

Overcoming Financial Worry, Part 2

Scripture: Matthew 6:25-34

Code: 2249

Take your Bible and look at Matthew chapter 6, Matthew chapter 6. We're continuing an examination of verses 25 to 34, a wonderful, familiar, rich chapter and passage in the Word of God. This particular text, 6:25-34, is a portion of a bigger text, chapters 5, 6, and 7, which make up the sermon on the mount preached by our Lord Jesus Himself, and so this is instruction straight from the lips of Christ, and indeed it is practical and touches us right where we live.

If you were here with us last time, you know that we began a look at the passage and we'll be continuing this morning hoping to do a little review so that those who were not here can find their place rather readily.

The heart of this matter to which Jesus speaks is the issue of materialism: Worrying about our finances, worrying about our life, worrying about our earthly existence, worrying about whether we're going to have enough of the necessities of life to survive. The injunction the Lord gives three times in the passage is that we are not to worry, that such anxiety, or such care, or such fear, or such worry, or concern has absolutely no place in the life of a Christian.

And, of course, it is markedly an antithesis to everything we know in our own world. The world in which we live is utterly preoccupied with material possessions. We live in a totally materialistic world. People's life begins and ends with the things which they possess, and that is an exact opposite to what the Scripture says when it says, "A man's life does not consist in the abundance of things which he possesses." And yet, if you were to really get to the heart of the matter and to the real issues in human life even here in our own country, you would find that most people live for nothing more and nothing less than all the possessions they can possibly grasp to feed their own determined lifestyle.

In the last issue of Fortune magazine, there is an article entitled, "On a Fast Track to the Good Life." Fortune magazine sent out its editors to do a survey. They surveyed all across America the 25-year-old men and women who are on their way up the corporate ladder in the business world. They did a similar survey 25 years ago. And they wanted to find out what the 25-year-old leader, business-type person on the way up the corporate ladder looks for in life, what they really want out of life, what they really search for, what their goals and objectives are. And so the writer, Gwen Kinkead, wrote the article in response to this survey. I suppose that it shouldn't shock us but it does and I'm glad I have a little shockability left in me. But I want to share with you some of the excerpts from the article so you can get a feeling for what the thinking is of the young generation in America.

The article says that today's 25-year-old business beginners know what they want and are uninhibited about demanding it. "They plan," says the writer, "to get what they want. And what do they want? What is their goal? What is that which they seek to achieve? Simply stated, they put their jobs ahead of all other commitments, including marriage and children which some claim they'll never want."

Well why? Why do we have a generation of people who are not committed to relationships, who are not at all committed to marriage or children, but are only committed to a job? And the answer given in the survey is that it isn't relationships they want. It is money that they want, and they see jobs as the way to get it. They desire greater economic security. They are drawn, says the writer, to big business for the money, and along with the money comes the prestige, and the authority, and the reputation. The writer says, they are guided by, "frankly materialistic requirements. They defend success and they want it now."

She goes on to say that they are confident. They are selfassured. They don't think they're lucky. They think they're good. Most of them think they're star material and can't wait to shove out whoever's in front of them. The writer says, "Their ambition is consuming. They are arrogant. They fear anonymity. They fear getting lost in the shuffle, and they fear a blurring into faceless organizational surroundings. They want to be somebody. They want to be somebody now. They want to be somebody at the expense of anybody else. They want the money and all that goes with it."

And the writer goes on to say, "They are very adept at the art of selfpromotion." In fact, she writes, "They practice tireless, sophisticated, selfmerchandizing, hoping they don't have to do much backstabbing on the way up." It also goes on to say that they have no commitment to the companies they work for other than that they want to make the most money possible, so they job hop as soon as there's any other money available to them.

And taking quotes from the 25-year-olds who were interviewed, both men and women, these are some of the things they said. "I want what I want when I want it." Sounds like about one and a half years old, doesn't it? Another one said, "I want no mandatory or monetary restraints." Edward Beam, who is a planning officer at Chicago Northern Trust Company said, "I love kids, but I don't want any. I'm too selfish."

Another lady, Laurie Graves at Northrop over here in Hawthorn California says, "We'll have children when we're financially secure enough to afford good child care so I can continue to work." The writer says, they are concerned with, "nabbing a piece of the action and being on the lookout for yourself. They don't feel obligated to help others. Few devote time to public service, or volunteer work, or social problems, and religion appears too proscriptive or irrelevant."

They're not interested in anybody or anything but themselves. Terry Michelle, who is a woman, management trainee at Connecticut General Life Insurance Company says, "I knew business would reward me in direct proportion to what I achieved. I like to spend money. I didn't feel like giving up any luxuries." So the writer of the article says of all people, they are an extremely grabby bunch.

Dwight Billingsly, a Utilities Consultant in a Washington D.C. firm, strikes a common cord. He says, "I plan to set up my own business, be independent, and report to no one, though I have more money now than I ever thought possible I'd like all the money in the world." They insist on gratification, the writer says, and she says they are unabashed materialists who crave the latest labor-saving and electronic hardware, along with frequent entertainment and travel. And in their righteous aversion to conventional status symbols they seem unaware that they're on their way to creating their own.

One woman said of them, one 25-year-old said, "We want to make sure my career is well established, that we have all the material things we want, that our bills are caught up so we don't fight over what little money we'll have to raise a family on. With our lifestyle we can't afford good child care now and all the things we like." Children are an intrusion into our materialistic age, and when people whimsically have those children, they want to make sure they can afford somebody else to care for them.

I say it in the past and I'll say it again. The biggest curse in American society is a working woman, and it continues to be that because it utterly devastates the family. They are materialists. They are unabashed materialists. They are guided by ambition, greed, motivation for success, prestige, and promotion.

If we are to see a change in the world and if we are to touch our society, then we're going to have to be distinctively Christian. And I dare say we are somewhat as materialistic as those who are a part of the system around us. We all suffer from the inroads, and the temptations, and the power of the materialistic age in which we live. We've all fallen prey to it.

What is the Christian view of material things? What is the Christian view of money and possessions? Where do we stand and what does the Bible teach? What is my perspective on both the luxuries and the necessities of life? Well, the answer to the questions is given nowhere as aptly as its given right here by our own Lord Jesus Christ. For what you have in 6:19-34 is the greatest statement Jesus ever made on the view that we must have toward material things.

Now, we've already studied verses 19 to 24, and that is what the Lord says about our view of luxury. Now we're looking at verse 25 to 34, in which He speaks of our view of necessity. So that the Lord touches both that which is beyond what we need and that which is what we need. And He gives us an affirmation of where our commitment is to be.

Now, remember that when we looked at verses 19 to 24, we saw the luxuries. What is to be our perspective on luxury, that which is beyond what we need for the basic necessities? Well, the simple statement our Lord makes is in verse 20. "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven." We are to invest in heaven. What does that mean? We are to commit ourselves to placing that which we possess in an eternal investment. We are not to stockpile it in earthly things, verse 19, because moth and rust, and thieves will destroy it. So when it comes to luxury or our abundance, we are to invest that in heaven, and we went into that in great detail.

And we are to do that for three reasons: Reason number one is in verse 21, because that's where our heart should be. If you put all your treasure in the earth, that's where your heart's going to be. You're going to be worrying about your bank account instead of the kingdom of God. But if you invest all that you have in God's things, and God's ends, and God's will, and God's purposes, and God's projects, then that's where your heart's going to be as you watch your investment bringing eternal dividends. And so reason number one that we invest our luxury in an eternal significance is that our heart might be there.

Reason number two is, in verses 22 and 23, it opens up our spiritual sight. And what the Lord says there is that if you invest in the earth, you pull the shades down on your spiritual eyes and you become blind to spiritual reality. If you invest in eternal things, the shades go up and the light of God floods your heart.

The third reason that we are to invest what we have in terms of luxury in an eternally consequential thing is that it determines that we serve God and not money. It makes our service to God undivided. So, in dealing with luxury, then, we invest it in eternity. We don't stockpile it and hoard it here. And the reason we do that is because our heart is there then where it should be, our spiritual sight is clear, and our service is undivided.

Now, it always makes me rejoice when I see somebody who is so free in their spirit as to be able to do this, such as the person who would give us a house, or give us a large amount of money, or whatever, and you have done the same thing I'm sure investing with God magnanimously and generously, because you know the eternal has far more consequence than the temporal.

Now from there He moves to the necessities of life. What about the basics? And that's in verses 25 to 34. And I guess if there's anything we're concerned about, it's the basics. In fact, the reason some people stockpile their luxuries is so that they can hedge against not having the basics in the future. And we worry about the basics. Should we?

Well, the heart of this passage is reiterated in three statements. In verse 25 it says, "Therefore, I say unto you, Be not anxious." In verse 31 it says, "Therefore, be not anxious." Verse 34, "Therefore, be

not anxious.” The thrust, then, of the passage is built around those three statements, “Be not anxious.”

The first one in the Greek says, “stop being anxious,” the next two, “don’t start being anxious.” So they catch you wherever you are if you haven’t started, don’t. If you’ve already started, stop. And the word “anxious,” merimnas, it means “to worry, to fret, to fear, to have anxiety.”

In fact, in the Greek manuscript that was found from the first century where there was a list of the names of certain Christians in the early church, they found one name of one individual Christian, his name was Titedeus Amerimnos, merimnas means “worry.” Put an a in front of it and it means “not to worry.” And so his name was Titedeus, the man who never worries. And that ought to be added to the name of any Christian. “Don’t worry,” He says.

Well, don’t worry about what? Well, don’t worry about, verse 25, “What you shall eat, what you shall drink; or for your body, what you shall put on.” The basics: Your food, your drink, your clothes. Don’t worry. Three times. Stop worrying and don’t start it, if you haven’t begun yet.

You say, “Well, that’s easy for you to say.” On what basis does He say that? Three reasons. Three reasons not to worry. It is unnecessary because of your Father. It is uncharacteristic because of your faith. It is unwise because of your future. So Father, faith, and future are they key. Now, I want you to see this. It is a masterful presentation.

Last week, we looked at point number one, and I just want to reiterate it because it is the substance of the other two. First of all, we are not to worry about the basics of life because it is unnecessary since God is our Father. Two weeks ago we did a little establishing of a substantial theology about God being the owner, and the controller, and the provider of all resources of time and eternity.

And if your concept of God is right, and you see that He is the owner, controller, provider, then knowing beyond that that not only does He own, and control, and provide, but He is your own Father, and a loving Father, at that, you have nothing for which to worry. Because if He has all things in His control, and that all things which He controls He controls in the behalf of His children, and you are His child, that should be the death of worry. Essentially that’s what we’ve covered in the past Anxiety is absolutely foolish because of our Father.

Now, look at Matthew chapter 7 for a minute and let me just give you a preview of what we’ll be looking at in a few weeks in verse 7 to 11. Matthew 7:7-11. “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that knocketh shall be opened; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.”

Now, those two verses have been applied to a lot of things, and they rightfully can be applied to a lot of things, but the basic issue to which our Lord is speaking there is the issue of physical sustenance, because He illustrates that principle in verses 9 and 10. "What man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?"

In other words, you know just in human terms that a man is not going to give his son a rock when he asks for a piece of bread, and the man is not going to give his son a snake when he asks for a fish. In other words, human fathers give their children what they seek, if what they seek is what they need. Then verse 11, "If ye then, being evil - " basically men are evil, we are sinful, but if we who are evil " - know how to give good gifts unto our children, how much more shall your Father, who is in heaven - " which means He's not evil but He's absolutely right, and just, and holy, and perfect, and good " - give good things to them that ask Him?"

And the good things, again, speak first of the necessities of life. I mean, you see it as the character of God here. If an evil father, a sinful father - and we're all sinful - if we know how to give good things to our children, does not an absolutely holy God know how to give good things to His children? So what are we worried about?

Whether it's food, Matthew 6:26, "The fowls of the air; your heavenly Father feeds them. Are ye not much better than they?" I mean, He's your heavenly Father and if He takes care of birds, don't you think He'll take care of you? And that's the illustration of food. He'll supply your food.

The next one is the illustration of the future. "Which of you by being anxious can add one cubit to his life span?" You know, there are people who worry, and worry, and worry about how long they're going to live. They worry about death. They're afraid of death. Some people don't want to get on an airplane. Some people are afraid of diseases. They go from doctor, to doctor, to doctor, from health spa, to health spa, to health spa, from bottle, to bottle, to bottle, taking vitamins and pills, and they live in constant fear about their life. What good does that do? Your Father cares for that, and all the worry in the world isn't going to add to your life. It's going to subtract from it, if anything.

Thirdly, not only an illustration from food and the future, but fashion. He says and some of you worry about your clothes, whether you have enough clothes or whether you have the right clothes to fit into the fashions of the day. And I'm telling you when you're all done dressing yourself you can't be dressed as beautifully as a lily, so why don't you let God do the dressing? He dresses the lilies. Solomon, the richest man there was, couldn't make a robe as fine as the petal of a flower.

In other words, God takes care of food, and He takes care of life span, and He takes care of clothing. He's doing all of that kind of sustaining. By the way, people are always saying, "Well, you know God made us naked, and that's the way we ought to be." Look, God wants to supply clothes. I want you to know that. Ever since the fall, people got dressed. These nudists, you know, they go around as if God

wanted people to run around like that. He didn't. That's why He clothed them in the garden.

I read in the Times this week about two ladies that believed that if they had the faith of a grain of mustard seed they could be healed of their diseases, so they took off all their clothes and painted themselves with French's yellow mustard and ran around town, claiming God's promise when they got arrested. Well, they should have got arrested. I mean it wasn't that God didn't provide them clothes, He provided them mustard. They just chose mustard over clothes. He gave them the mustard to eat and the clothes to wear.

But God does provide the basics of life. That's the promise. And the basis of the promise is that God is our Father. That's the substance of point number one, and we went into that in great detail last time. God is a loving Father who supplies for His children.

In Psalm 34:10 it says, "The young lions do lack and suffer hunger." You look in the animal kingdom and you'll find there are times when lion cubs hunger. The mother is unavailable. The mother doesn't provide the food or it's not there. And yet he says, "They who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing." I mean animals, they may lack. God's people, they will not.

God supports His own. That is a repeated biblical truth, and you can find it as well as I all over the pages of Holy Writ. God sustains His people. "My God shall supply all your - " what? " - needs according to his riches in Christ Jesus." There's nothing to worry about. Why would you worry about your life, and how long you're going to live? Or maybe if you're a mother or a father you worry about that on behalf of your children. Why would you worry about that? When all of your worry can not add one day to their life.

Why would you be in great distress of whether you're going to have enough food, when God who gave you life will give you the lesser gift that sustains that life? Why would you worry about having something to wear when the Lord has designed clothing for human beings and you're His children and He'll give you clothing?

Peter was a worrier. Oh, he worried about things all the time. He worried about drowning when he was walking on the water, even though the Lord was right there. He worried about the things that were going to happen to Jesus in the garden, pulled a sword and tried to fight the Romans. He worried about Jesus being crucified and told Him not to do that. He was a real worrier. He was anxious a lot, but finally got the message and wrote in 1 Peter 5:7 a great truth. He said, "Casting all your care on him; for - " what? " - he cares for you." It took him awhile to learn it, but he learned it.

And so our Lord says first of all, don't worry. It is unnecessary because of your Father. And if you do, He closes verse 30 with this statement. "O ye of little faith?" If you worry, what kind of faith do you manifest? Little faith, puny faith, inadequate, infinitesimal, small faith. The sum of an attitude that

worries about food, and clothes, and life span is that you have little faith in God.

Now that phrase, "O ye of little faith," is used four other times in the gospels and most fascinating the way it's used. It is used, for example, in Luke 12:28 when people worry about clothing. It is used in Matthew 8:26 when the disciples worried about drowning. They worried about the length of their life. They were afraid of death, afraid of drowning, the Lord was going to let them drown. They said to Him, "How can You sleep when the storm is going to drown us?" In Matthew 14, again, it was Peter worrying about drowning, fear of losing his life. And then it is used in Matthew 16:8 when they were worried about their food.

Every time that phrase is used, "O ye of little faith," it is used about somebody who worried about food, clothes, or their life span, the very same three things Jesus speaks of in this first point. So fitting that this phrase should sum up that point. And every time it was the disciples. Five times that that thing was used, He was speaking to the disciples. You, who should know better. I wouldn't expect that of people in the world, but you, who have had saving faith, O, you of little faith. You believe that God can redeem you, that God can save you from sin, break the shackles of Satan, take you from hell to heaven, put you into His kingdom, give you eternal life, but you just don't think He can get you something to wear and eat in the next couple of days. Pretty ridiculous.

You see, we can believe God for the bigger gift and then we stumble, bumble around and can't believe Him for the lesser one. We believe God's going to put us in heaven when we die, but we don't believe God's going to provide us a meal or take care of the length of our life. How foolish, how foolish. You see, in each of these cases where the phrase is used, He is speaking to His disciples, which indicates to me that this is a passage geared for believers. He would never say to unbelievers, "O you of little faith." He'd say "O you of - " what? " - no faith." We have the faith. We just don't use it. We don't apply it.

And listen, somebody might say, "Well, worry is just - you know, it's a small, trivial sin." No, it's not. No, it's not a trivial sin. I think probably 100 per cent of all mental illness is directly related to worry, and most of physical illness. Worry is devastating, but more than that it isn't what worry does to you, it is what worry does to God. Because when you worry you are, in effect, saying, "God, I know You keep saying that, but I just don't think I can trust You." And worry, then, strikes a blow at the word and the person of God, you see.

To me, worry is a monumental sin. You see, worry disbelieves Scripture. And you can go around all your life and say, "I believe in the inerrancy of the Bible. I believe in the absolute authority of the Scripture. I believe in verbal plenary inspiration of every word." And then just live your life worrying, and you are saying one thing out of one side of your mouth and something else out of the other. Because why would you go around saying how much you believe the Bible and then worry whether God's going to fulfill what He says in it?

You see, worry means that you are mastered by your circumstances and not the truth of God. Worry misunderstands your position as a child of God. Worry is a devastating sin. Worry is a killing, debilitating, self-indulgent, possessive anxiety, that says, "God can't care for me and I've got to do this thing myself." That's sin. That makes God a liar. It ignores His love. It ignores His power.

I don't understand how people can make the vicissitudes and the trials and the circumstances of life a bigger issue than their salvation. They can believe God to save them from eternal hell. They just can't believe He can help them in this world. It doesn't make sense. I mean, you ought to go back and read Ephesians chapter 1 again and reiterate what God has given to you. Paul says, I'm praying that, "The eyes of your understanding would be enlightened;" that you'd get your eyes open and "you'd know what is the hope of his calling, and the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints," and that you'd know "what is the exceeding greatness of his power toward us who believe." You better go back to the Scripture and get your eyes opened again.

Basically then, if you worry it's because you're not trusting your heavenly Father. And if you don't trust your heavenly Father, it's got to be because number one, you don't know Him well enough. Because if you knew Him, you'd trust Him, true? You better get in the Word of God and find out who He really is, and how in the past He has supplied the needs of His people. And that'll be confidence for the future. And I would add this that even those of us who know God and we study the Word and we're filled with that knowledge of God, we can worry too, now and then.

But you know when it happens? When you haven't been fresh in the Word, everyday, everyday, everyday, so that God is in your mind, and then Satan moves into that vacuum where you haven't been thinking about God and starts making you worry about something. That's a sin. "O ye of little faith." God is worthy of a greater faith than you give Him.

Now let's go to the second. The second reason that worry is a sin is because it is uncharacteristic due to our faith. It is unnecessary because of our Father. It is uncharacteristic because of our faith. Verse 31, He comes right back to the principle again. Here's the second statement of this. Stop being anxious, or in this case, don't start being anxious.

"What shall we eat? What shall we drink? With what shall we be clothed?" Same three things. Listen, here's another statement of the same principle as in verse 25. Don't worry about necessities. Why? Verse 32, "For all these things do the Gentiles - " or the pagans " - seek."

Now what's He saying? He's saying it is uncharacteristic of our faith to act like ungodly people. This is for the worldlings. This is for the 25-year-old business hotshots, not the Christians. Worry for us is needless because of God's bounty. It is senseless because of God's promise. It is useless because of our impotence to do anything, anyway. And it is faithless because it is, in effect, putting us right in

the category of an unbeliever.

The pagans, people without God, and the word “Gentile, pagan, heathen,” all the same word. It means “people without God, without Christ.” These people worry about that. Well, why not? That’s all they have going for them. They live for this world. They live to grasp, and grab, and possess. And so they’ve got to get it on their own. They don’t have any God to supply for them. They don’t have any God to promise them anything. They don’t have any divine resource to come to their aid. And so what happens is they have to grasp, and they have to do it all on their own, because they are on their own. They are ignorant of God’s supply, and have no claim on it, anyway.

So anxiously and worriedly, they set their minds on all these things. But for a Christian it is senseless. And by the way, it is also excuseless. It’s not a trivial sin. It’s a serious one. Just to show you how the heathen have no outside source for this, even when heathen people invent a god, and even when they make a deity, inevitably their deities are not deities that they look to in a trusting way.

Whenever the nations of the world build their own gods they are typically the gods of Satan. They are the demons who are behind those gods. And they are gods of broken promises. They are gods of lack of compassion. They are gods of fear. They are gods of dread. They are gods that have to be appeased. They are gods that everybody is afraid of, not that everybody counts on. They are not gods who supply. The people still have to do it all on their own, and they just have to keep shoving this god back by making sacrifices, or whatever their religion calls for. And since they have vague ideas about the future life anyway, life becomes consumed in the obsession to get and to gain comforts, and wealth, and security, and prestige, and all this, and their gods don’t help them a bit.

The phrase, by the way, for all these things, “after all these things do the Gentiles seek.” The word “seek” there is the idea of an emphatic seeking. They seek it with all their might, totally consumed in material gratification. Eat, drink, be merry. Tomorrow we die. It’s over. Grab all the gusto you can get. Do it now, man. This is all there is.

Now imagine a child of God, a Christian, approaching life this way. It’s ludicrous. The worldlings, says Luke, seek these things. It’s unworthy for us. Our faith, the Christian faith, says God will supply all my needs, and God can be trusted. And if I worry about my food, or I worry about my physical welfare, or I worry about my clothing is to have a worldly mind.

Paul says, “Be anxious for - ” what? “ - nothing. But everything by prayer and supplication, let your request be made known unto God.” Those who do not trust in God’s goodness and God’s promise miss the whole point of being a Christian. So many people are just empty in their profession. You know, they say, “Oh, we love Christ and we serve God.” But they don’t believe God for anything. They worry about everything. They are in the world and they are like the world. But Jesus said, “Father, I know they’re going to be in the world, but keep them from the evil one in it. Keep them separated.”

In Romans 12:2 Paul said, "Be not conformed to this world." You see what Jesus is saying is this. Sons of the King do not conduct themselves like the devil's beggars. Ask yourself the question. It's a practical issue. Do I face life like a Christian or a pagan? Do I? When things are difficult or the future is insecure, how do I react? Because you'll tell yourself a lot about whether you trust God or not. I guess you could sum the question up this way. Does my Christian faith affect my view of life? Do I always place everything in the context of my faith, every trial, every anticipation, every reality?

And then He goes back to reason number one at the end of verse 32, "For your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things." Do you know the difference, basically, between the gods of the heathen and our God? The gods of the heathen are dumb, ignorant, nonexistent. They don't know anything. They couldn't help their people anyway, because they don't exist. They're ignorant. But our God what? Knows. And if you believe that our God loves and cares, that's the first section, and now you see that our God knows. What else is there? If God knows what I need, and if God knows my life, and God knows my needs, then all I need to know is that He cares. And if He knows and cares, then I'm home free. That's the essence of what Jesus is saying.

For your heavenly Father in contrast to the pagans, He knows that you have need. He not only has the knowledge, He has the resources, and then He has the love to provide. So, what should you worry about? Nothing. It is unnecessary because of your Father. It is uncharacteristic because of your faith.

Let's go to the third reason, and we'll skip a verse and go to verse 34. The third reason not to worry it is unwise because of your future. It is unwise because of your future. This is a powerful point. And again the same phrase introduces this third point, verse 34. "Be, therefore, not anxious about tomorrow: for tomorrow will be anxious for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is its own evil."

Now, what the Lord is saying is look, don't worry about the future. The future going to have its own trouble. Just wait till you get to it. It's unwise because of your future. Don't worry about tomorrow. Now, providing for tomorrow is good. Worrying about tomorrow is sin. Because God is the God of tomorrow just like He's the God of today, right? And do you remember what it says in Lamentations 3? "His mercies are new every - " what? " - morning." He feeds you like He fed the children of Israel, just the manna you need for the day you need it.

Worry is a tremendous force. I'm telling you it is a tremendous force. Worry will do this. Worry will endeavor to defeat us. And if it first will begin with today. Worry will endeavor to destroy you today. It'll try to get you to see things today to get you upset and to get you anxious, but if it loses out today it'll just keep shoving you into the future until it finds something that gets you. That's the way worry functions. I'm afraid there are some people so committed to the sin of worry that when they have nothing in the present to worry about they just keep marching down the future until they find

something.

Listen, the Lord says you've got enough to deal with today. You take the resources of today for the needs of today or you will lose the joy of today. You want to know something? Lack of joy is a sin, too, and more people lose their joy because of tomorrow and they miss the victory God gave them today. And that's not fair to Him. God gives you a glorious and blissful day today. Live in the light of that day and fullness of joy of that day, and take all the resources God supplies for that day and use them. Don't push yourself into the future and forfeit the joy of today over some tomorrow that may never happen, because if you ever learn anything about this, learn this one little statement. Fear is a liar. Fear is a liar. It mostly never tells the truth. But it'll cause you to lose the joy of today. The Lord forbids this.

Tomorrow, Jesus says, is going to be anxious about itself. Let tomorrow be for tomorrow. Each day has enough trouble for itself. And by the way, God only gives strength for one day at a time. God hasn't given me the grace for tomorrow yet. I don't get that until tomorrow, right? I mean, sometimes you talk to a person who worries a lot, and they worry about dying or something, and they get all concerned about it, and then somebody in their family dies, and God gives a wonderful grace, and a wonderful peace, and a wonderful sustaining, and they can't understand it.

They'll say to me, "John, you know it's so wonderful how God has sustained me and supported me. Sure, there's a normal sorrow, but I feel strength, and then confident and there's even a gladness in my heart that this one I love is with the Lord, and I feel His strength." And that's exactly right because God gives us grace for the hour that we need that grace. But if you want to sit now and worry about that, you're going to double your pain without any grace to deal with it. Better you should singly endure it with the grace to sustain it. Do you see? I refuse to worry about tomorrow, or the next day, or the future, because I don't have any resource for that.

First of all, fear is a liar so I don't know the reality of what it'll be. And secondly, I don't want to double my trouble without any resource to give me grace at that moment. So I shoulder the burden of today and as I see God lift the burden and carry it away from me, I can enjoy today and let tomorrow bring its own trouble. So I don't cripple myself by worrying about a future that I can't live in.

When the Bible says, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and - " what? " - forever," what it means is He'll be doing the same thing tomorrow that He was doing yesterday. So if you have any question about the future look at the past. Did He sustain you then? He'll sustain you in the future. With Him there is no past, present, or future. So worry is a forbidden sin. It is incompatible with a Christian's Father. It is incompatible with a Christian's faith. It is incompatible with a Christian's future.

John Stott has said, "To become preoccupied with material things in such a way that they engross our attention, absorb our energy, and burden us with anxiety is incompatible with both Christian faith and

common sense. It is distrustful of our heavenly Father and it is frankly stupid." I like that. He says, "This is what pagans do. But it is an utterly unsuitable and unworthy ambition for Christians."

Listen. We're not spiritual orphans. God didn't leave us in a phone booth. He didn't dump us in a storefront. He loves us, and He cares for us, and He has all the resources of eternity at His hand in our disposal. Worry is sin. Alistair MacLean tells a story of Tauler the German, who one day met a very poor man. He said to the poor man, "God give you a good day, my friend." The poor man answered, "I thank God that I never had a bad one." Tauler said, "Well, God give you a happy life, my friend." "I thank God," said the poor man, "I'm never unhappy." In amazement, Tauler said, "Well, what do you mean?"

"Well," said the poor man, "When it's fine, I thank God. When it rains, I thank God. And when I have plenty, I thank God. And when I'm hungry, I thank God. And since God's will is my will, and whatever pleases him pleases me, why should I say I'm unhappy when I'm not?" Tauler looked at the man in astonishment and said, "Who are you?" He said, "I'm a king." "Well, where's your kingdom?" The poor man replied, "In my heart." I like that.

One old lady said, "I'm always happy and my secret is this. Always sail the seas, but always keep your heart in the port." Isaiah put it this way, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusts in thee." That's where perfect peace comes from. And by the way, that's the opposite of worry.

Now, how do you find this port? Well, put your trust in Him, stay your mind on Him, and that's verse 33. Let's back up. This is the positive command in the midst of the negatives. Verse 33. Here's how you keep your heart in port. Here's the opposite. He says, "Don't worry. Don't worry. Don't worry." You got three don'ts. Here's a do to cancel the don'ts. "But do seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

In other words, you get your thoughts on the divine level and God will take care of the physical. You see, God doesn't want us involved in the physical. He wants to free us from that. So He says, "I'll take care of that. You get on about the business of the kingdom." Let's take it a word at a time, or a phrase at a time.

"But," in contrast. De in the Greek and according to the lexicon Arndt and Gingrich, in specific it says that the primary use of de is to emphasize a contrast. And I would suggest that the best way to translate it is "rather." Rather than worrying, rather than being like the pagans, rather than being "O ye of little faith," rather than sticking the future into the present and muddling the water, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God," not those things. Rather than seek what the Gentiles seek, rather than being materialistically oriented, rather than being consumed with the possessions of this age, seek the kingdom.

Now what about the phrase, “seek ye first,”? Prtos? The word prtos which means first, means “first in a line of more than one options.” Of all the things you can choose from in life to be occupied on, of all the priorities of life, this is number one. Of all the things you have to be concerned about - and there are many things in life that we have to take some care about - but of all these things, number one thing is the kingdom of God and His righteousness. We have a long list of things. That’s number one.

Now, what does it mean to seek the kingdom? Well, the kingdom is simply basileia, Christ’s rule, the rule of God, the reign of God, the dominion of God, the kingdom of God, that we should seek that which is eternal, beloved. That’s what He’s saying. And I don’t need to go into that again. We studied it in 6:10 where it says, “Thy kingdom come,” in our prayers. We are to be lost in the kingdom of God.

The apostle Paul on his way to Jerusalem preaching the gospel of the kingdom, prepared to defend his faith at the point of a sword. And then comes Satan, “Don’t go, Paul. Don’t go because when you get there you’re going to get in a lot of trouble. They’re going to put you in prison. They might take your life, Paul.” And Paul says, look, “None of these things move me - ” Acts 20 “ - for I do not count my life dear unto myself.” I’m not interested in adding a cubit to my life span, and I’m not concerned that I get enough to eat and enough to wear. “I have one thought and that is to finish the ministry committed to me by Jesus Christ.”

Now that is seeking the kingdom. That’s what will make somebody go to a mission field in obscurity, and say goodbye to all the fashions and fancy foods of the world to eat in very simplistic terms and to dress the same way, and isolate their whole life to that situation because they are not nearly so concerned about those things as they are the advance of the kingdom. That’s what makes somebody preach Christ to the point where they don’t even fear for their own life, because the kingdom is far beyond any other concern.

Now where’s your heart, again? Where’s your preoccupation? Are you more concerned with the kingdom, or are you more concerned with this world? Are you pouring all of your energies into the globe or are you investing yourself in God’s eternal kingdom? You see, seeking the kingdom means you seek to bring people to Christ, because you seek the kingdom growing, you seek the gospel of the kingdom to be preached, you seek that people should become redeemed.

We do not spread the gospel because of some kind of a sinful imperialism, or as John Stott calls it, because of some kind of a triumphalism. We do not seek to advance the kingdom for any selfish goals. We seek to advance the kingdom in the preaching of Christ because a glorified God is the issue, and that’s true. And so we preach Christ and that extends the kingdom.

And I believe as we shared earlier in our study of the disciple’s prayer, seeking the kingdom means that I seek Christ’s rule to be manifest in my life. I seek the kingdom of God to be revealed in my life

as righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit manifests His kingdom says Romans 14:17. So in my life when the world sees righteousness, when it sees peace, when it sees joy instead of worry, it knows the kingdom of God is there. See?

You could say, "Well, I want people to be saved and I want to tell them all about Jesus," and run around worrying, and fretting, and anxiety, and concern, and care, and all of that stuff all the time and nobody's going to believe you've got anything they want. And they're certainly going to question the power of God. The kingdom of God is manifest in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, and that overcomes the worry. So we seek the kingdom when we seek to bring people into the kingdom, we seek the kingdom when we let it be manifest through us. I think we seek the kingdom, too, when we long for Jesus to return in His millennial glory.

I'll tell you something. I can't get too hot about piling up stuff in this world because I'm going to get it all for nothing when the kingdom comes anyway, right? I mean why should I buy it now? I'll get it free then. The Bible says I'll be a joint heir with Christ. We'll reign with Him forever and ever. We'll have a new heaven and a new earth throughout all eternity. We'll have all of the majesty and the riches of eternal heaven.

What am I going to do with wasting all my time stockpiling this stuff down here? By the way, the whole earth is going to be destroyed, anyway, and the Lord is going to make a whole new one. So if you want to invest in this old one that's going to burn up, that's your problem. I'd rather wait for the new one, and get it for nothing.

And so the kingdom is to seek that which is yet in the future, the granting of that eternal glory that comes from Christ when He gives His saints His own kingdom. It is to see the kingdom manifest in my life through righteousness, peace, and joy, and it is to desire to win people to Jesus that the kingdom might grow and expand.

Secondly, He says we seek not only the kingdom, but His righteousness, holiness. If you have to chase something beloved, don't chase money, chase holiness. Pursue it. We could share some verses, but our time is gone. What He's talking about here is practical righteousness. He is saying that when you pursue, pursue godliness; when you pursue, pursue holiness; when you pursue, pursue righteousness. Some of us spend all our time after money, cars, houses, clothes. How far afield we are from what we should be after.

You say, "Well, if I just get involved in the kingdom, and I just go chasing holiness, then what?" Oh, the end of verse 33, "All these things shall be added unto you." "You walk uprightly - " says Psalm 84 " - and you'll never have any need." God will supply every bit of it. God will take care of those who seek His kingdom and seek His righteousness.

I close with this. I suppose Solomon provides for us an excellent illustration. Solomon didn't pray for riches. Do you know that? Didn't pray for fancy clothes. He didn't pray for fancy food, and he didn't pray for a long life. Solomon prayed for what? Wisdom. And when he got wisdom, he got all the rest. Nobody was ever dressed like Solomon, fabulous wardrobe, nobody was ever as wealthy as Solomon, nobody ever could put on feasts that could match him, just feeding his wives and concubines would have been a monumental event, and they had to eat three times a day. I mean, the man was incredible. He sought wisdom and in the getting of wisdom all the rest was residual.

Martyn Lloyd Jones says, "It is not an accident that the Puritans of the 17th century became wealthy people. It was not because they hoarded wealth. It was not because they worshiped money. It was just that they were living for God and His righteousness, and the result was that they didn't throw away their money on worthless things. In a sense, therefore, they could not help becoming wealthy. They held onto the promises of God and incidentally became rich."

And part of the structure of their obedience to God was to work hard, and to save, and not to be self-indulgent. And I believe if you follow those kind of standards, God will honor that.

Listen. If you worry, it's a sin, because it is unnecessary due to your Father. It is uncharacteristic of your faith. It is unwise because of your future. Don't worry. Trust and He'll bring it to pass. Let's pray.

We thank You for the promise of Psalm 37 that if we commit our way unto You and trust in You, You'll bring it to pass. Father, that's our desire. We know the enemy trips us up and our own flesh is weak, but we pray, Lord, that we might not worry, that we might not cast dispersion on Your name, but that we might take the fullness of every moment in the grace that You supply for that moment, and that we might live in that moment, and that we might let the future take care of itself.

Not to say we don't provide for the future, we just don't worry about it. And help us, Lord, to make our investments in eternity. Cut the cords that bind us to the earth. Let us fly to Thee, to Thy holy habitation, into Thy courts, and there invest our lives in Thy presence knowing full well that all our needs will thereby be met through Your promise and thankfulness, we pray. Amen.

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