for their needs as His children.

B. Think about the fields (28-30a) - "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, 29 yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 30 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...?"

As He did with His illustration of the birds' dependence upon God for food, Jesus now addresses the people's potential worry that they might not have sufficient clothing to cover them in the future. We have a hard time identifying with this particular concern. Usually, if we are worried about clothes it is that they might be out of style, improperly sized or unflattering when we wear them. Our clothing concerns are usually anchored in our vanity. Jesus' original audience was potentially worried about not having warmth and protection if they did not have proper clothing. He uses the illustration of flowered fields to help them trust in the Father to provide clothing for them.

1. There is no anxiety for the fields - "...they neither toil nor spin"
2. There is no lack with the fields - "...even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these..."
3. There is no favoring of the fields - "...will He not much more clothe you?"

Again, Jesus wants the people to know that God considers human to be of far greater value than greenspace. He is glorified in all His creation, but His sons and daughters are of most importance to His Father's heart. If He beautifully clothes the fields and hills with flowers, surely there can be reassurance for our souls that He will provide the proper covering for us. We need not fear being naked, cold or uncovered in this life. Jesus calls us to exit anxiety about this too.

III. Jesus Connects Freedom from Worry to Growing Faith (30b - 34)

A. Examine your faith (30b) - "...O you of little faith..."

Faith is the muscle of the Christian which only grows when stretched. Jesus connects our tendency to worry to our underdeveloped faith. Those of us who fret, stress, obsess, fear and experience anxious toil over basic needs and material possessions have revealed that our faith-muscle has atrophied. Many times, we think we are experiencing worry over things that are needs. When and if we carefully address these matters, we will learn that those things are not needs at all. They are wants, luxuries and entitlements that have become so important to us that they feel in our hearts like legitimate needs. This is a great time to insert that God has promised to always pour out "extra things" on our lives. He is certainly generous, but God's primary reason for entrusting abundance to us is for us to sow it back into His Kingdom and to bless others through generous sharing. For the

most essential things in our lives, we should develop and maintain robust faith that God will supply these things. He will take care of us. We should live within our means and not expect God to endorse our material indulgences. Having those things properly aligned, we will be free to have confident faith that He is taking care of all that we need. This is the type of Father that He is to us. We must live as trusting children.

B. Exercise your faith (31-32) - “Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.”

Jesus now applies all that He has said as He gives them a course of action to obey. What is His command to obey? Stop worrying. Stop speaking out of anxiety. Stop feeding your worries with unanswered questions about the future. As a strong correction, Jesus declares that unbelievers (the Gentiles) are prone to worry, and that His followers must not be like them. They have a Heavenly Father who cares for them. Their Father knows every single one of their needs. They are to trust and pray and look for God's provision. This is the true exercising of faith: knowing, trusting, asking, waiting and receiving. Jesus says, in essence, "Let the pagans worry over their tomorrows. But not you. You have a good Father!"

C. Exalt your faith (33) - “But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”

Jesus then lifts their eyes off the horizontal, earthly kingdom and calls them back to the very matter of His entire sermon. He calls them to keep God's kingdom front and center in all of their thinking. They are to press in eagerly to God's righteous character and ways. They develop trust as they seek His righteousness. They are set free when they live in the reality of an eternal Kingdom. This vision of life is to be first and foremost in who they are and what they are doing with their lives. When they make God's Kingdom and His character their life's priority, all of those potential worry spots will disappear. They will be pursuing the greater things and become free from anxiety about the lesser things in life.

D. Enjoy your faith (34) - ““Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”

To finish off His divine thoughts on the matter of our potential worry, Jesus gives us one more liberating command to follow: He tells us not to even worry about things that are coming tomorrow. He calls us to live with Him in a conscious present moment. Faith is activated in the present moment and brings assurance to our souls that God has granted us everything we need for that present day. Tomorrow's challenges, battles and unknowns will need to be postponed until tomorrow. God is working in the present moment and wants you to be there with Him. When we allow our

minds to launch forward over things beyond our control, we experience anxiety that ruins our present day. We lose peace. We miss His presence. We cannot hear Him talking to us about the here-and-now because we are listening for His voice to address tomorrow and thereafter. That is not how God operates. Each day has its own trouble. He wants to partner with us in today's needs. This is the essence of faith: trusting God and enjoying Him in the present moment as we rest in His sufficient provision.