

Dealing with Worry (Part 1)

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 14 December 2022

Preacher: Lee Roberts

[0 : 00] We'll start looking at the last ten verses in Matthew chapter 6 tonight.

! These verses are part of the section where Jesus teaches us about dealing with secular matters.! Before we read tonight's text, let's remind ourselves of the verses we studied last week.

Here are verses 19-23 of Matthew 6. Last week's section ended with verse 24.

We're going to go ahead and read that verse along with tonight's text, so we'll take it all the way through the end of the chapter, which is verse 34. Starting with verse 24, Jesus said, No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.

You cannot serve God and money. Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on.

[1 : 42] Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air. They neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.

Are you not of more value than they? And which of you, by being anxious, can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow.

They neither toil nor spin. Yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

Therefore do not be anxious, saying, What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or what shall we wear? For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.

Let seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself.

[2 : 51] Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. Here's the main idea for this section. Christians who worry about earthly needs are committing a sin that reveals a lack of faith.

That main idea is blunt, but as we go through this passage, we'll see why that's true. Christians who worry about earthly needs are committing a sin that reveals a lack of faith.

Having said that, all of us have committed the sin of worrying about earthly needs at some point or another. If you claim never to have worried about something, then you're probably committing another sin, so you might have to deal with that too.

Through this passage, Jesus will show us why we should avoid the sin of worry in the future. Here in the Christmas season, what better gift could we give ourselves than to learn the biblical approach to dealing with worry?

We'll look at the text over the next two weeks in four parts. In the first section, we see the overlooked context. The overlooked context is your first section.

[3 : 57] The first word of verse 25 sets the context for us. Verse 25 starts with the word, therefore. This is the first of three times that we see the word, therefore, in tonight's passage.

This section focuses only on the first time we see the word. We'll cover the other two times when we get to them, but here's a hint. Jesus' three usages of that word build upon each other.

Many of you probably are thinking about the line we often hear from Bible preachers and teachers when the word, therefore, appears in a text. You might even be expecting me to say that too, so what is that well-known line?

Exactly. Whenever we see the word, therefore, we should ask ourselves, why is that therefore, therefore? Even though that saying ends with a preposition, it's still a good saying to remember.

When the Bible includes a therefore, we need to look at what came before that word. The text is calling us to take some action based upon what was said previously.

[5 : 05] Several times in our early lessons in this study, we talked about how the Sermon on the Mount is one connected sermon. That's easy to forget when we study the passage over several months.

Here at Matthew 6.25, though, we come to an appropriate time to remind ourselves that verse 25 is connected to the verses that came before it. That's because people often lift Matthew 6.25-34 out of context.

But we'll see that the main idea of tonight's text flows right out of the verses that came before tonight's passage. We read verses 19-24, the verses we covered last week, for a better reason than to fill the time so that this can become a two-part lesson.

We read those verses because they provide the reference for the first therefore in tonight's passage. Jesus said in the verses that we studied last week that we should avoid laying up treasures on earth.

We instead should lay up treasures in heaven. Our spiritual eyes, symbolizing our heart and mind, should choose to see light rather than darkness. And most importantly, we should recognize that we cannot serve God and money, which really is the Jewish word mammon, and that's a reference to possessions in general, which of course includes money.

[6 : 22] John Stott said, This passage is often read on its own in church, isolated from what has gone before. Then the significance of the introductory, therefore I tell you, is missed.

We must begin by relating this, therefore, this conclusion of Jesus, to the teaching which is led up to it. He calls us to thought before he calls us to action. He invites us to look clearly and coolly at the alternatives before us and to weigh them carefully.

Only when we have grasped with our minds the comparative durability of the two treasures, corruptible and incorruptible, the comparative usefulness of the two eye conditions, light and darkness, and the comparative worth of the two masters, God and mammon, are we ready to make our choice.

And only when we have made our choice for heavenly treasure, for light and for God, Jesus then says, Therefore I tell you, this is how you must behave.

To finish setting the context, remember what we said last time about the word translated as masters in verse 24. That's the Greek word kurios.

[7 : 34] Kurios is often translated lord. It refers to a slave owner. By definition, that slave owner has total control of the slave. For a slave, there's no such thing as a partial or part-time obligation to his master.

He owes full-time service to a full-time master. He's totally owned and controlled and obligated to his master. He has nothing left for anyone else.

And to give anything to anyone else would make his master less than his master. The quote we looked at from John Stott earlier ended with this line.

He said, Only when we have made our choice for heavenly treasure, for light, for God, Jesus then says, Therefore I tell you how you must behave. Our second lesson section then tells us how we must behave.

That second section looks at the obvious command. The obvious command is your next set of blanks. The command is obvious because it's repeated three times in three separate verses that are spread throughout tonight's passage.

[8 : 42] Look at the start of verse 25. Jesus said, Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious. Then skip to the start of verse 31.

Jesus said there, Therefore do not be anxious. Finally, look at the start of verse 34. Jesus said there, Therefore do not be anxious.

Jesus obviously is making a point with the repetition. We need to see that point before we look at the passage in depth. For believers to worry is to be disobedient and unfaithful to their master who is God.

For Christians, worry and anxiety are forbidden, foolish, and sinful. Worry is the sin of distrusting the promise and providence of God, and yet it is likely a sin that Christians commit perhaps more frequently than any other.

The English term worry comes from an old German word meaning to strangle or to choke. That's exactly what worry does. It's a kind of mental and emotional strangulation, which probably causes more mental and physical afflictions than any other single cause.

[9 : 58] The substance of worry is nearly always extremely small compared to the size it forms in our minds and the damage it does to our lives. That likely is one reason why Jesus repeated the do not be anxious command three times.

But the original text gives some additional insight that our English translations lack. Each of the three commands has a slightly different emphasis. In the Greek word, the first do not be anxious includes the idea of stopping what is already being done.

In other words, we are to stop worrying and never to start again. Then in verse 31, the tense of the verb is different. Verse 31 carries the idea of don't start worrying.

The first two instances are more focused on the present, but in verse 34, Jesus goes one step further because verse 34 deals with the future.

When we put all three instances together, the command of do not be anxious is even more comprehensive than it initially sounds. Jesus says that if we are worrying, we are to stop.

[11 : 11] If we aren't yet worrying, we are never to start. And he says that we should worry neither about the past nor the future. Each time Jesus uses the command, he uses the command relative to something.

We'll dig deeper into those specifics as we look through the text over the next two weeks. Suffice it now to say that each usage of the command in this section relates to something physical, such as health, food, drink, clothing, or our future needs for those things.

Consider this thought for a minute before we dig through the verses themselves. If we trust God to provide us with eternal life, why do we sometimes doubt God's ability to keep us alive and to meet our physical needs until we've fulfilled his purpose for us here on earth?

When we think about it that way, we see how ridiculous it seems to be to worry. However, avoiding worry is harder to do when we are in the middle of difficult situations.

Jesus knew that. He could have stopped with just the command. We know that Jesus' words are always truth, so he never owes us an explanation. But Jesus does give us an explanation about why he gave the command.

[12 : 31] In tonight's text, Jesus provides several examples to show why we should never be anxious about our physical needs. So far, we've been jumping around in the text to show the repetition.

If that bothers you, I only have one thing to say, and that is, do not be anxious. We'll go straight through the verses now as we get to the end of chapter 6 next week.

So we've talked about the overlooked context and the obvious command. In verses 25 through 32, we will see the outstanding case. The outstanding case.

Like an excellent lawyer, Jesus makes an outstanding case for why believers never should worry. As we go through the verses, keep in mind that important distinction.

The command to worry and not to worry applies to believers only. So again, the command to avoid worry applies to believers only. This section will show us why that is, but you'll have to come next week to hear the reason for that.

[13 : 40] We'll only get through verse 27 tonight. We're going to take this section in chunks, starting with just verse 25 itself. Again, that's where Jesus said, Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on.

Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? We've already looked at the first part of the verse in the previous two sections. Let's focus here on what Jesus says after the command to not be anxious.

He says to avoid being anxious about four things. Our life, our food, our drink, and our clothing. Notice that everything mentioned in the verse relates to our body.

Jesus talks about our life itself and the things we put either on or into our bodies. The word translated as life in this verse is a comprehensive term in the original Greek.

The word translated life encompasses all of a person's being. That includes physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual things. Jesus is referring to life in its fullest possible sense.

[14:58] Absolutely nothing in any aspect of our lives, internal or external, justifies our being anxious when we have the master that we have.

Today we think that it is difficult to obey this command, but put yourself in the place of Jesus' original audience. The command would have been even more difficult to obey for them. Throughout Bible times, food and water could seldom be taken for granted. When there was little snow in the mountains, there was little water in the rivers, and inadequate rainfall was frequent. Shortage of water naturally brought shortage of food, which seriously affected the whole economy and made clothes harder to buy. Yet Jesus said, Do not worry about any of those things. Here in verse 25, we see the first of three main reasons why a believer is not to worry. We've touched on this point already. The first, therefore, in this passage points us back to verse 24.

[16:03] And we are not to worry because we cannot serve two masters. If we worry about our lives, we give evidence that our master is our possessions, what Jesus called mammon in the original text of his sermon.

The main reason we are not to worry is because a Christian's only master is God. Jesus is saying, Because God is your master, I say to you, do not be anxious.

A bond slave's only responsibility is to his master, and for believers to worry is to be disobedient and unfaithful to their master, who is God. Here we're reminded once more of the terrible subtlety of Satan and sin.

It doesn't matter very much to Satan what form sin takes, as long as he succeeds in his ultimate objective. It's immaterial to Satan whether you're laying up treasures on earth or worrying about earthly things.

All he's concerned about is that your mind should be on them and not on God. You may think that you have won a great battle against Satan because you've conquered him when he came in at the front door and talked to you about laying up treasures on earth.

[17:18] But before you're aware of it, you can find that he has come in through the back door and is causing you to have anxious concern about these things. He still is making you look at them, and so he's perfectly content.

His one concern is that we should keep our minds on these things instead of centering our minds on God. The Westminster Shorter Catechism says, What is the chief end of man?

And its answer is, man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever. If that's an accurate description of Christian service, then we cannot be serving God by glorifying him if we're constantly filled with doubt about his ability to take care of us.

There's an old cliché that says, If you're worrying, you're not trusting. And if you're trusting, you're not worrying. That is literally true, and it's a proper restatement of Christ's warning that you cannot serve God and worry at the same time.

God commands us to stop perpetually worrying about even one thing. That's why we commit sin when we worry. We do not trust God when we worry. We do not receive answers to prayer when we worry, because we are not trusting.

[18:40] Think about this, though. Taking care of the body has always been a common obsession with men. Even when we're not starving or thirsty or naked, we still give an inordinate amount of attention to our bodies.

We pamper the body, we decorate it, we exercise it, we protect it from disease and pain, we build it up or sometimes slender it down, we drape it with jewelry, we keep it warm or we keep it cool, we train it to work and to play, we help it get to sleep, and we do a hundred other things to serve and satisfy our bodies.

Even as Christians, we're sometimes caught up in the world's idea that we live because of our bodies. And because we can think that we live because of our bodies, we end up living for our bodies.

We know better, of course, but that's often the way Christians act. Our bodies in themselves are not the source of anything. They do not give us life, but they are given life by God, who is the source of all life, spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and physical.

The last sentence of verse 25 emphasizes that point even more. Jesus said, Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?

[19:59] The argument Jesus makes is one based upon a deduction from the greater to the lesser. He says, in effect, Wait a minute.

Consider this before you become anxious. Is not your life more than meat, the food? Is not the body itself more important and greater than the clothing?

He says, in effect, Take this life of yours about which you are tending to worry and become anxious. How did you get it? Where does it come from? And the answer, of course, is that it is a gift from God.

Man does not create life. Man does not give being to himself. No one of us ever decided to come into this world. And the very fact that we are alive at this moment is entirely because God willed and God decided that.

Life itself is a gift, and that gift, of course, comes from God. So the argument that Jesus uses is this. If God has given you the gift of life, the greater gift, do you think that he now is suddenly going to deny himself and his own methods and not see to it that life is sustained and enabled to continue?

[21 : 13] God has his own ways of doing that, but the argument is that I never need to become anxious about it, and neither does any believer. If God already takes care of the greater, which is our life and our body, can we not trust him to take care of the lesser, which is our food and clothing?

The Bible uses this type of argument often. Listen to Romans 8.32. It uses the same type of argument, and it also happens to be a great cross-reference about how God will take care of us. Romans 8.32 says, So listen to that verse one more time.

He who did not spare his own son, that gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Martin Lloyd-Jones said, Of course, I am to plow and sow and reap and gather into barns.

I am to do the things that God has ordained for man and life in this world. I must go to work and earn money and so on. But all he says is that I never need be concerned or worried or anxious that suddenly there will not be sufficiency to keep this life going.

[22 : 39] That will never happen to me. It is impossible. If God has given me the gift of life, he will see to it that that life is kept going. But this is the point. He is not arguing as to how this will be done.

He is just saying that it will be done. Remember that Jesus is building his case here. The first reason we are to avoid worry about physical things is that we cannot serve God in possessions. Instead, we must trust God, our Master, to provide those things for us. Jesus made the logical argument that if God gives us life, God will never fail to provide the things needed to sustain that life for as long as God wants us to live.

Jesus again could have stopped there, but he provided even more proof, which makes his outstanding case even stronger. The additional proof comes with the second reason why believers should never worry.

That second reason is this. God is both able and willing to care for those who trust him. God is both able and willing to care for those who trust him.

[23 : 47] Jesus makes that point using examples in verses 26 through 30. And we'll look at verses 26 and 27 tonight. Jesus said there, Look at the birds of the air.

They neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you, by being anxious, can add a single hour to his span of life?

This argument is reversed from the other. This argument goes from the lesser to the greater. The God who cares about birds cares even more about us.

There are a lot of birds in northern Galilee. Most people think that Jesus likely pointed to some passing birds as he said, Look at the birds of the air. He called attention to the fact that the birds don't have intricate and involved processes for getting their food.

They neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, as he said. Like every creature, birds get their life from God. But God does not say to them, in effect, I've done my part, from now you're on your own.

[25 : 00] The Lord has provided them with an abundance of food resources and the instinct to find those resources for themselves and their offspring. Jesus emphasized that in verse 26 when he said, Yet your heavenly Father feeds them.

Listen to what God said to Job in Job 38.41. Here is Job 38.41, where God is talking to Job. He said, Who provides for the raven its prey when its young ones cry to God for help and wander about for lack of food?

Back in our text tonight, Jesus closed verse 26 with another question of his own. Speaking of the birds, Jesus said, Are you not of more value than they?

So what's the answer to Jesus' question? The answer, of course, is yes. We are of more value than the birds. So if we are more valuable to God than the birds, why should we be worried about our provision?

A lady named Elizabeth Chaney wrote this short poem called *The Robin and the Sparrow*. It loosely fits with Matthew 6.26. And the poem says, Said the robin to the sparrow, I should really like to know why these anxious human beings rush about and worry so.

[26 : 22] Said the sparrow to the robin, friend, I think that it must be that they have no heavenly father such as cares for you and me. That poem is not a strictly accurate reflection of what Jesus says here.

He did not say that birds have a heavenly father. He said that we have a heavenly father. And that heavenly father is the one who feeds the birds.

So if the creator cares for his creatures, we may be even more sure that the father will look after his children, which we are. No bird is created in the image of God or recreated in the image of Christ. No bird was ever promised to be an heir with Jesus Christ throughout all eternity. No bird has a place prepared for itself in heaven. And if God gives and sustains life for the birds, will he not take care of us who are his children and who have been given all these glorious promises?

A.W. Pink summarized verse 26 much more bluntly than the poem did. The English is a little old, but listen to what he said. Here we may see how the irrational creatures, made subject to the 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.

[27 : 44] For they seek only what God has provided for them, and when they receive it, they are content. Whereas man is deeply fallen from the estate of his creation in regard to his dependency on God's providence for temporal things.

Though he be endowed with reason and has the use of means which the fowls of heaven lack, his heart is filled with distressful care, whether we respect the obtaining of earthly things or the use which he makes of earthly things.

This solemnly demonstrates that man is more corrupt than other creatures, more vile and base than are the brute beast. How deeply this ought to humble every one of us under a serious consideration of our sinfulness, that we have so debased our nature that we are more rebellious to the laws of our being and more distrustful of divine providence than are irrational creatures.

If he provides for the birds in the dead of winter, is he unable or unwilling to minister to your temporal needs in sickness or old age? How small is our faith in his goodness, his faithfulness, his tender care, if we worry now about where our future bread or clothing is to come from?

The poem we read in A.W. Pink's quote are good, but the Bible is better. Listen to Psalm 147, verses 9 through 11. Speaking of God, the writer said in Psalm 147, verses 9 to 11, He gives to the beasts their food and to the young ravens that cry.

[29 : 25] His delight is not in the strength of the horse nor his pleasure in the legs of a man, but the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love.

The psalmist knew the answer to Jesus' question about whether believers are more valuable than the birds, even before Jesus asked that question. More importantly, the psalmist knew why believers are more valuable to God.

Listen to verse 11 of Psalm 147 again. But the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love.

Let's move on now to Matthew 6.27. In Matthew 6.27, Jesus asked another question. That question is this, And which of you, by being anxious, can add a single hour to his span of life?

This question drives home the point about the uselessness of worry. So here's what Jesus is saying. He's saying, How many of you, by taking all this trouble and care, and being so worried and anxious, can extend the length of your life, even by a moment?

[30 : 39] Because of their obsession with this, so many people have become worried about their bodily needs. They desire to extend life, but there's nothing that they can do to actually extend it. Listen to these words from Martin Lloyd-Jones.

Medical knowledge and skill cannot extend life. Even medical men are often bewildered and frustrated. Two patients who appear to be in the same condition are given identical treatment. One recovers, the other dies. What is the answer? The answer is that no man can add one hour to his duration of life. It is a great mystery, but we cannot escape it.

Our times are in the hands of God. Jones continued his commentary with this quote. He said, Life is a gift from God. He starts it, and he determines the end of it.

He sustains it, and we are in his hands. Therefore, when you tend to become worried or anxious, just pull yourself up at once and say, I cannot start or continue or end life.

[31 : 44] All this is entirely in his hands. If that greater thing is there in God's control, I can leave the lesser also to him. Do your work, sow, reap, and gather into barns, but remember that the remainder is in the hands of God.

You may have the finest seed you can buy on the market. You may have the best plow and everything necessary in the sowing, but if God withheld the sun and the rain, you would not have a crop.

God is ultimately behind it all. Man has his place in his work, but God giveth the increase. That is what we must always remember, and it applies always and in all circumstances.

Exercise, good eating, and other common sense practices are beneficial when done in a reasonable way and done with the right perspective. They no doubt can improve the quality and productivity of our lives, but they won't force God into extending our lifespan.

Do you see the importance of these verses? It's not merely that we're commanded not to worry. We're also given reasons why we are not to worry.

[32 : 55] Reasons that have to do with the demonstrated ability of God to take care of us. Dr. Charles Mayo of the Mayo Clinic wrote, The gift of life is a gift from God to be used for God's purposes, for spiritual and heavenly reasons, not selfish and earthly ones.

Our concern should be to obey, honor, please, and glorify God and leave everything else to His wisdom and care. Those are all the verses that we'll have time to work through in detail tonight, but keep the main idea of this section in mind as you go through the next week.

Christians who worry about earthly needs are committing a sin that reveals a lack of faith. Whether the Lord gives us more or less of anything, it all belongs to Him as owner, controller, and provider. It's our responsibility to thank Him for what He gives us and to use it wisely and unselfishly for as long as He entrusts us with it. It also is our responsibility to trust Him to provide us what we need. Think about the example of the Apostle Peter. He learned those principles the hard way. In the early days of his association with Jesus, Peter worried about a lot of things.

[34 : 30] Think about when he tried to walk on the water. Walking toward Jesus on the water, he began to look at the waves and became worried, and then he began to sink. Then later he was worried that Jesus might not pay taxes.

After that, he was worried about who might betray Jesus. And then he was worried that Jesus might have to suffer. He was worried so much, remember, that Peter rebuked Jesus on one occasion, and then he sought to defend Jesus with the sword on another.

So Peter was a classic warrior. He did it very well. But after he came to know Jesus better, he learned that Jesus was not only able to take care of himself, but that Jesus also was able to take care of Peter.

Listen to what Peter wrote in 1 Peter 5, verses 6 and 7. He said, Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

So again, verse 7 says, Casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. Peter learned an important truth that he wanted us to learn, and that, of course, is that last part.

[35 : 48] Cast all your anxieties on God, because he cares for you. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for this reminder that you do care for us, and that you do promise to provide for us.

When we are tempted to worry, help us remember that. Help us also remember the examples that we've seen in tonight's text, and realize that if you take care of the birds, you will take care of us even more.

Help us apply this text to our lives as we go through this week. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Thank you.