

Sermon on the Mount Freedom From Anxiety Matthew 6:25-34

Introduction

In our text passage today, Jesus addresses our relationship with material wealth and the effect of the anxiety it can produce. Of course, we need to be responsible with our worldly possessions, but we also need to place our faith in God, knowing He will never let us down. Jesus teaches that we can address our anxiety by pursuing God's priorities instead.

Last week we considered Jesus' teaching about God's kingdom and material wealth in Matthew 6:19-24. Today we'll examine Jesus' teaching about remaining free from anxiety produced by material wealth in Matthew 6:25-34.

In verse 25, Jesus says, "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. 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 of more 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, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed 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, O 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 that 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, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day *is its own trouble.*" (Matthew 6:25-34 NKJV)

Jesus outlines one of the most tremendous benefits of being a citizen in God's kingdom. Most people would consider it an incredible benefit to be free from anxiety, regardless of your income level, market fluctuations, or an uncertain future. And Jesus gives us some perfect advice to help us deal with anxiety.

But first, we need to distinguish between anxiety and responsible action. Any responsible person develops the ability to anticipate future needs and take action that prepares to meet them. God commands us to develop and exercise this quality and rebukes those who don't plan ahead as "sluggards." However, anxiety is forethought gone overboard. It's when you start ruminating over what might happen or obsessing over things you have no control.

It can also be assuming responsibilities for things God never intended you to have. It's so easy to begin with responsible action, and then step over the line into anxiety! The root of the problem is usually insufficient faith, not insufficient funds!

In this teaching from The Sermon on the Mount, Jesus wants His followers to have growing freedom from the anxiety that so quickly invades our lives and destroys our peace and sense of well-being.

Anxiety is when concern runs amuck and causes us to obsess over things we can't do anything about. We start playing over and over worst-case scenarios that increase our stress level, feed our fears, and cause depression and anxiety that drains us emotionally, mentally, and physically.

No wonder Jesus says, "Do not worry!" But He says it not as a rebuke but as an invitation. You don't have to worry about these things. Why? Because God is a good Father (6:26,32) who really does care for His children. John 1:12 says, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:" (John 1:12 NKJV)

By simply receiving Christ, you become God's child and come under His care. If you have never done this, I hope that today will be the day you do!

Jesus explains how faith is the key to conquering anxiety. The first step is to choose the way of faith in God.

I. Faith Chooses God

In verse 33, Jesus says, "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." (Matthew 6:33 NKJV)

Jesus says this teaching applies to those who choose to become part of God's family. Freedom from anxiety is only available to those who choose the way of faith. It is the person of faith that comes under the providential care of God. Those who run away from the family of God have good reason to be anxious because they are on their own, and there is no one to take care of their eternal needs.

The first question to ask is, "Are you a child of God? Is your hope in this world, or do you have an eternal hope in Christ?" Answering this question correctly is the first step to experiencing deliverance from all forms of anxiety.

But just being a member of God's family doesn't exempt you from experiencing anxiety. Many believers are qualified to live free of anxiety but don't because they fail to exercise their privilege to live their faith! Jesus identifies this as a key issue in verse 30 when He 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, O you of little faith?" (Matthew 6:30 NKJV)

For the Christian, anxiety is the "red light" that says, "Stop! You need to trust God!" Jesus spends most of this passage explaining how to express and increase your faith in God.

II. Faith Argues With Anxiety

Faith is bold and does not back away from an argument with anxiety. Biblical faith always promotes the right kind of thinking. Faith is not a mystical experience or emptying of mental thoughts. The problem with 'little faith' is that it does not think. Fear and anxiety destroy a person's ability to reason correctly.

According to Jesus' teaching in this passage, Faith causes you to think correctly; and the trouble with a person of little faith is that their mind is an ally of this world's thinking! Those who do not exercise faith will allow life's circumstances to intimidate them into submission. That is the real challenge we face in this life.

The world comes to us with a club and strikes us on the head, and we become confused and incapable of thought, which renders us helpless and defeated. Jesus says the way to avoid this is to use our God-given faith and think biblical thoughts! The children of God spend more time studying God's lessons in faith through observation and deduction.

The Bible is full of logic. We should never think of faith as something purely mystical and unrelated to the natural world. You can't just go to church once a week and listen to a sermon and expect marvelous miracles to happen. That is not the way the Christian faith works. Christian faith is what brings you to worship and what causes you to take action following worship.

Christian faith is essentially thinking with the mind of Christ. Too many Christians, especially right now, are not using the brain God gave them to meditate on the Word of God and think with the mind of Christ. They're listening to every voice but the voice of God. Consequently, we have far too many believers wringing their hands in despair and crying, 'What's going to happen to me? What can I do? I don't know who's right?' That's the voice of a person absent of thought; it is the abdication of thought. It is the voice of surrender; it is the acknowledgment of defeat. That is not the definition of faith!

Faith causes a person to insist upon thinking and logic when every worldly argument around him seems determined to bludgeon him and knock him down. The trouble with a person of little faith is that they cave in to worldly power and control instead of taking biblical authority over their thoughts. Their thoughts then keep them going round and round in circles. And it is this circular thinking that is the fundamental nature of worry.

Worry and anxiety will cause you to lie awake at night for hours. Negative thoughts will have going round and round in circles rehashing the same miserable details of some situation you can't change. That is not thoughtfulness; it is a failure to think! Something else is controlling your thoughts and governing them, and it has left you in that miserable state of worry and anxiety.

Of course, there are times when God awakens you to pray for some present need, or sleep will elude you because you're interceding in prayer for God's direction and

guidance. If you're going to lose sleep, make sure it's for a Godly reason and not because you're overwhelmed by circumstances you can't change. If you notice, Jesus gives us mostly rational arguments in this passage:

- If God has provided us with physical life, He will provide us with the necessary things to sustain it. (6:25)
- If God provides for all his lesser creatures, He will certainly provide for us, his chosen children. (6:26)
- If God provides clothing for fleeting plants, He will give us the clothing we need. (6:28-30)
- If God has provided salvation for us through Christ's death, He will undoubtedly meet our material needs. (Rom. 8:32)

In verse 27, Jesus asks, "Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?" (Matthew 6:27 NKJV)

He answers in verse 30, "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, O you of little faith?" (Matthew 6:30 NKJV)

But you can only take your thoughts captive as you pursue God's priorities. Pursuing God's priorities is also a dimension of faith.

III. Faith Pursues God's Priorities

Look at verse 33, "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." (Matthew 6:33 NKJV)

It is the way we order our priorities. We don't add seeking the kingdom of God to the top of our list of priorities. Instead, everything we do honors and seeks the establishment of God's rule in our life. We don't need to choose between honoring God and loving our spouse or being a good friend. We honor God and seek first the kingdom of God by being good spouses and good friends.

We need to examine this statement in its immediate context. Jesus reminds us that we should not devote our complete worship and service to our physical well-being. To think only about your physical well-being is to worship and serve mammon. To think this way is to curse your life with worry and anxiety. If you are more concerned about your physical well-being than your eternal spiritual well-being, you will find yourself focusing on your material needs and possessions.

Jesus tells us the cure for worry is to focus on the eternal. We give up the habit of worry and constant anxiety for a greater passion of honoring God in everything by giving thanks for His eternal and triumphant victory.

The righteousness of God demands our commitment to find and to do the will of God. It becomes our purpose to think right, do right, and live right. And when you

put God first, you can enjoy material things without becoming a slave to them. In addition to the heavenly treasures, Jesus promises divine provision to meet your needs as you pursue a righteous life.

Conversion or salvation is about changing your focus and who you serve. Seeking the righteousness of God happens when we pursue Godly character by consistent participation in God's Word, prayer, a thankful heart, and fellowship with other Christians. We also represent Christ by loving and sharing our faith with non-Christians, encouraging and building up other believers, and investing our material resources to prosper God's work. It is this lifestyle we build our priorities around. It is this focus that keeps anxiety and worry at bay.

Righteous living releases God's Spirit to break the power of anxiety and replace it with his peace. Over the long haul, it will build a history of God's faithfulness to you and a personal witness of your faithfulness to Him.

Conclusion

In verse 34, Jesus says, "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. (Matthew 6:34 NKJV)

Don't worry about tomorrow. If you must worry, then concern yourself with only the things of today. The truth is, most of the things we worry about, we have no control over anyway! That type of worry is foolish and harmful. Jesus says sufficient for the day is its own trouble. In other words, live in the present day! That doesn't mean it's wrong to remember the past or plan for the future, but don't live in the past or worry about the future.

When Jesus uses the word "tomorrow," it means the future in this life, not eternity, which He tells us we should focus on.- Tomorrow can mean an hour from now, 24 hours from now, or a year from now. Anxiety and worry thrive when we focus on all the negative things that could happen in the future.

But our faith grows when we focus on trusting and serving God in the present. Hebrews 11 says that Now faith is! Faith lives in the present. We can only express faith in the present, and God provides for us only in the present. Therefore, trusting and serving God in the present situation is the key to increasing freedom from anxiety.

Recognize when your current thoughts are anxious thoughts and argue against them with present faith. Every day give thanks to God for the day's provision. Demonstrate your faith and love for God to the people who are right in front of you. Listen to the Word of God and obey what the Holy Spirit prompts you to do. Prepare and plan ahead for the future. But don't get lost in the future and fail to focus on responsibilities right in front of you.

If you don't know how to do this, ask the Holy Spirit to help you. God can personally and patiently apprentice you in how to live a life free of anxiety.