

THE LIFE THAT SERVES GOD

Matthew 6:24-34

Intro: There are many absolutes in Scripture. “Ye must be born again,” is one very important absolute. Another is, “Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” We had still another in verse 21 of the chapter we are studying now: “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matt. 6:21). It would be very interesting to read through the Bible, making a record of all of the absolutes you find there. It would be a real eye-opener in these days when so many try to tell us that truth is relative, not absolute.

In the last verse we had last Sunday, Matt. 6:24, we have a verse that is an expression of absolute truth, from start to finish, concluding with, “Ye cannot serve God and mammon,” or *God and money*. Many have tried it, but have always failed. Money, and the love of money, can enslave men. It influences everything in their lives, when money becomes a man, or a woman’s, master. Luke, in chapter 18, verse 18, tells us about “a certain ruler who thought that he wanted to have eternal life. But when the Lord told him that he would have to sell all that he had, and give the money to the poor, he went away very unhappy because, as Luke tells us, “he was very rich” (Luke 18:23). This does not mean that you can’t be saved if you have money, but it does show us that a man’s love for money can rob him of the kind of love for God that will cause him to put God first regardless of the consequences.

So it stands as one of the absolute truths of the Word of God that “ye cannot serve God and money.” One is going to be your master, but not both of them. Inevitably you are going to love just one, and you will hate or reject, and “despise the other.” When we despise anything, it is because we think little or nothing of it. That is the way most people feel about God if He is to be compared with money. There are going to be multitudes in hell because their master in life was money. And remember that you don’t have to have a million dollars to be caught in the trap of loving money.

Now the Lord followed that section having to do with money, with some words which might take us by surprise. First of all we need to understand what the Lord meant when He said, “Take no thought.” You find this verb in verses 25, 27, 28, 31, and 34.

When we first read this passage, we might feel that the Lord was saying about our lives, that we are, as we say today, *not to give it a thought*. But we have to think about what we are going to eat, drink, and wear. Those

are among our most basic needs as human beings. If the Lord didn't want us ever to think about these things, then it would be wrong for you ladies to plan any meals. Your parents would be sinning if you planned to buy clothes for your children. We all do this, and we have to do it. And the Lord knows that we do. In fact, the Apostle Paul told Timothy that the man who does not provide for his family "has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (1 Tim. 5:8). You are not going to find that the Lord said one thing on a subject, but that the Holy Spirit led the writers of Scripture to say something else.

So what is the solution?

Well, the solution is to find out what the exact meaning of the verb is. It is the Greek verb *μεριμνάω*. It does not mean just *to think*, but it means *to worry, to have anxiety* about anything. It is the word that the Apostle Paul used in Phil. 4:6 when he wrote, "Be careful about nothing ..." The person who worries is not a person who is trusting God, and we are to be a people who trust the Lord for everything.

But we all have a strong inclination to worry, don't we? It is human to worry. But worrying is sin when the Bible tells us, as it does in Phil. 4:6 in so many words, "Don't worry about anything"

So in verse 25 we have:

I. A GENERAL STATEMENT OF THE WILL OF GOD ABOUT TRUSTING GOD (Matt. 6:25).

A person who lives for money is going to be doing plenty of worrying. He or she has no security at all that his money is safe. Those of you who were alive during the depression of the early 1930's will remember how many men who lost all of their savings in the crash of the stock market, took their own lives because their money was gone. What a pitiful situation to be in!

Here the Lord told His disciples not to be worried about what they were going to eat, or drink, or wear. And then He asked a question: "Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? That is, isn't your life more important than your food, and your body than the clothes that you put on it? And who is it who gives you life? And who takes care of your body? Obviously the Lord does. So if He takes care of our lives and our bodies, will He not provide what is necessary to keep us alive? The way our country is going, we may have an opportunity to trust the Lord even more than we do now for the food we eat and the clothes we wear. So this

passage may take on new meaning for us in the days ahead. Who knows?

But the Lord went on to give two illustrations to show how foolish it is to worry.

II. TWO ILLUSTRATIONS TO STRENGTHEN THEIR FAITH (Matt. 6:26-27).

A. Illustration #1 (v. 26): “the birds of the air.”

It is amazing how we have illustrations all around us to support our faith, and to teach us how we need to trust the Lord.

We all know what birds are. We see them every day. But did you ever see a group of birds plowing up some ground, then planting some seed, and waiting for the harvest time to come? We have never seen that. We have seen a lot of barns, but never any bird barns. And did you ever hear of a bird psychologist trying to help a group of psycho birds get through a difficult time? You have never seen that. Well, but how do they get the food that they need. Obviously they need food to live just like we do. What was our Lord’s answer? He said that the same One Whom we call “our Father” when we pray, is the same One Who feeds them – the same One Who feeds all of them!

And so then the Lord asked another question. “Are ye not much better than they?” The answer is obvious. “Yes, we are not only better, but, as our Lord said in His question, “much better”?”

So, if the Lord takes care of the birds, will He not also take care of us? A little child can give the right answer to that question. So why, then, should we worry?

But then the Lord went on to:

B. Illustration #2: physical growth, or the length of one’s life (v. 27).

This is a question for men (although I have heard of girls who wanted to be taller than they are). But it is men who are concerned about their height. I was listening to a football game yesterday, and there was a player who was 5' 10" trying to keep a pass receiver who was over 6' from catching a pass. I am sure that the one who was 5' 10" wished more than once that he was over 6'. And you don't have to be a football player to wish that you were taller. *But what good does it do to worry about it?*

How much is a cubit?

Well, it is supposed to be the length of your forearm, from your elbow to the tip of your middle finger, generally thought to be about 18 inches.

But there is evidence also that this measurement that the Lord was speaking about had to do with the length of his life. And that might be more reasonable. A person would have to be very small to want to be 18 inches taller.

Whatever the meaning, how much does it help to worry about it? None at all! We are all just like the Lord wants us to be, and we are only going to live as long as the Lord has planned that we shall live. So we had better find a better use for our time because worrying won't help it at all. In fact, worrying can prove to be detrimental to our health. Two men can eat the same food. One will get tall; the other will only grow to normal height. Or one can die relatively young, while the other may live to be an old man. What difference does worrying make? None at all!

But let us go on to the next point that our Lord made.

III. THE PROBLEM OF CLOTHING (Matt. 6:28-30).

What about clothing? The Lord had said, "Behold the fowls of the air." Now He said in this place, "Consider the lilies of the field." He was speaking of wild flowers. They weren't planted; they just grew where they were. And what could you say about them? That even Solomon in all of his finery as one of the richest men in the world in his day, could not compare with the glory of the flowers which the Lord had made.

Compared with the life of a human being, wild flowers are not to be compared with them. And yet their glory far exceeds the glory of man. And they had absolutely nothing to do with it! Besides, the flowers are here today, and gone tomorrow.

What is the problem with a person who worries about clothes? Our Lord tabbed them as being "of little faith." A God who can do what He does with flowers, clothing them with such beauty, is surely able to take care of us who are worth far more than flowers.

We are living in a day when men worship creatures and creation, but never give a thought to the Creator. In fact, I guess that most people don't believe in creation. And so they miss completely the kind of lessons the Lord was teaching His disciples. Creation shows the glory of the Creator.

And if we keep that straight, there are many, many lessons that we can learn from creation that will help us in our need to trust the Lord for all of the necessities of life.

IV. THE LORD'S CONCLUDING EXHORTATION WITH REASONS FOR SUPPORTING HIS WILL (Matt. 6:31-34).

A. The will of God about worry (v. 31).

While I was teaching at Multnomah we had a young man in the student body who had a beautiful tenor voice. I loved to hear him sing, and more than once he ministered to me in connection with some trials I was going through at the time. The chorus of one of his songs which I could have gladly heard him sing all of the rest of my life, had these words. Perhaps some of you know the song. This was the message:

All your anxieties, all your cares,
Bring to the mercy seat, leave them their,
Never a burden He cannot bear,
Never a friend like Jesus.

The Apostle Peter used a noun formed from the same root as the verb we have been considering today when he wrote,

Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you (1 Pet. 5:7). We are to take all of the things that we get anxious about, and throw them upon the Lord because He cares about us.

So we are not to worry. To worry is sin. If we are worrying about anything, we are not trusting the Lord as we should. **And then the Lord gave four reasons why we ought to trust the Lord:**

A. Because the unsaved Gentiles worry about these things (v. 32a).

I like that little verse which goes like this, since we have been talking about birds:

Said the Robin to the Sparrow, "I should really like to know
Why these anxious human beings rush about and worry so."

Said the Sparrow to the Robin, "I think that it must be

That they have no heavenly Father such as cares for you and me."

That is true of unregenerate Gentiles, but shouldn't it be different with you and me. I don't point an accusing finger at you because I have failed so often myself. It is only by God's grace that we can cast all of our care, all of our anxieties, all of our worry, on the Lord. But this is what it means to live by faith. And this is what it means *to serve God with our lives.*

But let us go on to a second reason as to why we should trust the Lord with our cares.

B. “Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things” (v. 32b).

We forget this, don't we? The Lord made quite a point of this in His Sermon on the Mount. Cf. Matt. 6:7-8. The Lord knows every burden we carry, everything that we are inclined to worry about. He knows all of our anxious thoughts. And He is the One Who loves us because we are His children, and He is the One Who can take our burdens, and give us peace. And the Lord Who was always speaking from the greater to the lesser, and from the lesser to the greater, is just as concerned about the little burdens as He is about the big burdens. What a lot of comfort there is in those words, “Your heavenly Father knoweth,” and they are especially comforting because they have come from the Lord Jesus Himself.

But let us look at a third encouragement for our faith.

C. The promise of the Lord (v. 33).

Why do we have things that worry us, not just about what we will eat and drink and wear, but a multitude of other things? They are constant reminders to us that we need continually to be trusting the Lord. And often special needs arise when we forget this.

To seek “first” the kingdom of God is what it means to be laying up treasure in heaven. It means to put the Lord and His will and His work “first” in our lives. And the promise is that when we do, “all these things shall be added unto you.” This is one place where we in America need to beware of the judgment of the Lord ahead. We have this year seen millions of crops ruined by terribly hot weather, or by flood. We are a nation that has forgotten God, and the Lord will make sure, as He has done so often in the past, that we do not forget Him. This is a wonderful promise that we have in verse 33, but there is a very big and important condition attached to it.

Finally,

D. In worry we are often concerned about tomorrow, and tomorrow is in the Lord's hands (v. 34).

We have enough to be concerned about with today. Don't borrow trouble from tomorrow. Tomorrow may never come, or it may be that when

tomorrow comes we will say, "Today is the day that I worried about yesterday." And the Lord made it a good day instead of a hard day. Serving the Lord by faith is a day by day way to live. God gives us grace for today, and when tomorrow comes He will give us grace for that day as well.

Concl: There is a lot in this passage to rebuke us, isn't there? But there is also much to encourage us. Let us remember that to worry is sin, but to trust the Lord, is the way to serve the Lord. Let us not allow money or needs of any kind keep us from trusting the Lord day by day to meet our needs, and to keep our hearts in peace in the midst of all of our trials and testings.