

Anxiety-Free Living, Part 2

Scripture: Luke 12:25-31

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Let's return in our study to the twelfth chapter of Luke...Luke chapter 12 and we are looking at verses 22 through 34 under the title, "Anxiety-Free Living." It was two weeks ago when we first looked at this passage. If you were not here, I would commend that section to you, the first message in the anxiety-free living series. There will be three messages, even though they're going to be interrupted a little bit, are nonetheless wonderful as they look at these great truths that our Lord has given here.

There is in chapter 12 a very long discourse given by Jesus. It actually starts in chapter 12 verse 1 and runs all the way to chapter 13 verse 9. That is one event, one place, one discourse with a couple of interruptions to answer some questions, but nonetheless this is one long teaching time with the Lord Jesus. And here in His teaching in verses 22 to 34 the issue is in the Kingdom of God we can have anxiety-free living. Our Lord told people they should not be anxious. They should not worry. And they should not be afraid. Anxiety-free living, worry-free living, fear-free living is part of what the Lord offered those who put their trust in Him. It is not just heavenly bliss and heavenly peace and heavenly joy, but here and now there is peace and joy to be found.

If you will notice the emphasis of this passage comes in three particular commands. Verse 22, "Do not be anxious." Verse 29, "Do not keep worrying." Verse 32, "Do not be afraid." They could all be translated with the word "stop." Stop being anxious, stop worrying, stop being afraid. This passage, by the way, parallels our Lord's teaching in the Sermon on the Mount back in Matthew chapter 6 verses 19 through 34 where He said essentially these very same things on another occasion much earlier in His ministry in a different place. This is in Judea, that was up in Galilee. And I simply say that to remind you that these are truths that our Lord taught many, many times, not just the few times they're recorded in Scripture, but these are the things that He taught day after day after day through His ministry.

Now He is calling here for worry-free, anxiety-free and fear-free living. He is saying that it is possible to rise above all the troubles of this life to have what the Apostle Paul called the peace that passes understanding. That is the peace for which there is no human explanation. It calls for an end to anxiety and fear and worry and panic, and all those things that can be so debilitating, so disturbing and so depressing and distracting in life.

There are really only two categories in which you can direct your worry, your fear and your anxiety, either into the material side, or the spiritual side, right? You're either going to be concerned about something physical, material, earthly, or you're going to be concerned about something spiritual, immaterial and heavenly. Those are the only two categories. You are a physical being and a spiritual being, in that sense you're two, an inner man and an outer man. And worry can be attached to both, but in the case of one who belongs to the Kingdom of God, worry in either sense is unnecessary. In regard to our material needs, verse 30 says, "Your Father knows that you need these things." In regard to our spiritual needs, verse 32 says, "Your Father has chosen gladly to give you the Kingdom." He will give you whatever you need to sustain your life in this world and He will give you all that you need to sustain your life in His Kingdom. Worry then is unnecessary. Worry is a result really of two things. It is a result, first of all, of ignorance and more unbelief. There are, I'm sure, people who worry not because they don't believe what God has promised, but because they don't know what God has promised. And the greatest way you can cheat a believer, the greatest way you can cheat anybody is to limit God or to teach them things about God that are not true or to give them a diminished view of God. In fact, this is a form of idolatry. Any misrepresentation of God is an idol. And worshiping and giving homage to a misrepresented God is a form of idolatry. It is incumbent upon all who teach the scriptures and all who possess the scriptures, meaning both us and you as well, to come to a true understanding of God so that we worship Him not just in spirit, that is not just with our emotion and all of our faculties, mind and soul as well as every physical part of us, but to worship Him in truth. It is critical that we understand who our God really is. And so it is possible to worry your way through your Christian life simply because you're ignorant, and that, unfortunately, is the legacy of many, many people where ministries do not weigh heavily in on the nature of God, the character of God, the promises of God and the purposes of God. There the people are cheated very often, don't understand the greatness of God, the glory of God, the commitment of God, the compassion of God, the power of God, the omniscience of God, the wisdom of God and all the rest in which we rest in the promises of God. There are many people, Christian people, who have no idea what their God is really like and the level of commitment that He's made to them, and so they live in fear...fear of circumstances, fear of Satan, fear of failure, fear of you name it.

So it is possible that your life is full of fear and anxiety and worry because of ignorance. That can be dispelled simply by reading the Psalms. If you think it's a long course, if you have to go to seminary to get to know God, you're wrong. Just start in Psalm 1 and 150 days later finish Psalm 150 and you will have come to know your God. And, of course, all the rest can be filled in but that's why we read the Psalms because we come to worship God and we need to know the God we worship.

If you do know your God and you worry anyway, this is not about ignorance, this is about distrust. This is a sin. To be willfully ignorant, to be needlessly ignorant is sinful. But to be willfully distrusting of the God who has revealed Himself is serious sin. So when you look at your life and you see anxieties and fears and worries, the question then is, am I ignorant of my God or do I just not trust Him? So

let's go back to some basic things, okay?

In this passage our Lord unfolds this whole issue of why we are not to worry and be anxious and be afraid either in the material or the immaterial, the physical or the spiritual, the earthly or the heavenly realms. Now let me give you the review of what we said two weeks ago.

Number one, worry is a failure to understand God's priority...worry is a failure to understand God's priority, verses 22 and 23. "He said to His disciples, 'For this reason I say to you, do not be anxious for your life as to what you shall eat nor for your body as to what you shall put on, for life is more than food and the body more than clothing.'" Now here's the point here. God didn't create you just to survive. God didn't create you just to have you eat and wear clothes so that you can make it. God did not create you to fulfill some physical goal, or objective, or purpose or design. Your life is far more than eating. Your life is far more than clothing. You must understand the divine priority. And what we said a couple of weeks ago is this, if you belong to God and you are in His Kingdom, He has a plan and a purpose for your life. That's the reason you live. And as long as God has a plan for your life, He will feed you and clothe you until the plan is complete. So what is there to worry about? There is really no place for worry and no place for fear, and no place for anxiety if you understand that the priority with God is far more than just surviving, it's far more than making it through the winter, it's far more than getting at least one or two meals a day, far more than that. God's purpose in giving you life, God's purpose in giving you a body is not material, it's not physical, and it's not earthly, it is immaterial, spiritual and heavenly. We were made for His glory. We were made to serve His glory, to serve His purpose, to honor Him, to bring attention to Him, to proclaim the gospel, to live out Christ and the power of the Spirit in the world. And as long as that's the divine priority, that's God's priority or purpose for us, He will sustain us to the end of His purpose.

In fact, you can work hard and save and the Bible says you should save and you should work hard and you should be a good steward and you should make good investments, and all of that. But in the end it wouldn't matter if you did that or gave it all away as far as the divine priority is concerned because whatever you wear and whatever you eat isn't the reason God put you here. There is a completely different reason you're here and it's a spiritual one. So you could give it all up and you're not going to heaven till God wants you to, and He will provide whatever it is that you need to get you to the place where it's your time. On the other hand, you could save a fortune, you could amass a huge estate, you could build bigger barns everywhere and you're not going to live one day past when God determines that your ministry is over. That kind of thinking tends to make you rich toward God and put your treasure in heaven rather than here.

So worry, anxiety and fear fails to understand the divine priority, that God has a purpose for your life and He's going to make sure that you live to fulfill that purpose. Second, we said, worry was a failure to understand God's provision. That is to say that everything you have comes from God. It may come through your work and through your savings and through your diligence and through your talents and

your training and all of that, but in the end it really is God's pledge to you that sustains you. And the point is made in verse 24, "Consider the ravens, they neither sow nor reap, they have no storeroom or barn, and yet God feeds them....here's the point...how much more valuable you are than the birds?" He feeds birds and birds have no spiritual value. Oh they give God glory, they manifest His creative power and His immense love of beauty and design. But they have no spiritual value. They hatch and fly around a little while and disappear. And yet God feeds them. They can't sow. They can't reap. They can't store. You are so much more valuable than they are and if God has a priority for your life, then He'll make the provision to make sure that the priority is met. He'll sustain you to the point where you accomplish His purpose. So worrying about life's necessities is a failure to understand God's priority for you and God's provision to make sure that that priority is completed.

And that leads to the third point, which I just introduced last time, worry is a failure to understand God's privilege...worry is a failure to understand God's privilege. Verse 25, "And which of you by being anxious can add a single cubit to his life span? If then...verse 26...you cannot do even a very little thing, why are you anxious about other matters?"

What is this about? This is about the idea that somehow you control the length of your life. Okay? Which of you by being anxious is going to add a single cubit to his life span? Now you have to see that cubit is used here sort of metaphorically or analogically. A cubit is a measurement from the elbow to the end of the finger, about 18 inches. They use this as a unit, a unit of measure. One cubit would be a unit of measure in ancient times. And so it's not the idea of adding to your physical stature. I mean, nobody particularly wants to go from 5'10" to 7'6". And if you did, it wouldn't be a small thing, verse 26, "If you cannot even do a very little thing," that wouldn't be a little thing, that would be a huge thing. That's not what it's about. It's using a cubit metaphorically or analogically. You can't add a unit to your life. You can't add to the years of your life that God has determined for you. You can't do it. So if you can't do it, if you can't add a single unit to your life, if you can't even do that very little thing by all your worry and fear, then what are you doing worrying and being anxious about all these matters like your body and your clothing and your food? People in our world today are consumed with this idea of health. We all get sold on this. I'm not sure a long life is in itself virtuous. In fact, I'm pretty sure that long life may not be virtuous necessarily. It's not how long a person lives but how they live, right? But we have literally made a god out of health and longevity in our sterile modern world where we manage to conquer bacteria and virus and things like that, where we've created a sort of an antiseptic/antibiotic environment. We're very concerned about being able to prolong life. And everything we eat, you know, has this graph of percentages and amounts of all these things, you decode everything you eat. You know, you've got to get the code on what you're eating so you can check out all these ingredients. And then we have all this mega-billion dollar food supplement industry, vitamins, exercise, medications, etc., etc. And I've noticed in recent years, this has come to dominate Christian radio on the weekend. Do you ever listen to a Christian radio station on the weekend? You will never hear the Bible teaching, it's like all the pagans can go to hell on the weekend, forget the weekend, we're selling beeswax, or we're selling C-vitamins, or calcium

supplements, or some other exotic weird thing. I don't know what...I mean, to me that would be the best time to evangelize the whole world because, you know, people aren't at work, they're around. And you say, "Well, they're not listening." Well if they are, at least they'll hear the gospel. Who cares whether you add life to your pre-determined plan by God? You can't do that. You're not going to be able to do that. This is just the sign of the time that's infiltrated the evangelical world. This generation's engaged in health mania. It's not wrong to be disciplined, it's not wrong to be moderate, it's not wrong to avoid the sin of gluttony, it's not wrong to be wise, it's wrong to be foolish about what you eat, you want to take care of yourself. If God created a wonderful, wonderful food world for us so that we can make good choices. I'm not going to add to my life, but I would like to live my life with a measure of strength so that I can serve the Lord the way He should be served. And I don't want to fall into sin by being gluttonous, and overindulging, and lacking discipline. But I'm not going to add one day to my life. God knows what He wants to accomplish. I can shorten it by sin, I can shorten it by sin. There's a sin unto death, 1 John 5, and people who had desecrated the Lord's table in the Corinthian church lost their life over it. God will discipline. I can make my life miserable by sin and maybe the Lord would shorten it. But I'm not going to lengthen it. The optimum of my life has been determined by God. And with certain reasonableness, I just want to maintain my strength, but I'm not going to add to my life. It makes me want to eat a big plate of cheese fries.

I mean, you get the point. Worry doesn't help. If you worry about how long you're going to live and you spend all your money on that and you waste all your money, really waste all your money being unable to add anything to your life, that's not good stewardship. And I'm not talking about being healthy. You need to be healthy. You need to beat your body into subjection. You need to be reasonable in how you conduct your life and how you use the resources that God gives you and not be dissipated and gluttonous and all of that kind of stuff that steals your energy and robs you of the strength that the Lord desires to use. But you're not going to do anything to add to your life. In fact, if you worry about it, you're going to contribute to your disability. You know, worry, anxiety and fear affects the heart, the circulation, nervous system, the glands, everything else. We are...here's the point...we are not the determiners of the span of our lives, this is divine privilege. So you don't want to be ignorant of God's privilege. It is His privilege to determine where we're born, to whom we're born, when we're born and how long we're here. God has given us life. He will sustain that life until our service is done. Worry makes no contribution. The Lord gives, the Lord takes away, blessed be the name of the Lord. If we live obediently to His Word, He will sustain our life to the end. You can shorten it by sin, but you can't lengthen it beyond the purposes of God.

So verse 26 says, "If you cannot do even a very little thing, like add a unit to your life, why are you worrying about what you're going to eat and what you're going to wear?" This is a failure to understand God's priority and that is that your life matters spiritually, and achieve a spiritual end. God's provision that He will sustain that life to fulfill that end. And God's privilege, it is God's to determine when we live and when we die and how we fit into the redemptive scheme for the advancement of His glory and His Kingdom.

Number four, worry is a failure to understand divine preference. It's a failure to understand divine preference. I know we live in a society that teaches evolution, and, you know, we're just supposed to be the latest form of an ape, we're just the last monkey, at least the newest monkey at this particular point in the evolutionary process. And we're no different than anything else. We're just animals and these environmentalists and these lovers of animals get all caught up in this. But look, we're Christians and you can look at the world of God's creation and you will see a massive gap between everything He created and man created in His image, and we bear the divine preference. Look at verse 27, here's an illustration. "Consider the lilies, how they grow. They neither toil or spin, but I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory didn't clothe himself like one of these. If God so arrays the grass in the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, how much more will He clothe you, O men of little faith?" Now we get to the sin part here.

Our Lord turns from the issue of food to the issue of clothing here. In a physical world, those are the two things people are concerned about. They're concerned about nourishing their body and protecting it. And He makes a comparison that reveals His preference for people, especially, of course, His own children. And He says, "Consider the lilies." The word "lilies" is not something to be understood in a technical sense because in verse 28 He says, "God so arrays the grass." The word "lilies" is broad enough, the word "grass" is definitive enough to let us know that He's talking about the wild grasses that grew all through the Middle East and the land of Israel that flowered in various ways. In 1 Peter 1:24 Peter quoting from Isaiah, "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass, the grass withers and the flower falls off." So this is just Jesus saying, and He may have pointed as He may have to the birds. I mean, consider...look at the wild flowers growing all over at the end of these stems of grass. There were so many different kinds of them in Israel. You see terms in the land of Israel, even in ancient times like Iris and Nasturtium and Gladioli, those are more modern terms, Latin derivative terms to describe various kinds of flowering plants. They even had certain kinds of Daisies and Poppies, such as we have in California, and Cap-lilies. It's just the general grasses that flower. Look at them how they grow. They don't toil. They don't spin. They don't labor over their clothes. They don't labor over their beauty. And yet if you take a petal off of a flower, even a wild flower, and you look under a microscope at its intricate texture, color, design, form...it's staggering. You can take the most beautifully manufactured garment out of wool or out of cotton or out of some synthetic and look at it under a microscope and it looks rough, and you look at a flower petal and there's a refinement there that only God can make. And so He says, "Look, they don't work to get their clothing. I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory didn't clothe himself like one of these."

Now the best dressed man in the history of Israel was Solomon. If you read 1 Kings 10 and 2 Chronicles 9, you read about the lavish attire and the lavish life of Solomon. And as the best-dressed man, he had the finest garments, but even Solomon in all his glory didn't wear things like the petals of a flower. And, you know, if you love flowers and Patricia keeps such a beautiful garden at our house, we love those flowers. I never walk through our garden in the front or the back or the side without

thinking about the amazing creativity of God and His obvious love for beauty because they're here and they're gone. They live and they die. And particularly, you look at these beautiful flowers here, you should see them on Tuesday. They end up in the barrel over here, have a short life. And they serve no spiritual purpose other than to give this little brief testimony to a God of beauty and a God of order and a God of design and a God of infinite variety. And the point is this, if God, verse 28, so arrays the grass in the field which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, how much more will He clothe you, O men of little faith? Come on, do you understand God's preference?

By the way, if you're wondering why it talks about throwing the grass into the fire, there's a very good reason for that. People cooked everything in those days, of course, the staple was bread. But they cooked everything in a clay oven. And the way they regulated the temperature of that clay oven was with dried grass. And so they would go out into the hillsides and they would collect all of the dead, dry grass, bring it together, keep it in a storage place and whenever they wanted to get the fire hotter, they put more in. And if they wanted it hotter yet, they put more in and they could regulate the oven that way. You regulate yours with a little dial, right? You want 250, 350, 450, whatever. Well they knew pretty well how much dried grass it took to raise the temperature of a fire. And so He's saying, "Look, this stuff has short life and look how God clothes it." He's made a commitment to the delicate beauty of things that perish, sometimes in a day. How much more will He clothe you? This is again the typical Hebrew argument from the lesser to the greater. God prefers you, you don't really think He's going to put that kind of a garment on a flower and not cover you when He wants you to accomplish His purpose and you're His own beloved children. If He made such lavish beauty to clothe plants that die in days and have no spiritual value, how much more will He take care to clothe the crown of His creation, the Bride of His beloved Son whom He has elected and redeemed? No wonder Peter said, "Casting all your care on Him for He cares for you." And if you still live in fear, doubt and worry, then you fall into the category of the end of verse 28, "O men of little faith."

This is the issue, folks. Fear, worry, anxiety is about a lack of faith...a lack of faith. And Jesus used this a lot, Matthew 6:30, Matthew 8:26, Matthew 14:31, Matthew 16:8, even refer to it back in Luke 8 when He said to the disciples who were worrying about drowning, you know, "Where's your faith?" Do you think the God of the universe who is calling you to be His apostles and preachers is just going to let you drown? What are you being anxious about? What are you fearing? What are you worrying? Why the panic? If you know My promise and you know My power, then it's a question of trust. If you don't trust Me, now you've got a sin problem. Do you not trust my knowledge? Do you not trust My wisdom? Do you not trust my compassion? What is it about Me you don't trust? Do you not trust My power? Do you not trust My care? Well what is it about Me you don't trust? Or maybe you think the devil is stronger than Me, there's a blasphemous thought.

Now He's not saying these people didn't have any faith. He called them "men of...what?...little faith." They are the ones who believe in Him. He's directing this, it says in verse 22, to His disciples, those who are true believers and those who are becoming true believers and He says it's possible for you,

He says, to worry and fear and be anxious, but understand this, if that is the case, you have a problem with trusting Me. That's a serious problem because would you agree with this, He's worthy of our trust, right? You can trust Him.

So, in verse 29 He says, "Do not seek what you shall eat, what you shall drink." Don't make that the pursuit of your life, that's what He is saying. And don't keep worrying. You know, in those days, I mean, they had to make it every single day. They had to find a way to get food every day...every single day. It was the preoccupation of their whole life. He said, "Stop, stop, that should not be the pursuit." He doesn't mean in a reasonable sense, don't prepare your meals, don't work to earn your living, you know, like Paul says, if you don't work, you don't eat. He is saying, "Do not make that the pursuit of your life, that's not what you live for. Don't live as if there were no caring God. Don't live as if that God had no promises or no power or no knowledge of your situation. And don't keep worrying." And if you do, you don't understand God's priority, God's provision, God's privilege to determine the end of your life and God's preference, His personal preference for you over anything else He's created.

And there's a fifth principle, and we'll close with this one today. Worry is a failure to understand God's paternity...paternity is a wonderful word from Latin pater, father. God's fatherhood, don't you understand that God is your Father, verse 30 and 31, "For all these things the nations of the world eagerly seek, but your Father knows that you need these things." God has a priority for us. He will make provision to see that priority fulfilled. He is the one who has the privilege to determine how long we live. He prefers us because He is our Father. It all works together. It all hangs together. It's all sequential.

Here for the first time in the discourse Jesus speaks of God as Father, your Father. We know He's talking to those who believe and all the way down to us who believe, these apply, these truths. Those whose Father is God. And it's in contrast to all these things being eagerly sought by the nations of the world. For all these things the nations of the world eagerly seek. Eagerly seeks, very strong verb, zeteo, means to strive or seek, epizeteo is the word here, it's compounded, they strongly strive for. I mean, hey, this is human life. If you don't have God as your Father, who's your father? The devil, John 8:44, okay? If the devil's your father, he makes no promises, provides no benefits. He's not about doing good in your life, he's about doing evil so you're on your own. The only good that does come into your life is basically common grace. It is God letting the rain fall on the just and the unjust, and it's very temporary. But no unbelieving person can make any claim on God. The unbelieving world has no promises from God, no commitments from God, no pledges from God, no guarantees from God for anything. So, according to verse 30, eating, drinking, clothing, all these things the nations of the world strongly pursue. That...that describes life among the unregenerate. It's a battle for bread. It's a battle for survival. It's a dog-eat-dog world. The world lives to acquire material things, they're all about survival. Why? They're dead to God. They're dead to spiritual life. So being spiritually dead, all there is is the physical world, not being children of God, having a father, the devil, who

provides no good thing ever, they are therefore left to themselves only to sort of reap what little they can from the common grace of God. Being ignorant of God, being ignorant of God's provision and being unable to lay any claim on God's promise or God's power, they live to survive. Those people in spiritual darkness without the life of God may create religion and they may create a god that they hope will help them, but the deities they create are only a reflection of evil men and demons. That's why the gods of the world are wicked, devious, selfish, violent, untrustworthy, indifferent, capricious, evil and merciless. So people are left to the gods that they believe in only in the sense that they...not that they think those gods may benefit them, but they just hope those gods won't harm them. There are little benefits, you know, that they think those gods deliver, like when they get a good harvest, and they thank the moon god, or the mountain god, or whatever. But they're just really reaping common grace that God has built into the world. Their gods don't help them, because their gods are demons impersonating the gods they think they worship. They're on their own. Unbelievers feel the full weight of survival.

But verse 30 says, "Your Father," in contrast, "knows that you need these things." He knows that you need them. It's not a question of power, it's not a question of resources, it's not a question of love, it's not a question of compassion, not a question of sympathy, it's not a question of mercy, it's just a question of knowledge. If God knows that you need it, that's the big issue, isn't it? I mean, you could say, "Well, God has the power to give you those things but that still leaves you with the idea of well, I wonder if He knows I need them." We know He has the power and the resources, so the most comforting reality is that He has the knowledge. Your Father, in contrast to all the lifeless gods of the pagans, is your Father. And He acts as a father acts and a father is a provider and a protector, and your Father knows what you need. All that you need is available to you from God. What are you worried about? What are you afraid of? What are you anxious about?

How do you tap into that? How can I be assured that I'm going to get all that my Father has for me? Verse 31, here is the key, very important principle, "But seek for His Kingdom and these things shall be added to you." You want these things? Do you want food? Drink? Clothing? Do you want to live a full life? Do you want to be free from worry? Free from anxiety? Free from fear? Don't focus on those things, don't focus on food, don't focus on the body, don't focus on drink, don't focus on health, don't focus on those things, focus on this...the Kingdom of God, and you seek His Kingdom and, believe Me, these things will be added to you. And in Matthew 6 verse 33, Jesus put it this way, "But seek ye first His Kingdom...the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness, but seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added to you."

Instead of worrying about your bank accounts, instead of worrying about your length of life, instead of worrying about your food, and worrying about your clothes, instead of focusing on all that, let the dominant enterprise of your life, unlike the world, the dominant enterprise of the world is food, clothing, money, a future, health, that's their...that's all they have, that's all they have to live for and they're on their own, but the dominant enterprise of my life and your life is the Kingdom of God, the

sphere of salvation, the gospel, Christ. The focus of our life is to worship and to serve and to proclaim Christ and to live obediently to the Word of God, to pursue truth and holiness and love. Colossians chapter 3 says it in straightforward language, "If then, verse 1, you have been raised up with Christ and you have," it could be read, "Since you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above. Stop seeking the things here, seek the things above, live your life for the Kingdom and all the others will be added." And God may add a lot more than you need in many cases, He certainly has in most of our lives. You can take whatever God gives if you're seeking His Kingdom with all your heart, and then be a good steward of it. But He says, "Keep seeking the things above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Seek Christ's honor, or Christ's exaltation, Christ's glory, seek to proclaim Christ as Lord and Savior and King and ruler, submit to His will, submit to His Word, submit to His authority." Verse 2 he says it this way, "Set your mind on the things above not on the things that are on the earth. For you have died to this life and your life is hidden with Christ in God."

Your whole life has to be directed at the Kingdom, at the sphere of salvation, the sphere where God rules as King and Lord. Everything you do is for His honor and His glory. First...the first seeking is to seek to enter the Kingdom. In Luke 16:16, entering the Kingdom is described as seizing the Kingdom. It says, "Everyone is forcing his way into it." That's the first thing you have to do is you have to come to the Kingdom and understand that it's difficult, it's hard because it requires repentance, self-denial, self-sacrifice, humility, meekness, mourning, hunger, thirst. Start by entering the Kingdom. Start by believing the gospel. Start by self-denial and embracing Jesus Christ and hungering after righteousness and turning from sin. Start that way, enter the Kingdom. Once you've come in, seek only those things that exalt Christ and honor Christ. Give your life for salvation, for righteousness, for obedience, for truth, for service, for worship, for witness. Back to that parable, the duet of parables in Matthew 13, sell all to buy the pearl, sell all to buy the treasure hidden in the field. It's self-abandonment, give yourself away to the Kingdom. Live only to honor Christ, only to exalt Christ, to advance His name, advance His gospel. Be devoted to what is eternal, not what is temporal. And by the way, this is not an isolated principle. I mean, Jesus says here if you do this, everything else is going to be added. And everything else means you're going to live out the full years of your life, you're going to have enough food and drink to survive and be clothed and all that if you just seek the Kingdom.

And that's not new to these Jewish people, listening to that. I want to show you, they would know this because they would know the Psalms very well. Psalm 34, for example, and in Psalm 34 there is a number of verses, we'll start in verse 8, Psalm 34 verse 8, "O taste and see that the Lord is good. How blest is the man who takes refuge in Him. How blest is the man who takes refuge in Him." Verse 9, "O fear the Lord, you His saints, for to those who fear Him, who worship Him, who honor Him, there is no want." Verse 10, "The young lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they who seek the Lord shall not be in want of any good thing." That's what the psalmist says from God. Verse 15, "The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous and His ears are open to their cry." God knows, God hears. Verse 19, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, the Lord delivers him out of them all." God takes care of His

own.

Psalms 37 is very similar. This is great. Evil doers...what happens to the world? What happens to the nations of the world? Well they wither quickly like grass, verse 2, they fade like the green plant. But on the other hand, what about God's children? "Trust in the Lord, do good, dwell in the land, cultivate faithfulness, delight yourself in the Lord, and He'll give you the desires of your heart." You delight in Him and He'll take care of all the rest. Verse 5, "Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him." Just trust Him, "And He'll deliver." He'll do it. Verse 7, "Rest in the Lord, wait patiently for Him, and He will provide." In fact, verse 9 says, "Evil doers will be cut off and those who wait for the Lord will inherit the land." Verse 11 says, "The humble will inherit the land and will delight themselves in abundant prosperity." In other words, the psalmist again understands the provision of God if He is honored and trusted, He provides.

And then down in verse 25, we'll skip a few of the others. "I have been young," says David, "and now I'm old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or His descendants begging bread." God takes care of the righteous. Seek the Kingdom, seek righteousness and everything else comes from God.

Isaiah 33 is another Old Testament text on this. Verse 14 talks about sinners being terrified and trembling and it talks about the consuming fire of God's judgment and the continual burning of His judgment. And the question is asked, who can survive this? Who can survive God's judgment? Sinners in Zion are terrified. You know, God's going to come, He's going to bring a judgment, Isaiah was predicting the judgment which ultimately was the Babylonian captivity. And they're all wondering who is going to survive, and verse 15, "He who walks righteously, speaks with sincerity, who rejects unjust gain, shakes his hand so that they hold no bribe, he who stops his ear from hearing about bloodshed, shuts his eyes from looking upon evil." In other words, righteous people. He will dwell on the heights. You'll escape. His refuge will be the impregnable rock, his bread will be given him, his water will be sure.

Oh there are many others, but you get the picture. This is an old principle. Same promise, God takes care of those who belong to Him and are faithful to Him. Seek the Kingdom, His Kingdom and all that that means, the whole of the rule of Christ and let Him take care of everything else. And you know what? He will not supply in a meager way. You'll inherit the land. You'll have an abundance. God will give you more than enough in many cases because He knows you can be trusted to be a faithful steward of it because you are rich toward God and you seek treasure in heaven. And that's where you'll invest what He gives you. Don't be a part of that association in verse 28, the little faith association. Don't get involved in the sin of doubt, fear, worry. God's priority, God's provision, God's privilege, God's preference, God's paternity as our Father indicates that we do not need to worry. And as long as we passionately pursue the Kingdom, He promises that He will sustain us to the very end of His plan. And I don't know about you but I don't want to be here one day beyond that. That's His promise.

There's one more point and you'll have to wait two weeks, but I'll tell you what it is. Worry is a failure to understand divine pleasure...pleasure. Verse 32, "Don't be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen...what's the next word?...gladly...gladly in the NAS...to give you the Kingdom." It's not as if God is reluctant. This is His delight. What delights God? The same thing that delights a father, to provide for the children He loves. We'll get into that and have our communion service when I'm back in a couple of weeks.

Father, we do thank You that You are our Father, that You have given us life in order that we might accomplish a divine priority, and that You will, as You have promised, provide for us to live that life in its full. It is Your privilege to end it when You desire and take us to that glory prepared for us. Father, we thank You that You prefer us over the rest of Your creation and if You beautify and care for flowers, how will you not care for us? We know You will. We thank You for being our loving Father. We don't want to belong to that little faith association, we want to trust You with everything. Set us free from worry and fear and anxiety because we trust You completely. And may we seek Your Kingdom and know that we'll have all that we need and an abundance. Thank You for this rich, rich pledge of which we are not worthy but for which we are grateful. Father, we thank You now for Your truth, it's so rich to us. Seal it to our hearts, we pray in Christ's name.

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