

Sermon Series: *Jesus Said What?*



Do Not Be Anxious About Tomorrow

Learning to Live Free From Anxiety

Matthew 6:25-34 (ESV)

²⁵ "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious 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? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷ And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? ²⁸ And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹ yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰ But if

God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? ³¹ Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³² For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. ³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

³⁴ "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."

Introduction

The words of Jesus are sometimes shocking, always poignant, difficult to ignore, and when truly heard, they are life-changing. What Jesus says here about anxiety, could be life-changing for some of you listening.

Peter once said to Jesus, "*There's no one else like you? You have the words of eternal life.*"¹ We here at Hope, like Peter, believe that the words of Jesus are life-giving. This is why lately we have been giving our attention to the words of Jesus (mostly those found in the sermon on the mount).

Jesus speaks about issues with which we all are struggling, both personally and societally. We need his words. If we obey his words, there will be life for us, our children, and our nation. If we trust his words and obey his teaching, then we have his promise of fullness of life here² and eternal life hereafter.³ If we ignore his words, then we are choosing a life that will be marked by hopelessness, alienation, and societal implosion.

The words of Jesus are the words of God himself.⁴ Jesus said, "*My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me*" (Jn 7:16). To listen and obey the words of Jesus is to listen and obey the words of God the Father. To reject the words of Jesus is to reject the words of God the Father.⁵ Paul thanked God that the Thessalonians received the gospel of Jesus as the word of God and not merely the words of men.

(1 Thessalonians 2:13 ESV)

¹³ *And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.*

¹ My translation of Jn 6:68.

² Jn 10:10; 15:11.

³ Jn 3:16, 36; 4:14; 5:24, 39; 6:40, 47, 54, 63; et. al.

⁴ Jn 7:16; 14:24.

⁵ Lk 10:16; Jn 5:23.

May we receive the words we have heard read to us this morning in the same way. May we receive these words of Jesus as the very words of God, sent to us today to work in our lives and accomplish his will for us.

What's the Therefore There For?

The words Michelle read to us are part of the sermon Jesus preached on the mount. The first word Michelle read was, 'therefore.' This tells us that the conclusions that follow this word are based upon the truth that has been stated before. We need to be reminded of what Jesus has just said in order to fully understand what he is now saying.

Jesus has been describing what the true discipleship looks like, what the real child of God loves and how she acts. In chapter six, Jesus contrasts false discipleship with true discipleship. He explains that false disciples engage in religious activities in order to please others, while true disciples engage in religious activities in order to please God the Father.

The examples Jesus uses this difference are giving money, praying, and fasting. False disciples give, pray, and fast, but they do these things to because they love the praise of men. True disciples also give, pray, and fast, but they do these things because the love the praise of God. ***The key difference between true religion and false religion is determined by what or who you love most.*** What do you treasure most, the praise of man or the praise of God? It is a matter of the heart. Jesus says it this way,

Matthew 6:21 (ESV)

²¹ *For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

Jesus' primary concern is with what happens in the inner person. Who or what has your heart? That's the central question that Jesus demands every single person answer. We have been created to worship (i.e. love) only one god. Either we will love and worship the one true God, who created us and all that exists and has revealed himself through the person of Jesus, or we will love and worship a false god.

If that seems to be a very narrow assessment, then you can blame Jesus, for this is his assessment.

(Matthew 6:24 ESV)

²⁴ *"No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money."*

Do you see that there are only two options? *"No one can serve two masters."* We must all make a choice of who our one master will be. Either God will be our master or money⁶, that is material possessions, will be our master. Do you see that it comes down to what we love most? *"Either we will hate the one and love the other, or we will be devoted to the one and despise the other."*

"What a man loves, that is his God. For he carries it in his heart, he goes about with it night and day, he sleeps and wakes with it; be it what it may—wealth or self, pleasure or renown."⁷

Jesus has just laid before his audience a choice. They must choose who their one master is to be. *Jesus assumes that it is obvious that God is the better choice.* But he knows that our sinful hearts need to be convinced. So he offers an argument explaining why having God as your master is the better choice. *A life lived serving God the Father as master will be a life filled with God's providential care, while a life lived serving the things of this world as master will be a life filled with anxiety.* Jesus does not want his disciples to be dominated by a desire for the things of this world or by anxiety.

Anxiety All Around

However, if you want to be anxious, you needn't look far to find ample reasons to be so. There are plenty of reasons for which one could choose to be anxious.

Who will be the next president of this country? Is there lead in my drinking water? Am I going to get the Zika virus? Will I get hit by a falling crane while walking down the sidewalk? Will I die in some random terrorist attack? Will my friends on FaceBook like my post? Will my followers on Twitter retweet my tweet? Will my video get lots of likes? Will I be able to go to college? Will I be able to graduate? Will I be able to have a successful marriage? Will I be able to pay off all my student loans? If I do graduate, will I be able to find a good job?

Anxiety Among College Students Now Most Common Concern

According to the New York Times, anxiety among college students is now the most common mental health issue.⁸ A study conducted by Penn State's Center for Collegiate Mental Health found that half of all students visiting the campus health clinic listed anxiety as a major concern

⁶ "Money" renders Greek *mamōna* ("mammon"), itself a transliteration of Aramaic *māmōnā* (in the emphatic state; "wealth," "property"). The root in both Aramaic and Hebrew (*mn*) indicates that in which one has confidence. D. A. Carson, "Matthew," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 178.

⁷ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, vol. 2 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 27.

⁸ Source: http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/05/27/anxious-students-strain-college-mental-health-centers/?_r=1 accessed 6 Feb 2016.

in their lives.⁹ “Nearly one in six college students [has been diagnosed with or treated for anxiety](#) within the last 12 months, according to the annual national survey by the American College Health Association.”¹⁰

One professor at University of Central Florida said she has seen students go into panic attacks at the thought of being called upon in class.¹¹ This same professor told of another student who could barely make it to class because he had to ride a bus and walk past groups of students who he assumed were always talking about him.¹² This anxiety resulted in him taking up the practice of cutting himself and soon he had to be hospitalized.

Is this the best way to live our lives?

If anxiety dominates your life, then your serving the wrong master. If anxiety dominates your life, then Jesus stands before you today inviting you to put your whole trust in God and not in material things. *If anxiety fills your life, then this means that your deepest confidence is more in material things than it is in the person of God the Father.* Therefore, consider your anxiety to be a sacred siren calling out to alert you to the fact that your love and trust are not as deeply rooted in him as they should be. Jesus does not want your life dominated by anxiety. Jesus wants your soul grounded in deep trust and full faith in God.

So he says,

Matthew 6:25 (ESV)

²⁵ *“Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious 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?”*

Jesus hits the two things about which we are most anxious, our life and our body. Some people live with a constant concern for their life and in fear of losing their life, while others live with anxiety about their body. Jesus addresses each of them with an illustration.

Do Not Be Anxious About Your Life

The concern about life is primarily expressed by anxiety about what we will eat and drink. Food and drink are two of the necessities required to sustain life. We should include our jobs in this concern, since we often connect our jobs with “putting bread and butter on the table,” and “bringing home the bacon.” We become easily anxious about the things which are the means

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

of our livelihood. I suspect there's probably little that would cause you greater anxiety than showing up at work tomorrow and receiving a pink slip.

Jesus says don't be anxious about this. Why? Because of the birds.

Matthew 6:26 (ESV)

²⁶ *Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?*

Jesus was speaking these words outside on the mount sloping up from the sea of Galilee. No doubt he pointed up to some birds flying above them or maybe to some nearby on the ground. He points out the fact that birds don't plant fields or reap a harvest or store up food in barns, like us. ***And yet our heavenly Father feeds them.***

Do you ever wonder what God does all day? Jesus says that part of what he does every day is to feed the birds. God is at work all around us and we don't see it. If only we had eyes to see all that he does.

Jesus does not mean we ought not to sow seed and plant and reap a harvest and lay up food for the winter. Birds do not sit in their nests all day waiting for birdie manna to fall from the sky right into their little beaks. No. They get up early and go out looking for food. And God the Father every day feeds the ones who go out looking, digging, and scratching for food. Jesus is not here teaching us that we ought not to work. He is teaching us that we ought not to worry.

Do Not Be Anxious Because You Are More Valuable Than Birds

Why ought we not worry? Because we are valuable to God than are birds. Jesus says,

Matthew 6:26 (ESV)

"...your heavenly Father feeds [the birds]. Are you not of more value than they?"

Jesus argues from the lesser to the greater. Every day God feeds little birds, which are so insignificant in our eyes. And yet God concerns himself to feed them. ***If God cares enough to daily feed tiny, insignificant birds, then how much more will he care enough to daily feed his children?*** Jesus says, ***"Do not be anxious about what you will eat or what you will drink... because your heavenly Father will feed you and give you drink."***

When Hagar thought she was dying of thirst, God sent an angel to point her to a well.¹³

¹³ Gen 21:15-19.

When the children of Israel thought they would die in the wilderness, God made water shoot from a rock.¹⁴

When Samson thought he would die of thirst, God spilt the ground open and caused a spring to well up before him.¹⁵

Don't be anxious about what you will eat and drink. Trust your heavenly Father. Since he feeds the birds, he will certainly feed you, because you are much more valuable to him than birds. You are created in his image. Birds are not. ***So do not be anxious about your life.***

Don't Be Anxious, Because Being Anxious Changes Nothing

Jesus offers another reason why you shouldn't be anxious. Being anxious about something changes nothing.

Matthew 6:27

²⁷ *And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?*

Does being anxious about your life extend your life? No. It doesn't. No one, by being anxious about life can lengthen his life by one minutes. In fact, there have been studies which indicate that anxiety reduces life span.¹⁶ Worrying about your life will not add a single hour to it, but it may steal an hour from it. So Don't be anxious about you life.

(Psalms 31:14-15 ESV)

But I trust in you, O Lord;

I say, "You are my God."

¹⁵ *My times are in your hand,"*

The psalmist, David, knows that God is sovereignly holding his life in his strong hands.

(Psalms 139:16 ESV)

¹⁶ *Your eyes saw my unformed substance;
in your book were written, every one of them,
the days that were formed for me,
when as yet there was none of them.*

My life is in the hand of God. In him I will trust. Before he ever made me to see the light of day, he had written down the number of days which he had planned for me. Therefore, I will not be

¹⁴ Ex 17:1-7.

¹⁵ Jud 15:18-19.

¹⁶ Source: <http://theweek.com/articles/473388/could-even-mild-anxiety-shorten-life> accessed 6 Feb 2016.

anxious about my life. I will not die one day sooner than he appointed for me before I was born. Therefore I will not be anxious about my life.

Do Not Be Anxious About Your Body

The second greatest area of anxiety has to do with the body. This couldn't be more relevant for us today. Are we anxious about our bodies today? Every year diet and exercise top the list of the most popular New Year's Resolutions. Our anxiety over body image fuels entire industries, from diet products, to clothing, to toys.

Yes, even the toy industry feeds anxiety about body image. The toys of a culture reveal the values of a culture. Just last week Time.com broke the story that Mattel was reshaping the Barbie line of dolls. Now instead of one Barbie body style, now there are four. Barbie now comes in Original, Curvy, Tall, and Petite. The article was entitled, "Barbie's Got A New Body." One body style had caused too much anxiety in little girls and many little girls didn't look like Barbie, and sales began to slump. So Mattel reshaped Barbie to be more appealing to more little girls.



Little boys are not immune from body anxiety either. Little boys dream of looking like Mr. Universe. A study published in *Pediatrics*, which is the official journal of the Academy of American Pediatrics, revealed that boys today are far more concerned with having a muscular body than at any time in the past. The study found that 40% of 13-14 year old boys were exercising regularly in order to increase muscle mass. Toy action figures are muscular and bulky. Mass media glorifies massive males. Video games feature unnaturally muscular males as the main characters. Sports "heroes" are regularly caught using performance enhancing drugs. The American Institute of Learning and Human Development referred to this dramatic increase interest in being seen as muscular as "The Schwarzenegger Effect."¹⁷

Anxiety over body does not only effect children. It reaches us all, from adolescents to adults. Not only are we anxious about what our bodies look like, we are also anxious about what we put on our bodies, our clothes. From the classroom to the office we've all seen that look when we're not wearing the name brand that society tells us we must wear in order to be valued. ***Our culture tells us that the value of a person is often measured by the symbols or names they do or do not have on their clothes.*** We would rather hang out with a person wearing anything Nike than with some wearing a no-name brand.

Jesus says,

Matthew 6:25 (ESV)

¹⁷ Source: <http://institute4learning.com/blog/2012/11/19/the-schwarzenegger-effect-body-building-on-the-rise-in-boys/> accessed 6 Feb 2016.

²⁵ *Is not your body more than clothing?*

Matthew 6:28-30 (ESV)

²⁸ *And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹ yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰ But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?*

Loving God and serving him as master leaves us free from the anxiety of wondering if we'll have the clothes that we need. Jesus once again argues from the lesser to the greater. It's as if he were saying,

Take a look at the grassy field. Notice all the flowers that adorn it. It's beautiful, isn't it? It's even more beautiful than Solomon when he was dressed up in his finest. The grassy field didn't work hard to cause those flowers to grow, nor did it spin those flowers out on a spinning wheel. God caused those flowers to grow. God clothes the grassy field with beautiful flowers. If God clothes the grassy field with beautiful flowers, which don't even last one day, then do you really think that he will not so clothe you? O you of little faith.

Once again ***God the Father is daily at work clothing grassy fields with beautiful flowers.*** God is daily at work taking care of the grass and causing flowers to grow. If he cares so much about grass and flowers which are only alive a short time, here today and gone tomorrow, then how much more will he care for you and give you the clothes you need? Jesus is explaining that God most certainly will take care of your need of clothing.

The Root of Anxiety is Unbelief

Then Jesus says something that should catch our attention. ***O you of little faith.*** Now Jesus exposes the root of anxiety. It is a lack of a strong faith. The root of anxiety is unbelief. He says, "O you of little faith." There is some faith there within you, but it is only "little faith." A heart filled with much anxiety, has only little room for faith. If you are over tired and weary by continual and abiding anxiety, then the way to drive it out is by deepening and growing your faith.

Exercise your trust in God's power to provide for you and your anxiety will weaken while your faith will deepen. Choose to focus your mind on his promises and not upon potential problems. Meditate on God's providential power and not upon future fears. One such promise to meditate on is the one Jesus offers in the next few sentences.

Matthew 6:31-33 (ESV)

³¹ Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³² For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. ³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

When Jesus says, "Gentiles," he means unbelievers, those without God. Those who do not know God constantly worry about what they will eat and drink, and what they will wear. Jesus reminds us, "**Your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.**" The point is, we need not be anxious about all these things because God knows that we need them. He's promised to take care of us, so we need not be unnecessarily preoccupied with them. Instead, Jesus says, "**Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.**"

Our first priority ought to be the kingdom of God. The priorities of our lives ought to be in line with the priorities of the kingdom of God. What does it mean to seek first the kingdom of God? When Jesus teaches his disciples to pray, the first thing he prays is that **God's name would be hallowed**. To hallow God's name is to revere it, to respect it, and to praise it. Our first priority ought to be to glorify the name of God in our lives. Our first priority ought to be to magnify and to glory the name of God in this world. Everything we do ought to bring glory to God the Father (Mt 5:16).

After praying that God's name would be hallowed, he then prayed that **God's will would be done without disobedience**, just like it is perfectly obeyed in heaven. A second part of seeking God's kingdom first is obeying his revealed will. Wherever God's will is obeyed, there his kingdom has come. If obeying God, pleasing God, becomes our first priority, then Jesus promises that all of our needs will be met.

I'm reminded of what Paul wrote to the Philippians.

(Philippians 4:6-7 ESV)

⁶ do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

(Philippians 4:19 ESV)

¹⁹ And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

Jesus also commands that we seek **his righteousness**. His righteousness is a perfect righteousness. His righteousness rightly values all things. This at least means that we ought to strive to love holiness and hate evil. We ought to fight the sinful tendency within us to be content with worldliness. And it means that we ought to seek to live in perfect obedience to all

of God's will. But his righteousness was manifested personally and perfectly in the man Jesus of Nazareth.

Ultimately I believe that the command to *seek his righteousness* is a command to seek Jesus himself. We ought to strive to make Jesus the treasure of our lives. We ought to treasure him above all other things and all other persons because Jesus attained God's righteousness. Jesus perfectly obeyed God the Father. Jesus never once disobeyed our heavenly Father. It is only faith in the perfect righteousness of Jesus that will get anyone into heaven. Seeking his righteousness means putting your whole trust in Jesus and his perfect obedience and resting in his gracious promise that he will give the gift of his perfect righteousness to all those who come to him and ask him for it. **We cannot achieve perfect righteousness, but we can receive perfect righteousness.** If all of our trust is in Jesus, then there is no need to be anxious about God rejecting us. If we put our faith in him, then he gives us the gift of his own perfect righteousness.

And finally,

Matthew 6:34 (ESV)

³⁴ *"Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."*

This is now the third time Jesus has said, "Do not be anxious." He has said, "Do not be anxious about your life, do not be anxious about your body," and now he says, "Do not be anxious about tomorrow." Jesus does not want his children to be anxious. Jesus does not want his children burdened with excessive worrying.

This does not mean that Jesus thinks there will never come into our lives anything any trouble or anything that will cause us great concern. There will be difficulties that come into our lives. He is saying, take one day at a time. Do not import into today, the troubles of tomorrow.

Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. Every day has its own problems. Just be concerned with the problems of today and stop adding to them the burdens of tomorrow. Each day has enough to be concerned about. The actual problems of today are heavy enough without adding to them any number of potential problems of tomorrow. Jesus is a realist. He knows that there will be difficulties and challenges and intense days of struggle.

(John 16:33 ESV)

³³ *"I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."*

Jesus knows we will have various kinds of tribulation while we are in this world. Yet he would have us filled with his peace while we walk through them. We can have his peace within us

because we know that he has conquered every enemy in this world, including death. Jesus has overcome this world and therefore, he can overcome all our unnecessary worrying and anxiety.

Conclusion

The words of Jesus are right to heed,
they bring us peace and life.
Obedience satisfies our deepest need,
willingly submitting removes all strife.

No two masters can one man serve,
his heart was not created thus.
Mammon's mastery is bitter we learn,
through fruitless toil and fuss.

God the Father's a master sweet,
he clothes the grass and feeds the birds.
A kinder Lord you'll never meet,
full of providential power and life-giving words.

He cares today for things tomorrow gone,
his attention nothing escapes.
To distrust him would be a serious wrong,
don't make an eternal mistake.

Rest deeply in his tender arms,
lean on him in faith.
Seek not earthly charms,
keep heaven's kingdom in first place.

Avoid the weight of worldly anxiety,
tomorrow's burden today, we cannot carry.
Seek his righteousness sincerely,
and all needful things will be added shortly.