

Worry Not, but Seek First the Kingdom

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[0 : 00] If you do have your Bibles, I want to invite you to turn with me to the book of Matthew! Matthew chapter 6. Matthew chapter 6. This morning's reading is coming from Matthew chapter 6.

I'm going to read from verse 25 through to verse 34. Matthew chapter 6, verse 25 through to verse 34.

I'm reading from the Christian Standard Bible. Therefore, I tell you, don't worry about your life, what you eat or what you drink or about your body.

What you wear isn't life more than food and the body more than clothing. Consider the birds of the sky. They don't sow or reap or gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them.

Aren't you worth more than they? Can any of you add one moment to his lifespan by worrying? And why do you worry about clothes? Observe the wildflowers of the field.

[1 : 13] Observe the wildflowers of the field. They grow. They don't label a spin thread. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was adorned like one of these.

If that's how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and thrown into the furnace tomorrow, won't he do much more for you, you of little faith?

So don't worry, saying what will eat or what will drink or what will wear. For the Gentiles 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. This is the word of the Lord. Let us bow together in a word of prayer.

[2 : 16] Father, we do give thanks for the gift of your word. Your word is true, and your word is everlasting.

Now we commit this hour to you. We pray that you open our eyes, that we see wonderful things emerging from your word. We pray, Lord, that you calm us.

You give us ears that hear to what you are saying to us this morning. And Lord, we pray that you do this for us, not because we are deserving, but because you are gracious, and because you are kind, and you are loving.

We humbly ask in the wonderful name of your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen and amen. There is general agreement among musicians and among musical lovers that one of the greatest hits of all time, one of the greatest songs of all time is Three Little Birds by Bob Marley.

Three Little Birds famously known for its chorus, Don't you worry about a thing because everything is going to be all right. Don't you worry about a thing because everything is going to be all right.

[3 : 38] It is a song that we all have sang, we all have maybe danced to at some point. And the reason why it is one of the greatest hits, I believe, is not just because of its tune.

Whether you're a reggae fan or you're not, there's something about this song that resonates. I believe, and I want to put forward for your consideration this morning, that the reason why this song is one of the greatest hits across genres, across time, is because of its message.

There is something that resonates about its message. You see, this song identifies and rightly identifies what we all struggle with.

This song rightly identifies that worry is a reality. Worry is part of life. And worry has been part of life since the fall.

The song rightly identifies that we are a worrying people. We worry about small things and we worry about big things.

[5 : 02] We worry about all sorts of things. And for right reasons, we worry about what we're going to eat.

What we're going to drink. What we're going to wear. We worry about... We worry about...

We worry about... Does that person like me? We worry about our health. Is my health going to fail me?

We worry about our finances, our security. If you're a new parent, you worry if you're ever going to sleep again.

Friends, the bottom line is that we worry. But here is the problem. No matter how much we sing, no matter how loud we play the song, Don't You Worry, it seems we can't stop ourselves from worrying.

[6 : 09] The problem is actually double-fold. First, we worry. We are an anxious people who are under the enslaving power of anxiety and worry.

But no matter what we try to do, it seems we can't rid ourselves of this. Friends, worry is a powerful reality.

But praise be to God. Praise be to the Lord that this morning I want to announce that it seems our text, it seems our passage this morning gives us this window, opens this possibility that those who follow Christ can experience freedom from anxiety.

Now, get me right. What I'm not trying to do is undermine the depth of your worries. Nor am I trying to give a medical solution to that.

There are some people gifted and competent who were experts in their field who would gladly do that. But what I'm trying to do and what I pray and hope will happen by the time we walk out of these doors is that we will see that the Bible invites us to experience freedom.

[7 : 47] This morning I'm not going to be too ambitious. I only have three things that I want to touch on. The first one, I want us to see the reality of worry.

I want us to see the commandment not to worry. And lastly, I hope we will see the reasons why we need not to worry and the reasons why freedom from this powerful vice is possible.

First point, the reality of worry. If you were paying attention when I read the text this morning, you would see that over and over, at least five or six times, the word worry appeared.

It appeared because Jesus, during his earthly ministry, actually Jesus, during one of the greatest sermons to be delivered, which is the sermon on the mount, Matthew chapter five through to verse seven, he attends to the subject of worry.

Is it okay to you that the goodness about the Bible, the goodness about the God we worship is that he cares deeply for his people.

[9 : 03] He loves his people so deeply that not even one thing pertaining to our well-being falls outside of the realm of his providence.

Jesus, in Matthew chapter five, through to verse seven, he is teaching concerning the kingdom. He is teaching his disciples, he is teaching his followers what life in the kingdom looks like.

He addresses a lot of things. He teaches them how to pray. He teaches them about anger and the dangers of anger. And he teaches them about a lot of things.

And one of those things he touches on is worry. The portion we read comes just after talking about possessions and how Jesus makes it clear that all those who would follow God need to make a decision between saving money or God because you cannot save two masters.

And then he turns in Matthew chapter six, verse 25, and he says, if you trust in me, if you save God, therefore I tell you not to worry. Six times he comes back to this topic and he assures his people, worry not.

[10 : 26] Don't you worry. Don't you worry. Maybe you are sitting here this morning and maybe you have troubling thoughts.

You have anxious thoughts. And you have tried everything that you could have tried. And actually, maybe you have not even given the Bible a chance.

You have dismissed it. You thought it had nothing to say. Well, the Bible acknowledges the reality of worry. Jesus talks about it from Genesis to Revelation.

There are multiple texts that addresses this topic in one way or the other. Jesus cares. But you see, Jesus just doesn't address worry on a surface level.

He is very specific about what he has to say. Jesus commands his followers not to worry.

[11 : 38] He's not just acknowledging worry. He's not just empathizing with us and he's like, we understand, we do worry, it happens. No, because he is the king of glory, because he is the master, he is God in charge of every aspect of life he has and he can speak directly to the subject of worry.

and what he says is very bold. I'd go as far as saying it's very counter-cultural. He doesn't encourage his disciples, he doesn't encourage us by extension to retreat in our feelings and to just feel sorry about ourselves and to just be fixated on what keeps us worried.

Actually, he commands us to not worry. Jesus here is not gaslighting us.

No, he is recognizing worry that it is a reality and he's calling you and he's calling me to not worry and he makes it a commandment.

Look with me at verse 25. Don't worry. Verse 28. Why do you worry?

[13 : 02] Verse 31. Don't worry. Verse 34. Don't worry. I want to say to you this morning, Jesus commands you not to worry.

Jesus commands you not to worry. But I think that should be followed up by why.

You see, Jesus lays down the law and the law is like, don't worry. That's not an option. And he follows that with rationale as to why not to worry. No matter how much we sing the song, don't worry, everything is going to be all right, we can't stop ourselves from worry.

Why? Because some of us who have lived long enough would know that there's always nonsense around the corner. There's always something to worry about.

So just to say everything is going to be all right, well, it's true, but that never stops anyone from worry. There are few things that you should never say to someone or that always prove unhelpful.

[14 : 31] don't worry, calm down. No matter how we say it, it just never lands well.

But friends, I want to challenge you to get over that mental head a bit. Or maybe I want to challenge you to be patient enough to see why Jesus says, don't worry.

when Jesus says, don't worry, it's because he knows something that you and I don't know. The first thing that Jesus calls us to think about or calls his disciples to think about is, we find it in verse 25, he says, don't worry about your life, what you eat or what you drink.

Isn't life much more important? In other words, Jesus is calling us to question our priorities. He's saying these things that we preoccupy ourselves with worrying and stressing about, but actually, if you slow down, if you catch your breath, you would see that you have life.

And life is much more important than that. Friends, when was the last time we stopped and we slowed down and we recognized that life is a gift from God and that our lives are inherently valuable and important and precious in the sight of the Lord and also in the sight of your loved ones.

[16:15] We're living in times and in days when it's so easy to preoccupy yourself with the next thing that you don't have, the next thing that you want.

But even when you receive it, rarely do we stop and thank the Lord. Rarely do we stop and recognize that it is by God's grace that I'm awake this morning and that I'm here.

Don't worry. Why? Because your life is much more valuable. But Jesus doesn't stop there.

He introduces a case study for us. He says don't worry. Why? Because you have a father.

You have a father in heaven who delights in blessing you with everything that you need. and friends that is comforting news to us.

[17:28] And anxious people living in an anxious broken world, we have a father. You're not an orphan. You have a father who's in heaven who's seated on his throne who will never withhold anything that is good for you.

And that father delights in providing and meeting all of your needs. He'll provide you and me with food, with drink, and with clothing.

So don't worry. And here, just in case we're still wondering and we're still doubting Jesus' command and the father's ability to provide for our needs, Jesus gives us a case in point.

He says, look at the birds of the air. They do nothing. Or technically they fly, but other than that, your father feeds them.

He says, look at the wildflowers. Look at them. If you're doubting your father's ability to provide for you, just look at nature.

[18:49] Look at the ecosystem. It's being sustained by your father through Christ Jesus who has the whole world in the palm of his hand.

So on that grounds, don't worry. Now I know this is difficult for some people to embrace and to believe.

Why? Because maybe of your experience with your earthly father. Maybe you didn't have an earthly father. Your earthly father was absent.

I want to give you this assurance. God the father is perfect. He's perfect in every way.

He knows each and every one of your need. He will never leave you. He will never forsake you. Your mother and father can leave you, but not your father in heaven.

[19:55] He will be with you always. Your father in heaven is like no earthly father.

He's a better father. He's a good, good father and that is who he is. He delights in providing for you and me.

And again, if you're doubting that, look at the cross. Look at the cross. The Bible tells us in Romans that God has not withheld his only begotten son.

He gave his very best. Jesus Christ. There is no good thing he shall withhold from you and me. For God so loved the world that he gave his begotten son.

He gave his very best. Surely it's not hard for him to give you bread. It's not hard for him to give you drink, the choicest of drink.

[21 : 04] it's not hard for him to provide for your clothes. He will. Maybe you're sitting here and your needs extend beyond that.

Of course, the things that Jesus addressed here are the very basic things that we need to live and survive. But maybe you are sitting here and you desperately, desperately in need for a promotion.

at work or for a raise. Your Father in heaven knows what you need. When you need it and you will never be late.

He will give you everything that is good for you. Trust in him. You do not have to wander outside the providences and the promises of God to provide for yourself.

That's a distrust. That's an insult to the Father's ability to provide for you. Rest in him. Trust in him. Trust in him.

[22 : 20] In verse 27, Jesus asks a question. Actually, throughout this passage, he asks a series of rhetorical questions, questions that he really doesn't need an answer to, but he's asking to drive across his point.

He says, aren't you more valuable than the birds of the air and the flowers? If God provides for them, the logical thing is that he trusts that he will provide for you. In verse 27, he says, don't worry worry.

Because life is valuable because of your father's care for you, but also because of the futility of worry. Worry, it seems Jesus is saying here in verse 27, what will you do?

Nothing comes out of your worrying. If anything, worry is an energy-consuming activity. So Jesus calls you not to worry. He said, don't worry.

Don't worry. friends, I don't know where you are this morning. I don't know what is keeping you awake at night.

[23 : 38] I don't know what's worrying you. Is it your health? Is it the salvation of your family members? What is it that is worrying you? What is it that is worrying you?

this I can tell you. Whatever that is worrying you has been taken care of. Whatever that keeps you awake has been taken care of.

By God, your Father in heaven, who cares for you. And that is good news for you and me. you and what makes this good news is that it sets us free from an endless striving, endless pursuing, endless pushing, endless trying to create a security for ourselves.

It calls us to trust, to deeper trust in the Lord. what is it that is worrying you? Trust in God the Father.

Trust in God the Father who has provided everything. Trust in God the Father. Look to him. Look to him.

[24 : 57] Look to Jesus. One of the reasons why it's important and why we can take Jesus seriously when he says don't worry is because he is talking about things that he experienced himself.

The Bible tells us that in Gethsemane a few hours before Jesus was to be crucified he found himself in the garden crying carrying the weight of the world worried plagued with anxious thoughts.

Thoughts of the cross that was awaiting him. He suffered. And in his suffering he cried out to his father he said Lord if this is possible let this cup be taken away from me yet not my will but your will.

In his anxious worried thought he didn't give up. He is a better Adam. He doesn't give in to his flesh. He powers through and he perseveres even when he is worried so that he would secure a place for you and me.

There is no need to worry. Why? Because Jesus has taken our place because Jesus persevered.

[26 : 21] Your sin and my sin was laid on him. Your nakedness and my nakedness your hunger and my hunger was laid on him and all who would look to him need not to worry.

Is it okay to you that sometimes the way we worry about food even though we were provided for yesterday even though I know that there's food when I go home yet we still worry about what we're going to eat and what we're going to drink is maybe a sign of something that is deeper.

Maybe our worry and our concern and our preoccupation with food and drink points to a hunger that cannot be and a thirst that cannot be quenched with physical food.

And the good news is Jesus is the bread of life. Maybe you are here and you are listening and you are saying I hear what you're saying. I hear the assurances that you are giving about why not to worry.

But I don't know God as my father so I have every reason to worry. The good news is that he is willing, he is waiting to embrace you if you would turn to him in repentance, if you would profess this morning your dependence on yourself, you would profess your need for him to be your father, you would readily accept you.

[28 : 08] Maybe you hear you like Jesus is, God is my father, yet you live like you're an orphan. I invite you to fix your gaze on him.

Let us pray. Amen. Lord, we give thanks for the gift of your word.

Your word is true. And Lord, we humbly accept it as true this morning and we humbly acknowledge our tendency to trust in ourselves, our tendency to think that we know better.

Our tendency to rest in our own efforts. And Lord, we want to pray, we want to humbly ask that you will meet us where we are at.

For those who are worried, we have good reasons to be worried, Lord, we pray that it will please you to touch them.

[29 : 20] It will please you to relieve them of anxious thoughts that plague them. And Lord, we pray also with the recognition that this topic, this subject, is more complex than we can treat it.

Yet, we realize that you are God who is bigger than any complexity. And you are God who is powerful to meet us wherever we find ourselves.

Bless us, keep us, grant resolution to some of the concerns or the issues that are giving rise to our worries and our concerns. We humbly ask through the wonderful name of your Son, Jesus Christ.

Amen.