

## ***Session 17 Overcoming Anxiety and Fear (Mt. 6:25-33)***

### **I. PURSUING OUR DESTINY WITHOUT FEAR**

- A. Jesus addresses how we pursue our destiny as related to our finances and daily provision. The way we pursue our destiny (life goals) is radically different from how the world pursues it.
- <sup>25</sup>Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?...<sup>31</sup>Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’...<sup>32</sup>For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. (Mt. 6:25, 32)*
- B. “Worry” is the key word used here—occurring six times (vv. 25, 27–28, 31, 34 [2x]). The KJV’s translation of worry as “take no thought” can easily lead us to unbiblical conclusions. We are to plan for the future, but without a spirit of fear and anxiety.
- C. ***Therefore:*** This points to a connection with verses 19-24. Only by choosing heavenly treasure (v. 20), a lifestyle in light (v. 22), and God as our master (v. 24) are we prepared to trust our Father in the way Jesus sets forth (v. 25-34). When we determine that our primary treasure is God’s glory and kingdom and not earthly wealth (6:23-24), then we approach securing our daily provision with a different attitude (6:25-34).
- D. Our life is eternal and thus there is much more to it than the food which sustains it. A life dominated by worry about food misses the bigger purpose of our life in seeking first God’s kingship and righteousness (v. 33).
- E. Jesus called us to escape covetousness that is fueled by the anxiety of not having enough money. Anxiety hinders our progress in walking out the 8 Beatitudes in practical ways.

### **II. FOUR REASONS TO RESIST ANXIETY**

- A. Jesus gave us four reasons to not yield to a mindset of worry: We are more valuable to God than the rest of creation—birds and flowers (v. 26, 30); worry doesn’t add any benefit to us (v. 27); God knows all our needs (v. 32); and He gives us sufficient grace to help us for today (v. 34).
- B. ***Reason #1:*** We are more valuable to God than the rest of creation—birds and flowers (v. 26-30). Jesus reasons from the “lesser to the greater.” Thus, worry results from not seeing God’s goodness. God’s people are more important to Him than the rest of His creation. He gave humans dominion over creation to bring it forth in much fruitfulness (Gen. 1:26-28).
1. ***Food:*** Birds are diligent and industrious in seeking for food. Despite their great efforts, birds are still dependent on God’s processes in nature. Since humans have a far greater opportunity to use God’s processes in creation, we should not worry.
- <sup>26</sup>Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? (Mt. 6:26)*

- a. God's creation provides the food which birds need. However, He does not hand feed them. The truth that our Father feeds the birds does not imply that they did not work to secure their food or that we should not work for our material needs.
  - b. Birds search for food so how much more should humans who have the skills to sow, reap, and store food have confidence in God's provision.
  - c. This teaching was not an endorsement for lack of diligence for people or birds.
2. ***Clothes:*** The flowers of the field illustrate God's care to provide us with clothing. The term "lilies of the field" included many types of beautiful wild flowers.
- <sup>28</sup>Why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; <sup>29</sup>and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. <sup>30</sup>Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? (Mt. 6:28-30)***
- a. To "consider" means to learn from. The uncultivated and short-lived wild flowers are so beautiful without being purposely fashioned for it by man's work of toiling and spinning. (To toil meant to cultivate beautiful fields and to spin meant to make beautiful clothing). Yet, our Father adorns them with beauty that surpasses the clothing of wealthy Solomon.
  - b. These flowers have a very short life span and were then thrown in the oven as fuel for cooking. Their survival is not at issue here since they quickly die. Jesus' point was not the survival of the flowers but their beauty.
  - c. If God gives extravagant care to perishable flowers, then how much more valuable are we? If God creates with such love and care flowers that die quickly and are burned, then we can be confident that He will provide much more for us.
  - d. The principle here is that our heavenly Father as the sustainer of a beautiful creation can be trusted to meet the basic needs of His children.
- C. ***Reason #2:*** Worry doesn't add any benefit to us (v. 27). It doesn't enable us to gain more food, to live longer or to accomplish anything at all.
- <sup>27</sup>Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? (Mt. 6:27)***
1. Worry is more likely to shorten a person's life than to extend it.
  2. A cubit was a measurement of about 18 inches. Stature comes from the Greek word *helikia* which can mean either physical height or life span (age). Most translate it to mean adding *a single hour to one's life span* (NAS, ESV, NIV). Height does not fit this context of trusting God for provision of food and clothing.
  3. Our life span, food, and clothing are all gifts of God and are greater than human ability.

- D. **Reason #3:** God knows all our needs (v. 32, 8). Anxiety is confidence in the wrong things.  
**<sup>31</sup>Therefore do not worry, saying, “What shall we eat?” or “What shall we drink?” or “What shall we wear?”...<sup>32</sup>Your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. (Mt. 6:31-32)**
1. Our confidence is in our Father's knowledge of our needs (Mt. 6:8, 32).  
**<sup>8</sup>Your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him. (Mt. 6:8)**
  2. For trusting God for daily needs see Phil. 4:6-7; Heb. 13:5; 1 Pet. 5:7.
- E. **Reason #4:** God gives us sufficient grace to help us for today (v. 34). Jesus points out the futility of having anxiety today about tomorrow's troubles.  
**<sup>34</sup>Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. (Mt. 6:34)**
1. **The day:** God only promises to provide for us on a daily basis—not a yearly basis.  
**<sup>11</sup>Give us this day our daily bread. (Mt. 6:11)**
  2. It is good to plan for tomorrow, but not to worry about it.
  3. **Trouble:** Jesus reminded His disciples of the reality of daily “trouble” or more literally of “evil.” Jesus wants us to be realistic about pressures. Jesus promised believers a reward for enduring persecutions that will surely come (Mt. 5:10-11).  
**<sup>1</sup>Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. (Jn. 14:1)**
  4. God's provision of the necessities of life are promised, but that does not mean that the disciple's life is to be trouble free. Each day will still have its "troubles."

### III. SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD

- A. Jesus calls us to seek first God's kingship and righteousness (v. 33). This language of wholehearted commitment links back to verses 19-21, 24. In context, He called us to make God our master and treasures in heaven our priority (v. 22, 24).  
**<sup>33</sup>Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. (Mt. 6:33)**
- <sup>20</sup>Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven...<sup>24</sup>No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate one and love the other...You cannot serve God and mammon. (Mt. 6:20–24)**
1. Seeking righteousness first implies obedience to Jesus' commands as seen in the main premise of the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5:20). Righteousness is the distinctive lifestyle of Jesus' disciples who hunger after it (Mt. 3:15; 5:6, 10, 20; 6:1).
  2. The gift of righteousness freely gives us a legal position of full acceptance before the Father with the hope we will be moved to such gratitude that we choose righteousness.

- B. Some rightly ask, how these promises of provision of daily food, drink and clothing apply to those who live in a region devastated by famine or in one oppressed by persecution? How are we give this teaching to disciples who die in famine or persecution? It is wrong to suggest that the famine in their region is linked to their personal lack of faith.
- C. This section does not address Christians in famine or persecution.
- D. Some suffering can be blamed on human selfishness and our bad management of the resources in creation. However, we can trace a human cause for every famine or disaster. Such theological issues are not addressed here. The focus is on our trust in our Father.
- E. The God-given dominion over creation has been abused in recent generations. The most basic cause of hunger is not a lack of divine provision, but of human distribution. God has provided sufficient resources in creation.
- F. These promises presuppose the sharing of goods within the Christian community. Over half of the Body of Christ worldwide lives in the “Two-Thirds World” and are below what those in the “First-World” define as the poverty line. When believers corporately seek first the kingdom, they will consider fellow-believers who suffer from famine or persecution (2 Cor. 8:13-15).
- G. We are not promised freedom from work, responsibility, trouble, or great abundance but from worry and lack of daily necessities.
- H. Note, these three principles related to living by faith:
  - 1. We are to work to earn our living and not idly claim to trust God to provide (2 Thes. 3:10). The use of “means” or secondary causes does not lessen our faith.
  - 2. Believers are not exempt from responsibility for others. God promises to feed His children in areas devastated by famine partly by using the Body of Christ. The fact that God promises to feed His children does not exempt us from the responsibility of being the agents through whom He provides for others.
  - 3. Believers are not exempt from experiencing trouble. He provides for the birds, but the sparrows still will be killed (Lk. 12:6), but not without the Father's knowledge.
- I. A gentle and quiet heart is precious to God. This speaks of those freed from the dominion of anxiety. The fruit of peace is evidence of the first commandment operating in our heart. Living with “holy detachment” from materialism is part of developing a loyal heart to Jesus (Mt. 6:24). Living this way is a statement of trust. It is about actively loving, submitting, and seeking Jesus. Jesus lived in perfect peace without any anxiety because His eye or vision was pure and full of light. He is gentle and meek at heart (not passive). He trusted and submitted to the Father by keeping the end in view because His treasure wasn't in the temporal "shadows" of His 33 years on the earth. His treasure was loving the Father and being faithful to His will.

***<sup>4</sup>The hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. (1 Pet. 3:4)***