

Overcoming Financial Worry, Part 1

Matthew 6:25-34

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We come again this morning in our study to the 6th chapter of Matthew, again just reminding those who are guests with us that we are in a protracted, a long, and thrilling study of the sermon on the mount, as part of a greater study of the gospel of Matthew. We are learning very first hand and in depth, I trust, the words of our Lord given in this most masterful of all sermons, from chapter 5 through chapter 7.

We find ourselves for this time in 6:25-34, and in order that you might have context for what we say to you, let me read this passage to you and you follow along in your own Bible beginning at Matthew 6:25.

“Therefore I say unto you, be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; neither yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than food, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by being anxious can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye anxious for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

“Therefore be not anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, With what shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

“Be therefore not anxious about to morrow: for to morrow will be anxious for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is its own evil.”

Now you'll notice in the passage that an oft repeated phrase is the theme, “Be not anxious.” In fact, it appears in here four times. “Anxious” is a word that simply means “to worry.” Don't worry. That is the heart and the soul of the passage. The Lord is calling for us to cease from worrying. Now, I guess all of us have to admit that worry is a part of life. It's a pastime for most people. It occupies their thinking for a great portion of their daily waking hours.

However, worry is a very dangerous item. It takes a severe toll on people. But far beyond its psychological effect is the fact that the Bible tells us that for a Christian, for a child of God, worry is a sin. Because worry is the equivalent of saying, “God, I know You mean well by what You say, but I'm

just not sure You can pull it off.” Worry is the sin of distrusting the promise and the providence of God, and yet we do it all the time.

William Inge said, “Worry is interest paid on trouble before it’s due.” Another writer said, “Worry is a thin stream of fear that trickles through the mind. If encouraged it’ll cut a channel so wide that all other thoughts will be drowned in it.” And one writer put it this way, “Worry is faith in the negative, trust in the unpleasant, assurance of disaster, and belief in defeat.” And one writer said, “Worry is wasting today’s time to clutter up tomorrow’s opportunities with yesterday’s troubles.”

Let me tell you something that I thought was interesting I read this week. It really wasn’t related to worry until I saw a very interesting connection, but I was reading about the Bureau of Standards in Washington D.C., and they had a little feature in there that was telling about fog, and what was the composite element of fog. And this I thought was fascinating. A dense fog that covers a seven-city-block area 100 feet deep - and by that, they mean a very dense, thick fog 7 blocks and 100 feet deep - is composed of less than one glass of water, divided into 60,000 million drops. Not much is really there at all, but it can cripple an entire city. And I think that’s a pretty good illustration of worry. Put it all together and you don’t have much more than a glass of water, but you can sure mess up a whole lot of people.

Now, we worry. That’s just the expression of human sinfulness. And I guess we don’t worry any more about any other thing as much as we worry about the basics of life, and so we’re little different than the people to whom Jesus spoke. Because they worried, and what they worried about - in verse 25 - is what are we going to eat? And what are we going to drink? And what are we going to put on our bodies? I mean, they were worried about the basic stuff.

I guess if you’re going to worry and you’re going to try to legitimize it, there’s no more way to think of it than to say, “Well, after all, I mean, this is rather basic. I’m not worrying about extravagant things. I’m just worrying about my next meal, a glass of water, and something to wear.” But for the Christian, that is forbidden. For the Christian, that is sinful. For the Christian, that is foolish. There’s no place for us to worry, even about those basic commodities of life.

Why? Because the Lord says, “That’s My area.” And one of the things you learn if you listen to Jesus all through the sermon on the mount, and all through the gospels, and if you listen to the epistles, which are the commentary on the gospels, one thing you learn is that God does not want His children preoccupied with the mundane passing things of the earth. He wants us to set our affection not on things on the earth, but on things above. He wants us to lay up our treasure in heaven. He wants us to seek first the kingdom of God. And in order to free us to do that He says, “Don’t worry about the other stuff. I’ll take care of that.” You see?

That is a basic principle of spiritual life, that we are not earthbound people. We just give that part to God and we are free to live in the heavenlies. How foolish to be worried about material things. But that is precisely what people worry about.

Now He could be talking about rich people here, the same people who have all the luxuries in verses 19 to 24 are also worried about the necessities here in 25 to 34. Because rich people worry about necessities, that’s why they stockpile all their money, so they can hedge against the future. That’s why they stash it all away, so that they’ll make sure that if everything goes apart they’re going to be

able to have it all. So rich people worry about necessity.

So do poor people. In fact, poor people maybe worry about it in a little different way. They worry about it but can't do anything specific to relieve that worry. Rich people can at least stockpile. Poor people can worry about it and can't do a thing to alleviate that. And so the Lord is here, I think, maybe primarily directing it to poor people, but it has to encompass the rich because anybody can worry about having the necessities of life.

Why, there are people in our own society who have all they need and they're worried about running out. They're worried about things that are going to happen in the future and they're not going to have enough resources, and they're not going to have the clothes, or they're not going to have the things they need to eat and drink, or the shelter, and so forth, and in fear they begin to hedge against the future and, really in a non-trusting, non-faith expression, try to determine their own destiny apart from God, even Christian people. And so you could be rich and have this problem but basically, primarily, I think He's talking about the person who has no resources for the future and is totally dependent on today, and then tomorrow, and the next tomorrow fulfilling itself.

Now should that person worry? You say, "Why, poor people should worry. How do they know where their next meal is going to come from? How do they know they're going to have it in the morning? How do they know they're going to have shelter and clothes?" But our Lord precisely says you're not to worry about that. You're not to take your luxuries, and you're not to stash your luxuries in some hoarding fashion as a hedge against the future and not use what you have been given by God to accomplish His purposes now. That's verses 19 to 24. Nor are you to have anxiety in your heart for tomorrow's needs, even if you have nothing. So the Lord here is covering luxury in 19 to 24 and necessity in 25 to 31.

Now, let me give you some background on the text just briefly. Throughout the sermon on the mount the Lord is laying a standard that was uncommon in His day and it was really far beyond anything that was going on in the religion of Judaism. He gave them a new standard of themselves. He gave them a new standard - really not a new one, but a reiteration of the old one, the divine one. He gave them the divine standard of the world. He gave them the divine standard of God's law. He gave them the divine standard of moral issues, the divine standard of religious worship. And here He gives them what God says about their money and their possessions.

And throughout the sermon on the mount - and I think you already know this - what the Lord is doing is just giving them the categories where God speaks to the issue. God has something to say about your attitudes, something about your commitment to the Word of God, something about your religious activity, something about your moral values, something about your money, something about your possessions, something about your prayer life.

In other words, He sweeps through all of these dimensions of life in this great sermon. And so at this point we are touching on the money and the possessions part, and particularly in 25 to 34 on the necessities. Somebody might answer this way. They'd say, "Well, you know, I read verses 19 to 24 and it said, 'Don't lay up for yourselves treasures on earth. Boy, you just lay it up in heaven. And don't serve money, serve God.' " And somebody might say, "Boy, you know, but what about the future? Boy, you know, in this kind of changing world if I don't stash a lot of it away how do I know I'm going to have food and drink in the future? How do I know I'm going to have clothes for myself and my family? How do I know I'm going to have a shelter?"

And I believe in wise planning. But if you're having trouble with that, the Lord says, "Don't worry about that." It's fine to save for the future. It's fine to plan for the future. It's wrong to worry about those plans, because God will take care of that. And as I told you before, if you have a choice between God saying to you, "Use this money now for this purpose," and your own feeling, "Well, I'd better have it for the future because it's unknown," then to keep it for the future is to disobey the moment.

Now these are general principles that you're going to have to apply. So, we may have treasure. We're to lay it up in heaven and we're free to do that when we don't worry about the necessities of life.

Now, let's get the general principle. Verse 25. Going to cover the general principle and then some specifics. First here's the general principle, "Therefore, I say unto you, Be not anxious." And that's repeated in verse 31, "Be not anxious," verse 34, "Be not anxious." That is the all-inclusive theme of the passage, and basically in the Greek it simply means "don't worry," don't worry.

And by the way, in verse 25 the Greek tense is unique and it means, "Stop worrying." If you're already doing it, quit. And in verse 31, it's different. It says, "Don't start worrying." So either way you cut it, He hits you. If you're doing it, quit; and if you haven't started, don't. Don't worry.

Then He says in verse 25 - notice it - "for your life." And the word is *psychē*. It has to do with the fullness of earthly, physical, external life, all that this life in this world is. Don't be anxious about this world, the temporal, external, physical, earthly world; the eating, and the drinking, and the clothing, and the housing, and all that makes up this earth. Don't worry about that, and if you've already started, then stop worrying about it.

Now let me give you a little bit of a connection. Verse 25 begins with the word, "Therefore," and the word "therefore" is to take us backwards. And He gave us three principles you'll remember in verses 19 to 24. He said, first of all, earthly treasures corrupt. Earthly treasures corrupt. Then He said yearning for earthly treasures blinds your spiritual vision, verses 22 and 23. Thirdly, He said you must make a choice between God and money.

Now let me sum it up. Listen to this. Since earthly treasures corrupt you anyway, since earthly treasures tend to blind your spiritual vision, and since earthly treasures tend to draw you away from serving God, therefore don't worry about those kinds of things. Do you see? That should not be your preoccupation, even the basics of life.

You say, "Well, can't we at least worry about the basics, if not the luxuries?" No. Not at all. If you're a child of God, you have a single goal: Treasure in heaven. You have a single vision. You see God's purposes. You have a single Master. You serve God, not money. Therefore, you cannot become preoccupied with the mundane things of this world.

Now specifically what is He referring to? Back to verse 25. What are the basics? "What ye shall eat," that's food; "what ye shall drink;" that's water or fluids; "nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on," that's clothing. Food, water, and clothing, don't worry about that. Don't be anxious about that.

Now, in our society we might think that's a little bit obscure. We say, "My, I don't worry about that. There's a supermarket on every block and I can go in there and pile it all in. We've got so much water in our house we never think about it. Average house has probably got ten faucets, you know, indoors and outdoors, and you can have water running all over the place, and sprinkler heads. And what do you mean worry about water, who worries about that?"

And then some prophet of doom comes along and says we're running out of food in America and we're running out of water in America and maybe we do worry a little. But if you were living in Palestine at Jesus' time, you might have been a little more concerned, because there were times when the snows didn't come to the mountains, and when the snows didn't come to the mountains the streams, didn't run, and in the burning summer heat the stream would dry up and there was no water. And there were times when the crops didn't come through because the locusts plagued the crops, and when the crops didn't come through, there wasn't any food and there was famine in the land. And when there was famine in the land, there was also no income in the land, and when there was no income in the land, there could be no purchase of clothing in the land, and so there was none of the real resource that people need to live by.

These words of our Lord are literally tremendous and powerful spoken in the context of that time. Don't you ever bother to worry about what you're going to eat. Don't you bother to worry about what you're going to drink. And don't give a second thought to what you're going to wear, said to those people on the edge of the parched desert, who were totally dependent upon the natural resources must have been a shocking statement. "Don't even give it a thought," He says. Certainly that would be an indictment of our own worry about those kinds of things.

Our Lord recognizes that man in his covetousness tends to devote his whole life to caring for the externals. He tends to devote his whole life to his food, and his house, and his clothes, and those kinds of things. But then at the end of verse 25 He says this, putting it in perspective. "Is not the life - " the *psuchē*, the fullness of physical life, far " - more than food and is not the body more than just clothing?"

I mean, is that all there is in life? Is that all you're going to focus on? You know, frankly, that's the way it is in the world. Most people in our world are totally consumed with the body. Just decorate the body, fix up the body, clothe the body, take care of the body, put it in a nice car, send it off to a nice house, stuff it full of nice food, sit in a nice comfortable chair, hang a bunch of jewelry all over the thing, take it out on a boat, let it swim, teach it to ski, take it on a cruise. The body, feed that body. That's the way most people live. Isn't life more than that? Isn't life more than that?

That's what He's saying. What are you worried about that for? The body isn't the end of all. Life is not contained in this body. Life is contained in the very - listen to this - nature of God. I live, not because my body lives, but because God gives my body life, see? Life is more than the body, more than food, more than clothes. You'd never convince people in our society of that, but it's true. So why worry about those things? He gives three reasons why you shouldn't worry.

Number one, it's unnecessary because of your Father. Number two, it's uncharacteristic because of your faith. And number three, it's unwise because of your future. It's unnecessary because of your Father, it's uncharacteristic because of your faith, and it's unwise because of your future. Now, we'll take the last two next week, and the first one today.

Why you should never worry about finances, why you should never worry about the basics of life, why you should never worry about what you eat, or drink, or wear; it is unnecessary because of your Father. Now remember that. This is a fabulous thing that Jesus says here. I feel like a clumsy oaf trying to deal with this majestic material. But first of all, He says it is unnecessary to worry about material things, even the necessities of life because of your Father. Have you forgotten who your Father is? It's so foolish.

You know, I can use my own children as an example. My children don't worry about where they're going to get their next meal. They don't worry about that. They don't worry about whether they're going to have clothes, a bed, something to drink. That never enters their mind because they know enough about their father to know their father provides for them. They have absolutely no anxiety.

And believe me, I don't come close to being as faithful as God. And yet, how often we fail to believe that God is going to provide for us, and we worry. Anxiety is foolish. And the Lord gives three illustrations: One from food, one from the future, and one from fashion; food, the future, and fashion. And these are related to Him as our Father.

First of all the one on food, verse 26. This is really fabulous. I think the Lord is standing on the hillside there, up in Galilee looking down over that beautiful north end of the sea. The breeze was rippling across. The sun was bright in the sky and the people were all gathered at His feet. A lovely time of the year and a lovely place to be, and I've stood there myself several times. And I think as He was speaking to them some birds flew across.

One writer said that the north part of the area of Galilee is the crossroads of bird migration. It's a very special place where the birds migrate in that part of the world. And Jesus probably saw them fly by and He said in verse 26, "Behold - " look " - the birds of the air: - " very common " - they don't sow, and they don't reap, and they don't gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are ye not much better than they?"

Listen, every bird that lives in this world lives because God gave it life, right? God gave life to every bird. And if God gives life to a bird, He doesn't say, "All right, bird, I've done My thing. I've given you life. Now, you figure out how to keep it." No, birds don't get together and say, "Now we've got to come up with a strategy to keep ourselves alive." Birds have no selfconsciousness, no cognitive processes, no ability to reason, but God planted within birds something called instinct so that birds are planted, if you will, with a divine capacity to find what is necessary to live. God doesn't just create life, He creates life and then sustains life.

In Job, for example, 38:41 it says, "Who provideth for the ravens his food? When his young ones cry unto God." In other words, when the little birds cry unto God, isn't that interesting? The little birds actually look to God the Creator, says Job. It is God the Creator who gives the mother the instinct to bring the food. It is God the Creator who gave the mother the instinct to build the nest, and to migrate to a new area at the exact and precise time. "To the young ravens which cry out, he gives food." Says Psalm 147:9. God feeds the birds through the process of their own instinct, and the Bible calls it "crying out to God." It says the birds cry out to God.

Now, if God is going to take care of irrational birds who cry out to Him through their instinct, is not

God going to take care of His own children? At the end of verse 26, “Are you not much better than birds?”

Arthur Pink said, “Here we may see how the irrational creatures made subject to vanity by the sin of man come nearer to their first estate and better observe the order of nature in their creation than man does, for they seek only for that which God has provided for them and when they receive it, they’re content. This solemnly demonstrates that man is more corrupt than other creatures, more vile and more base than even the brute beasts.”

Birds, God takes care of. Don’t you think He’ll take care of you? Now by the way, this is not an excuse for idleness. He says in 26, “They sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; but your heavenly Father feeds them.” And somebody says, “Oh, that’s the idea. I’m just going to stand out there on the edge of a tree with my mouth open.”

Now listen. It never rains worms, never. Birds, God feeds through an instinct that tells them where to find that food, and they go for it. They work for it. They’re busy searching around, gobbling up little insects, worms, preparing their nests, caring for their young, teaching them to fly, pushing them out at the right time, migrating with the seasons. They work hard. All this work is to be done if they’re going to eat, and yet they do it by instinct, and they never overdo it. They don’t say, “I’m going to build bigger nests. I’m going to store more worms. I’m going to say to myself, ‘Bird, eat, drink and be merry.’ ” They work within the framework of God’s design for them, and they never overindulge themselves.

Birds only get fat when people put them in cages. Birds don’t overdo a good thing. It’s men who have enough, and they go for more, and they stockpile, and they stuff, and they hoard, and they ignore God’s priorities and His promises and they forfeit the carefree heart. The birds just fly, they don’t worry where they’re going to find the food, they just fly until they find it, and God provides it. And birds can’t plan ahead. And birds have no reason to worry. And if birds don’t have any reason to worry, what are you worrying for? Are you not much better than a bird? How silly. How silly. You don’t think He’ll feed you?

Listen, no bird was ever created in the image of Christ, no bird. No bird was ever made in the image of God, no bird. No bird was ever designed to be a joint heir with Jesus Christ throughout eternity. No bird ever has a place prepared for him in heaven in the Father’s house, no bird. And if God sustains the life of a bird, do you think He’ll take care of you?

Think of it this way. Life is a gift from God. There’s no question about that. Life is a gift from God. If God gives you the greater gift which is life, do you think He’ll not give you the lesser gift which is the sustaining of that life, by food? Of course. So don’t worry about that. If God lays it upon my heart to take my resources that I have right now that I’ve planned for the future and He says, “John, in My heart I want you to do this with all of that,” I don’t have any right to say, “But, Lord, if I do that, what am I going to do tomorrow? I won’t have any food or anything to clothe my children.”

Wait a minute, if God asks for this now it becomes His responsibility to feed me tomorrow, and He will. If He gave me the greater gift of life, will He not give me the lesser gift to sustain that life? The gift of food. And so I, like a bird, have to work but God has designed that man should earn his bread by the sweat of his what? Of his brow. And if I don’t work I don’t eat, Paul said. So just like the bird,

God provides but through instinct, so man God provides through his effort. And if God gives me the gift of life, then God will sustain me.

Martin Luther said, "God wants nothing to do with the lazy gluttonous bellies - " he was pretty vivid " - who are neither concerned nor busy. They act as if they just had to sit and wait for Him to drop a roasted goose into their mouth." That isn't what He's saying. He's not saying do nothing. He is saying through your effort God will provide.

Now people say, "Oh, yes, but we're running out of resources." I hear this all the time, the world has no food. Listen. There's so much food in this world. God is always in the business of an abundance, did you know that? An abundance. This world hasn't seen anything yet. Wait until we get to the millennium and you see what happens around this world.

But just to give you an idea, so you're not going to worry about whether God can handle the current crisis, I picked up an article from the United States Department of Agriculture that I thought might be interesting. This is what it says. They asked some questions. This is just recent, the end of 1979, a few months ago. The question is is the world's food supply large enough to meet everyone's minimum needs? Here's the answer, United States Department of Agriculture.

"The world has more than enough food to feed every man, woman, and child in it. If the world's food supply had been evenly divided and distributed among the world's population for the last 18 years, each person would have received more than the minimum number of calories. From 1960 to the present, world food grain production never dropped below 103 percent of the minimum requirement and averaged 108 percent. Thus, if a system existed today to distribute grain equitably the world's four billion people would have available about one fifth more grain per person than the 2.7 billion people who lived 25 years ago."

Here's another question they asked in the brochure. Hasn't the amount of food produced per person been dropping in the developing countries of the world over the last 25 years? The answer is no. This is a common misconception. Food production in the developing countries has been increasing. World per capita food production declined only twice in the last 25 years, in fact production of grain, the primary food for most of the world's people, rose from 290 kilograms a person during the early 50s to 360 kilograms during the last 5 years, about a 25 percent increase. There's more food than there's ever been.

And listen to this. As far as potential food production is concerned, the world could feed every single person in it on the standard of the U.S. consumption by using less than 10 percent of the agricultural land available on the earth. Did you hear that? We could feed the whole world as good as we eat on less than 10 percent of the available agricultural land in the world.

Listen. When God says, "I'll provide," He means He'll provide. You say, "Well, why don't people have anything to eat?" I don't think it's because God doesn't provide it. I think it's because they're not His children and He has no obligation to them. Take for example, India. I shared with you not long ago, India has plenty of food to feed its people, but there's starvation there. They allow sacred cows to eat 20 percent of all their food, and the rodents and the rats that they believe are reincarnations of their ancestors eat 15 percent of it. That's 35 percent of their food. It is not that they don't have the resources. They just don't have the spiritual connection to God that puts them in the place of

blessing. Their religion destroys them. There's plenty of food. God will provide as we're faithful to believe His Word.

So the thought is simple, then. You should never worry about your food because it is unnecessary because of your Father. He provides food.

Then He takes a second illustration, I call it the future, verse 27. I think this is kind of graphic. "Which of you by worrying can add one cubit unto his stature?" Now, a cubit was the distance from your elbow to the tip of your finger. This is a cubit, and it's approximately 18 inches give or take depending on the individual, but about 18 inches, a cubit. Now the verse says, "Which of you by worrying can add one cubit?" And the King James says "unto your stature." Well, frankly folks, nobody would want to add a foot and a half to his stature. I'd be 7' 10" and that would be a little unnecessary. So there's a better way to translate the word "stature," *hēlikia* and that is the word is used sometimes to mean "span of life." And what He's really saying is, "which of you by worrying can lengthen your life?"

Listen. Not only will you not lengthen your life by worrying you'll probably - what? - shorten it. You can't lengthen your life, you know. But boy, we live in a day when everybody wants to do that. I mean, people are in a panic to lengthen their life. I mean, we're wacko about vitamins and health spas, and exercise. We're cultic about the body beautiful.

We were coming to church this morning and I looked out of the window of the car and here was this little old granny. I mean she was up in her 60s, late 60s, and she had on her little jogging shorts, and then she had on a little jogging shoes, and what looked like a road map going down both legs, you know? She was old. And she had a little visor on, and she was huffing and puffing down the street. I mean, she was going to lengthen those years. She'd have been better off to get in her car and come to Grace Church, because the spiritual is the issue.

Now I believe God has determined the times of the nations and bounded the life of a man, and I believe that God has designed how long we live. You say, are you saying exercise is useless? No, as long as I'm going to live I'd like to increase the quality of my life. And if I get exercise I function better, my brain works better, and I'm happier and I'm in control of things. But I'm not going to kid myself that by running down the street everyday I'm going to force God to let me live longer. I mean when the plan says, "MacArthur, you're out and somebody else is in," I'm out.

And so our world has missed the point. I mean, we spend a literal fortune joining spas, buying vitamins by the tons, incredible, visiting every doctor in sight to get a physical, every special diet conceivable. And all we want to do is lengthen our life. The fear of death - we don't want to die. We want to live longer, and longer, and longer, and you worry, and worry, and instead of going that way you're going this way. And you're going to make yourself miserable in the process.

Charles Mayo at the Mayo Clinic said, "Worry affects the circulation, the heart, the glands, and the whole nervous system, and I've never met a man or knew a man to die of overwork but I've sure known a lot who died of worry." You can worry yourself to death, but you're never going to worry yourself to life. And yet that's what people do. And when you worry about how long your life is, and when you fret and fume about how long you're going to live, and when you worry about adding onto your life you are distrusting God and that's foolish because God, if you give Him your life, and you're obedient to Him, will give you the fullness of days. I believe that the gift of life is a gift that comes

because God wants you to live for spiritual reasons.

In the Old Testament it was obedience that lengthened life. It was obedience that God promised to give long life. And so as we live a righteous life there's a reason for us to be around. So God gives us life, and we're His children, and He bounds our life by His sovereign decree, and He wants us to live that life to it fullest. And sure exercise helps, and health helps, because it keeps alert and alive to the limits of our capacity while we're living that span. But we can't worry ourselves into a longer life. What are you worried about? You're going to live the fullness of life if you're obedient to God. He'll give you all your days, all your days.

The third thing, a third illustration of the first point, the first point is it's unnecessary because of your Father. And the first illustration is food, and the second is the future or the length of life, and the third is fashion. And this is very graphic and it really hits us all. There are some people who live for their clothes. The most important place in their whole world is the closet. That's right, the closet. They go in there and they open the door and, you know, it's just, it's so jammed together you can't keep it from getting wrinkled. The closet, they live for clothes. Verse 28, "And why are you anxious for raiment?"

Now in those times if you were really poor, and you didn't have any resources, and the streams dried up, and the crops didn't come, and you got no money, you couldn't buy anything. And in our day maybe it isn't that we're so worried that we can't have anything, but in our society we worry about the fact that maybe what we wear isn't really what's in. I mean, you hear, "I can't wear that, mother. The pants don't go like that anymore." Or, "I can't wear that. I wore that last Tuesday."

People live for clothes. They manifest a carnal, selfish, worldly, materialistic care for clothes. It isn't so much that they are afraid they'll have nothing to wear, it's that they're afraid they won't be able to stand up and look their best and feed their pride. Lusting after costly clothes is a sin and it's a sin in our society. All you have to do is walk through a mall. It's unbelievable how much stuff is hanging on those racks, unbelievable. I don't know how those stores can sustain the inventory.

We've made a god out of fashion. We sinfully indulge in a money mad spending spree to buy ourself the things that drape all over this body and have nothing to do with the beauty of the character. That's why in 1 Peter chapter 3 it says that we're to be adorned with things not gold, and plaiting, and braiding, and fancy garments, but the heart. And we worry we don't have enough, we don't look good enough. When the Lord Jesus who owned only what He wore on His back was the loveliest who ever lived.

And He speaks to the issue, look what He says in verse 28, "Consider the lilies of the field," take a look at the field lilies, look at them. Now if you were to look at the field lilies you'd say, "Well, what are they?" Well, there's a lot of discussion about this, but the best thing is this that they're no particular flower at all. That "field lilies" is just a general term for all of the wild flowers that graced the rolling hills of Galilee, and there were many. There were the anemones, and there were the gladiolus, and the iris, and the narcissi, and what they called the little caplilies. There were such lovely little things. And all of these flowers were all over those hillsides. They even had what I think might be the prettiest of all, little scarlet colored poppies that would grow for such a brief season. But the hillsides of Galilee at the right time of year would be dotted with all the brightness of these lovely flowers.

And there's such a wondrous beauty about a flower. He says, "Take a look at the field lilies." And I'm sure He just turned His arm as they were sitting right there on the grass, right on the grass on the side of the hill and He said, "Look at the field lilies. Look at them. They don't spin and they don't toil. They don't make fancy thread and hang it all over them. And say I've been scarlet for two days I think I'd like to be blue tomorrow."

You know, I read recently where people have gone into business and you go there for a consultation and they tell you what colors you should wear. Did you read that? Yeah, they, they give you a chart. You're a definite this bracket thing, and you go out and buy all of that color, and it brings out your lips and your eyes and your hair and your, you know. "Look at the little flowers in the field," He says. "They don't bother to spin, and they don't bother to toil over it." There's a free and an easy beauty.

And I'll tell you, you can take the glorious material, the most beautiful thing that was ever made for the greatest monarch like Solomon and put it under a microscope and it'll look like sackcloth. And you take the petal of a flower and put it under a microscope and you'll see the difference. I've seen plastic flowers. I've seen silk flowers. I've seen paper flowers. I've never seen anything come close to the petal of a flower. Nothing. Nothing. There's a texture, and a form, and a design, and a substance, and a color that man with all of his ingenuity can't even touch.

"How do they grow?" He says. How do they grow? Easily, freely, gorgeously, effortlessly they flourish. Oh, the stupidity of pride in your dress. It's an indictment of our day that we spend so much time and effort. And they keep changing the fashion on us all the time, you know that? You know this is out and this is in, and it goes so fast that you cannot keep up with it.

You know they say, "Oh, you can't wear that tie. That's a thick tie. There's thin ties are in now." I've got the same ties I've had for fifteen years. I just watch what's going on and pull out the old batch, right? They keep changing it on us to force us to be preoccupied. And you go into a store, you go into a store, a clothing store, a department store, and it is literally an assault on your mind and your eyes, isn't it? Oh, look at that one and there. Boy, they're everywhere. And they pile heavy carpet on the bottom, and music plays, and fancy lights. Here they got a bunch of rotten T-shirts sitting there basically, and they've got spotlights on them like it was some fabulous things. It's an enticement to the lust to have and possess, and when you've got it all on, folks, and you've dolled up and done the best you can with what you've got to work with, you're not close to a flower.

Now I'm not saying look seedy and tacky. That's a negative distraction that makes people think you have no care for yourself. But I am saying you can lose your sense of perspective, and when you get all said and done you're one step short of real beauty that only God can give.

Verse 29. He says, Look, "even Solomon - " and Solomon was the greatest and the richest and the wisest " - in all his glory was not arrayed like a wildflower." He had no garment with that texture. He had no way to approximate the fragile beauty, the incredible design of a flower.

Now what He's saying is when you've done it all to yourself you can't do what God can do with one little tiny flower. Why do you spend such an effort for such a result? And then He makes the point from the lesser to the greater in verse 30. "Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field - " and the grass here, by the way, compasses all the flowers and the grass, all that grows on the field on the hillside, if God does that for the flowers and the grass of the hillside, " - which today is, and to

morrow is thrown in the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?"

Do you know what they used to do with that old grass? The women in that part of the world had these little hearth situations where they cooked and they had a fire, and they had an oven which was basically a thick clay oven, made all the way around with a little door. And they would build a fire, and they would take this thick earthen oven and they would place it on top of the fire. And they would let the fire heat that earth until finally it would seep in and heat the inside, and then they'd open the door and put in whatever they wanted to cook.

But if the fire had grown low or they were in a kind of a hurry and they couldn't wait for all the heat to get inside, they would start a fire on the inside of that little oven. And the historians tell us that they had a very simple way of doing it. They would go into the field and they would find the dried grass that had become brittle. They'd find the flowers that had died and fallen over, and they would gather the little stalks of the flowers and the grass and they would use that, putting it into the oven and lighting it on fire to start a fire on the inside that would move out that would meet the fire coming from the outside to evenly warm the oven.

That is exactly what our Lord is saying. "If God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" Don't worry about what you wear. Don't worry about how long you live. Don't worry about what you're going to eat and drink. God takes care of all that. That's His category. A God who would lavish such beauty on a flower of a day, will He not lavish necessary clothing on one who is His eternal child?

Beloved, this is practical stuff. You know that? Really practical stuff, this. The Bible, and what the Lord says here is not pie in the sky. He will give you food. He will give you clothing. He will determine the length of your life and sustain it. That's very tangible stuff. You have no grounds for financial worry if your heart is right.

The key is "You seek first - " verse 33 " - the kingdom of God, and his righteousness - " and all this stuff will be added. The key is you put your heart and your treasure in heaven and God will take care of all the earthly things. You know, I just believe in my heart that I don't want to give one minute a day thinking about physical, mundane earthly things. God's going to take care of that.

Said the wildflower to the sparrow, "I should really like to know why these anxious human beings rush about and worry so." "Well," said the sparrow to the wildflower, "Friend, I think that it must be that they have no heavenly Father such as cares for you and me." Maybe we ought to learn from the birds and the flowers how to live life. The sum of it is clear. Jesus says, "Don't worry. It is unnecessary because of your Father." We'll pick it up from there next time. Let's pray.

Lord, we do not want to be those of little faith. We do not want to be those who don't believe. We want to be those who are free, free to soar the heights, free to walk in the heavenlies, free to invest in eternity because we take no thought for what we eat or drink or with what we shall be clothed. That's Your area. Thank You for that.

Speak to each heart and make application, Lord, where it's needed. May we, each of us, come to a practical way in which we can implement what You've taught us today. In Christ's name. Amen.

Let me just give you a personal testimony for a moment. Years ago, when I started out in the ministry, I made a determination in my mind that I would never put a price on my ministry, that I would never, I would never tell anyone I had a speaking fee, I would never set an amount, I would never ask for any money, ever, under any condition. If it was a church I would never ask for a salary. I would never ask for a raise. I would never seek anything but the kingdom and His righteousness.

And I can tell you from my own personal testimony after 15 or 16 years of living that way, seeking the kingdom and not always being totally faithful as I would want to be, but as I have matured in seeking the kingdom, I have seen God take care of the physical. He does it, and He does it with generosity. That's what He promises His children. I refuse to worry about that. There's too much evidence of His care in the past. I can believe Him in the future. I hope you can, too. Let's stand for prayer.

Thank You, our Father, for touching us with Your truth again. May we find those practical ways to implement what we've heard. Lord, You know our needs here at Grace Church, too, especially in the financial area this difficult time. We pray that You'll speak to our hearts about some treasure that could be laid up in heaven, and then we can trust You for the future, for the necessities of life.

May we really practically respond, each of us. Thank You for the richness of our worship this morning. We commit ourselves to You. And as we go may we touch the world and may it be different because we've been with You in this time. In Christ's name, amen.

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