

## Matthew 6:25-30 - Don't Be Anxious - Part 1

Jesus continues on in his masterful sermon and this morning we look to the issue of anxiety and worry. What our Lord has to say here about anxiety and worry here is very much a timeless message for his followers.

And I think this is huge because God does not want us to worry. Not just because worrying irritates him but because he is our Father and he is gracious in providing for his children. I mean, most of us who are parents don't want our kids to go around worrying and filled with anxiety about what they're going to eat and wear and whether or not they will be protected. As their parents, that's our job. We just want our kids to enjoy life.

That's the heart of God here. If you're a follower of Jesus, God has already taken care of the biggest need we have: he's forgiven our sins, imputed to us the righteousness of Christ, given us eternal life and an eternal inheritance waiting in heaven. He's brought us into his family and is continually working through his Spirit to conform us to the image of Christ. He's adopted us into his family. And just like we wouldn't want our kids to worry, our Father doesn't want us to worry.

Reality, what Jesus gets at here is that we should be the most stress free and anxiety free people around. Now, some of you are probably stressing out just hearing that because you're thinking "Well, what's wrong with me that I'm filled with anxiety? Does that mean I'm not even a Christian if I worry as much as I do?" So now when you hear Jesus say do not be anxious, you get even more anxious because not only are you anxious about something but now you're in sin about being anxious. We'll get to that.

But know that Jesus is aware that his followers will struggle with anxiety. This is not uncommon amongst the followers of Jesus. That doesn't mean it's okay. That doesn't mean we can be content "just being a worrier." But that does mean he knows we're going to struggle with this particular sin.

But the big picture I want us to get to here is that if God has brought you into the Kingdom through faith in the risen Jesus, the last thing he wants is for you to walk around filled with anxiety and worry. No he wants you to walk around knowing he's got you. He's going to provide for you.

In fact, I think one of the ways we show people the gospel in our lives is that we're not affected by anxiety like the world is. Because Christians are a heavenly people, we don't get too bogged down by earthly concerns.

Right now the world is filled with concerns. Coronavirus, riots, racism, political unrest because it's an election year. The media pours gas on these fears. News reporting is largely fear-based. That's on top of all the anxieties that people battle on a normal basis. Anxieties about jobs and health and loved ones and normal every day living and "what's God's plan for my life?"

In that sense, Jesus words here about anxiety are timeless - people around the world and throughout the centuries have struggled with anxiety and worry. If you read about anxiety and worry from secular sources you'd think there is an epidemic of stress. That only in the last 20 years has the world ever had this much stress and worry. And the reality is that it has always been here. It's nothing new. Jesus's first hearers were just as prone to anxiety as we are now. And largely for the exact same reasons.

**Prov. 12:25:** Anxiety in a man's heart weighs him down but a good word makes him glad. That was 1,000 years before Jesus. Anxiety has been around a long time.

And to be fair, what Jesus has been talking about could even create some anxiety. Which is why he says in **Vs. 25** "therefore." He's connecting what he just said about not storing up treasure on earth and giving generously to what he now says about anxiety.

Because I think if we were honest if we really follow what Jesus has to say it could fill us with anxiety. All we see is this world, we walk by faith in the eternal Kingdom of heaven. But we're surrounded by material things.

So when Jesus calls us to give our treasures away to invest in the Kingdom he wants to do so without worry or anxiety. That command to invest in the Kingdom is not opposed to the command to not worry. Or maybe put the other way: we should joyfully and gladly be generous to others knowing that our Father will take care of us.

So blood bought children of God can be both generous and worry-free. So let's dive in. We'll look at the command and the roots of anxiety. Then we'll look at reasons for the command. We won't get through the whole passage today.

### 1) Command to not be anxious. Read 25, 34

So the command is pretty straightforward: do not be anxious. And do not worry. Those are basically the same thing. Anxiety and worry is when our minds are continually preoccupied with things. The word is used in other areas in association with insomnia. Tossing and turning all night because we are worried about something.

This isn't the only place in the Bible we see a command against anxiety.

**Phil. 4:6:** Do not be anxious for anything, but with prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God and the peace of God which passes all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

One reason we're anxious is that we don't pray. We don't go to God continually with what's weighing on us. And it's not just "Okay God, I told you, now what?!" It's "Okay God, I've told you, now you've got to do something about it while I go play."

**1 Pet. 5:7:** Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

Peter gives us a little bit of a jab. If we're anxious it's not because we're humble but because we're proud. Because we think we have to control life, control the outcome of our situation, when really that's God's job. Proud people are filled with anxiety and worry. Humble people cast their anxieties on God and let God work out the details of life.

Now, here's something to keep in mind: Since Jesus is commanding us to not be anxious, what that means is that anxiety is a choice we make. We're commanded to not get drunk, to not be involved in sexual immorality, to not lie. Those are all things we can control. But we're also commanded to not be anxious. Anxiety is a choice we make. It's not just a feeling we have, although there are internal feelings associated with it.

Now the fact that this is a command should actually be good news for us because what that means is that anxiety doesn't have to control us. It doesn't have to master us. Through the gospel we have power over these things.

See, the world wants you to think you're powerless and helpless. That anxiety is just a chronic condition and the best we can do is manage anxiety. Maybe ease some of it's affects. But if that's true - and it's not true - but if that's true then you have confined yourself to a life of worry and anxious living and there is no hope. You're stuck in a prison with no walls. Maybe there are techniques to help minimize the intensity but there's no way to overcome it.

Jesus actually says we can live a worry-free life - which is a pretty amazing promise. The second thing

### 2) The core of anxiety is basic provision. Read 25

What Jesus uncovers here is that most of our anxiety gets down to concern over basic provisions: food and drink and clothing. Will God gives us the basic things we need to live life. Remember back in **Vs. 11** our prayer is simply "give us this day our daily bread." The fact that we have cars and houses and televisions and air conditioning and all the rest means that we have way more than basic provisions.

But usually when you talk with people about why they're anxious and you keep drilling down with them, it comes down to basic necessities. I'm worried about my job because I need to have a home and groceries and to eat. I'm worried about my health because I want to live. I need an income to cover clothing and utilities.

Jesus's listeners felt the same pressures. Back in Jesus's day clothing was very hard to come by. You didn't go down to the store to buy things unless you were well off. Most people made their clothes, usually out of wool. The wool was usually not dyed, but if it was it was dyed gray or brown because that was the cheapest color. It was a drab society and if your cloak was ripped you might have to deal with it for a long while.

Water in Israel was scarce. Wells were similar to our well here: just a hand dug well only 10-20 feet deep. And because Israel is so dry, wells and streams often dry up in the summer months. So consistent water is hard to come by; and who knew if the water was even clean.

Getting food was a similar problem. A drought or locusts or fire could devastate the people at any time destroying thousands of acres of fields with no modern farming implements. I get bummed out when I eat though all the Honey Nut Cheerios. They didn't even have refrigeration.

But for them and for us, when we boil it all down usually what is underlying our anxiety is basic provision. Will God provide for us?

Now, before I go on, let me just say that there are other reasons we may be anxious. We might be anxious because we're in sin. Sin has a tendency to create guilt and worry that we will be exposed.

One day this week I realized I had had way too much coffee to drink and I just felt restless and irritable. What we put into our bodies can affect us.

Like we saw last week, if we're laying up treasures on earth, we can be filled with anxiety. One guy said: "Ironically, when a person seeks happiness through riches and possessions, he only guarantees that anxiety will chase away that happiness" (Quarles, Charles. *Sermon on the Mount*, pg. 258). Hoarders are rarely peaceful people because their heart is with all their stuff that is destined to be destroyed.

We could be anxious because we're late, or we won't get something we want, or we are in some kind of danger.

But I think that for the most part, when we struggle with anxiety, if we keep digging down to what's really going on inside of our soul, what we're concerned about is basic provision. Put another way, if God were to come down and say, "Look, no matter what happens in your life, you will for sure have clothes to wear and food to eat and water to drink." If God came down out of heaven and said that would that provide some relief to most people? Yes. That's exactly what Jesus is saying here. God will provide for us.

Our basic needs are covered by our loving Father in heaven.

**3) We don't need to be anxious because there's more to life than food and clothes. Read 25**

What is the answer? Yes, life is more than food and the body is more than clothing.

There's a saying that "While most people eat to live, the French live to eat." The idea is that for many in France, apparently, life revolves around food. If they can't have the finest wines or the most gourmet cheese then what's the point in going on in life?

To which I would say: If your whole life revolves around what you eat, that's pretty pathetic. To some extent God gave us food to enjoy and there is some good food. Sometimes God takes away food from us. But there is just a sense where food is utilitarian. It's just gas in the tank to keep us going - if we have daily bread we should be content and thankful.

Life is also more than clothing. Again, for Jesus's audience it was just having any clothes. Remember back in **5:38-42**? Jesus has already touched on our attitude toward clothes. **Read**

So the radical life of following Jesus is seen in gladly giving our tunic and cloak to someone who tries to take it from us. Why? It's the same principle here. Life is more than clothes.

If we're constantly concerned about our clothes - how many clothes we have or whether our clothes are raggedy or whether our clothes are nice or the latest trend - we're missing the point of the Kingdom. Life is more than that, especially for those who follow Jesus and know that

First of all, whatever clothes you're wearing whether you like them or not were given to you by God. Second, you don't need great clothes in order to be of great use in the Kingdom. John the Baptist wore camel skins and a leather belt. The guy looked like a caveman but Jesus himself said there is no one greater in the Kingdom of heaven.

I can't remember where I read it but there was a guy talking to a kid and the kid said he needed to wear these \$200 Nike shoes in order to feel good about himself. When he wore \$200 Nikes he felt like he could conquer anything. And the man's question to the kid was: what person is so fragile that he doesn't feel good about himself unless he's wearing \$200 Nikes? If the only confidence a person has is because they're wearing expensive clothes, and that confidence is gone the minute they don't have nice clothes on, the issue is really pride in material things. It's okay to dress nice and appropriate for the occasion, but we need to make sure our hope and confidence is not in the clothes we wear.

God gives us the clothes that you need, not necessarily the clothes that we want. But he gives us the clothes that we need in order to live joyfully for his glory.

#### 4th Reason to not worry: God feeds the birds. Read 26

So I was sitting outside this week sipping coffee thinking about this passage and actually watching some birds. And it occurred to me that it really is amazing how gracious God is in caring for these little guys. And Jesus makes it clear that every bird on the planet is fed - and every animal on the planet is fed - because God provides their food.

This isn't the circle of life in the Lion King, this isn't the evolutionary survival of the fittest nonsense. This is our gracious Heavenly Father who is an animal lover. He made them and he cares for them. He gives them life and he takes their life. And he loves them.

**Psalm 147:9:** He gives to the beasts their food, and to the young ravens that cry.

We've got these little hummingbird feeders around the house. Just think of the wisdom of God in hummingbird feeders. These little guys hit the jackpot in life. I don't know what we spent on the hummingbird feeders, let's call it \$30. And we fill them with sugar water and hang them up at the right height and keep them stocked all summer long. God has put it in our heart to love these little birds he created and to provide for them. God is feeding these little birds through us.

They don't have a garden. They don't go to the grocery store. They're not clipping coupons or stocking up the freezer. They don't have a pantry. But they are jet set at the Upchurch household.

And Jesus's point is that if God feeds these cheap, wild birds that in most peoples' eyes are worthless, will he not feed us? Won't he feed people who are made in his image? And more than that won't he feed his own children whom he has adopted into the Kingdom? Of course he will. Just from a worldly perspective, what kind of father would I be if I kept these birds well fed but neglected my own children?

This is a classic argument from the lesser to the greater: God feeds the birds, God will feed you. The next time you're worried about a job or finances or how you're going to make it, Jesus says go outside and learn from birds.

#### 5th reason not to worry: It doesn't accomplish anything. Read 27

Jesus's main point here is that worrying doesn't accomplish anything. Just from a pragmatic point of view, worry is useless. If you have a bad situation in life where you're concerned about whether or not your needs will be met, worrying does nothing to alleviate the problem.

You'd be better off doing 500 jumping jacks than worrying because as **1 Tim 4:8** says bodily training is of some value. And maybe you're thinking: if I don't know where my next meal is coming from why in the world would I do jumping jacks? That would be ridiculous. Jesus's point is that worrying is even more ridiculous.

He says it won't add a single hour to your life. This is a figure of speech which is why there's some differences in our translations.

ESV: single hour to his span of life.

NASB/NIV: Can't add a single hour to his life

NKJV: Add a single cubit to his stature

Literally it's worrying won't add a cubit to your span; a cubit was about 18 inches. But Jesus isn't talking about how tall we are, but how long our lives are. We talk about having a long life. And if your life is proverbially miles and miles long worrying about these things won't even add a cubit. Worrying won't make your life any longer. Our worry about food and drink and clothes and life doesn't actually have the effect that our lives end up longer. Our lives are in God's hands.

God has numbered all our days. That doesn't mean we throw caution to the wind. That doesn't mean we don't take care of ourselves - there's a balance we need to strike. I think some people think that if they just exercise enough they'll live forever. If they eat this or avoid that food they'll cheat death.

Nobody cheats death. We all die right on time. And we die right on time whether we're filled with joy in God's good provision or worrying about this life.

#### 6th Reason not to worry: The flowers. Read 28-30

So this is very much the same lesser-to-greater type of argument that Jesus gave about the birds but of course it applies to clothing. And actually it's a lesser to greater to greater.

Watch how this works. Who is better clothed: Solomon or the flowers? The flowers. Some of you have "lilies" - Jesus's words here are somewhat generic. And then who is better clothed: us or the flowers? We are. So it's lesser to greater to greater.

Solomon in all of his glory would have been a sight to see. He was by far the richest man on the planet at the time. His wealth was really incalculable comparatively speaking. It was beyond imagination for his time. Jeff Bezos, as we speak has a fortune of \$150 billion. That pails in comparison to what Solomon had at the time. We don't have an exact description of what Solomon wore or the wardrobe he had, but we know that he was abundantly rich. And, again, unless you were very wealthy, the only thing you would wear would be a drab wool cloak dyed brown or grey or maybe even not dyed at all. One of the ways king's flaunted their wealth and status was to dress in the richest clothes possible.

But who's clothed even greater than Solomon? The lilies; the flowers of the field. God dresses even the smallest flower more lavishly than Solomon was ever dressed in all of his glory.

I've never been a huge flower guy, but over the last few years my wife has planted all kinds of flowers around our house and they're pretty cool. And it's easy to step back and look at things and see the whole spread. But actually what's pretty cool is to get up close and look at individual petals of each flower. How intricately made they are, how bright the color is. All these different varieties and types and colors. And who clothes them? God does.

And these flowers, in God's economy, are pretty low on the scale. The flowers Jesus has in mind aren't the flowers in a nursery or in your well manicured garden. Remember Jesus is preaching to a crowd sitting on a mountainside. He probably looked down and pointed to flowers as an example. He's talking about wildflowers. God clothes random flowers in field in amazing ways and about the only thing flowers in the field are good for is to be cut down and burned. Those flowers are better dressed than Solomon.

And if those flowers are well dressed - and clothed with greater glory than Solomon - how much more will God clothe his children?

Now, just to be clear, Jesus is not saying that the Father promises to deck out his children in Solomon's fashion. God's not promising to clothe all of his children in the latest fashions. What he's talking about is the **certainty** of being clothed. Just as certain as Solomon was clothed, just as certain as flowers are clothed, that's the certainty we have that we will be clothed.

It might not be exactly the clothes that you like or love but you will be clothed. In Hebrews 11:37 the author talks about how some of our brothers and sisters in the faith from the OT went around in skins of sheep and goats, they were destitute, afflicted, and mistreated. But you know what? They had clothes. And now they have heavenly robes that Jesus himself gives to them.

At the end of the day, God will keep you clothed just like he'll keep you fed and watered.

And by the way, most of us are probably dressed better than Solomon. I don't think I've ever worn an undyed wool cloak that was hand made. You probably don't want to get your fashion tips from me, but one of the reasons I like polyester shirts is because they don't fade. I have a blue shirt I bought when I was 16 - 22 years ago - that looks just as bright and nice as the day I bought it. We can go to Costco or Value Village or wherever you prefer to shop and we have more clothing choices than anyone at any time in the history of the world - and most of those clothes, relative to ancient clothes, are not that expensive.

Has God taken care of us? Yes. And he will continue to do so forever.

**Pray**