

“DO NOT BE ANXIOUS ABOUT YOUR LIFE”

I. Introduction

- A. There are a lot of things we could be anxious about right now.
 - 1. There is the possibility of being infected by the coronavirus and having our loved ones infected by it.
 - 2. There are concerns about our health care system being overwhelmed by the number of people requiring critical care.
 - 3. There is the economic damage that is being brought about by the measures that are being taken to mitigate this crisis.
 - 4. There are questions concerning what long-term effects all of this is going to have on our society and on our day-to-day lives.
 - 5. All of these things are valid concerns.
 - 6. I would be lying to you if I said that I haven't been anxious about these things at times over the past week.
 - 7. This is why I thought it would be helpful for us to take some time to listen to what our Lord has to say to us in this portion of the Sermon on the Mount.

- B. These verses immediately follow the section where Jesus tells us to lay up treasures in heaven rather than on earth.
 - 1. This is an important contextual detail, because it helps us see that Jesus is doing far more than just issuing a command or giving advice when he tells us not to be anxious about our lives.
 - 2. That is a good thing, because when you are worried, having someone respond by simply saying, 'Don't worry,' isn't very

helpful.

3. What Jesus is doing here is teaching us how to keep our lives in proper perspective.
4. How you respond to this passage, especially in the midst of our present crisis, is a litmus test of where your treasure is.
5. This passage challenges each one of us with this question: Do you really value heaven more than you value the things of this life?
6. We need to approach this text with this prayer: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way." (Ps. 139:23-24 NASB)

II. Remember That Life Is More Than the Material (25)

- A. Our passage begins with Jesus charging us not to be anxious about our life.
 1. This does not mean that we should be careless or irresponsible or lazy when it comes to our physical needs.
 2. Jesus is not telling us that it is wrong to plan, or take precautions, or give forethought to matters pertaining to our material welfare.
 3. God calls us to be prudent and diligent.
 4. It is natural for us to have a sense of concern about material things.
 5. This is what motivates us to do what we can to promote and preserve our material well-being.
 6. It is this sense of concern that is the motivation behind the differing ways in which people are responding to our present crisis.
 7. Those who are calling for extreme efforts to slow the spread of the virus are focused on protecting people's physical health and

preserving our health care system.

8. Those who are dismayed over the economic damage that is being brought about by these efforts are focused on protecting people's finances and livelihood.
 9. And those who are defying our governing authorities by partying on Florida beaches (or elsewhere) are focused on asserting their individual liberty to do whatever they want.
 10. Now, the partiers are just selfish hedonists, but the others are right to be concerned about health and finances.
 11. These are basic realities of life in this world.
 12. The problem comes when we make these things the ultimate things.
- B. The point that Jesus is making when he charges us not to worry about our life is that we need to keep our physical and material welfare in proper perspective.
1. John Calvin offers this helpful summary of the basic approach we should employ: "Each of us ought to labour, as far as his calling requires and the Lord commands; and each of us ought to be led by his own wants to call upon God."
 2. We need to be diligent and wise in the responsibilities that God has assigned to us, and we need to cast all our cares upon God.
 3. When we are anxious about our material lives, we are acting as though our existence consists in them.
 4. But that is not true.
 5. Life is not merely a matter of having our material needs met.

6. After all, there are many people who have no material wants at all, and yet they do not possess true life.
 7. The things of this world will eventually pass away.
 8. Our bodies will eventually die.
 9. As David says in the 103rd psalm, “As for man, his days are like grass; he flourishes like a flower of the field; for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more.” (Ps. 103:15–16 ESV)
 10. If the material is all you have when you are bereft of your physical life and possessions, you will be left with nothing.
- C. This is why Jesus said in his great high-priestly prayer, “this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” (John 17:3 ESV)
1. Jesus has life in himself. (see Jn. 5:26)
 2. He is the way, the truth, and the life. (see Jn. 14:6)
 3. As the second member of the Trinity, Jesus possesses the divine attribute of self-existence.
 4. And in his office as the one mediator between God and man, Jesus has authority to give life to all who believe in him.
 5. Because of this, if you have saving knowledge of him — if you have received him as he is revealed in the gospel, as the Son of God and the only Savior of guilty sinners — then you have come into possession of eternal life.
 6. You might lose your job, your financial security, your possessions, your home, your loved ones, your health, even your physical life — but you will still have that which is truly life.

7. Your life is hid with Christ in God.
8. Christ is your life, and when he returns to consummate his kingdom, you also will appear with him in glory.
9. Nothing will ever be able to separate you from the love that God has for you in Jesus Christ.

III. Look at Two Lessons from Nature (26-30)

- A. The next thing that Jesus does in this passage is direct our attention to two lessons from nature.
 1. In these examples, we are reminded of how the created order testifies to God's providential care.
 2. The first lesson comes from the existence of our feathered friends, the birds.
 3. Birds certainly work to get their food, but they go about their work without worrying.
 4. They don't get paralyzed with fear over whether or not they will be able to find enough to eat tomorrow, or next week, or next month.
 5. They just focus on what they need to do today, and the Lord provides them with their food.
 6. They live from day to day on what they can pick up.
 7. Martin Luther says that this qualifies birds to be our instructors when it comes to the subject of worry, saying: "You see, [Jesus] is making the birds our schoolmasters and teachers. It is a great and abiding disgrace to us that in the Gospel a helpless sparrow should become a theologian and a preacher to the wisest of men... Whenever you listen to a nightingale, therefore, you are listening to an excellent preacher... It is as if he were saying, 'I prefer to be in the Lord's kitchen. He has made heaven and earth, and he himself is the cook and the host. Every day he feeds and nourishes

innumerable little birds out of his hand.'" [cited in Stott, 164]

8. If God can provide for the birds, he can surely provide for us.
 9. After all, we are far more important than birds.
 10. As human beings, we are God's image-bearers.
 11. And if we are in Christ, we are God's children.
- B. The second lesson from nature comes as Jesus directs our attention to the lilies of the field.
1. Flowers do not toil or spin in order to adorn themselves.
 2. They simply grow under the conditions given under God's providence.
 3. This leads Charles Spurgeon to say, "Lovely lilies, how ye rebuke our foolish nervousness!" [cited in Stott, 165]
 4. If God the Creator cares for his creatures in this way, creatures whose existence is far more fleeting than ours is, how much more can we be confident that God our heavenly Father will care for our needs.
 5. Of course this does not mean that our lives will be free from misfortune and affliction.
 6. As Jesus points out in verse 34, every day is going to have troubles.
 7. Our comfort is in knowing that our God is sovereign over our troubles, and that he orders them for his glory and our good.
 8. We exercise our faith by relying on the care and power of God when it comes to the things we need to support our life.

- C. We should not lose sight of the fact that it is Jesus who is telling us not to be anxious about our life.
 - 1. This is not an instance of someone who has never had to deal with anything all that troubling telling a worried friend to relax and take it easy.
 - 2. Jesus knew what it was like to live under the shadow of impending anguish and distress.
 - 3. Yet he was never anxious for his life.
 - 4. He entrusted his life into the hands of his Father.
 - 5. And because he suffered and obeyed on behalf of those he was given to save, we can know for certain that God will never forsake those of us who take refuge in Christ.

IV. Trust That Your Heavenly Father Knows What You Need (31-34)

- A. This brings us to the last part of the passage, where Jesus tells us to trust that our heavenly Father knows what we need.
 - 1. To be anxious about our material security is to lose sight of who we are.
 - 2. Jesus says that it is the Gentiles who devote all of their attention to the things of this world.
 - 3. In this context, the term "Gentile" is not being used in an ethnic sense but in a religious sense.
 - 4. Jesus is speaking of pagans or unbelievers.
 - 5. Unbelievers make material things their focus because their existence in this world is all that they have.

6. Their earthly-mindedness bears testimony to the fact that they have no hope beyond this world.
 7. But that is not the case for us.
 8. Through Christ, we have been reconciled to God and made members of the household of God.
 9. In Christ, we have received an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, an inheritance that is being kept for us in heaven even as we, by God's power, are being guarded through faith for the full realization of our salvation on the last day." (see 1 Pet. 1:4-5)
 10. And because of the grace of adoption, we have Almighty God, the Creator and upholder of all things, as our heavenly Father.
 11. Those who are outside of Christ do not have God as their Father.
 12. The Bible tells us that men in their natural state are "sons of disobedience," "children of wrath," and even "children of the devil." (see Eph. 2:2-3; 1 Jn. 3:10)
 13. But when we come to Christ, we become children of God.
 14. As such, we have the comfort of knowing that God is fully committed to our well-being and preservation.
- B. Having pointed this out, Jesus then instructs us to remember that there are things that are more important than material security, saying, "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."
1. While we are not to be anxious about the things of this world, we are to be concerned for God's kingdom and his righteousness.
 2. This only makes sense.

3. This world is not going to last forever.
 4. Neither are our lives in this world going to last forever.
 5. But the kingdom of God will endure for all eternity.
 6. This is why our first priority in life should not be the things of this world, but the advance of God's kingdom and the promotion of his righteousness.
 7. To seek first God's kingdom is to desire above all else that we and others will be brought into God's kingdom and kept in it until it is consummated in all its glory.
 8. And in this context to seek first God's righteousness means to do all that is within our power, in reliance upon the indwelling Holy Spirit, to live our lives in submission to God's revealed will as set forth in his law.
- C. Our passage concludes with Jesus reminding us of the pointlessness of worrying about tomorrow.
1. This really speaks to our present situation, doesn't it?
 2. The more we think about the coronavirus crisis — and how can we help but think about it when it is the subject of attention pretty much everywhere we turn — the more we think about the disconcerting possibilities that may lie ahead of us in the future.
 3. Will I be able to get enough food and basic supplies?
 4. Will my family get sick?
 5. Will I lose someone close to me?
 6. Will my future plans be spoiled?
 7. Will this result in financial ruin?

8. Will this bring about undesirable changes in our government?
9. While these questions are certainly not without grounds, to be anxious about them is to borrow troubles from tomorrow.
10. Now more than ever, we need to walk by faith on a day-by-day basis.
11. God will provide us with the grace that we need to face the troubles of today.
12. And when tomorrow comes and brings its troubles with it, we will find that God's mercies really are new every morning. (see Lam. 3:23)
13. Here is a concluding thought from J.C. Ryle: "We are not to carry cares before they come. We are to attend to today's business, and leave tomorrow's anxieties until tomorrow dawns. We may die before tomorrow. We know not what may happen on the morrow. This only we may be assured of, that if tomorrow brings a cross, He who sends it, can and will send grace to bear it."