Anxiety

Mt 6:24-34

• [removed] Some brief personal details about my long-term struggle with anxiety and how this sin gradually subsided over time with good teaching, maturity, and improved prayer life... though being a Sin, it is always on my life's doorstep wanting to come back in.

I. Introduction to Worry

- (asking) The main command of this passage is what? "Don't Worry" or to put it more positively, to trust God.
- Jesus is not being subtle about this:
- v25 "do not worry about your life"
- v27 "Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?"
- v31 "So do not worry"
- v34 "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow"
- Jesus is commanding us, not just recommending, "DO NOT WORRY". Therefore, it makes it a sin to
 worry because it is against Jesus' very word of commandment to us and we must treat it primarily as a
 sin, not simply as a disease, nor a minor bad habit, or a some genetic disposition, though it certainly
 can be all of those. It is SIN and we must fight against it and arrest it in its tracks.
- In order to stop it we should probably define it: What is worry? Well, the passage makes is clear that worry has a future-focus to it because it says "do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear". These are future tense concerns. Worry is not concern about the here and how, but what might be.
- The Greek term here means "to divide, part, rip, or tear apart" and this perfectly describes the effect of worry on us. Worry is concern about the future, not about the here and now. We are divided in our mind over the concerns of today and our concerns for tomorrow. We are mentally torn between two time zones....now and later. We are not able to focus on now because we are focused on potential problems tomorrow, not the actual problems of today.

Root Cause of Worry

What is the cause of root cause of worry?

- Skim back a bit at the context leading up to this passage. Notice the context is about priorities. "Do not store up for yourself treasures on earth...for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also...You cannot serve two Masters...God and Money." These show us that worry is born in an environment where our priorities are wrongly set on temporal things rather than eternal things and we are subsequently not wholeheartedly serving our master God.
- The root cause underlying worry is revealed in v30. "If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?"
- "O you of little faith" -this was a common rebuke by Jesus toward the disciples when they exhibit distrust in him.
- The root of Worry is essentially a lack of faith, or to say it another way, Worry is unbelief. When we worry, we are distrusting that God is everything He says that He is in Scripture. Fighting anxiety is essentially fighting unbelief. In many cases, the problem is simple ignorance of the Scriptures which are given to instruct us about God. That was the case in my life at one time.

- So the root of anxiety is unbelief, but the trunk of anxiety has many sinful branches:
 - 1. For example, anxiety over finances can lead to covetousness, greed, hoarding, even stealing.
 - 2. Anxiety over relationships, especially with those you don't know very well, can make you withdrawn and apathetic toward others
 - 3. Anxiety over success and achievement can make you irritable, abrupt and surly
 - 4. Anxiety over what someone will think about you can lead to lying, even covering up our Christian witness to others.

Unhelpful Counselors

- Fortunately, Jesus, here, as well as other Scriptures give us real practical strategies to fight this
 darkness in our hearts.
- Its obvious that anxiety is big business in the professional counseling and pharmaceutical industry. In many cases its tied to its sister "depression" which is the queen of the psychological industry. Entire businesses depend on the fact that people worry and they get depressed. And Christian counselors are just as busy as the secular ones, and maybe more so, due to the theologically incorrect teaching dished out in many churches such as the power of positive thinking and other garbage...like Job experienced, there are many unhelpful counselors.
- One unhelpful counselor is the person that sees you wearing a facial expression that is anything less than a grim. "SMILE" is their advice, said more like a command, really its a rebuke. "Oh yeah, I just forgot, thanks for reminding me...now I feel better [fake a smile]." And maybe in the same way you can fix your broken car by just saying to it "START!" Hmmm...do you think just maybe our emotions run a little deeper than the muscles on our face?
- I am glad that Jesus is not like another unhelpful counselor Bobby McFerrin, who wrote the pop song "Don't Worry be happy" [if necessary quote a verse below]. McFerrin seems to promote the idea that people can just turn off worrying and turn on "happy" like a light switch.

Here is a little song I wrote
You might want to sing it note for note
Don't worry be happy
In every life we have some trouble
When you worry you make it double
Don't worry, be happy......

Ain't got no place to lay your head Somebody came and took your bed Don't worry, be happy The land lord say your rent is late He may have to litigate Don't worry, be happy Lood at me I am happy Don't worry, be happy

Listen now to what Jesus, the Counselor of counselors, has to say about anxiety.

Context

• I included v24 in our reading for context reasons, even though your bible likely starts a whole new section in verse 25. Notice the "therefore" in v25. "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life". What is "therefore" there for? Its a cue that Jesus is making a conclusion based on his previous teaching. Thus if we don't go tread backwards slightly we could misunderstand the application, or at the least, not fully understand it.

- The overall theme in vv19-24 is that eternal things must be the priorities we choose in life. In effect, we are to be heavenly minded while on this earth taking into account that this world is passing away and we must live now in light of eternity.
- In vv19-21 Jesus warns us why we must prioritize laying up treasure in heaven rather than treasure on earth. WHY? (ask). Because he concludes in v21 where our treasure is, that which we value most highly, there our hearts will be also. It is an inescapable law, all our work produces treasure, and the treasure we are most focussed on producing reveals what our heart's desires are.
- The word picture in vv22-23 that illustrate this condition. Eyes are symbolic of our life's focus and desire. Eyes are like portals that admit light to our soul. Those who set their sights on the things of this world, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal; admit only darkness into their soul. But those who set their sights on things of eternal significance, will be filled with light.
- Jesus' conclusion of all this is in v24, you cannot serve two masters; its either God or money. Money
 represents all worldly security, pleasures, and comfort that men seek to assure them about today and
 tomorrow. God is either the Lord of your life or He is not.
- Our passage vv 25-34 is then a practical application of this teaching. The therefore in v25 "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life..." is in effect saying, "so based on the fact that you treasure eternal things above temporal things, and because God is your master, the one you love, serve and allow to set your priorities in life, worrying about worldy matter is not a practice that is consistent with your confessin, in fact it is a denial of your confession.

II. v25 What not to worry about

What are we not to worry about?

v25 "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life"....what does he mean by life....what aspect of life? Jesus defines it: "what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear". He is talking here about temporal personal security...Food, the shelter of clothing, even the money to acquire those things, anything that would affect our personal security.

III. 8 Reasons Jesus gives to not worry

1. Life is more important than the things things you worry about v25

- v25b "Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?"
- Is this a riddle? What does Jesus mean by this question?
- Well, food and clothes are at their lowest level just commodities, the means that enable you to survive and thrive. But we can easily be deceived and start living for these things themselves rather than the life that these things support. We can value things above our very life.
- You've heard the expression "do you work to live or live to work?". This is usually directed at
 workaholics who pour so much energy into working, that it replaces life itself. They started off
 working in order earn money to live, then they get so absorbed that working becomes their life. Its a
 slippery slope, a trap.
- Anxiety cause us to get forget what is the true purpose of bodily life on earth. Are we here to glorify God by carrying out the Great Commission and enjoy him forever or is life just an continuous treadmill of gathering wares?
- Jesus is telling us to separate life from the means needed to sustain it. Which is more important?
- Anxiety screws up our value system so we begin to value the means to sustain, enhance, and comfort
 our life above life itself. Anxiety turns the relationship between our life and things on its head.

 Anxiety causes us to lose sight of the greatest pleasure in life, which is enjoying God, pursuing his Kingdom, and living in light of eternity. Anxiety messes with our head and blinds us to what's truly important.

2. Our Father considers you valuable v26

- The next reason not to worry is found in Jesus illustration from nature. v26 "Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?"
- The main point here is the rhetorical question: "Are you not much more valuable than they?" The implied answer is yes. It is an argument from the lesser to the greater. If God feeds these creatures, will he not feed you of much higher value in his eyes.
- What is the value of a sparrow: Mt 10:29 says, "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father." So if God is sovereign even over the life of a sparrow worth a half-penny each, how much more is He sovereign over your life.
- Why does Jesus compare us to birds? Jesus actually contrasts us with birds by pointing out that there are things we do that never cross their bird-brains. The fact that they don't sow or reap, or store away surplus shows they don't plan for tomorrow...we do. They have no foresight or ability to think beyond their immediate current need. The lesson Jesus is drawing here is not that we should be like birds...many proverbs and parables inform us that planning, hard work, and wise investment are things we should be doing.
- The point is that God even cares for simple creatures like birds, who have no foresight, how much more will he feed and sustain the creatures that bear his image, those whom he redeemed and brought to himself.

3. Worry accomplishes zilch v27

- Next Reason: What does worry accomplish? v27 "Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?" The implied answer is nothing. Worry is about as effective as an ashtray on a motorcycle.
- A devil's advocate may counter that worry is a good motivator. For example, last Sunday afternoon, realizing that both Monday and Tuesday were shot, made me get to work on this message. Was worry of standing here in front of you with nothing to say a good motivator to study and to write?
- No, Jesus is correct when he states that worrying accomplishes pretty much nothing. Worrying and planning are two different things.
- Worrying looks to the future and imagines the worst. But planning looks to the future and works for the best. [repeat].
- Planning is motivated by loving concern, which is a completely different animal than selfish worry.
- The apostle Paul experienced intense loving concern, not worry. He wrote to the Corinthians "Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches." (2 Cor 11:28).
- So, if my motivation was selfish, like to not look like an idiot in front of you today, would I not be subconsciously working in material to impress you, rather than to edify you? The motivation inspired by worry is a low road. In contrast, loving concern is a high road
- I can assure you that Randy works hard each week out of loving concern for your best, not out of worry to impress you and draw your praise.
- So, Jesus third argument not to worry stands: Worrying accomplishes pretty much zilch.

4. God adorns us with what we need v28-31

• Fourthly, another reason for not worrying is that God adorns us with what we need to do his work.

• Jesus uses another illustration from the natural realm. vv28-30

"And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?"

- Again, Jesus uses an argument from lesser to greater, the short-lived grass of the fields is decorated
 with beautiful flowers. In contrast to us, flowers don't work, yet God adorns them with beauty. If God
 adorns the short-lived fields with such beautiful garments, then will he not adequtely clothe his own
 children who are commanded to work in His eternal Kingdom? Answer: YES.
- I noticed none of you are wearing sackcloth today. Don't you know that functionally speaking, sackcloth is just as effective as your clothes and a whole lot cheaper? The truth is, people don't just want clothing, they want clothing that will make them look good. Clothing is social.
- For many, the "splendor" of their clothing is of excessive concern to them. "Clothes make the man" they say....clothes project an image. How will you get that promotion or be taken seriously if you're not "dressed for success"?
- Many people wouldn't be caught dead in certain brand names as it would "shame them" it would not fit the image they wish to project as part of a particular social group. Sadly, even public school kids are so brand name conscious today, perhaps even encouraged by their similarly brand name conscious parents, so that they can preserve their "membership" in certain social cliques at school. Sadly, this mindset persists long after they've outgrown their clothes.
- Remember, Jesus asked, "is not...the body more important than clothes?" Don't worry about clothes. You are not the brand name or lack thereof that you are wearing on your back or front, or wherever labels go these days. Be glad you have clothes...and realize God WILL clothe us...no, not as splediferously as the flowers of the field, but with that which is adequate for us to perform the works he has prepared in advance for us to do.
- Clothing symbolizes all that we need to be adorned with in order to carry out our designated purpose in life. God will adorn us, his valuable eternal children, with whatever we truly need to live to his glory.

5. Puts you on the same level as the pagans v 32

- Next reason not to worry, v32 "For the pagans run after all these things".
- An anxious heart puts you on the same level as unbelievers. Your worry broadcasts to everyone around you that you value the same things they do. What makes them happy is also what makes you happy.
- What you worry about, reveals to all where your treasure is and where your heart is also (v21). People will read your life by this, rather than what you say.
- If God is your Lord, you must differ from your workmates and unsaved family members and friends in what you value and by what consumes your time. You are the only Jesus people will ever see. Anxiety is hard to hide from the world that we are commanded to disciple.

6. You Father knows you need them

- Next reason, same verse v32 "For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them."
- Do you think God, your creator, is unaware of your needs? Earlier in this chapter in Jesus' instruction on prayer he said in v8 "Do not be like [the pagans], for your Father knows what you need before you ask him."
- Even so, prayer has an invaluable function in fighting anxiety as Paul wrote in Phillipians "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (4:6-7)

• So prayer is not informing God, it is conforming us. Through prayer we are saying, "King Jesus, we give you the Lordship in this area of our life" and he promises us peace.

7. As you seek Him first, God works for you to provide your needs v33

- The next reason not to worry is probably the best.
- v33 "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."
- Not only is God perfectly aware of our needs, but here is His promise to meet them.
- BUT note well that the promise is conditional. There are two prerequisite conditions (1) We must seek first His Kingdom (2) We must seek His righteousness
- What is seeking first God's Kingdom? It is acknowledging His Lordship in every area, seeking one
 master throughout your life. Jesus summarized the first command of the Law like this "You shall
 love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with
 all your mind" (Lk 10:27)
- Acknowledging His Kingship encompasses all our faculties: affections or desires, intellect, emotions, and our will.
- Holy obedience is proof of His rule in our lives. You cannot separate seeking His Kingdom from personal holiness.
- Note that Jesus does not just say, "seek his Kingdom", but seek "first" his Kingdom. It must not be a
 priority, but the first priority. And for them God promises "all these things will be given to you as
 well" referring to all our needs.
- This promise is not a name it and claim it formula. We don't name or claim anything, except we pray "thy Kingdom come". If our focus is on His Kingdom, God will supply us with what we need to keep us focussed on His work.
- Hudson Taylor said it this way, "God's work, done God's way, will never lack God's supply".
- You see God too seeks first His Kingdom. Above all, God seeks His Glory. "I will be glorified" (Lev 10:3). And how is God most glorified? In His Kingdom-seeking, righteous people. 2 Thes 1:10 "on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marvelled at among those who have believed"
- And so God's promise rests on His faithfulness to His own glory. We don't earn God's favour and receive His blessing, we are given God's blessing to keep on working for His Kingdom and Glory.
- In seeking first His Kingdom, we give up the responsibility to worry for ourselves and pass that responsibility to God. It reminds me of a story about a guy named Bob.

 Bob was always considered by his friends as a bit of a worry- wort. Lines of concern were permanently etched on his face and he hardly ever smiled except for some occasional relief from his misery. One day Bob's friends noticed him jumping and skipping with a sunshiny smile that didn't look faked as usual. They stopped and asked him, "Bob, why so happy...what "wrong"? "Wrong, no everything's right", Bob exclaimed. "I hired someone to worry for me." Thinking over all Bob's problems, which were many times greater than theirs, his friends asked, "How much do you pay him? How can you afford it". Nonplussed Bob replied, "Well, I guess that's HIS problem!"
- Well we have not "hired" God to worry for us, so the illustration is flawed, but God's promise to supply the needs of His kingdom-seeking children eliminates any reason to worry.

8. Trouble for Today is enough v34

• The last verse (34) contains the final reason Jesus gives for us to not be anxious. "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

- You've heard the saying "One day at a time". That is pretty weak advice on its own because it lacks any reasoning. But Its about the best possible advice one pagan can offer. Is this what Jesus is saying, "one day at a time"? Let's colour in the missing theology in this statement.
- First, Jesus never promised us a trouble free life. In fact he promised the opposite, "In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world." (John 16:33).
- Paul wrote to Timothy "In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Tim 3:12)
- In Phiippians 1:29 we read, "For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake"
- So we have a practical guarantee of suffering. Put that into your church growth manual! But we know suffering is appointed, controlled, and apportioned by God for our good as Romans 8:28 makes clear "all things for the good of those who love God, who are called according to His purpose."
- So Jesus has appointed every day's share of troubles for our good and to His glory. Trouble is purposeful, not random. We serve a God who is sovereign over all, nothing happens except as he ordains.
- You are promised strength to bear today's trouble, but bring in tomorrow's too...sorry...there is no promise that covers disobedience. In that case you will NOT be able to bear it.
- Do do not worry, because his strength is sufficient for you for today's trouble today. Trust in His future grace to help you with tomorrow when it becomes today.

IV. Wrapup

• Well that was quite a bit of material, I hope the notes will help you remember some of those points. Let us pray that God will grant us the desire to put His Kingdom first and His righteousness realizing it the only way to be free from anxiety.

Prayer