

Worry

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[0 : 00] And I thought, worry is a good message to talk about. You know, what does Jesus say about worry? So I got a little worried if I had enough information.

I went back to my old stuff, and I said, oh, no, this isn't going to work. So here we are. I'm not worried. We're going to look from Matthew 6, Matthew 6, verses 19 through 34.

Matthew 6, 19 through 34. And as you know, Matthew 6 is his sermon on the mount.

And it's a sermon because supposedly he was on a mount. He is the new Moses who brings God's will and God's word from the mountaintop.

And it's a sermon to describe and define for believers who are disciples who are following Jesus what life is like and ought to be like in his kingdom.

[1 : 05] Because, you see, when he came the first time, he brought with him his kingdom. But he only brought, how shall I put it, brought a little bit, right?

He hasn't brought it in its fullness. And in theological circles, we call this the already and not yet. It's already here to a certain level because Jesus himself is the embodiment of the kingdom.

And he brings a new world order, if you will, that will ultimately take over in the new heavens and new earth. But he has not yet returned in the fullness of the kingdom to wipe out all wickedness and evil and those who have rejected him.

So he gives a great description as to what and a definition as to what the kingdom is. What does it look like to live in the realm of Jesus' world in his kingdom?

And that's what the sermon is essentially about. It's not so much a new laws as it is a way of understanding what God said in the Old Testament brought to the fore to this time and how we live now.

[2 : 16] And he delivers this. And if we look at it and compare it to the world, it is absolutely topsy-turvy to what the world presents. And it was even more radically so back then in the days of the Romans.

And imagine living under Taliban. That kind of gives a good picture of what it would have been like back then. Not much freedom. But everything was counterculture that he brought.

That was counterculture. Because the culture that he brings is a new world order, as I said. And Paul describes it as being in Christ.

It's a sphere of the Holy Spirit embodied in Jesus himself where he is in us and we are in him. So Matthew 6, though, he comes upon this issue because for some reason there was a lot to worry about back then.

There was no justice. Virtually no justice at all. But they had a lot to worry about. So Matthew 6 is an answer to that.

[3 : 26] Starting with verse 19. Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth or rust destroy, where thieves break and steal.

But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will also be.

The lamp of the body is the eye, and if therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness.

If therefore the light is in you is darkness, that is in you is darkness. How great is that darkness? No one can serve two masters. For either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other.

You cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on.

[4 : 32] Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns. Yet your heavenly Father feeds them.

Are you not more of value than they? Which of you, by worrying, can add one cubit to his stature? So why do you worry about clothing?

Consider the lilies of the field and how they grow. They neither toil nor spin. And yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not a raise like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field which today is and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you? You of little faith. Therefore do not worry. Saying, what shall we eat or what shall we drink or what shall we wear? For after all these things the Gentiles seek.

For your heavenly Father knows you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. And all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow.

[5 : 39] For tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

Father, we ask for your kindness again to speak to us, to each and every one of us, to apply the word that is read and now will be explained.

Allow our eyes to be opened and ears to be opened to see and hear that which is your will and what it's like to live in proximity to who and what you are and who Jesus is and in his kingdom.

Speak now we ask. Amen. Are you worrying about anything right now? Let's see. Let's count the ways. The election coming up.

Coronavirus. What's going to happen after the election? Coronavirus. People getting sick. Toilet paper. There's a lot of things.

Seriously. A lot of things. Our recent concern is what to do with Matthew in terms of do we adopt him or not. Because if we do, we lose some benefits.

[6 : 52] If we don't, he loses some benefits. And can we, you know, fork out \$6,000 to \$10,000 to hire a lawyer to go through the process. So it's a concern primarily because we really don't know what the birth parents will do.

One lawyer said there's no way they have an opportunity to come after you given their history.

Another lawyer said, well, don't believe that because, you know, the courts always favor the birth parents.

And, you know, all right, what do we do? So that's one of our concerns as a family. And, you know, it's legit. But as some would have counseled us years ago, well-meaning people, they would have said, you're in sin for worrying.

What's the matter with you? You know, shame on you for sinning like that. And then the whole focus would be upon the sin of worry, not about resolving the issue, coming up with an answer. And I've heard that quite a bit. I've, you know, on Facebook have all these friends because they actually hear something that they don't often hear.

[8 : 05] And that is you're not always under sin. You're not under condemnation all the time. If you're in Christ, you're in Christ. There is therefore now no condemnation.

So I might be concerned about adopting or not adopting. But God, even if I sin, he's forgiven me, right? And so that's, as we look at this passage, I've sat under messages that have basically pointed out all the places where Jesus said, don't worry.

And every time you begin to worry, God needs to smack you upside the head. Shame on you. You know, you need to get it straight. But let's see what he says about worry.

What's going on in Matthew 6? Again, it's about kingdom life. It's about trust and faith and exercising that within the realm of his life, his whole sphere of being.

I like what one author said. Worry is a problem. It's a state of mind. It's a default mode. It really is part of the brain. It's a default mode to make a search for possible imperfections or problems or threats.

[9 : 15] It is. If you don't have that in your brain, you really don't care about anything. So you step right into danger. But God has put that little thing. Some of us have a much more active part of that where we see little things, negative things.

And we are always scanning for something that bring about harm. So when the brain finds something perceived as an imperfection or a threat, it sets off an alarm of discomfort and pain.

It is trying to help you focus on the problem in order to find a solution so as to learn how to identify the problem, develop a plan for similar problems, or ways to avoid the issues.

This alarm provokes you to do something. If you don't act, the alarm becomes more intense. And that affects appetite and sleep and so forth. So what he's doing, he's explaining what goes on in the brain.

You know, so if we're out there, I just found out that yesterday there were a pack of coyotes at a park my wife and Matthew love to go to.

[10:22] And, you know, that's a concern now. If we come across a pack of coyotes, I would hope that we would be alarmed by that. You know, have some level of concern. And then begin to think in terms of what should we do?

You know, what plan can we have to escape this threat? That's what's going on in the brain.

Anxiety, on the other hand, is not exactly like worry.

We often tend to put the two together. But, you know, the mechanism within the brain and everything is different. Anxiety is an aspect of a proper concern for life's issues.

Such things bring about plans to deal with it. And that's what both of them do. Anxiety is the level of emotional pain we feel that motivates us to do something about it.

And sometimes without that pain, mental pain. And by the way, the pain center that registers emotional pain and mental pain is the same pain center that registers physical pain.

[11:26] It doesn't know the difference. So when people say they are in pain, they're in pain.

Worry, on the other hand, comes when no plan is made or there's no solution that seems to be forthcoming.

And then there's fear that or there's fear that the plans will not resolve the problem. Are you with me? That's kind of a background. In the original Greek, that's often translated worry or anxiety. It's a word that means overly concerned, having anxiety, to be divided up, to be torn up. And some of us have this, you know, the high volume.

It's always on high volume. You're always alert. You're going to have Thanksgiving dinner. And you're scared to death that somebody will reject your stuffing, you know, so you really overdo it. But that's what this means, this word means. To be divided up, torn up over, having anxiety. It means distractions and divisions. Well, that's the backdrop.

[12:37] And we kind of bring that when we're talking about worry because it's a genuine thing. We all experience it to some level. But again, there is a difference between anxiety and worry.

We'll see what that is in a minute. But as I mentioned, I've been told many, many times, and I was even taught this, that worry is a sin and therefore you need to repent and exercise faith.

And that's all the further it really got. Now, there are steps you can take so you don't sin anymore. But I don't find that satisfying for a lot of reasons.

You know, mentally, spiritually, and so forth. Because if we always perceive worry as sin, then I find, I have found that I begin to worry about being worried.

You know, and God is going to get me. Again, I'm worried about this. It's like one family. I found out when we purchased a new house, we bought it through the VA loan and everything.

[13:37] And we bought insurance. You know, you're kind of required to have insurance on the house. And they were so ticked off that we had such a lack of faith. They said, you don't need insurance.

Insurance means you have a lack of faith. What are you worried about? I thought, okay, well, you can do without the insurance. I'm going to have insurance. That's our business.

So is worry a sin? Sometimes. But that's not the point. When is it a sin? When it tries to preempt God's sovereignty. When it essentially says, I'm in control of my life, God, not you.

Now, you know how that goes. You know, all the best laid plans often don't tend to come to fruition. I don't know what's, you know, I've read this many times.

I've never found the study. They say, you know, they have studied this and 90% of what you worry about never happens. How do you know? I mean, really, who did that? What kind of, but it's when we say, God, back off.

[14:45] It's my life. I'm going to do what I want to do. And then it doesn't work. And you find problems. Sometimes it shows a lack of trust.

That's kind of the point of verse 30, where it says, now, if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you?

You of little faith? He's not trying to deride. He's motivating them to think differently about this situation.

So sometimes it's a lack of trust where we're asking, is God really trustworthy? And remember, the whole point of this, Matthew 6, is a lesson on how we exercise faith, kingdom trust.

What does it mean to trust? And we ask, is God really trustworthy? And think about all the things that have happened in your life that you were concerned about actually came about and it was a bad thing?

[15:48] You know, sometimes that puts us in a state of mind where can I really trust that what might happen is going to happen and God's not going to keep it from happening? It does happen. Then we have something else to worry about.

Does God really love me to keep this bad thing from happening? Does he love me so that he will give me what I want? You see, all these things are essentially parts of our hearts and souls that desire control.

To manipulate events and things so that we can do what we want to do. However, scripture reminds us from many different places, we can laugh about our impotence to try to take control of the details of life.

Sometimes worry can be a test. Sometimes worry can be a sinful distortion of a good emotion. God has put us and given us the emotion of concern.

To run into people who say, I'm not concerned about that. I often think, well, I'm good for you. I don't think I believe you sometimes.

[16:58] But if that's where you're at, that's good. But God put a concern for us. You know, if a relative of yours is sick with COVID and is in the hospital and they're doing everything to keep that relative from dying, you ought to be concerned, right?

You ought not to be taken off to the side and rebuked for worrying. You ought to be concerned. But this concern simply cannot be turned off.

You can't just switch it off and switch it on. It needs to be replaced with proper concern of the things of God. And that's what Jesus will tell us here. A proper manifestation of this emotion is true concern of the things that concern God and trust in him.

It's true concern and trust in him. Worry is the focus of the concern upon the wrong day, tomorrow. Right?

It's putting all that energy, you know, mobilizing your energies, trying to release all those energies for something that has not yet happened. And what Jesus is reminding us is we need to exercise those energies for what is going on right now.

[18:20] Now, he doesn't say don't make a plan. He says don't focus all your intent and energy upon the worry for tomorrow, what might happen tomorrow.

Because quite frankly, I have yet, and maybe you have, but I have yet to anticipate exactly what's going to happen tomorrow that actually came about.

When we mobilize those energies that cannot be released productively, because tomorrow is not yet here, then that can lead to being, you know, ill and dissatisfied and have, you know, be sick and stressed and distressed and tension and be upset on edge and so forth.

What we've also found is worry can be addicting because it becomes life-dominating at times. And some people thrive on the drama and they actually enjoy the worry in an odd sense.

Well, there you have the problem, worry. How can we deal with it in God's way? What does Jesus say about trusting while living within the realm of God's kingdom when you are worried while living in this world?

[19:37] What does he say about that? What does he say? The first thing that he brings out, that I'd like to bring out, is remember this is in the context of the good news that he's bringing of his kingdom.

This is in the context of who and what he is. And the first most important thing we need to understand is what the good news is, the gospel. And that is Jesus came, you know, and Paul outlines it beautifully in Romans and in Galatians.

And Peter talks about that. All the New Testament goes back to looking at who this Jesus is, the Savior King, the Messiah, who has come, who brings his kingdom.

And he calls people to himself. And what did he do? He lived that perfect life that we cannot live. He obeyed God's will, performed God's law, exercised everything that God wants and expected.

And he did it perfectly without flaw whatsoever. Why? Because we can't do that. Never could. And God, who is holy, requires people to be holy like him, to be without flaw.

[20 : 48] But Jesus did that. We can't. Meaning, he didn't worry. We need to know the gospel that not only did he live that life perfectly for us, he went to the cross to die for our guilt and our sins, including the sin of worry, if any of those sins pop up.

He said, it is paid in full. It is finished, complete, done. 2,000 years ago, when he died upon the cross, it didn't just impact that moment.

It impacted everything into the future. So that all of our sins today and yesterday and tomorrow and as long as we are on this side of heaven, all those sins are covered.

We need to remind ourselves of that. Jesus already beat somebody. I mean, God already beat somebody up, so to speak. And it was Jesus himself because he took upon the lashings that we deserve.

That's the good news. He died. That's the sad news. But he took with him all that. And then three days later, he raised again.

[22 : 09] That's the great news. And the power that caused him to be raised again, we find in Ephesians, is the power that gives us to live the life that he desires for us to live.

It's the power to do what he tells us to do here. So what does Jesus say in Matthew 6? First thing, understand the gospel.

Know it's the good news. And live that out and remind yourself of that. But also know that God is still in control.

So what does he say in Matthew 6? First of all, this is not a scolding. It's really a prodding and an encouragement. He doesn't come to you as one.

I don't picture him as somebody who came with a sword and a rod. And he went around beating up his disciples. Which, by the way, was a privilege.

[23 : 09] Rabbis often did that to their students. Jesus never did. But you need to have a single heart. That's number one. That's the point of this Matthew 19, 34.

6, 19 through 34. Our heart needs to be undivided. Not conquered by so many other things. It needs to be focused, laser focused.

And the focus is on Jesus. And the focus is on who and what God is. And the focus is on the good news of what Jesus has given to us and provided. He paves the way.

And he forgives our sins. He explains the cause of worry. Verses 19 through 21. Don't lay for yourself treasures in heaven.

We've gone around and around about what to do with the money, retirement money. And every single person that we've consulted has a different idea of what you do with your money.

[24 : 14] Stocks. This person, no, no, no, no. No stocks. Bonds. No, don't do it. Mutual funds. No, you can't have that. Yes, it should. You know. So we just gave up. Because no matter what we do, it's wrong.

But we're not going to worry about it. Worry can be a result of an over-concern about our earthly treasures.

Our house, our car, our money, you know. Toilet paper. But another cause of worry that can divide us and divide us mentally and in our soul is found in 22 and 23.

Where Jesus says, The lamp of the body is the eye. Therefore, if your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. Meaning if we are looking at the light of Jesus, our lives would be filled with light. But if your eye is bad and your whole body will be full of darkness. There is light that is in you. It is dark. How great is that darkness? You see, worry can be due to a wrong focus.

[25 : 23] Looking at the wrong things. Looking at tomorrow too much. Looking at, you know, too many possibilities of what might happen. Looking at our own lives and how to safeguard the way we want.

So, it can be a result of over-concern about earthly treasures. Worry can be caused by a wrong focus and perspective. And then verse 24. Jesus says, No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other.

You cannot serve God and mammon or things or money. Which is true. And the point here that is reiterated later on in the book of James, is that worry is being double-minded.

Trying to have an allegiance to the one and the other. I will serve God and his purposes and I'll do what he says, but I will serve me and my purpose and I'll do what I want. Or I will serve money.

Or I will serve, you know, food. Or I will serve my own personal goals. Whatever it might be. Worry is being double-minded. It's an over-concern about our treasures.

[26 : 35] It's due to wrong focus. And it's being double-minded. So, what do we do? Go to the gospel. What else do we do?

We need to think God's thoughts about worry. Essentially, we need to know what he has to say and think those thoughts about him. Which is what wisdom is.

It's being skilled in the issues of life. He wants us to be skilled. Isn't it amazing? He doesn't go into some, you know, philosophical, ideological ideas, political ideas, and chase a rabbit, you know, about how he's the great, great Messiah is going to save them from Rome.

You know, from the political environment. Or save them from the corruption of the mafia group.

They were called out priests. High priests. He doesn't do that.

He gets down right to the essential core of issues that address us every single day. Worry being one of them. So, God, how does he resolve?

[27 : 39] What does he say to us? First of all, in verses 25 through 27. And therefore, I say to you, don't worry about your life. What you will eat and what you'll drink or about your body, what you will put on.

Is life not more than food and body, more than clothing? The point of this section is God takes care of you. Well, he didn't give me a Maserati.

That didn't take care of me very well. Did you have food enough for today? Yeah, but it wasn't steak.

He takes care of us. He says the food, the essentials, the sustenance of life. You know, the deepest way that we know he takes care of us by looking at Jesus and what Jesus has done for us.

If Jesus had not done what he had done, we would not have known what we know. He resolved all issues, especially the most important one, of being right with God and living with him.

[28 : 45] In verses 28 through 30, he brings out the issue of clothes. Back then, and even now, my wife and I own an image consulting business a few hundred years ago.

And essentially what we learned is clothing is a language. It communicates things. You think about it. Uniforms communicate a message. You know, you wear a tux that communicates something. Well, it was that way back then. And people wore clothing. It was much more that way to identify their status in life. So if you were kind of a low life, you ought not to wear things that were high life. That was it. You just didn't do that. You know, so people who were following him were both rich and poor. And they were concerned.

What am I going to wear? Because I will be evaluated and judged and assessed based on what I have and what I wear. It's still true today. But it was much more so back then.

[29 : 50] This is why he says, don't worry about clothes. Now, he's not saying you just throw something in a pile in the hamper. And when you get around to it, you pull it out. And, you know, it's all crinkled up and wrinkly and smelly.

You know, he's not saying don't have that nonchalant attitude about life. What he's saying is we're not to be overly consumed by things such as status based upon how we are reflected in the world through clothing.

Because Jesus has clothed us ultimately in his righteousness. And whether you look frumpy or you look frilly, whether you look wonderful or poorly, if you're in Christ, you are clothed with far more than anybody could ever give to you or anything you could ever purchase.

The third thing, his third answer is in verses 31 through 34. Don't worry saying, what am I going to eat? What will I drink? What shall we wear for after? For after all, these are the things that Gentiles, unbelievers, non-followers, that's what they pursue.

Don't be like that. For your heavenly father knows you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be added to you.

[31 : 15] If you need those things, seek his kingdom and these things will be supplied for you.

That's what he's saying. You don't seek those things first to do the kingdom, to live in the kingdom.

You seek and live in the kingdom so that these things will be added.

Topsy-turvy. Just the opposite of how the world thinks and how we often think. Don't be like the world, the negative side, who worry over such things.

Because really those are idols of the heart. Don't be like them. Right? Right? The positive side is know the reality of your life in Jesus.

Who am I in Christ? What do I have in Jesus? You know, to live in... For the Jewish mindset, to live in righteousness meant to fulfill the law, to do the law, which was a way of life so that one would

flourish in life and be successful.

So that's what it meant to be righteous. You know, to show mercy and justice was to be righteous. To show grace and love was to be righteous. All those things.

[32 : 25] Ultimately, you know, the heart and core of true righteousness, even found in the law, is love. And that's what he desires for us. He says, God's righteousness and all these things will be added to you when you seek first the kingdom.

And so we need to focus on that reality of our life in Christ. Is what do we really have and who are we in him? Not who are we based on food and drink, clothes, money, any of that.

So verse 32, God knows what you need. You can go to God and say, oh yeah, God, I know that you know, but I have to tell you just in case. God knows what you need.

And he knows everything about you and all your needs. Not only today, but tomorrow. Next week, next year. Verse 33, get your priorities right.

Pursue, chase after God and he will provide your needs. Leave it to him to resolve those issues.

[33 : 32] This is why Peter says in chapter 5 or 7, cast all your cares on him. Why? Because he cares for you.

Wow. We have an all-powerful, omnipotent, mighty Lord and Savior, creator of the universe. And he cares for you.

So what is Jesus' encouragement? Verse 34, don't worry about tomorrow. There's enough on the list, tomorrow's list. You have enough right now.

Just deal with it now. Which sufficient is today. It has its own troubles. Worry is really fretting about tomorrow. Today has enough troubles to deal with.

So address today's problems. We can be overcome or we can overcome by refocusing our concern upon today. But that is not to say, because we can look in Proverbs and in other places in the New Testament and see that it is legitimate to make plans.

[34 : 40] Contingencies, right? That's fine. You can overcome worry by refocusing your concern on today and deal and then make plans for tomorrow.

Worry comes, as was said, when no plan is made, no solution seems forthcoming, and there is fear that the plans will not resolve the problem. That's worry.

If, very practical, if you're worried about something, make a plan. Will it resolve it?

We don't know until you try to execute it. But what it does do is it pulls off a lot of the tension and stress on your shoulders of trying to address it.

Submit your plans to God. God, these are the best plans. These are the best that I know how to make these decisions based on your guidance and your instruction and your will.

[35 : 36] But I give it to you. I will be, you know, as the psalmist will do. No matter what happens, nevertheless, I will praise you, O Lord. And leave the outcome entirely to God.

That's what James 4, 13 through 16 says. Come now who say, today or tomorrow we're going to do such and such and go to a city and spend a year there and buy and sell and make a profit.

Whereas you don't know what will happen tomorrow. Well, for what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and vanishes away. Instead, you ought to say or think, if the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.

And by the way, don't take this as superstitious. I've known dear Christian people who will say, you know, I plan to go somewhere tomorrow, God willing.

You don't have to say that. It's to have the attitude. If God directs it and he wills it and he desires it, it's going to happen. Have that in mind. But now your boast is in your arrogance and that such boasting is evil.

[36 : 47] And finally, Philippians 4, 6, and 7, you know this one. Essentially, pray and leave the results to God.

Be anxious for nothing. Don't be double-minded and don't be so hyper-stressed and worried for nothing. But in everything through prayer and supplication with thanksgiving.

Let your requests be made known to God. So that the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard and protect your hearts and minds through Jesus.

Are you anxious? You know, if you have something in the brain and, you know, mentally and you are anxious all the time, that could be a legitimate biological thing.

And see a doctor. Are you worried? And Jesus reassures you, you don't need to be. He's got this.

Our Father, we thank you that we can trust in a God who is alive and well, who's real, who's greater

than any.

[37 : 56] There is no other God. We can trust in a God who has given us the kingdom, who has given us Christ. We can trust in you, O Father, for directing our lives.

And we can trust that you will bring about what you desire for us, ultimately in our best interest, but ultimately for your glory.

May we glorify you in our decisions and work to live seeking after your righteousness, seeking after who you are, seeking your kingdom.

Amen.