

Sermon On The Mount Part 9

Overcoming Anxiety

Matthew 6:25-34, Luke 12:4-7, 22-34

Memory Verses: Matthew 6:34

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

As a pastor I often have people ask me what I think about this or that. Especially when I go to the jail. Hey pastor, what do you think about heaven and hell? Hey pastor, is Jesus the only way to heaven? Hey pastor, do I have to forgive my enemies? Hey pastor, is it okay to get divorced? Now, if these issues were left to my own opinions I think I would give pretty bad advice that would lead to more pain than good. But, here's the good news; I don't have to give my opinion because the Bible gives us answers with clarity to these issues. That's why I love the Sermon on the Mount. Instead of just sticking with general platitudes such as "love everyone" and "be righteous;" Jesus gives us the specifics to over 20 different topics.

Today we will be looking at yet another one of those topics. Today we will be looking at the issue of anxiety and worry. I'll just go ahead and admit that I've struggled with anxiety and worry at times. I'm sure you like me have little triggers that can cause moments of panic or fear. One that I've never gotten over is wind gusts. Rain, no problem, thunder, lightning, no problem, but when that wind blows really hard, all I can imagine is a parts of my house flying off or trees falling down or worse, a tornado coming. I know that statistically, I'm probably going to be fine, but it never helps, when that wind gets going my anxiety goes up a little. Another one, which I guess relates to the last one, is flying in an airplane. Again, statistically I know I'm going to be fine, but I just can't get over the turbulence. Any turbulence and my anxiety spikes and I just stare at the stewardess to make sure that she's okay, because if she's okay then there must not be a problem right?

What's it for you? What things in your life give you anxiety or worry or fear? What things, if you allow them to, will paralyze you and keep you from doing what God has called you to do? I pray that today we can see in the sermon on the mount how to overcome this anxiety.

Let's go ahead and look at our passage for the day in **Matthew 6:25-34**. Do not be anxious. Why should we not be anxious? Three reasons. We shouldn't be anxious because God genuinely cares for us. We shouldn't be anxious because God will supply all of our needs when we seek his kingdom first. And, we shouldn't be anxious because it does more harm than good. The main point this morning is this... **Worry almost always assumes that God either doesn't care about us or**

that he is unable to help us.

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first thing we need to see this morning is that... **There's No Reason To Worry If You Believe God Cares For You**. We've heard from our main passage, now let's read from our parallel passage in **Luke 12:24, 27-30**. Let's look at Jesus' illustration. Look at birds. Do birds plant seeds and wait for the grain to grow and then pick that grain? Nope. That would be crazy right? Birds don't behave like humans. But they always seem to find everything that they need. Birds don't worry. Animals in general don't worry. Animals just seem to know that when they need something it will be available to them and it usually is.

And what about lilies? Flowers in general are beautiful and scientifically mesmerizing. They take a normal looking field and turn it into a work of art. The fields with all of the the flowers and beauty are more pleasing to look at than the richest man who has ever lived; Solomon. So, is the grass worried whether or not it will be clothed with flowers? Is the grass worried about whether it will look better than Solomon? Of course not! Grass can't worry because grass cannot think. And yet God makes sure that flowers grow and bring beauty if for no other reason than to give us something pretty to look at. So, if God makes sure that birds and other animals, who can do very little for themselves, are cared for with food. And, if God makes sure that the fields, which cannot create for itself beautiful adornment, is clothed in flowers, then why in the world are you worried about whether God will supply for you food and clothing and all of your needs? Simply put... **if God cares about animals and fields, which are ultimately less important to him than you are, then he cares for you.**

We should be different than non-Christians. Non-Christians worry about what they will eat, drink, or wear, and a plethora of other issues. Christians shouldn't worry about things the way non-Christians do. If we worry like the world worries what does that communicate? It clearly communicates that we have nothing different than they do to hope in or have faith in. But we do. God knows we need food, clothing, and shelter and he will make sure that we get those essential elements if we trust in him.

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The second thing we need to see here today is that... **There's No Reason To Worry If You Seek God's Kingdom First**. Again, let's look at our parallel passage in **Luke 12:31-32**. Seek God's kingdom first and then all of the other things we need will be added to us as well. The point here is clear. God wants to give you the kingdom and supply your needs, so seek for the kingdom first and then you will see your needs met as well. But we must not miss this. **We must seek his kingdom first. I believe that so many**

people struggle with anxiety, worry, and fear, because instead of seeking God's kingdom first, they are seeking their own kingdom first. What I mean is this; as humans, when we come up against an issue, we almost instinctively always rely on our own strength, creativity, and ability first. It's called the survival instinct. We are those who sow and reap and store in barns to make sure that we are taken care of no matter what. We build in redundancy to weather any storm. And yet, if we always rely on ourselves, eventually we will see our world come crumbling down around us.

Christians must live by a different world view. **Instead of storing up enough money, enough insurance against the storms of life, we must first look to faith in Christ and his will.** This goes right along with one of our core values. Prayer is our first response not a last resort. **Seeking his kingdom first means, praying before planning. It means having faith before fixing problems. It means desiring his will more than desiring safety and security. It means giving before taking. It means serving before being served. Ultimately it means trusting in his amazing grace over our anxieties.** **Philippians 4:6-7** is one of my favorite verses in the Bible because it deals with this issue head on. Do not be anxious about anything but instead pray with thanksgiving and supplication and God will give you a peace you will not be able to explain. You want peace in the midst of anxiety? Seek his kingdom first.

And, yet, there is one more aspect to seeking God's kingdom first that is relevant to our conversation. Look with me at **Luke 12:4-7**. Again, if God cares about birds, he cares about you. But this time this illustration is not used in the context of food and clothing but in the instance of being bold for Christ when confronting the lost. If we were to be honest this morning, one of the things that makes us the most anxious is confronting another person with the Gospel. Why? Well, among other things, there is always the strong possibility that they may reject us or even worse, persecute us. But Jesus tells us to stop fearing men. Why? Because we should fear God more. Men may be able to kill us but God has the ability to destroy our souls for eternity. When we confront men with the Gospel, God has our back and will take care of us. If not in this life, in the life to come, which is by far more important. **We won't fear anything in this life if we fear God more.**

Look at the parallel again in **Luke 12:22-23**. Don't worry about your life because your life is way more than what you eat or what you wear. What is Jesus saying? He's saying your life is more than your physical life. Your life is your soul and your spirit which will live for all of eternity. Simply put, stop worrying about your temporary vapor of a life that is here today and tomorrow is gone. The thing that really matters is if your soul belongs to the kingdom of God. **Worry almost always assumes that God either doesn't care about us or that he is unable**

to help us.

Lastly we need to see this morning that... **There's No Reason To Worry Because Worry Does More Harm Than Good.** Going back to our main passage in Matthew look at the very last verse **Matthew 6:34**. Don't worry about tomorrow. We will deal with tomorrow when it gets here. Let's just deal with today today! Does this mean we don't plan for the future. Of course not. Proverbs is filled with all kinds of wisdom about planning ahead. Rather it means, that you shouldn't worry about what will happen tomorrow that you can't control. Worry about what is happening today that you possibly can control. We see this same sentiment in **verse 27**. Which of you can add a single hour to your life by worrying? You can't. In other words, what is going to happen is going to happen. Trust in God's plan and stop worrying about it. Your worry isn't going to change what is going to happen. Worrying is pointless. It is harmful.

One of my favorite quotes I found while researching this message comes from the great **Charles Spurgeon**; "**Anxiety does not empty tomorrow of its sorrows, but only empties today of its strength.**" You need all of your strength to be able to deal with today. Today has a lot going on doesn't it. Today is tough and you need prayer, and power of the Holy Spirit for today's struggles. If you spend all day worrying about tomorrow then you are not focusing on what God wants you to handle today. In that case you mess up today and tomorrow. **Proverbs 12:25** tells us that anxiety in a man's heart weighs him down. God doesn't want you weighed down. How are you supposed to do what he's called you to do today if you are burdened with anxiety? Listen, God is able to help you for today and tomorrow and everyday after, you just have to trust him. Look at what he says in **Matthew 11:28-30**. **Why don't you let Jesus take your burdens and anxieties today? Worry almost always assumes that God either doesn't care about us or that he is unable to help us.**

Application

So how can we apply this to our lives this morning? Pretty simple huh? If you are struggling with anxiety and worry and fear can you allow Jesus to overcome that with his care for you? Can you hand your anxiety over to Christ? **1 Peter 5:7** tells us to cast all of our cares on Jesus because he cares for us. One, do you truly believe that God cares for you? Look at the way he cares for nature. Look at the way he cares for seemingly unimportant things like birds and flowers. Do feel that he cares for you even more? Look at how he has sent his son to die for you on the cross. Guys, God loves us more than we could ever know. He cares for you and your needs. Two, are you seeking him first? If you are trying to do it in your own strength then there is cause to worry. We will mess it up. But if you are seeking him first he assures us that he will meet all of our needs. Don't put

your faith in you and your abilities, put your faith in the one who had sustained the universe and holds the world in his hands. Third, Worry is dumb. It doesn't help, it only hurts. It empties today of its strength. You can't do anything helpful by worry. You can do a lot though with faith.

Worry almost always assumes that God either doesn't care about us or that he is unable to help us. But he does care for us and he wants to help us.

Conclusion

The story is told of when George Muller Massena, one of Napoleon's generals, suddenly appeared with 18,000 soldiers ready to overtake an Austrian town which had no means of defending itself. The town council met, certain that surrender was the only answer. That was until the old dean of the church reminded the council that it was Easter, and begged them to hold services as usual and to leave the trouble in God's hands. They followed his advice. The dean went to the church and rang the bells to announce the service. When the French soldiers heard the church bells ringing they concluded that the Austrian army had come to rescue the town so they broke camp, and before the bells had ceased ringing, vanished in retreat.

The point is simple, when we have faith God overcomes our anxiety with peace and victory. When we choose to worry, we will almost always be overcome. Today let's turn our worry and anxiety over to the one who can overcome all of our struggles and provide all of our needs.