



-- Read Luke 12:22-34

-- **Prayer** – Father in Heaven, we come today asking that you will give us grace this morning such that we will both hear and put into practice the instruction of this text we have just affirmed aloud together. O God, be pleased to give us undivided hearts so that we may fear your name, praise you with all our hearts, and glorify your great and glorious name forever. Let our hearts be so supremely satisfied in you that the things of this earth hold over our hearts and minds no sway in any way. Forgive us our worries and fears, and show us the fullness of what it means to know you as our Father forever. Speak through me today and use me as Your voice box... that we might grow in your grace for your everlasting glory... we ask in Jesus name... Amen.

-- **Big Idea: A believer's life is about confidence in God's kingdom, not the worries of the world.**

Have you ever looked at an enormously wealthy person, such as Bill Gates for example, and thought, "That guy might just have too much money to see his sin and trust in Christ," or "Boy, if I were that rich, I'd sure be doing more for the kingdom of God than that guy is!" Well, there is no question that great wealth can be a hindrance to salvation. As Paul writes in 1 Timothy 6:10: *"The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs."* Moreover, in the previous passage (verses 13-21), Jesus cautions a man about his love for money, and He uses the Parable of the Rich Fool to demonstrate how having great wealth can separate our hearts from God and from a life of eternal significance.

However, we are greatly mistaken if we believe that money is a spiritual hazard only for the rich. Notice how today's Scripture passage begins. After having described the pitfalls brought about by great wealth in verses 12-21, Jesus now talks about money and possessions with His disciples, who were not rich men. Recall that they had left everything in order to follow Him. Jesus doesn't look at them and say, "Well, I know you aren't rich, but hey, at least you don't have to worry about all the sins related to money. No, instead our Lord looks at them and teaches them about the kind of sins that a *lack* of money can inspire. In short, He summons them to realize that worrying about money can be just as sinful as boasting in it, because both perspectives look to money to provide can only be received from God.

But this passage is more than just a call to understand an interesting truth, for this conversation between Jesus and His disciples—which certainly includes us as 21st century disciples—begins with a *command*. He says: "*Therefore I tell you, **do not be anxious** about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on.*" Thus, our Lord begins teaching about the worries of life by *ordering* us not to be anxious about stuff of earth, which brings us to our first point...

1.) Worrying is forbidden (v. 22).

Jesus here is not offering a mere meditation for the masses or a simple suggestion for the savvy. These words, rather, are a concrete command for those who are committed to Christ. Jesus is here ordering us not to worry about the stuff of earth. It doesn't matter if we have lots of money or very little, great possessions or very few—either way, we are expressly forbidden by our Lord to live lives of worry.

It should be noted that this verse is not unique to the New Testament. In at least nine different places in the Gospels, Jesus impresses upon His followers this very same idea: "*Do not worry!*" And in Philippians 4:6, the Holy Spirit gives us a very definitive command through the Apostle Paul, saying, "*Do not be anxious about **anything**.*"

Therefore, even though anxiety can come upon us so easily, and even though the world around us seems to be adrift in an unsettled sea of

worries, the clear command of Christ still stands for you and me as His followers: Do not to live a life of anxiety.

Having now given this instruction, Jesus begins explaining why it is so important, and the first reason comes in verse 23. There our Lord commands us not to worry because...

2.) Worrying is foolish (v. 23).

Look with me at verse 23, where Jesus says, *“For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing.”* So here we see that Christ’s command to stop worrying about the stuff of earth is based, at least in part, upon the fact that true life is more than stuff—and not just mansions or luxury cars, but even necessary things like food and clothing. Very simply put: Jesus is telling us that those who worry about earthly things is missing real life, because real life in Christ is much greater than the things we possess on earth.

Therefore—and please catch this—this text is telling us that anxiety about earthly things is evidence of a puny perspective and misplaced priorities. You see, when we worry and fret about food and clothing and other possessions, we are necessarily missing what matters most because the glory of eternal life is far greater than anything we can own on earth. Don’t get me wrong here, Jesus is not saying that food and clothing don’t matter. He is, however, summoning us to realize that whenever we fix our mental and emotional energy upon what we can possess on earth, we will miss the much greater grace that God is granting us by faith.

In the way of an illustration, I think that the person who stresses out over stuff is a lot like the man who is given a ticket to the world’s greatest all-you-can-eat buffet, but he never so much as takes a bite because he is so upset about the Tootsie Roll he lost in the taxi cab on the way there. A uniquely delicious opportunity awaits him, but he is missing it entirely because his attention is so preoccupied with lesser things. The same kind of foolishness is displayed when citizens of God’s eternal kingdom freak out about the fleeting things of earth. Having shown the foolishness of worry, Jesus then points out another problem with worry...

3.) Worrying is forgetful (v. 24).

To see what I mean by this, please look with me at verse 24, where Jesus says, *“Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds!”* Here, Jesus gives us a second reason why anxiety is forbidden, which is this: Fretful believers are forgetful believers—they have forgotten how deeply and meticulously God loves us.

To drive home this point, Jesus says, *“Consider the birds,”* and asks, *“How much more value are you than the birds?”* Well, let’s see: Birds are not the only aspect of Creation fashioned in the very image of God—people are. And yet God feeds the birds. God did not send His only Son into the world to save birds—but to save people—yet He nevertheless gives birds what they need. And birds will never be the bride of Christ, or the body of Christ, or co-heirs with Christ... they will never be united as one with Christ or eternal children of God—only true believers in Christ will. Yet, still, God watches over the birds and provides for them.

So, Jesus says, *“Of how much more value are you than the birds?”* And the answer is obvious, *“We are infinitely more valuable than birds!”* Indeed, as John 3:16 declares, *“God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.”* And 1 John 3:1 exclaims, *“How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!”* And back in verse seven, Jesus gives us this assurance of the Father’s love: *“Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows.”*

Thus, anxious living is sinful because it reveals a heart that has forgotten what God has done for us and all that He has promised us by faith. To gripe and moan about our lack of stuff on earth is to forget what God has already prepared for us in heaven. To lose sleep over circumstances is to lose sight of salvation. Worrying, then, is forbidden by Jesus because when we worry, we are essentially saying that we don’t really believe God loves us as much as He says He does. It is to forget that God is our Father, and that He loves us with flawless faithfulness, compassion, & care.

If it weren't enough to know that worrying about money is forbidden because it is both foolish and forgetful, Jesus goes on in verses 25 and 26 to show us that...

4.) Worrying is futile (v. 25-26).

He says, "*And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest?*" In addition to being both foolish and forgetful, worrying is tremendously futile, for it simply cannot accomplish anything good... ever.

Now, in saying this, please realize that there is a great difference between prudence, which is an exalted virtue in the Bible, and anxiety, which is sinful. Prudence is about carefully evaluating our circumstances so that we might handle a given situation in a useful, godly way. Anxiety, on the other hand, simply wants to worry a problem away. That is a good test of anxiety in our lives. When a worrisome situation arises ask yourself: *Am I trusting God and concentrating on useful ways He can use me to make a positive difference, or am I simply letting my thoughts run away with me with no constructive goal in mind?* Prudence is good and useful. Worry, on the other hand, is always worthless.

One reason why worry always proves to be so unhelpful is because the very process of anxiety springs from at least two false premises. The first false premise behind worry is the belief that we are somehow omniscient (or all-knowing). That is, when I dwell in anxiety, I am in a sense claiming for myself a superhuman ability to predict the future. I am looking into the future and declaring, at least in my own mind, that I know. I mean *I really know!* I can clearly see how things are going to turn out and *things are not going to turn out good!* ... However, I can't predict the future. Neither can you. We honestly don't have a clue as to how any one of a thousand different situations is going to turn out.

Moreover, the Bible makes clear that God very frequently delights in working against human expectations. *Did the people in Noah's day expect a flood? Did old Abraham and Sarah expect a baby boy? Did Jacob expect to find Joseph in Egypt? Did the disciples expect the cross or the resurrection of Christ?*

No, no, no, and no. Yet, our persistent worrying suggests that we have flawless foresight to know exactly what is coming.

The second false premise behind worry is the belief that I am somehow omniscient (or all-powerful). At its core, the process of worry is really an attempt to bring our desires to bear on any given situation, *isn't it?* It is an effort to make happen what I want to happen simply because I want it so badly and worry about it so much. However, just in case any of us here believes that our anxiety has any power to actually change things, consider again the questions Jesus poses in verses 25-26: *"Which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest?"*

A life of worries, then, reveals an immature understanding of the sovereignty of God. As Psalm 139 tells us, God has long ago decreed which day on earth will be our last. And no matter how much emotional energy we pour out worrying about our lives, that fact is immutable—it cannot be changed. Consequently, Jesus says, if our worries cannot alter in any way that one most critical event that God has decreed, then why do we think we can worry away anything else. Prayer helps in any situation, because God has chosen to use our prayers as instruments of His sovereign will. However, as this passage makes clear, worry is worthless. It is foolish, forgetful, and futile.

In addition to all that, Jesus goes on to show us that...

5.) Worrying is faithless (v. 27-28).

Take a look with me if you will at the illustration that Jesus provides in verses 27-28. He says, *"Consider the lilies, 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, which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith!"* That sounds a lot like verse 23, *doesn't it?* Back in verse 23, Jesus told us not to worry about food, because if God provides food even for the birds, He will gladly provide food for His children who ask Him. Now, in this verse, He applies the same logic to our worries about clothes, saying, *"If God so clothes the grass... how much more will He clothe you?"*

This time, however Jesus ends with a phrase not spoken in verse 23, referring to His disciples as *“O you of little faith.”* Worry, then, is not just an instance of foolishness, but also an evidence of faithlessness. Whereas humbly asking God to clothe us is an exercise in faith, stressing out because we don’t have exactly what we think we need is a sign of faulty faith.

To put the matter bluntly, worrying about stuff on earth is an insult to our God in Heaven. To be anxious all the time is to believe that God is not trustworthy. It is to look toward the heavens and say to God, “I know you have promised to take care of me, but I don’t really believe that you will. And I know you have told me trust you, but I don’t really think I can.” A life of worry believes that our present wants – whatever they may be – are better than God’s perfect will... that our plans for our lives are bigger and better than God’s provision. Thus, Jesus forbids worry because it is an insult to God and a symptom of a faltering faith.

Finally, in what is probably the most important argument against anxiety, our Lord calls us to see a sixth reason why worry is so worthless, which is this:

6.) Worrying is Fatherless (v. 29-30).

Hear now what Jesus says in verses 29-30: *“And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried. For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them.”* Notice the progression of thought here. In verse 29, Jesus instructs us not to seek after the things of this earth, because – as He goes on to say in verse 30 – those are the things that the world wants. In essence, the idea is this: Since we, as believers in Christ, no longer belong to the world, our lives should look different than they used to. Whereas we used to chase after earthly things and worry about not having them – like all the nations of the world do – we don’t need to do that anymore... indeed, we shouldn’t do that anymore.

Why, though, should our perspective change in this way? Why are we now commanded to stop seeking what the world seeks? The answer comes at the end of verse 30, where Jesus says, *“For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them.”*

So here is the point: We now have a different way of thinking and living because we now have a Father in Heaven. Our new identity in Christ demands a new confidence in life. We are told not to be anxious about our circumstances on earth because we are children of God, and incessant worry makes us seem Fatherless. Hear that again: Anxiety finds us living in this world as though we were still spiritual orphans.

But we are not orphans! We are Fatherless no more. Whereas we used to seek security in money and possessions, we now have been promised eternal security in the family of God. Whereas we once thought ourselves to be valuable on the basis of what we could buy, we now know that we are treasured by God because He bought us with the infinitely precious blood of Christ. Whereas we used to lust after the things of this world, we have now forsaken it all at the cross of Christ to gain the glory of the kingdom of God.

And therein is found **the cure for worry, which Jesus articulates in verse 31, saying, “Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you.”**

And so here is our Lord’s solution to this great struggle we have with worry. The antidote to worry, He says, is to seek first the kingdom of God. And seeking first God’s kingdom is, at its heart, a matter of our perspective and our desires. Ultimately then, this passage consists of Jesus directing us to want for ourselves what God has always wanted for us. And the one thing God wants us all to have is all of Himself, for even if all of the most desirable things on earth were combined together, they could not remotely compare to the infinite worth of God and His kingdom. Consequently, God wants us to want Him because God knows that He Himself is the one and only perfect treasure of infinite worth.

Thus, the very best thing for us—by far—is to know God, to love God, and to live for God. In comparison to Father, Son, and Spirit, everything else is absolutely nothing at all. The better we realize and understand this one transformative truth, the better we will see why worrying about stuff is so very foolish, forgetful, futile, and faithless. God has not saved us to be preoccupied with the stuff of earth. God has saved us to be passionate

about Him and to pursue His perfect purposes in Christ. So the key to stop worrying about this life is to get serious about living for the next.