

# Do not be anxious

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Matthew 6:19-34

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## Recap from Last Week

We are looking in this series at Kingdom Values as taught by Jesus in what is known as the Sermon on the Mount. Last Sunday I looked at Jesus instruction on laying up treasure in heaven (Matthew 6:19-24).

I commented that I was glad to preach about money for **three reasons**.

**The first reason is** that it put me in good company as Jesus said a lot about money. In fact it is estimated that 15% of his teaching was about money and possessions.

**The second reason is** because if we were gripped by the radical life of open-handed liberality that Jesus taught, ... if we really tasted the freedom from fear and greed that Jesus bought with his own blood ... there would be an avalanche of ministry and missions and acts of mercy!

Can you imagine another Warehouse, or two or three launched this year. More church planting, more young people sent off to Uganda, Namibia, Limpopo, Niger, ...

**The third reason** for talking about money is, if we are personally were set free to give the way the New Testament talks about giving, we would be the happiest people on earth.

*Proverbs 14:21, "Happy are those who are kind to the needy."*

*Proverbs 22:9, "The generous will be blessed."*

*1 Timothy 6:9, "Those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction."*

*Acts 20:35, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."*

As Pastor of Christ Church I long that our young people would learn quickly, and our older people would learn before it is too late, that there is no positive correlation between having many things and being happy.

A life of simplicity that curtails spending on self and is matched by a passion to advance the kingdom through giving, will be a far happier life and far more fulfilled life, than a life of indulgence and luxury.

**The main point** I made last week was from Matthew 6:20 – that we should lay up treasures in heaven and not on the earth. The way we lay up treasures in heaven – the way we increase our reward and joy in the presence of God – is by giving our money away in the name of Christ rather than storing up more and more for ourselves.

And if you count yourself as a member of this church – one way to store up treasure in heaven – and it is not the only way I hasten to add - is to give generously and sacrificially to support the work and ministry of Christ Church. That we can do next Sunday when we lay our Dedications before the Lord.

Also just to recap on what I said last week about laying up treasure in heaven I mentioned the comment made by Randy Alcorn, in his book, *The Treasure Principle*,

*"I'm convinced that the greatest deterrent to giving is this: the illusion that earth is our home" (p. 44).*

It's not; Christ is our home.

Rather than treating this world as our home and treating this age as though it were a time of peace, we need to adopt a wartime life style recognising that we are in fact living in a time of conflict. There is conflict between God and Satan, and between righteousness and unrighteousness, and between belief and unbelief, and between light and darkness. And the stakes in this conflict are eternal.

So, I concluded, let's put a spending checker on our lifestyles (because if we don't, expenses will always expand to fill our incomes) and then let us give more than we ever dreamed. Let's be hazardous in our risk-taking for the glory of Christ. This kind of freedom and this kind of love, will make us the happiest people on planet earth. Jesus said,

*"It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).*

Loving and giving like Jesus will probably involve suffering, but the joy in giving and the increased joy in heaven – the joy set before us – will be worth it all.

*Now – let me ask this...*

- What prevents us from giving like that?
- What keeps that avalanche of mercy ministries and mission being released?
- What holds us back from knowing that joy and happiness which Scripture speaks about?

Well Jesus addresses the main obstacle to giving in such a way that we store up treasure in heaven in the next few verses. Three times in verses 25-34 Jesus says, "**Do not be anxious.**" or "**Do not worry.**" (NIV)

*Verse 25: "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."*

*Verse 31: "Do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'"*

*Verse 34: "Do not be anxious about tomorrow."*

Money is closely allied to worry. Michael Green comments that on the whole the more money people have the more anxious care they expend on how to keep it, increase it, and protect it. In our society we pay more to those who look after and care for our money than we do to those who care for and teach our children. More money, more worry – is the way things go.

Now the truth is that worry is not a little weakness that we all give into from time to time. It is a sin that is strictly forbidden. As one commentator I read put it this way. *Worry is practical atheism and affront to God.*

And in these verses Jesus gives four good reasons why we should not worry.

### ***First - worry is unnecessary***

*<sup>25</sup>“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? <sup>26</sup>Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?”*

Quite often Jesus uses a common rabbinical method of arguing where you argue from the lesser to the greater. So an example of arguing from the lesser to the greater would be when Jesus says in Luke 11:13 ...

*“If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”*

But here Jesus turns that method around and argues from the greater to the lesser and says in effect if God has given us life and a body, both admittedly more important than food and clothing, will he not also give us the latter?

In verse 26 he draws our attention to what happens in creation. To worry about food and drink is to have learned nothing from the natural creation. The point is not that disciples need not work—birds do not simply wait for God to drop food into their beaks—but that they need not fret and worry and be anxious. It is unnecessary, because God who gave us life and gave us our bodies, knows what we need and we are valuable to him.

Do we deduce then that hard work and careful planning and making provision is not necessary. That is not what Jesus is saying. He is saying worrying about whether we are loved by God and whether God knows what we need is an unnecessary expenditure of emotional energy.

### ***Second - worry is fruitless***

*Verse 27: Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?*

The word used in the original can mean either an hour to you life or it can be translated a few centimetres to your height.

Worry is not only unnecessary it is also useless. It does not add one centimetre to your height or one hour to your life. In fact worry is more likely to shorten your life than prolong it.

So to worry does or be anxious does no good. It accomplishes nothing. It doesn't help.

Preach this to yourself: I am accomplishing nothing helpful by this anxiety. It is only making a hard situation harder. I will listen to Jesus and say no to this useless emotion. I refuse to be mastered by a useless emotion!

### ***Third - worry is blind***

Just look around you. Can't you see what is glaringly obvious?

*<sup>28</sup>“And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labour or spin. <sup>29</sup>Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these. <sup>30</sup>If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith?”*

This is almost the same as the argument from the birds of the air. But not quite.

The point here is that you are eternal, and the grass and the lilies last for a day. Yet God clothes them more beautifully than Solomon.

Again the most amazing truth for us is the truth that Jesus virtually takes for granted: God's sovereign rule over the world of nature extends to the seemingly insignificant colour of a lily and variety of Ericas in the field of Fynbos. These are not mere natural laws that God put in motion and set loose to do good or bad things with no control over them. These are his doing.

The message for us is that if God is so intimately and lavishly involved with grass and flowers which are like a vapour, then how shall he not care for his children who are eternal?

***Worry is unnecessary, it is fruitless, it is blind. It is essentially failure to trust God.***

<sup>31</sup>*So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'* <sup>32</sup>*For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.*

God knows what we need. Worry is in effect saying, God I do not trust you. I don't believe you know my needs and I don't believe that you care and love me. That hurts God.

It hurts God because we are saying in this life these things become the number one priority. Loving and serving God are further down the list. They have a lower priority rating. They are subservient to our main goal in life and that is attending to what we eat, drink and wear and all these other things.

To his followers Jesus says ...

<sup>33</sup>*But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*

Jesus' expects his disciples to live lives qualitatively different from those who have no trust in God's fatherly care and no fundamental goals beyond material things.

John Stott comments ...

*"In the end there are only two kinds of ambition: one can be ambitious either for oneself or for God. There is no third alternative"*

Jesus' disciples are not simply to **refrain** from the *pursuit* of material temporal things as their primary goal in order to be differentiated from pagans. Instead, we are to **replace** such pursuits with goals of far greater significance.

To seek first the kingdom is to desire above all to enter into, submit to, and participate in the prayer we are taught to pray ...

Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Seek God's kingdom as first priority and these things – these life necessities – will be added in.

***But what if they are not?***

What about the hardships that believers face? Is Jesus being unfeeling and unrealistic? No.

He knew what it was to go hungry. He knew what it was to be naked and strung up on a cross. But these things did not rob him of his loving trust in his heavenly Father, whose sovereign overarching love would not allow anything to happen to him, which was in the last analysis, for good.

And in the final verse he almost whimsically lays aside these high ideals and says, of course there are troubles in life. No one promised you a bed of roses. In fact the only thing we are promising is a cross.

If you want to be my disciple you have to take up your cross and follow me.

In verse 34 he appeals to common sense.

So ...

#### ***Fourthly - worrying about tomorrow does not make sense***

*<sup>34</sup>Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*

Worrying over tomorrow's troubles, misfortunes, is not worth it. Give attention to what God is doing right now, and don't get worked up about what may or may not happen tomorrow. God will help you deal with what ever hard things come up when the time comes.

So the stop worrying – it is unnecessary, it fruitless, it is blind, it is does not make sense – but most importantly it hurts God. It is a sin.

Lord, help me to recognise where I have allowed worry about material provision to come before my concern to see your kingdom advance.

I repent of that Lord. I recognise it as sin and turn away from it.

I seek now Lord to replace that anxiety and worry with trust in you. Give me grace Lord for today, and for tomorrow. You know the troubles we face. You know I our needs. Keep our eyes on you Lord. Fill us now with your Holy Spirit. May grace abound in our lives as we seek your kingdom and delight in rejoice as see it advancing. Hank you Lord for including us in what you are doing.

May kingdom come, may your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Amen.