

Worry Not, but Seek First the Kingdom - Part 2

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[0 : 00] It is really wonderful for me to be back again this week. And I want to invite you, if you do have your Bibles, to turn with me to Matthew chapter 6.

This week we'll be picking up from where we left off last week. And we are going to read from Matthew chapter 6. I'll read from verse 31 through to verse 34.

So, don't worry saying what will we eat or what will we drink or what will we wear.

For the gentles eagerly seek all these things and your heavenly father knows that you need them. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be provided for you.

Therefore, don't worry about tomorrow because tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day is enough trouble of its own.

[1 : 09] This is the word of God. Brothers and sisters, will you bow with me in a word of prayer? Father, we continue to come before your holy throne of grace.

We continue to come expressing our need for your help. We are but finite. We are but creatures and we turn to you, our creator.

We turn to you and express our need for you. We need you this hour. We need you this moment. We need you and we humbly ask that you would please open our ears.

That we'll hear what you have for us this morning. In the same manner, you inspired your word. You inspired your word.

We pray that now as your word is being explained, Holy Spirit, you'll be our portion. Please do these things for us.

[2 : 17] Not because we are deserving. Not because we... Because of anything, but because you're gracious and you're kind.

Through the wonderful name of your son, Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen. Last week, we began looking at this portion of scripture.

We began looking at the subject of worry or the topic of worry. And three things that I want to revisit or highlight in passing that image from last week's sermon is that firstly, we saw that Jesus acknowledges worry.

Jesus affirms worry. He acknowledges it. He's not surprised by it. He's not aloof in the face of worry, in the face of what his people goes through.

He knows this and he acknowledges it. We also saw that not only does Jesus acknowledge worry, but he speaks directly to this reality.

[3 : 32] Jesus commands his people not to worry. Three times in this portion or in this immediate text, three times he reminds his disciples, he reminds his followers that don't worry.

Don't worry. So Jesus commands his people not to worry. But if you remember, last time I also highlighted that Jesus lays down the law.

He calls us not to worry for good reasons and he gives us those reasons. He calls his disciples not to worry. Firstly, because life in itself, life itself is more valuable than any of the things that we worry about.

We also saw that Jesus calls his disciples and calls us by extension not to worry because worry is futile.

By worrying, we add nothing. We do nothing. Worry is an energy-consuming activity. Last week we also saw that one of the reasons we ought not to worry is because Jesus highlights that we do have a father in heaven.

[5 : 05] A father who cares for us. A father who cares for the birds and the flowers and who provides for them. How much more will he provide for us?

And if you were paying attention, this morning as we picked up our reading, we pick up in verse 31 where verse 31 begins again by re-emphasizing this, by calling us, by commanding us not to worry.

You would expect that after two or three reasons that Jesus already gave, you would move on and address other pertinent issues.

But no, he doesn't. Rather, he circles around that subject or that topic of worry. And friends, once again, this all goes to show that worry is a deep thing.

It's deeper than what we care to admit. It's deeper than what we care to confess. And Jesus, knowing this, he spends considerable time talking about worry.

[6 : 27] He gives not one, not two, not three, more than three reasons as to why you shouldn't worry. Are you here this morning and you are worried?

Are you here this morning and you are still worrying? Well, the text does have good news for you and me. Well, Jesus just doesn't say, don't worry.

I told you so. Don't worry. I gave you three reasons already. No, he doubles down. He continues. He keeps on giving us reasons as to why not to worry. And verse 31, he says, so don't worry.

Don't worry. Don't worry saying, what are we going to eat? What are we going to drink? Or what are we going to wear? And here, it seems or it appears as if Jesus does a shift.

Now, he moves from the father's care for a second and says, don't worry about these things. Why? Because if you look around you, those who don't have a father worry about these things.

[7 : 47] Jesus draws a distinction. He calls his people and he says, don't worry about these things. Why?

Because the Gentiles, and this is not so much a racial distinction that he's making.

It's more of a religious distinction. He's saying the Gentiles, referring to those who don't have God, who don't know God, they worry about these things. So you, because you know God, you ought not to worry about it.

To put it differently, Jesus invites his disciples not to worry. And the point he underscores there in verse 31, he said, there ought to be a qualitative difference between you and of those of the kingdom of this world.

He goes on and describes that those who don't follow God, those who don't have God, those who are enslaved by all sorts of ambitions, all sorts of passions, those who have no one to tend to worry about these things and are preoccupied about making a way for themselves, but not you.

[9 : 10] Has it occurred to you that the Bible does call us to experience freedom from the enslaving power of anxiety?

And one of the ways through which we experience this, or as we experience this freedom, it becomes a witness to those who do not know God. What Jesus is getting to here and elsewhere, this comes out more clearly, is that even though we are in this world, even though we exist in this context, we work in the same places, we go to different places, we have Cyril Ramaphosa as our president, actually we are also a peculiar people.

A different people, a people in a different kingdom within this greater kingdom. And our text moves us further.

It calls us not to worry and it says, be different from these people who don't have God, but you, because you have God, you have a father who cares for you, and not only does he care for you, not only does he wait for you to express your needs, actually he knows them.

Friends, if that doesn't excite you, I don't know what will. Your father in heaven knows you. He knows your needs.

[10:53] Your very hairs are unknown to him. Your thoughts that plague you. Your desire, your need to eat, your need to drink, your need to be clothed.

None of that is outside of his radar. So why do you worry? Why do you worry?

Why do you worry? What Jesus is getting at in verse 31 is that because you are known by God and because you are loved by God, don't be like pagans.

Don't be like gentiles who don't have God, who are not known by God. Rest in the knowledge that your father cares for you and your father loves you.

And our text does something more. If you look at verse 33, it moves us further. There is a direct shift.

[12:06] Now, Jesus has been telling us what not to do. He's been telling his disciples, don't worry, don't do that.

But in verse 33, it's sort of a summary or everything comes to a climax and he tells us now what to do. The gospel frees us or enables us to be free from anxiety.

And the gospel calls us and invites us to participate. The call that Jesus extends here is a call to seek the kingdom.

He says, don't worry, but seek the kingdom and his righteousness. Now, before we come back to what kingdom and righteousness is and what Jesus is getting into here, I think it is important to see the latter part of verse 33.

He says, actually, when you prioritize this, the very same things that you're worried about will be added.

[13:19] Is it okay to us that Jesus is saying, don't worry about the basics, not because they are not important.

No, no. Food, drink, and clothing is important. Imagine a world if I would come here without clothes.

Maybe don't imagine that. But the point is, clothing is important. So Jesus is not undermining that. We know there is a place for clothing.

Because in Genesis chapter 3, after Adam and Eve had sinned, and God comes looking for them and says, Adam and Eve, where are you?

They were hiding and they went on to try and cover themselves with fig leaves. They tried to cover their shame. We know clothing is important because God made better clothing for them, made out of animal skin.

[14:28] We know food is important because Jesus teaches us to pray. And he says, pray like this. Give us our daily bread. It is important.

We know that drink is important because even Jesus, during his earthly ministry, he asked for a drink.

John chapter 4, we're told. So what the text is getting to is not to undermine your needs. It's not to undermine your worries.

But he's inviting us to exchange our worries and our cares for things that are material, things that are secondary, to exchange that with something that is primary.

And there is a promise attached to this. The promise is this. As you make the big things big, as you put a high premium on that which matters, the secondary things will fall into place.

[15 : 32] That's what Jesus says. He says, as you seek his kingdom, as you seek his righteousness, all these other things will be settled.

Verse 33, Jesus says, but seek the kingdom and his righteousness. Friends, worry not.

Worry not. But seek God's kingdom and his righteousness. What does that even mean?

Up to this point, we're being told. We're being cautioned. Actually, we're being commanded not to pursue certain things. Not to seek certain things. And now Jesus turns around.

He's like, no, but seek this. Verse 33 is an imperative.

[16 : 42] It's not a suggestion. It's a command in present continuous form where Jesus calls us to pursue certain things.

He calls us to pursue the kingdom. He calls his audience to pursue the reign and the rule of God in this life.

And it is very important for us to understand that the very same people Jesus is calling to seek the kingdom are people who are very familiar with kingdom language.

Yet Jesus reshaves their ideas of what kingdom is. What Jesus means something different when he talks about the kingdom.

The people to whom Jesus was speaking to were people who were longing and who were waiting for the restoration of Israel as a superpower.

[17 : 47] They were longing and yearning that they'll be restored to be this great kingdom, this great power. Yet that's not what Jesus meant.

The people who Jesus calls and invites to seek the kingdom were people who had a world understanding of what kingdom is.

Their understanding of kingdom was liberation from Rome. The people to whom Jesus calls to seek the kingdom were people who were primarily concerned with the material things of this world and the material things that this world offers.

And friends, if we're to be honest, we're no different from these people. We're no different from these people because no matter what we sometimes say, no matter what we sometimes profess and confess with our mouths, if we're to look deep down in our hearts, we would admit that there are certain kings ruling our hearts.

Worry is a king. If we're to be honest, worry for what tomorrow holds, rules our hearts.

[19 : 20] If we're to be honest, concern for what we're going to eat and drink and what we're going to wear, dominates our hearts. We're no different from these people.

Yet the true king, the glorious king, the all-powerful king, the all-sufficient king, the king who was from before, who is now and who is forever to come, invites us to seek his kingdom.

Because it is a better kingdom. It is a glorious kingdom. It is a kingdom of love, of grace. It is a kingdom where we can rest in the one who is ultimately in control.

You see, worry sometimes springs from a place where we want to exercise control over everything. And even though we know that we are not in control, or maybe you are, I know that I'm not in control, especially with an infant in the house.

Even though we know that we're not in control, even though we know we can never fully exercise control, yet we strive and we pursue it and we seek control. And that cycle leaves us empty.

[20 : 43] That cycle leaves us drained, leaves us exhausted, leaves us depressed. Friends, the good news is this.

There is a king who invites you to seek him. There is a king who came from heaven to earth for you and me. A king who displaced himself.

Even though he was God, he didn't deem his godness, his kingship, something to hold onto. He emptied himself, we told in Philippians, and he stepped down into his story to redeem his people.

To redeem you and me from all other kingships. The good news of the Bible, the good news of the Bible is this.

You have a king who has pursued you. The king who has made it possible for you to now seek him.

[21 : 49] To now be in his presence. This we know from earthly kings. You just don't walk into the presence of a king willy-nilly.

But just don't do that. Yet, the king calls you to seek him. He calls you and me to be under his rule.

Whose rule are you under this morning? Whose rule are you under? Well, it's not a rhetorical question.

But again, I'm not asking you to say the answer out loud. Whose rule are you under? It says, seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

What Jesus is getting to here is that be under the reign or the leadership of this king. But let your life reflect it.

[23 : 00] Seek his righteousness. Let your life align with God's reign. And friends, if we're to be honest again, we're not always consistent.

We're not always perfect. Yet, this king is not one who chases us. He's a king who invites us and keeps on inviting us to confess, to be in his presence.

And he's a king who washes us. Clean everything. Our text, this morning, gives us more reasons as to why we shouldn't worry.

It says, because your father knows your needs. And in the same vein, it reminds us that worry is for those who do not know God.

But for you who are known by God, who are loved by God, you have no reason to worry. But for you who are loved by God. Our text calls us and invites us to set our priorities right.

[24 : 24] It says, seek first the kingdom. It says, pursue first what is primary.

And the rest will be added. And what this means is not an invitation to be passive.

It's not an invitation to do nothing. It is an invitation to carry on with life. To carry on with our jobs.

To carry on as students. But as we do that, we're always aware of the God factor. As we do that, we're always reminding ourselves that our chief end is to enjoy God and to glorify him.

At all times and at all places. But that's not all that is there in our text.

[25 : 32] Our text invites us to worry not. But again, and I don't fully understand why Jesus would do this. In verse 34, he says, don't worry because God will provide.

But he also still gives us a dose of reality. He says, don't worry about tomorrow. Read with me in verse 34.

Therefore, don't worry about tomorrow. Why? Because tomorrow will worry itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. What the text is getting to here.

Is that even though we invited to worry not. Even though we invited to rest in the father's care and father's provision.

It doesn't mean the road won't be bumpy. It doesn't mean we exempted from all the troubles. No.

[26 : 43] Don't worry about tomorrow. For tomorrow will worry itself. Friends, I do not know what tomorrow holds. I do not know what this afternoon holds for you and me.

And no matter how much we try to control everything, we are not in control for our future. But this we know. We have a father who cares for us.

We have a father who knows beginning to end. We have a father who, in his love and in his kindness, has given us his son, Christ Jesus Christ.

And because Christ lives, we can face tomorrow. But I also do not want to over promise. Tomorrow has trouble.

There is trouble that awaits you and me. But no matter how much we prepare, the best preparation we can make today is to believe and embrace the gospel and the promises of the gospel.

[27 : 57] Which is we are not our own in life and death. But we belong to Christ. He is our hope in life and in death. Friends, I want to invite you again to consider this again.

Worry not. Worry not. Worry not. Worry not. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness.

And everything will be added to you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.