

Worry Swallowed Up by Seeking God's Kingdom First

Matthew 6:31-34; Psalm 78:19

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Greg L. Price

As we look back over our lives, no doubt we can see various sins that have had too much control over us. One sin that has eaten up so much of your time and mine, your energy and mine, your health and mine, your peace and mine, and your sanctification and mine is worry. How much more we could have accomplished for the Lord, for our families, and for the church if we were not so distracted and overcome by worry that is fed by our fears of tomorrow (most of which never come to pass). This is one of the most successful tools of the enemy to diminish our usefulness in Christ's kingdom; for as long as we are filled with worry, we are preoccupied with the giant rather than with the giant slayer—Jesus.

As noted in the last sermon, worry IS sinful because we have forgotten that Jesus has promised to be with us in the boat in whatever storms we may face in the future. Worry is sinful because we are not trusting in Him that He will see us to the other side in the future in providing for all our needs. Worry is choosing to fear man/circumstances rather than to trust our loving and almighty Father. Worry implies that God is not trustworthy, almighty, loving, and merciful.

And yet there is a lawful concern and care for people or circumstances (that is not sinful worry), with this qualification: as long as we are casting that concern upon the Lord and see Jesus as in the boat with us. There is also a lawful concern (not panic) to prepare for emergencies that may lie in the future (that is not sinful worry), as long as we are casting that potential emergency upon the Lord (Joseph wisely prepared for 7 years of famine to come by gathering and storing in 7 years of plenty).

Let us continue today to hear the words of our Lord Jesus as He teaches us why we are not to worry: (1) Worry Is Fitting for the World—Not for the Children of God (Matthew 6:31-32); (2) Worry Seeks First the Kingdom of This World—Not the Kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33); (3) Worry Focuses upon Future Potential Troubles without Christ—Not upon Present Needs with Christ.

I. Worry Is Fitting for the World—Not for the Children of God (Matthew 6:31-32).

A. By way of review, Jesus prohibits worrying about the necessities of life in Matthew 6:25 (“stop worrying”). Then He gives three reasons why we must stop worrying.

1. Jesus commands us to stop worrying because He provides food for even birds (and all the other creatures He has made). Surely, He will certainly provide for you, His beloved children (Matthew 6:26).

2. Jesus commands us to stop worrying because it does not change anything—except to make us sick with worry (Matthew 6:27).

3. Jesus commands us to stop worrying because our glorious Father provides the most beautiful clothing for the lilies in the field that live for such a short time. Will He not provide for you (His beloved children) the clothing that you need (Matthew 6:28-30)?

B. Jesus continues His prohibition against worry in Matthew 6:31.

1. He begins with “Therefore”. In light of the reasons just given to stop worrying, Jesus once again forbids us to worry, as if once was not enough (“take no thought”). Repetition is for emphasis.

2. This time the prohibition is in the Greek aorist tense (“don't begin worrying”), whereas in Matthew 6:25 the prohibition was in the Greek present tense (“stop worrying”). So Jesus catches us either way. If we are worrying, He commands us to stop worrying; and if we are not worrying, He commands us not

to begin worrying about the necessities of life: food, water, and clothing (or housing, health, work, dependable transportation to get to work, etc.). When you are tempted to worry, replace your worry with these reasons not to worry. That's faith in action. It's natural to worry (anyone can do that), but supernatural to trust in God to supply all your needs according to His riches in glory.

C. Why are we not even to begin worrying about these earthly needs? You are not to begin worrying because that's what the Gentiles (worldly unbelievers) do (Matthew 6:32). That's not what you, God's children, are to do. You don't want to think and act like them, do you?

1. It is very fitting for worldly unbelievers to worry about their needs because they are only depending upon themselves for all that they need. They have no promise from an almighty, loving Father. Now that is truly scary! They have a reason to worry. They trust in the economy, their employer, the stock market, their health—all of which are here today and gone tomorrow. They are on their own.

2. However, it is very unfitting for God's children to think and act like worldly unbelievers; for we have a loving, merciful Father who has promised (and He cannot lie) to provide for all our needs (Philippians 4:19). Would you really want to trade places (even for an hour) with those who are without God, without hope in this world, and without the promises of God? Are you in no better place to have your needs met than those who despise and hate your gracious Father? Is the economy more trustworthy than your Father? That is how we are acting when we worry like the world around us. The world of unbelievers "seek" after all these things—not a godly seeking and working in dependence upon God to supply all their needs, but a ungodly, sinful seeking where all depends upon themselves and changeable circumstances around them.

3. As His beloved children, your loving Father knows you by name and knows all that you need even before you ask (Matthew 6:7-8). He knows your needs better than you know them. And yet your all-knowing Father delights to hear you express your faith in Him, your love for Him, and your thankfulness to Him in asking Him to meet your needs (as any good father does). Your almighty, loving Father has provided for your greatest need (the forgiveness of sin through Jesus Christ), surely He will provide for your lesser need (food, clothing, shelter) just as He has promised (Romans 8:32). Let us not doubt such a faithful Father as did the children of Israel (Psalm 78:19)? Will you provide the needs for your beloved children, and yet your perfect, infinite Father, not provide the needs for His beloved children? God forbid! Unthinkable!

II. Worry Seeks First the Kingdom of This World—Not the Kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33).

A. Jesus now gives us a contrast ("But").

1. The contrast is between worldly unbelievers in the previous verse who frantically seek for their earthly needs and the children of God who are given a godly way of having all their earthly needs met (Matthew 6:33). Do you really want to be overcome with worry and fear about the future with all of the consequences that follow (ulcers, high blood pressure, insomnia, panic attacks, discontentment, or depression)? "I can't help it." Yes, you can by God's grace. I have been there. It is not fun. It's awful. It's dark. Why would you choose to be there when you don't have to? Matthew 6:33 is not God's way to go hungry, but rather God's way to have all that you need in this life, and without all the worry and fretting that suck the very life out of you.

2. Here is a positive command: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." Stop worrying (Matthew 6:25), don't even begin worrying (Matthew 6:31), but continually be seeking (Greek present tense) God's kingdom and His righteousness. The chief object of our seeking is not the kingdom of this world—that's what those who are consumed with worry chiefly seek. No, the chief object of our seeking and pursuing is God's kingdom—Christ's rule over all.

a. This is the same aspect of God's kingdom that is in view in Matthew 6:10 ("Thy kingdom come"). This is God's kingdom of grace and power that has been placed into the hands of the Mediator (King Jesus) in purchasing guilty sinners by His death and rescuing them by God's grace and power

out of the kingdom and dominion of Satan and ushering them into His glorious kingdom in which it is now our highest honor to walk in loving obedience to His righteous commandments. This kingdom is all about our glorious Jesus and His lordship in subduing all enemies to God (the world, the flesh, and the devil).

b. One of the great lies Satan uses to deceive people is that there is some place of neutrality between the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of Satan—a safe place where they can go if they do not want to be in either kingdom. My friend, there is no neutrality—if you are not in the kingdom of Christ through faith in Christ, then you are in the kingdom of Satan (Matthew 12:30). If you are not seeking Christ’s kingdom, you are seeking Satan’s kingdom. If you are seeking your kingdom, you are seeking Satan’s kingdom.

c. One of the evidences that you have been delivered from Satan’s kingdom and brought into Christ’s kingdom is that you earnestly seek to submit to His Kingship/Lordship over everything. He is not King over just the religious part of your life. He is King over your family, your bank account, your work, your possessions, your health, your thoughts, your desires, your past, present, and future. He has not died to save you so that you can be king/lord of own your life, but that you might in love willingly submit to Him as Lord. And when you in love submit to His as King, you will also earnestly and continually seek to do what is righteous rather than what is wicked (to walk in the light, not in darkness)—not in order to impress those around you (as did the Pharisees), but in order to reveal your love and thankfulness to the God and Father who saved you (Matthew 5:6,10,20; Matthew 6:1,5,16).

d. The command is to seek FIRST the kingdom of God. There will be many other things in this world that we may lawfully seek (that are righteous according to His Word), but Christ’s kingdom is to have the FIRST place in our life in what we seek, in what we pursue, in all our goals, in all our decisions, in the way we use our money, in our entertainment, and in who we marry. God’s kingdom and obedience to Him is pursued first of all (not as an afterthought). He receives the first fruits of our treasure, talents, and time, not the leftovers. He receives our worship as He has commanded, not as we wish. He alone is lord of our conscience, not any man (His commandments not the commandments of man). To seek God’s kingdom first is to begin in our homes in training our children to trust, love, and obey Christ. To seek God’s righteous kingdom first is to forgive, comfort, encourage, and pray for one another in pursuing the peace, purity and unity of Christ’s Church. Even how we plan our day reveals whose kingdom we are seeking first and foremost (private worship and family worship). How we adjust to the changes/delays that He brings to our plans reveals whose kingdom we are seeking first and foremost (Christ’s or our own).

e. The unfailing promise of Christ is: and all these things that worldly unbelievers seek after and worry about shall be added to you. That is why you need never to begin worrying. This is not an unqualified promise—there is a God-appointed means: “But seek ye first the kingdom of God.”

III. Worry Focuses upon Future Potential Troubles without Christ—Not upon Present Needs with Christ (Matthew 6:34).

A. This is the last reason we are forbidden by Jesus to worry (“don’t even begin to worry”): it’s foolish to borrow future troubles (that may never happen) when there are sufficient troubles in the present.

1. I don’t know about you, but my life is not so free of trouble, trials, and afflictions in the present that I need to go searching for trouble, trials, and afflictions in the future (that may never come to pass)? It is right to plan for the future and even to save for the future. But it is a sin to worry about the future and to permit tomorrow to rob you of today’s blessings. Let us not be our own persecutors and tormenters.

2. If you wonder whether God will provide for you in the future, just look at how He has provided for you in the past through all the trouble, heartaches, suffering, and trials He has brought into your life. It may have been hard, but He provided for you as He promised. Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He is unchangeable. It is we who are constantly changing—not the Lord or His promises. Our problem is that we walk by feelings, fears, and worries, not by faith in our loving Father who cannot fail to provide for

all our needs.

B. Today's mercies include the strength we need for today, not for tomorrow (Lamentations 3:23). And yet we believe that as our merciful God has provided for us today, so His mercy will be sufficient for us tomorrow regardless of what He has ordained for us. We are not already in our tomorrow, but our precious loving Father is. And knowing that takes all of the fear and worry out of tomorrow. And that is why, Jesus commands us, "Stop worrying" and "Don't even begin worrying."

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