

Sunday, November 1, 2020 am

TEACHINGS OF JESUS (24)
Sermon on the Mount (23)
Concerning Worry
Matthew 6:25-34

We continue our study of the Sermon on the Mount. We have just concluded 3 lessons dealing with our commitment – our treasure (our spiritual investments), our eyes (environment and perspective), and finally our master (our commitment). Today, we will address the subject of worry (anxiety), as Jesus continues to make applications about true righteousness.

I. Thoughts about worry

- a. We have addressed this subject on numerous occasions, but it is one that needs to be revisited often as this is something many of us struggle with, and much more so than we ought to.
- b. What is it? Worry – (μεριμνάω, merimnaō) *“to have an anxious concern, based on apprehension about possible danger or misfortune.”* (L&N, 25.255) Other Bible dictionaries include descriptions like distracted, to be unduly concerned, cares, etc.

Our English word for worry comes a German word meaning “to strangle”.

A middle English ancestor (ca. 1300s) defined the word as *to slay, kill or injure by biting and shaking the throat (like a dog or wolf)*¹ These are actually good descriptions of what worry does – it strangles you of your joy, and maybe even your health. It can rob you of quality of life.

Concerning the word in Greek, it is not always a negative word. IT is translated “care” 7 times including, 1 Corinthians 7:32-34 (4x) which speaks of one married caring for their spouse (something have to do) and how the unmarried *cares for the things of the Lord*; 1 Corinthians 12:25 speaks of how we are to have “the same care for one another?”, and Philippians 2:20 speaking of how Timothy cared for their state..

So as is so often the case in His teachings, including this sermon, Jesus is talking about taking something further than you ought to – e.g. “unduly concerned.”

When we think of worry, we think of someone who is obsessed with whatever he/she is thinking about to the point that it affects their demeanor and thought process. Worry is unhealthy – it can lead to physical harm of the body (actual harm to the heart, circulation, the glands and nervous system – it can lead to a stroke), stress the mind (our confidence, depression, loss of desire, etc.), affect our interaction with others and even our ability to function. Then there is a spiritual damage – how it affections our faith and thus our relationship with God and brethren.

There is a difference between worry and concerns.

Jesus was concerned in the garden (Mark 14:33-39). Paul at times was concerned about the churches (2 Corinthians 11:28). We need to be concerned about our bodies and take care of ourselves (Ephesians 5:28-29), etc.

The difference is how we deal with whatever we are facing. Do we let our concerns paralyze us, or do we face them realistically?

- c. What does the Bible say about this?
 - i. **Proverbs 12:25**, *Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression, But a good word makes it glad.*
 - ii. **Philippians 4:6-7** – be anxious for nothing
 - iii. **Matthew 13:22** – the cares of this world choke out the word in the thorny heart (divided).

¹ <https://www.etymonline.com/word/worry>

- iv. **Luke 10:38-42** – We read the account of Martha and Mary as they receive into Martha’s house.
- d. NOT worrying is not an easy thing to do, but we can train our minds and body to be healthy as we deal with our concerns. But to do so, we have to control our environment. To NOT worry is difficult for many because we have created environments that lead to worry. We often bring worries on. In our text, Jesus dealt with this. Let us consider His message.

II. The text

- a. In this text, Jesus actually makes the case for why we should not worry. He actually gives a number of reasons that make worry (anxiety) a baseless pursuit. And then He gives some direction on how to deal with worry.
- b. **Therefore** – this is tied to the previous verse. If you consider Jesus just addressed making God your Master, it might prompt His audience to think, “But what about living life?” “I have to make a living and work. Are you saying that if I have money than I am unrighteous?” We know that is NOT His point. This is about making money your master. This is the context of His message about worry.
- c. **Do not worry about your life.** 4 times in this section Jesus says, “Do not worry”. 2 of these are “imperative” words, meaning this is a command. Jesus is not suggesting but telling us to do this. It is foundational. Therefore, it is something we need to work on.
- d. **Argument 1(25) - Is not life more than food and clothing? (25)** – these are necessities, to a degree. We need them, but how much is actual necessity? Few of us are concerned about our next meal or if we will have clothes to wear (though some are). We are concerned about the type of foods we eat and our fashionable appearance. Does excessive concerns about these things bring on worry? Is not your life more important than a meal and what you wear? Don’t let externals define you! Incidentally, who provides you with life? Who gave you a soul? Who has the power to sustain you? Are spiritual matters MORE important to us than our necessities? Is not that the point Jesus has tried to drive home in this entire sermon, and ALL of His teachings?
- e. **Argument 2 (26) - Look at the birds of the air** – like all natural creatures, they survive on their environment. They may gather for winter or other reasons, but what they depend upon is what nature provides for them. God created nature! **Yet your heavenly Father feeds them.** **Are you not of more value than they?** God gave a man a soul that will live on. Ecclesiastes 12:7 notes that while your body will decay and return to the dust, your spirit returns to God who gave it. THIS makes us different than the animals (Ecclesiastes 3:21). See also Matthew 10:29-31, where speaking to the 12 and telling them not to fear, Jesus notes that God protects the birds, “*but the very hairs of your head are numbered. Do not fear therefore, you are of more value than many sparrows.*”
- f. **Argument 3 (27) - Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?** There are things we cannot change - why worry about them? The NASB reads different, “**Who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life?**” The NKJV is the more literal interpretation, whereas the NASB is the more practical application (because a cubit is about 18 inches and Jesus was dealing with small things). The point is, we often worry about things we simply have no control to change. Consider that typically people worry about:
The past – which is history. Mistakes we’ve made, etc. You may need to deal with current consequences, but you cannot get in a time machine a go back. Its done! Why worry about it?
The future – which is down the road and unknown. While there is a small degree of predictability (because of the consistencies of life), life has a way of changing. And while there is a case to be made for making preparations for the future (both physically and spiritually), often our worries are proven to be unfounded. When we worry, we tend to assume the worst possible scenario and that is what we let consume us.

The present – this is where some concern is appropriate. But even then. What is happening right now fits in 1 of 2 categories – things you can control and things you cannot control. Why worry about what you cannot control? If you can control something – DO IT! And then move ahead.

- g. **Argument 4 (28-30) - Consider the lilies** – similar to that of feeding the birds. Jesus now addresses what we wear.

He notes that God provides for flowers to grow and blossom, and what beauty they display. Their purpose is for our enjoyment and we know now to sustain our lives. We depend on grass and trees to live. And consider, that unlike birds, it is only here for a short while and then used as kindling and other purposes. So, if God knows how to clothe the grass, can He provide for you what you need to wear and for your protection? Again, we are addressing needs here, not wants.

O you of little faith - The question is, do we trust Him. How many of us see these things and say, “Yes, BUT...”? We fill in the blank – BUT we have to eat and provide for ourselves; Nobody is just going to give us food and clothing; we know of those who starve and freeze to death; etc.

Yes, all these things are true – but what is the point? DO YOU TRUST GOD?

Consider, that even if you did not have enough food or clothing, where will you spend eternity?

- h. **After these things the Gentiles seek (31-32)** – we are to be different. Those with no hope beyond this life, all they have is NOW. Thus they do worry about such things. Some might say that worry is something everybody does, and it is normal. But Christians WE ARE DIFFERENT!

And that difference has to start in the heart, which is where anxieties rest. While most of us do need to deal with this to some degree, we need a different perspective. Be like Paul in Philippians 4:11-13, content no matter what state he is in.

- i. **God knows you need these things (31-32)** – He knows what is going on. Never forget that!

- j. **But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (33)** – this is about faith (cf. vs. 30 – “O you of little faith”). This is about seeking – diligently searching for HIS righteousness – which is the point we have been emphasizing throughout our study of this great sermon. This is the point Jesus is driving toward. 1 Peter 5:6-8 – humble yourselves. Cast your cares on Him.

- k. **All these things will be added to you** – Again God has the power to provide and take care of you. And while there are material exceptions, God can provide. If we will put our trust in God first, everything else will be ok. Anxiety is a product of a lack of trust in God (faith)

- l. **Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow (34) – sufficient for today is its troubles.** Jesus summarizes this noting if you concentrate on today and what is right in front of you – and do your best to deal with that – there is no real merit in worrying. Do not bring with you yesterday’s trouble, nor borrow what might happen tomorrow. Chances are, if all you will do is focus on today (wisely), it will make tomorrow better, because you will be working to prevent what you were worrying about in the first place. So learn to let it go!

Keep this in context with the sermon Jesus is teaching. Jesus is talking about true righteousness. Living with God as your ONLY priority. Where your eternity is concerned, that is all that matters. And in the concluding thoughts of this sermon, Jesus will drive that point home. Meanwhile, are you worrying?