

Why Are You So Worried?

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Well, whenever we come to the word of God, we should always come to it with a sense of confidence that God intends to do good to us, no matter what the topic is. Scripture tells us that all Scripture is inspired by God, profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work, so no matter what Scripture we would open, we would come to that which would be helpful for our souls, that would be useful in our lives, and would be that which would strengthen us in grace as we come to it as believers in Christ. And as we come to the word of God, perhaps some of you not yet in Christ, still outside, not having put your faith in Christ to realize that the word of God is the means that he uses to awaken people and to impart new life to them, and so we come with a sense of expectation today as always when we open God's word.

Now along with that, there is a particular sense as we come to God's word here this morning that I'm mindful of. I had a seminary professor now many years ago, who told us that when you preach the word of God, you should be mindful that you are always preaching to a room full of broken hearts, and I have found that helpful over the years of ministry. I don't know that I've always succeeded in keeping that in mind as I preach, but it is on my mind that we come together today in a sense of recognition of weakness with the topic that is at hand, "Why are you so worried?" dealing with Jesus' teaching on anxiety. But I want you to know that as I preach this morning, it is my sincere desire before Christ that he would use this time to help you and to strengthen you in your life. We all deal with anxiety, we all deal with worry to one degree or another. This is a common aspect of life. And as we do that, I'm just mindful of wanting to be able to be used by God to be a help and strength to you here today and to open up and just assure you that I am on your side as I preach to you here this morning. But even more importantly, it's important for us to remember as we come to this topic that will in some ways convict us and correct us, it's important to remember even more importantly, far surpassingly that the Lord Jesus is on our side as we deal with God's word here this morning.

Let me just remind you of what it says in the book of Hebrews 4:15 that "we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with us in our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in

time of need." In the Lord Jesus Christ who offered himself for our sins, in the Lord Jesus Christ who gave himself for our redemption, we have someone who has offered himself to be our strength, one who sympathizes with our weaknesses, and one who is there to give us strength and mercy and grace to help in the time of need. So we come to one who is with us and one to help us and we approach it with that sense of expectation here today.

Now, our text for this morning comes from the book of Matthew 6 and I would invite you to turn to Matthew 6 with me. Matthew 6, our text comes from Matthew 6:24 through 34. We're going to cover this text in an overview fashion here this morning, and then deal with it in greater detail over the next two weeks. Matthew 6:24 where it says,

24 "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth. 25 For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? 26 Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? 27 And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life? 28 And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, 29 yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. 30 But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith! 31 Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' 32 For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. 34 So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

I did a Google search recently on the topic with the search terms "how to overcome anxiety." It returned over 90 million hits. The internet recommends all kinds of things to calm your anxious heart. You can find instruction on deep breathing, exercise, meditation, diet, magnesium supplements, herbal remedies, therapy, on and on it goes. I'll be honest, I didn't look at all 90 million. Apparently worry is a major problem for everyone and it's interesting to me, it's always interesting to me that so many of the worldly solutions to anxiety involve people making money off the anxiety in your heart. I've always questioned whether they actually are motivated to help you or not because the longer your anxiety stretches out, the more they make off of you.

And we have so many things that cause us anxiety, don't we? Our health. Our loved ones. Our jobs. Our finances. Our other troubles. For me, I don't like change. That stresses me when things start to change and things start to happen. I'm still kind of upset with Henry

Ford at the invention of the automobile. I liked it the way it was before, not that I'm quite old enough to remember that. We'd all like to have peace in the midst of it. We'd all like to have a sense of calmness in the midst of it. You know, Scripture understands the effect and the challenge that anxiety brings to us. In Proverbs 12:25 it says, "Anxiety in a man's heart weighs it down," and I know that all of you know that by experience to one degree or another. And here's the thing as we go to the words of Christ here this morning, is to realize that that is not meant to be, as common as it is, as much as we live with it, it's to understand that Jesus says this is not to be the experience of people who are his disciples, who are Christians who belong to him. This is not intended to be the natural state of life. The fact that it is common does not mean that it is to be accepted, the fact that it is common does not mean that it is right, the fact that it is common does not mean that it has to be that way going forward.

One of the things that will strike you if you read the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5, 6 and 7 together, and just read it with this perspective in mind, that other than the topic of prayer, Jesus devotes more attention in the Sermon on the Mount to the topic of anxiety than he does any other topic. Oh, you'll find lots of books written about divorce and remarriage and dealing with the exception clause in Matthew 5:31-32, but Jesus spent a whole lot more time on anxiety than he does on that. You'll find that people who love the social Gospel will talk about Jesus and what he said about loving your enemies, Jesus spent a whole lot more time talking about anxiety than he did about that topic. And on and on it goes and that gives us a sense of the urgency of this. Christ would only have to say something once for it to be true and important and worthy of our attention, when the Lord Jesus himself states a topic and then expands and expands and expands on it, it deserves our close attention. It is something that is intended for the benefit of our souls.

And what is anxiety? Well, just to give you a definition: it's that feeling of apprehension, that feeling of fear that comes in the face of possible danger or misfortune. You are anxious over what the future will bring and what lies ahead and you dread it, you regret what might come, and you're concerned about it and it starts to tie you up in knots. That's just the sense of what we're talking about here and before we go any further, let me just say one thing that is very important to understand as we deal with this: Jesus here is giving instruction to his disciples. He's giving instruction to those who follow him. He is not instructing the world at large. He distinguishes in the Sermon on the Mount those who are in his kingdom and those who are outside of it.

Look at Matthew 7:21. There is a very important point to make here. Matthew 7:21 where Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter." He distinguishes those who are in the kingdom from those who are not. Earlier in Matthew 7:13, he said, "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it." So as we come to the words of Christ here, we realize that there is a distinction that he makes between those who are in the kingdom and those who are not in the kingdom. And why is that significant in this topic? Well, why is that important? The cure for anxiety differs

depending on whether you are a Christian or not. You see, if you're not a Christian, the things that Jesus has to say here about the care of your heavenly Father in verses 25 through 34 have no application to you because those who are not Christians, those who are outside of Christ, are still enemies of God, are still under his wrath, are still facing the judgment of God, and it doesn't do any good to talk about the care of a heavenly Father if you have not first been reconciled to him. That is a matter of supreme importance in understanding.

You see, if you're not a Christian here this morning either in the room or over the live stream, you must understand – this is so foundational – you must understand that you have a bigger issue in life than anxiety over what the future on earth might bring to you because for you, you must understand the critical issue for you to understand is that judgment is coming. Earthly anxiety, what's going to happen to me or my family or my fortune, all of that stuff pales into utter insignificance when you start to realize that your soul is in danger of eternal judgment and condemnation as the righteous punishment for your sin. It's only when you have been gripped by the reality of the judgment of God that you can begin to properly see anything in the right perspective, that what you have to be anxious about is your whole eternity, not life itself. These earthly anxieties pale next to the eternal judgment that awaits you in the hands of a holy and angry God.

If you are not a Christian, the only thing that matters to you is to find the grace of God as he has revealed it in the Gospel of Christ. Your primary goal, your only goal, the only thing that matters to you whatsoever is to seek and to find the grace of God as it is revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." I can't promise you help for your earthly anxieties if you're not a Christian because that's to take your attention off the thing that most matters. What good would it be to solve all of your earthly anxieties and disappointments if you found at the end that you still were consigned to eternal judgment? So we have to have our minds straight on these things and if you're not a Christian, I just call you to Christ and the forgiveness of your sin that is found alone by faith in him.

Having said that and gathered together as the people of God through faith in Christ here this morning, the analysis, the way that we look at it, the way that we think about these things is different for a Christian. And I think that this little analogy is helpful. We all know physical diseases marked by symptoms. You have a high fever, you are coughing or something like that, your body is telling you that there is something physically wrong; there is an illness present in your body that needs to be addressed and helped. The symptoms point you to the disease. Well, brothers and sisters in Christ, anxiety is a symptom of a spiritual disease in your heart. Just like a high fever points to a physical disease, anxiety is pointing you to something that is wrong spiritually, something in your thinking, something in your priorities that is misaligned. You are missing something and the good news is that there is a cure for it, that there is help for anxiety and that you are not condemned to suffer through it forever.

And what we're going to do is we're going to look at this passage that I read earlier in an overview way, come back to it next week. I want to give you three things that give you a sense of perspective on anxiety that will put you in a position to grow and hopefully to find some resolution to that which has troubled your heart, for some of you for so many many years. And I can tell you that I speak from experience as I preach these things; that what we're going to go through, what we're going to see in this passage, are things that have helped me personally, that have allowed me to settle a lot of things from the past, regrets over the past. Or you think about it this way, you know, you rehearsed decisions that you made. "Should I have done this instead of that? Maybe I shouldn't have taken that job instead of this one. Maybe I shouldn't have moved when I did" and you are just filled with anxiety over what has happened in the past. Well, everything that we are going to see here allows you to put those things to rest, to leave them behind, to leave them in the past and to go forward unburdened by them. I know this by experience but my experience isn't what gives the strength to this, what gives the power to this is that this is the word of the eternal Son of God. I just want you to know that I'm not preaching theoretically here this morning, that I'm not preaching in an academic way. These things make a difference and so we are going to see three areas of your life for you to take a look at that will help you understand anxiety and then point us to the solution to anxiety in the next two weeks as we take a closer look at the passage.

First of all, what should you do as you deal with anxiety? Point 1 is that you should examine your priorities. You should examine your priorities. Jesus had just spoken in verses 19 through 24 about the need for undivided loyalty in following him and he had taught us about priorities again and again in those preceding six verses. In verse 19 he said, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." So he says you have to consider what it is that you treasure, what it is that you value, what it is that you love in life, and to set your priorities accordingly.

In verse 24 he said, "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth." He says, "You must follow me with a sense of undivided loyalty. I have exclusive claim on all of the affections of your heart," Jesus says. And as a result of that, you must decide what it is that you are going to make the preeminent priority of life because you can't have it both ways. You can't love this world and want everything that you can get out of this world and still rightly and successfully follow Christ. Those two things are mutually exclusive.

So notice what he says in verse 25 with that little bit of background. He says in verse 25, "For this reason I say to you," for this reason is connecting that prior teaching about undivided loyalty with what he is about to say on anxiety and that is crucial for you to understand and to see the significance of what is happening here. Jesus has just taught about priorities and he bridges from that to say, "For this reason, now let me teach you about anxiety."

So your priorities in life are directly connected to your experience with anxiety. That's the point that Jesus is making here, and the truth of the matter is this: if your priorities are built around earthly matters, if what you love most is tied up in the things of this world, it doesn't even have to be sinful things, it could be perfectly fine things of family, of relationships or enjoying whatever it is that you enjoy, but if your priorities are built around things that are connected with this earth, then yes, you will be anxious. Yes, you will struggle with worry. It is inevitable and you must understand and think through these things at a very foundational level because it is the reality of life that those things are subject to loss at any time. Even your best of human relationships, the most noble and holy ones affirmed in Scripture of a husband and wife relationship, of a parent and child and relationships like that, understand that all of those things, not are they only vulnerable to loss at any time, it is inevitable that we will lose them eventually because it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment. All of our relationships in an earthly sense, and I'm just taking the most noble things that we could point at, they are all temporary. They are all eventually whether it is tonight or whether it is 50 years from now, it is inevitable that one day we are going to say goodbye to each other in an earthly sense. It's all subject to loss.

How does that help? When you say that it seems like that only makes it worse, and I realize that not everyone is like me. I like to think in those ways. I like to think and adjust life to the reality of that perspective. For some of you, I realize you don't like to think that way and you might wonder, "When you are reminding me that this is subject to loss, how in the world is that going to help me with my problem with anxiety?" Well, it helps in this way, beloved, and this is all so fundamental: we have to come to grips with the fact that your anxiety flows from the things that you value, what you consider important, what you cherish and what you love. And it's easy enough to prove this. You don't worry about things that aren't important to you. You're not anxious about things that don't affect your life. A simple question here: how many of you today came into this worship service worried about the price of lumber in Oregon? None of you did, right? None of you care about that. None of you are anxious about that because it does not affect your life. However, if I asked you how many of you came in concerned about your finances or family relationships or health problems or work, I suspect the answer would be much different. Those things affect you and therefore you are concerned about them, and when it seems like they might not go well or it might turn out differently than what you want, then the anxiety starts to come in. If you can grasp and accept that fundamental point, all of a sudden you are in a position of strength to deal with anxiety, believe it or not, because it helps you see what you are attaching importance to and then you can bring that to the words of Christ for resolution and find out what it is that should be of significance to you.

What is it that should be for the disciple of Christ? What is it that should be our first priority? What is it that we first care about? What is it that is important above all else? Well, Jesus states it plainly in the passage that I read. Look at verse 33, he says, "seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." Seek first. Seek as a matter of your priorities, seek as that which you love most, seek as that

which is of primary importance. Seek it first, his kingdom and his righteousness. Seek first as that which exceeds everything else in importance to you.

Our brother, Sinclair Ferguson, said this, he said, "The chief drive in our lives should be to live under the authority of Jesus Christ and to see his kingdom extended in every possible way: morally, socially, and geographically, as well as personally, inwardly and spiritually. When our priorities are in order, we will discover 1, God will provide all we need, and 2, many of the things that we thought we needed, we do not even want. In place of anxiety, we have found contentment."

Beloved, just think through. We are speaking in a very high level broad view here this morning in what we're talking about and just think through it with me here. In our Christ, in our Lord Jesus, we have someone who reigns over all. We have in our Christ one who has a plan for the unfolding of human history as well as the unfolding of the personal details of your life. We know him to be good. We know him to be holy. We know him to be sovereign. And if we belong to him, then he has included us in his plan and he has the intention to work everything out in our lives according to a plan that he designed for his glory and for your good. If that is the most important thing in life to you, if that is the preeminent priority of your heart, then you are in a place of unassailable security because everything that matters to you is in the hands of Christ and belongs to him, and you can be confident that he will carry it forward and accomplish his will. If that's the most important thing to you, then it can only come out well for that which you consider most important. If Christ is preeminent in your affections, if Christ will never leave you nor forsake you, then you have security. It doesn't make all of the other issues of life go away, but it puts them in perspective. That's why the hymn, "It is well with my soul," is so significant. "Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come/ Let this blessed assurance control/ That Christ has regarded my helpless estate/ And has shed his own blood for my soul."

The thing that is most significant, the thing that is most valuable, your eternal soul, when that is the most significant thing and you have set your priorities on that and on the goodness of Christ, then you have put your affections in a place where they can never be betrayed, where they can never be disappointed. It comes out well for you in the end. But when you abandon that and become gripped in the things of this life, then anxiety is inevitable because it is bound to be gone eventually. Eventually, beloved, remembering that I'm speaking to help you in what I say here today, as you grip the things of this life as a disciple of Christ, understand that eventually God will take your fingers and loosen the grip one way or another so that you will learn that he and he alone is supposed to be the preeminent affection of your heart. So for those of you that have suffered loss that has caused you to grieve, I've been there, I understand, I sympathize with you, but understand that the things that have the highest priority in the life of a Christian, the things that are most precious, are those things that can never be taken away. And when grief or when anxiety or loss come into your life, then this is the opportunity to renew your perspective, renew your priorities and say, "Ah, but that which is most important has not been taken away." It cannot be taken away because if Christ is preeminent in your affections, then you have security.

So let's ask a question: what is it that you are anxious about in life? What is it that over a period of time you are consistently finding yourself worried about? Sometimes it's passing things, day to day things, and you forget it by the end of the week. Other things are more deeply rooted: what is my future going to be; what kind of relationships am I going to have in the future. Well, the more you find anxiety gripping you in that, what you need to step back and realize and we just need to be analytical here, we need to be objective here, is to realize that, "I have set my heart on things that belong to this world. No wonder I'm having anxiety. It may not work out the way that I want." And at that point you step back and you say, "Lord, I need to repent of what my heart has loved. It's not that these things are sinful necessarily in themselves but, Lord, they have displaced you on the throne. They have displaced you as first in my heart. I realize that I valued my career more than your kingdom." And if that's the case, then it is only healthy and helpful to understand, "Oh, I need to reconsider everything that I think is important in life."

There is always something that strikes me when I'm in this section of Scripture that wouldn't necessarily be evident upon a casual reading of the passage, but isn't it astonishing the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ? Here is Jesus Christ commanding us what should be going on in our inner man. He commands us to order our priorities around him. He doesn't simply tell us what to do in external behavior, he tells us what to love, what to cherish, what our supreme affection should be. The stunning authority for Christ to come and say, "Let me tell you how you must arrange your inner man," is striking. And as we respond to Christ, we respond not only to how he orders our outer lives, we respond to him the way that we order our very affections, our priorities, and that which we think is important in life. So you have to examine your priorities and realize that anxiety flows out of what you value.

Now, having said that, and when Jesus says in verse 25, "For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life as to what you will drink or what you will eat or what you will do for your body, what you will put on," understand that the logic that he is expressing here is this: your heavenly Father knows what you need before you ask him, right? We've seen that already earlier in Matthew 6. God knows that you need all of these things. Christ says that your priority must be first of all the kingdom of God rather than your earthly needs and the logic of what he's saying here is that God understands this, God commands you to order your priorities around Christ and his kingdom, and as a result of that, you must understand that because God knows that you have the lesser needs, he'll provide them for you as you seek first his kingdom and his righteousness. That's the flow of logic here. Verse 24, you cannot serve God and mammon, therefore, for this reason, seek first the kingdom and God will take care of the rest. Your Father knows that you can't juggle all of these balls at once and the promise and the security that we enjoy as believers is that as we make Christ our first priority, that God says, "I understand that. I see that and I'll supply what you need in the meantime. Just keep your eye on the ball," so to speak, "and allow me to provide for you along the way." That's the idea. Examine your priorities.

Now secondly, there is a second thing to examine here and it is to examine Christ's command. Examine Christ's command. You know, if we were to do a little survey here before we had started this message anyway, and if we were to list out the really terrible sins that a man or a woman could commit, you would almost all of you, would start with listing out things like murder or adultery or things like that. Very few people anywhere would classify anxiety as a spiritual issue that requires self-examination and repentance. Very few people would do that. We are so accustomed to it and it seems to be a little bit less notorious sin, it's not something that people see, it's not something that causes physical suffering to others, and so we wouldn't think and classify it as something that is in a class of sin that needs self-examination and repentance.

We need to change the way that we think about that, beloved. Jesus Christ in this passage commands us not to be anxious and you as his disciple, are responsible to respond. Prevailing anxiety is disobedient to the command of Christ and I want to show you a couple of things about this in this passage. In verse 25, look at it with me, in verse 25 it says, Christ says, "For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life." The form of that command has the idea of, "Stop doing this. Stop what is in progress. Here you are, you are being anxious, stop that. Don't do that anymore," is the idea of the command there. Stop being anxious as you are now. Now, he goes on and he repeats the command in verse 31. He says, "Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?'" Verse 34 he says, "So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself." Do not worry, do not worry, verses 31 and 34. It's a different form of a command in the Greek language. It's the command never to do a thing. It's a form that says don't even start that. So in verse 25 he opens and says stop being anxious, verses 31 and 34, he says, don't do that. What does that mean? How do we take those things together? The idea is this: stop worrying and don't start again. Stop worrying and don't start again. Christ forbids it as a moral imperative.

Now, why would Christ make such an issue over the inner man? Well, first of all he loves us. He cares for us. He realizes it's a miserable way to live and so he would release us and free us from that manner of living. But there is a more significant aspect to it as well. When you think it all the way through, you're calling yourself a Christian here this morning, right? You say, "I believe God. I believe his word. I believe his promises." Well, what does anxiety say, remembering that anxiety is reflecting a fear about the future? What does anxiety say? What does your worry say? At the root of it, anxiety is saying that God cannot be trusted. Either you do not trust his power to keep you, to sustain you, to provide for you, or somehow you do not trust his love to care for you. You are anxious because you think things are going to go bad, things are going to go wrong in some way that you don't want them to go. That's anxiety in a nutshell. Something might happen here and if that happens, I'm going to be sad, I'm going to be disappointed, I'm going to be hurt, I'm going to suffer a loss. And anxiety is an earthbound perspective that factors out the sovereignty and the love of God and the care and supervision of your life. How could it possibly go wrong for you if God has promised in Romans 8:28 that all things will work together for good to those who love him and are called according to his purpose? Is that promise true or not? Answer in your heart: is that true or not? Is what is happening in your life, can God take that and work it together for good? Will he? Can he

or not? We have to, beloved, we have to address ourselves at these fundamental levels and we have to preach to ourselves, we have to remind ourselves of what is true and let that inform and govern the way that we look at life because anxiety is telling us, your anxious heart is saying, "I don't really trust God here." And beloved, we can't do that. We can't live there.

I've used this illustration in the past, speaking to those of you that are parents. Imagine when you were younger and your children were little, some of you, you're in that position of life now, imagine that you have taken care of your child from birth and you have provided everything for them, you care for them, and they get to that stage of life where they start to talk, and imagine a child after you have cared for that child for years, one day coming up to you and wondering if you are actually going to feed them their next meal. "Mom, are you going to give me breakfast today? What about supper? Are you going to feed me today? What if I don't eat? Will I go to bed hungry?" That would be a terrible insult to a loving parent. It's kind of funny, it's kind of foolish in one sense, the example, but that's a terrible insult to a loving parent. A parent would be justified in a healthy family, a healthy family responding to this, to a question like that, an attitude like that, "How can you so distrust my character? Of course I'm going to feed you. I have always fed you. I tell you, I will always feed you. What is wrong with you? Why are you asking this question? There is no basis whatsoever, my child of my flesh, there is no basis whatsoever for you to question me like that. Your very question is sinful and wrong because you are suggesting and you are imputing a lack of love and a lack of care for you that somehow I might let you suffer want and suffer in a way that would be to your detriment." A loving mother, a loving father would be perfectly justified in responding, That's irrational. That's not right. The thought is so absurd in the context of a healthy family that it never even crosses anyone's mind to think and talk this way. This is just the environment in which a healthy family lives, right?

Well, take that and multiply it by infinity. Take that and multiply it by the revealed inerrant word of God. Take that and multiply it by the infinite value of the blood of Jesus shed for the salvation of your soul. Take it and multiply it by the infinite value of the promises in Scripture like in 1 John 3:2, "we will be like him for we will see him just as he is," and ask yourself on what basis are you possibly righteous in being anxious about the future? Dear Christian, I say it gently, I say it in love, I say it to help you, I say it as one who needs these words myself even today: look at yourself in your anxiety, hasn't God always provided for you? Hasn't he promised to do so in the future? Isn't he faithful? Didn't Christ shed his blood at Calvary for the good of your soul? Isn't heaven your ultimate destination? Didn't God choose you in Christ before the foundation of the world that he might pour out blessings upon you? Isn't it true that in Christ you have received every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, Ephesians 1? Isn't it true that the Spirit has sealed you? Isn't it true that God has reconciled you to him fully? Isn't it true that he has adopted you into his family? Aren't all of those things true?

Well then, explain your anxiety in light of that. Why such distrust toward your heavenly Father? Why these doubts about whether he'll continue to be good to you in the future? Why these insinuations that you'll be left unattended in the care of his sovereign love?

Why such distrust toward your heavenly Father? Dear Christian, I say it in love, I say it in love, I say it in love, I say it to you in the midst of your anxiety: what is wrong with you? What is wrong with you in the midst of your anxiety that you can look at an earthly situation and so quickly discount all of those immense spiritual blessings that we have just recited? And we could have and should have listed 10,000 beside. Why such distrust toward your heavenly Father? Why these thoughts that the future holds ill for you when the future is in the nail-scarred hands of the one who gave himself for you? Philippians 4:6 and 7 says, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

So you examine your priorities, you examine Christ's command and understand something of the logic that is behind the command: stop worrying, don't start again. How can that be true when we live in such an uncertain world? Well, we remember who it is that we belong to. We remember the spiritual realities that are given to us in Scripture that we have been talking about and we say, "Oh, I get it now. This command against anxiety is designed to protect and secure the glory of God who said that he will provide for our every need. I need to honor God. I need to seek first his kingdom. I need to trust him and manifest that trust not just outwardly but in my inner man."

How do we do that? How can we move forward now that the issue has been identified? Christ tells us to replace worry with right-thinking and that's our third point for this morning. We've said that you examine your priorities, you examine Christ's command, now thirdly, you examine your thinking. And what I love about this passage, another thing that I love about this passage, is that Jesus doesn't just give us the negative command, "Do not be anxious." If he just simply gave us the negative command, that would not be helpful at all, in fact it would just make things worse if you think it all the way through. Imagine you are tied up in knots about whatever it is that is about to happen, whatever you are looking forward to, you're dreading it, "I don't want to deal with this. This could go bad and it could go very bad in a hurry." You get tied up in knots about it. Imagine that we had just closed this message just now on that point and we said, "Okay, so go out and do not be anxious," and that's where it was left. That makes things worse because not only do I have the earthly problem to deal with, now I've got the burden of realizing that I'm falling short of a direct command of Christ. Now you have added to my trouble. Well, Jesus doesn't leave us there and in the pattern of biblical thinking, in the pattern of biblical instruction, in the pattern of Christ, when it is so often the case that a negative command is followed by a positive command: put off the old man, put on the new man, Ephesians 4; stop stealing, work with your hands, that kind of thing. And here what Jesus does in this passage that we're going to look at more in the next couple of weeks, Jesus doesn't simply give you a negative command, "Do not be anxious," he tells you to change the way that you think. He gives you the proper way to think about the future so that your heart can change, so that your mind can be conditioned to think rightly, because if your mind is thinking rightly, the proper feelings in your heart will follow as a result.

Look at Matthew 6:26 and 28. In verse 25 he said, "Do not be worried about your life." In verse 26 he gives you a positive command. The negative command, "Do not be worried," the positive command in verse 26, "Look at the birds of the air." Verse 28, he says, "Observe how the lilies of the field grow." Beloved, this would be a good time for eye contact from you, sure. It's not simply, "Don't worry." It is not as Martyn Lloyd-Jones so brilliantly points out, the biblical way of thinking is not, "Don't worry about that because it might not happen." That's not biblical thinking. True, it might not happen but do you know what? That does nothing to solve your anxiety, does it? A thinking man says, "You're right, it might not happen, but the problem is it might happen and then what?" So simply telling someone, "Don't be anxious, it might not happen," is not helpful biblical advice at all. Jesus here is not simply telling us, "Don't worry. Don't be anxious." What he's saying in this passage is this, he's saying, "Replace your worry with right-thinking about the nature and character of God." I'll say that again. Here's the key to all of your anxieties of unlocking them and starting to grow spiritually in a way that they don't control you like maybe they have until today: replace your worry with right-thinking about the nature and character of God.

Go back to verse 26, and like I say, we'll look at this in more detail next week, all of these things in more detail over the next two weeks. Jesus says, verse 26, "Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?" Verse 28, "why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these." Here is his point: it is undeniable, it is irrefutable, it cannot be challenged for its veracity, and every one of us, you and me together, we need to come to grips with the simplicity of what Jesus is saying and the utter power that lies behind it because it is undeniable.

What does God do with his creation? Well, God feeds birds who cannot feed themselves. One time I saw an estimate, there are like 10 billion birds in the world at any given time. God feeds each one of them. They wake up early in the morning and they've got to go out and look for it. They don't have a storehouse. They don't have a bank account or a corn account or a seed account, whatever it is that birds would have if they could but they don't. Jesus says just look at nature. Look at the nature of birds and what does your Father do? He feeds them consistently day by day. He feeds birds who cannot feed themselves.

He says go further and observe the flowers of the field. Observe the glory of blooming plants at the height of their glory and say, "Man, that is spectacular, the glory of this, the beauty of it, the richness of the colors." Jesus says when you see that, understand that your God who cares for his creation is giving that beauty to those flowers. He is giving feed to the birds. He clothes ordinary plants with stunning beauty. He feeds animals that are of no account by any human scale of measure. Who cares about a sparrow that fell in Southwest Missouri two hours ago? It's of no account by human measures. Jesus says your Father feeds them. Matthew 10, he says, a sparrow doesn't fall to the ground apart from your heavenly Father.

Beloved, here is the key to your anxiety being resolved and moving forward. Jesus is making an argument from the lesser to the greater and he's saying this: if you understand that God cares for the lesser creation, if God cares for a bird and God cares for a flower, don't you think when you have much greater value, that he's going to care for you too? Isn't that inevitable? Why would he do the lesser thing and not do the greater thing is the idea? Child of God, he holds the future and he will provide for you even more certainly than he will provide for birds and flowers. Look, look, look, Christ did not come from heaven to earth in order to die for sparrows. Christ did not come from heaven to earth to die for plants. He came to die for men, for women, for sinners like you. Well, if that's what he did, then isn't it obvious that there is a greater value that he attaches to his people than he does to the birds and flowers? If he cares for them and he attaches a greater value to you and to your soul as measured by the price that he paid for it, isn't it obvious what he's going to do? If he cares for the lesser, he'll care for the greater. There's nothing to worry about. There is no cause for concern.

Look at Matthew 6:30 where Jesus states this explicitly. Actually, go back to verse 26 just so you can see that Jesus made this point explicitly with what he said when he said, "Are you not worth much more than they?" You are worth more than a bird and God provides everything the bird needs. What's going to happen to you? He's going to provide for everything you need. Verse 30, "if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith!" Jesus says, "Look at God, look at the work of God, and realize that your anxiety is utterly unnecessary. He will provide for you even more certainly than he provides for birds and flowers." Oh, beloved, whatever has come into your life in the past, whatever will come into your life in the future, has all been in his hands. It has all been a product of his eternal plan for your life. Whatever comes in the future will be an outworking of that eternal plan which he has promised and guaranteed by the blood of Christ, is designed for your good.

He will work it together for good no matter what happens. If your nearest and best drop dead today, God has a longer-term plan that will bring good out of that. There is no need for fear. If the economy collapses and we all lose whatever it is that we have saved, God will be good to us. Do you see how this intersects with priority? "But my family, but my fortune!" To which the Bible response, "But God! But God in his providential care! But Christ in his shed blood for your soul! But the indwelling Spirit who is the seal of your future redemption! What about that?" And you see, the Christian all of a sudden just thinks from a completely different set of principles, presuppositions and priorities, and out of a great sense of love and undeserved favor, we look and say, "God, I see everything that you have done and everything that you are doing. It can only be that you intend my good in everything that happens."

The question then, beloved, is this: what will you do with the words of Jesus as you contemplate your future? As you contemplate the deep sorrows and anxieties that are on your heart? Listen, listen, listen, listen, listen: life is messed up. Life is messed up. We live in a world that is under a curse because of our sin, the sin of our forefather Adam, "Cursed it is the ground because of you," Genesis 3 says. It was through sin that death

entered into the world. There is this unavoidable curse, there is this unavoidable transitory nature of everything that we love, there is this unavoidable decay that is woven into our existence here in this world. Loved ones are going to lose their health and die prematurely. Wicked people may violate you and get away with it. Your children may rebel. Authority rules against you in whatever realm we deal with authority. That's life and we are not exempt from it as Christians. Our escape is in heaven, meanwhile we are pilgrims passing through a fallen and transitory world that has disappointment woven into the nature of existence. You can't change that and those of you that like to control your circumstances, you can't control it all. You can't get up in a high tower in a castle and avoid it. It's just not possible.

Look at the men of greatest wealth, the greatest positions of authority, look at the Presidents of the United States, and you can all go and see their gravesites personally. Their great power, their great affirmation, the accolades from the electorate didn't keep them from the inevitability that we all face. And if you have less power than a President, how are you going to control your future?

This is life. The question is not how can you get away from it, the question is what would you do with it? How will you respond in your heart to it? Well, here's the Christian response, here's what the believer in Christ says. The Christian looks at this, the biblical mindset is that you look at it, you look at all of that, all of our cursed, fallen world, look at all of it and you can biblically shrug your shoulders at it in this sense and say, "Okay, it's like that. Do you know what? I'm not living for this world. My citizenship is in heaven," Philippians 3, "from which I await, eagerly await a Savior, the Lord Jesus, who will transform our body into conformity with the image of his glory. That's what I'm living for. That's my first priority. That's what really matters to me and do you know what? This cursed world can't touch it. Thieves can't break in and steal the treasure that is mine in heaven. I'm not living for this world and even while I'm here, my heavenly Father, do you know what? He's good. He loves me. My Lord Jesus went to a cross to save me from my sin. There is my security. There is what matters. That's what I treasure and that cannot be taken away and therefore on the most important things, I live in unassailable security. My Christ loves me as a brother. My Father loves me as a son. He is in control. He is good. He has a plan. I'm going to rest and I'm going to trust him."

Why are you so worried? You see, that commitment of faith that I just articulated deals a deathblow to anxiety. It takes anxiety and it hits it right in the sternum and knocks it back. Now, we understand that things are going to come, life changes, we're going to have to apply this again and again. It's not that we think through these things once and we never have to face and deal with anxiety again, but this is the mindset. Jesus is cultivating a mindset. This is where you as a Christian can live. This is where Jesus says you must live.

And let me add one final thing here as I close, as we contemplate our Lord and all that he has done for us in this realm. Do you know what the beauty of this is? When Christ paid the price for your sin at Calvary, he also paid for your sins of anxiety. He also covered you in his righteousness. Where you have been anxious and untrusting, Christ was perfect

in his obedience. Christ was perfect in his trust in his heavenly Father and he says, "All of those spiritual riches of mine, I share with you." And he covers us in them. He has forgiven even our untrusting hearts. He has forgiven us of even our anxious approach to life and from that perspective of strength and confidence, we look forward and say, "Lord, thank you for covering my soul with your blood and righteousness. Lord, thank you that the future is under your control. I'm not afraid anymore. And Lord, thank you that beyond that lies eternal glory where this cursed world will be put behind and I will live in the glory of Christ for ever and ever. Amen."

Father, help us to appropriate that which is true. Help us to appropriate that mindset of which Christ spoke. And lead us by the hand as we go forward, freed from that controlling sense of anxiety, ever more having our view of life informed by the reality of your sovereign care and the sovereign work of Christ on the cross which saved us from our sins. In the beautiful name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

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