

## Living Free From Worry

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Matthew 6:25-34 | Philippians 4:4-7

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- It is good to be with you this morning.
- Our text for this morning is Matthew 6:25-34.
- We are all fallen, and therefore all struggle to differing degrees with sinful, inordinate self-concern.
- For those of you that like math...
- Preoccupation with self-concern + distrust in the character of God = Worry and Anxiety
- As we will see from our text this morning, we struggle with worry and anxiety ultimately because we struggle with distrust.
- Though we may never verbalize our distrust in these particular words, our thinking and our actions (worry and anxieties) demonstrate that we struggle to believe two fundamental truths about God:
  1. That He is sovereignly in control of every circumstance that comes to pass in my life.
  2. That He cares and desires to be intimately involved in the circumstances that He ordains for me.

*Therefore I tell you, 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. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? 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? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, 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 of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. Matthew 6:25-34*

### WHAT DOES WORRY MEAN

The Greek word for worry is *merimnao*, from *meridzo*. It means to be divided, pulled apart, separated into pieces. What are some typical things that you worry about? We worry about things like:

- How are going to pay these bills?
- What will he /she think if they really knew me?
- How am I going to accomplish all that is on my plate?
- What if I am diagnosed with a life altering illness?
- Will I fail? Will I succeed?
- Should I take this job or that one?
- What if I don't get the job? What if I loose my job?
- I'm such a sinner; will God really forgive me?
- What if I am treated adversely for my faith in Christ?
- Will I pass the test? Am I really saved?
- What if they choose someone else over me?
- Will my children turn out right (godly)?
- What if I can't have children?
- What if he / she doesn't keep their commitment to me?
- What if the airplane crashes?
- What if they ask me to speak?
- What if I say the wrong thing?
- What if they put me to sleep and I don't wake up?
- What if we have only seen the beginning of the floor dropping out from under the economy?
- What will happen if this candidate wins?

## THE MADNESS OF WORRY

Worry is an indicator of wrong thinking. We worry when we fail to apply the character and promises of God to our circumstances.

Worry is wrong thinking about our life's purpose (v. 25)

*Therefore I tell you, 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. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Matthew 6:25*

What is the purpose of your body?

Worry is wrong thinking about our place in God's plan. (v. 26-30)

*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? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, 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 of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Matthew 6:26-30*

Go watch the birds... what do you learn?

Go watch the flowers grow...what do you learn?

Worry is wrong thinking about the character of God. (v. 31-32)

*Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. Matthew 6:31–32*

*[Christians] who worry believe God can redeem them, break the shackles of Satan take them from hell to heaven, put them into His kingdom, give them eternal life, but just don't think He can get them through the next couple of days. John MacArthur*

Who are we acting like when we worry?

What are we saying about God when we worry?

## **JESUS' PRESCRIPTION FOR WORRIERS**

God knows what you need – trust Him. (v. 31-32)

*Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. Matthew 6:31–32*

God has called you to a higher purpose – seek Him. (v. 33)

*But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Matthew 6:33*

What do you do when you seek something?

What do you do when you seek something first?

God has designed you to live one day at a time – obey Him. (v. 34)

*Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. Matthew 6:34*

James McDonald illustrates this with a TV that has three channels. Channel one is yesterday – don't watch it. Channel three is tomorrow – don't watch it. Channel two is today – watch it! God has designed each day with the perfect set of trials, challenges, joys and heartaches. He knows exactly how much you can handle and has provided all the grace you need to meet every circumstance.

*No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it. 1 Corinthians 10:13*

Paul echoes Jesus' command not to work in Philippians 4:4-7.

*[4] Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. [5] Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; [6] do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. [7] And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

***Philippians 4:4-7***

## **1. WORRY AND ANXIETY ARE THE RESULT OF MISPLACED JOY, SIGNIFICANCE, AND SECURITY. (v.4)**

- Worry and anxiety are the result of trying to protect my idol from failure.
- Can you see that?
- Let me use three common idols to help unpack this truth.
- If finances are your idol, if they are your treasure, what you have attached your significance, identity, and value to, then you will worry that that misplaced treasure doesn't fail...
- If relationships and reputation are your idol, if they are your treasure, what you have attached your significance, identity, and value to, then you will worry that that misplaced treasure doesn't fail...
- If control is your idol, if it is your treasure, what you have attached your significance, identity, and value to, then you will worry (when things seem out of your control) that that misplaced treasure doesn't fail...
- You see, our worry and anxieties are just indicators that we have misplaced treasures.
- We were designed to find our significance, identity, and value in Christ, we were designed to anchor our hope in Christ, we were designed to worship and serve Christ, but sin has warped our value system so that we seek to find our significance, identity, and value in people and things, we anchor our hope in people and things, and we worship people and things...
- And because we have misplaced our treasure, we worry that all that we have invested, all the time and energy that we have given to protecting our idols, doesn't fail us.
- You can trace every moment of worry and every anxious thought back to an idol.
- Back to a misplaced treasure because of a disbelief in the sovereign control of God and the gracious care of God.
- Paul Tripp, in an article written a couple of years ago entitled *Thinking Biblically About Worry*, says that there is an ongoing war in each of our hearts.
- And this war is between the Kingdom of self and the Kingdom of God.
- He says that the kingdom of self is driven by a pursuit of earth-bound treasures and anxiety-bound needs.

- The Kingdom of God in the other hand is driven by the pursuit of eternal treasures.
- There is in each of our hearts a war to invest in what is temporary vs. what is eternal.
- The reason that we worry is because we have assigned inordinate value to temporary things.
- Jesus cautions us to be careful about what we assign value to and what we name as our treasure, because our treasures control our hearts, and what controls our hearts will control our behavior (worry and anxiety).
- He said, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." *Matthew 6:21*
- In light of that truth, you will rest the most (experience the peace of God) when your treasure is the most secure, and you will worry the most when your treasure is the most at risk.
- *Question:* If you think back over the last week, what does your worry reveal about the treasures of your heart?
- You will tend to worry when you plug your life into the outlet of 1.) Things that you don't actually need (misplaced treasures / idols) and 2.) To circumstances that you can't ever control.
- But you will also tend to worry when you are confronted with a legitimate need, but you distrust that God is a faithful and gracious provider.
- We must put off self-sufficient, self-protective thinking and instead obey the command in *Matthew 6:33*.
- Jesus said, "Seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, [as your treasure above all earthly treasures] and all these things [legitimate needs] will be added to you."
- As long as we are not declaring war on our worry idols and seeking to put them to death, we will live in the spin cycle of an anxious life.

*I am deeply persuaded that real, lasting personal rest of heart [peace of God] is never to be found in ease of circumstances. Even in the best of situations in this fallen world your heart will be able to find reasons for worry. Inner rest of soul and lasting peace of heart are only ever found when Jesus and His kingdom are your highest and deepest treasures. When you place your identity in His never-changing hands, when you find your meaning and purpose in the unstoppable work of His kingdom, and when you place your inner sense of well-being on the sure foundation of His promise to meet your every need, you will be able to rest even when the situations and relationships around you are broken. Paul Tripp*

- Worry and anxiety are the result of trying to protect your idols from failure.
- So an anxiety problem is really an idol problem – it is essential that you understand that.
- Because if we are going to make war with worry, we have to make war with our idols.
- Philippians 4:4 tells us what we are to rejoice in, find our significance in and treasure...
- We are called to rejoice in the Lord.
- And to the degree that we do, we will find ourselves living in the peace of heart that only God can provide!

## 2. WHAT WEIGHS MORE - YOUR VIEW OF GOD OR YOUR VIEW OF YOUR CIRCUNSTANCES?

(v. 5)

- Look at verse 5...
- Paul says, "Let your reasonableness [gentleness] be known to everyone. The Lord is near."
- Think with me here for a second about the context surrounding this verse...
- Where was Paul when he wrote the book of Philippians?
- Was he reclining in a beach chair somewhere in the Florida Keys?
- No... He was writing this letter from the confines of a Roman prison.
- Talk about "bummer" circumstances...
- You can imagine that there might have been cause for concern...
- Are they going to kill me or are they not going to kill me... Are they going to kill me or are they not going to kill me...
- But do we find Paul paralyzed with worry and anxiety?
- No... we are reading the letter of a man who was rejoicing in the midst of less than desirable circumstances.
- It is interesting to note that Paul's exhortation to, "Let your reasonableness [gentleness] be know to all," actually can be translated to let your contentment be evident to all people in all circumstances.
- When the deck seemed stacked against Paul, instead of focusing on himself and his difficult circumstances, instead of trying to protect idols and wasting away in worry, we find him enjoying the peace of God that is found when we trust that God is sovereign over all of our circumstances and will take care of all of the protecting that we need.
- If your view of your circumstances is bigger or weighs more than your view of God, you will worry...
- Let me say that another way...If your God is smaller than the world that you live in and the events of your everyday life, you will have no other alternative than to be riddled with worry.
- You see, worry and anxiety are practical atheism.
- At its core, the worry-riddled life is lived as if the promises of God were non-existent.
- *Oswald Chambers* said, "All of our fret and worry are caused by calculating without God."
- All of our worry and anxiety fails to take into consideration the character and promises of God.
- Let me share 6 truths about God that we disbelieve when our worry is heavier than our view of God:

1. God is sovereignty in control of every circumstance of my life.

...[Our lives] Having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will. Ephesians 1:11

...He himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. Acts 17:25

...The hairs on your head are numbered. Matthew 10:30

The heart of man plans his way, but the LORD establishes (directs) his steps. Proverbs 16:9

2. God is bigger than any perceived difficulty in my life and His grace is sufficient for me.  
*My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness...For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong. 2 Corinthians 12:9-10*
3. God cares and is intimately involved in my life.  
*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. 1 Peter 5:6-7*
4. All things work for the good of those who love God.  
*And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. Romans 8:28*
5. God will never leave me nor forsake me.  
I will never leave you nor forsake you. Hebrews 13:5
6. God is faithful even when I am unfaithful.  
[Even when] we are faithless, he remains faithful... 2 Timothy 2:13

- Here is a helpful exercise to reorient our focus on God's promises... write this down:
- When I am anxious about \_\_\_\_\_, I am disbelieving that God \_\_\_\_\_.
- You see, the anxious mind parks in a LIE.
- It believes that it's up to me to take care of this situation or circumstance...
- When we distrust the promises of God it is no wonder that we worry.
- Thinking that you have to bear the weight of the world all by yourself is a lonely place to be.

When you are worrying, it is like being in a universe where no one is home – it's just you and your struggle...but [then] God plants a grace "bomb," He is near! *David Powlison*

- Paul says, "Let your reasonableness [gentleness] be known to everyone. *The Lord is near.*"
- You see, our view of God has to trump our view of our circumstances.
- Paul knew that... That is why he encourages us with God's nearness.
- It is almost as if Paul is saying, "Hey...put your eyes on this, focus on this...the nearness and bigness of our great God!"
- The God who Paul says in Philippians 4:19, "[Can] supply every need of yours according to His riches in Glory in Christ Jesus!
- Instead of parking your mind in a lie that your circumstances are somehow bigger than God can handle, get a good look at God... He is near!

It is only when we want to take our lives out of the Father's hands and have them under our own control that we find ourselves gripped with anxiety. The secret of freedom from anxiety is freedom from ourselves and abandonment of our own plans. But that spirit emerges in our lives only when our minds are filled with the knowledge that our Father can be trusted implicitly to supply everything we need. *Sinclair Ferguson*

- We need to park our minds in the TRUTH.
- *God is sovereignty in control of every circumstance in your life.*
- *God is bigger than any perceived difficulty in your life and His grace is sufficient for you.*
- *God cares and is intimately involved in your life.*
- *All things work for the good of those who love God.*
- *God has a perfect plan for your life.*
- *God will never leave you nor forsake you.*
- *God is faithful even when you are unfaithful.*
- And that God...is near!
- You see, when we get our eyes off of our circumstances and on to God's glorious grace, it changes everything.
- I am reminded of the lyrics:

*O soul, are you weary and troubled?  
No light in the darkness you see?  
There's light for a look at the Savior,  
And life more abundant and free!  
Turn your eyes upon Jesus, Look full in His wonderful face,  
And the things [cares] of earth will grow strangely dim, In the light of His glory and grace.*

- Rejoice in the nearness of God!
- Cultivate a high view of Him in His word.
- That will help you keep your eyes off of yourself and your circumstances.

### **3. THE WAY TO FIGHT WORRY AND ANXIETY IS ON YOUR KNEES. (v. 6)**

- Look at verse 6.
- Paul says, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God."
- I want you to notice that Paul didn't tell us to be anxious for nothing and then remind us that God is near.
- No, He first reminded us of who God is, and then he communicated the imperative "Do not be anxious about anything."
- Again, our view of God has to weigh more than our view of our circumstances.



- But, when you are tempted to worry, when you are tempted to pull your eyes off of the sovereign God who is in control and cares, put your knees on the floor.
- The way to fight worry and anxiety is through prayer.

*I have yet to meet a chronic worrier who enjoys an excellent prayer life. D.A. Carson*

- When anxious thoughts creep in, we have two options:
  1. Entertain worry with worry.
  2. Bring our sinful, disbelieving, idol-loving hearts before the throne of grace.
- Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. *Hebrews 4:16*
- We need to come before God and pray, "I am being tempted to worry and I need your grace to believe your promises."
- "Help me keep my eyes fixed on you."
- "Help me to fix my mind on what is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent, and praiseworthy instead of what is temporary." *Philippians 4:8*
- "Help me to see my circumstances in light of your sovereignty."
- "Help me to trust that you are committed to me and even though I am struggling to see beyond the here and now, I know that you are using my circumstances to complete the good work that you started in me." *Philippians 1:6*
- "Thank you that you are near to me..."
- The Psalmist 73:28 said, "But as for me, the nearness of God is my good; I have made the Lord GOD my refuge..."
- Question: Where is your refuge from worry and anxiety? Where do you run?
- Question: Where does worry drive you?
- Does it drive you to deeper wells of worry, or does it drive you to the promises of God?
- I want to encourage you to pray the promises of God!
- Praying the word helps to saturate your mind with truth.
- And that is where we want to park our minds.

#### **4. THE FRUIT OF SELF-SURRENDERED, GOD-CONFIDENCE IS A PEACE THAT SURPASSES ALL UNDERSTANDING. (v. 7)**

- Look at verse 7...
- Paul says, "And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."
- Three brief things I want you to notice here:

##### *1. The peace of God is available!*

- As we are rejoicing in the Lord...

- As we are fixing our eyes on His character and promises...
- As we are praying with thankful hearts....
- God will faithfully supply the peace that we could never generate on our own.
- This peace is a confident trust in His flawless wisdom and infinite power that provides the calm among the storms of life.
- Isaiah adds an incredible adjective to the peace of God.
- You keep him in *perfect* peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. *Isaiah 26:3*

## 2. *The peace of God surpasses all understanding.*

- God's grants a peace that cannot be gained anywhere else and can't be explained by any other means than He is its source.
- If God can make peace with a guilty sinner, then God is big enough to provide a peace that is greater than all our troubles in this world.
- He is able to provide a peace that that doesn't dull or fade.

*God's peace is not subject to anything that happens in the worldly realm. It is not built on any human relationship. It is not built on any human circumstance, Rather, it is built on an unchanging divine relationship, and a divine plan and promise from an unfailing God will secure you in himself, and who will do everything for your good. This peace is unbreakable, unassailable, and transcendent.*

*John MacArthur*

## 3. *Lastly, the peace of God will guard your heart and mind in Christ.*

As we confidently, by God's grace, apply the truths of Scripture to our minds, that truth will put the eternal into perspective and will guard our hearts and minds from worrying about the things that we can trust God to take care of.

### *Closing:*

- What worry and anxiety do you need to bring to the cross?
- What idols have you been trying to protect?
- What God-given responsibilities have you been neglecting because of fear and worry?
- Bring them with confidence to the throne of grace, there you will find mercy and grace to help in your time of need.