

LEARNING NOT TO WORRY

Matthew 6:24-34

Intro: We need to keep in mind as we go through this Sermon on the Mount, that it was delivered primarily to His disciples, especially in preparation for the ministry which was ahead of them. But we learn from Scripture in many places that the one who is going to give proper guidance to others, must have learned for himself the lessons that he would be teaching others.

The Beatitudes give us the character of a child of God. Or to state it another way, the characteristics that every child of God should seek to cultivate in his or her own life.

As such, they would be “the salt of the earth,” and “the light of the world.”

And then the Lord emphasized with them the importance of pleasing God by their obedience to His Word, and their obedience was to be more than just an outward display to impress people, but it had to be genuine, from the heart. It had to be more than the merely external righteousness which was characteristic of the scribes and Pharisees. The disciples, being Jewish, and being raised under the teaching of the scribes and Pharisees, were going to have to re-learn what it means to obey God.

After that in chapter 6 the Lord spoke to them about the kind of giving that was pleasing to the Lord. He spoke to them also about how to pray. And then He taught them how to fast. In each case our Lord pointed out how the disciples had gotten the wrong kind of teaching from the scribes and Pharisees.

Following all of these things we have seen how the Lord exhorted them to seek heavenly treasures rather than that which is earthly. The scribes and Pharisees were “money-grabbers,” even taking widows’ homes from them. Serving the Lord for monetary gain was not acceptable at all to the Lord.

Now we have gotten down to the part in chapter 6 where the Lord spoke about a subject that ought to have been of interest to every disciple, the subject of **worry**! Everybody is guilty of worrying about something, and often we worry about many things. Perhaps it would be best to say that

we catch ourselves worrying about everything! We worry about money. We worry about our health. Parents worry about their children, and then about their grandchildren. We worry about terrorists. We worry about the future. We worry about our country. And the list could go on and on because in one way or another we worry about everything! We worry about life, and we worry about death. In fact, anxiety is a major problem, not only for us in the USA, but for people around the world!

But worrying is exactly what the Lord told His disciples they were *not* to do! And notice that the Lord gave this as a commandment. To disobey any commandment is a sin, and this commandment is no exception.

I. THE COMMANDMENT.

It is actually given three times in our text. Notice the commandment in verse 25.

Notice it again in verse 31.

And then it is repeated a third time in verse 34.

For the Lord to state the commandment three times, is evidence of how important it was to Him, and, if it is important to Him, it also ought to be very important to those of us who know and love Him. We love Him, and want to please Him? Then this is one major way that we can concentrate on.

But what does it mean? Is it wrong for us to think about what we are going to eat, or what we are going to drink, or the clothes that we are going to wear? If it is, then all of us have sinned this morning because today we all have thought about what we were going to have for breakfast, whether or not we were going to have anything to drink, and what we would wear to church.

Undoubtedly there are some of the Lord's people in our own country who were not concerned about what they were going to eat, but if they were going to have any food at all to eat. The same is true of drink, even water. And clothing is a problem to many of the Lord's people throughout the world.

Now is it wrong to think about these things? No, and that is not what the

Lord had in mind when He spoke these words. The Greek verb that is used six times in our text is the verb μεριμνάω, which means *to be anxious*, or *to be troubled*, or simply *to worry*. This is the way it is translated in the NKJV: “Do not worry about your life.” The NASB renders it, “Do not be anxious for your life.” The NIV uses the word “worry.”

These are basic things that people worry about, and the larger your family, the more inclined you may be to worry. In fact, the Lord touched upon three things that we are all inclined to be unduly concerned about. And from there we could go on to mention many other things that we worry about. So this passages touches all of us.

This is the basic commandment.

Next will you notice that the Lord gives

II. TWO ILLUSTRATIONS FROM NATURE.

A. The birds of the air (Matt. 6:26).

Yesterday as Lucille and I were eating lunch, we watched the HP Golf Tournament which was being played down in New Orleans. And while the commentators were explaining to us what was going on, there were birds singing, and their sound was so loud it was just like they were being featured. Obviously they didn't have anything bothering them. They weren't worried. They were happy, very happy. There are a lot of lessons we can learn from nature, and this was a good illustration to go along with what the Lord said here. They weren't worried about where their next meal was coming from.

Now did you ever see a bird plowing a field, or planting a crop? No. Did you ever see a bird harvesting a crop, and putting it away in a barn? No. Why haven't you see any activity like that? Our Lord's answer: because “your heavenly Father feedeth them.” God operates the most amazing bird feeder in existence.

The second illustration:

B. The lilies of the field (Matt. 6:28-29).

Have you ever seen a lily working for its clothing, or busy spinning its

garment to wear? No, you have never seen anything like that. And neither have I! But what do you see when you “consider the lilies”? You see color and beauty which goes far beyond anything that King Solomon with all of his riches and wisdom ever wore! The lilies of the field are an amazing example of how God cares for it.

Now stop and think about all of that. Let the truth of what you see sink deeply into your mind and into your heart.

I am going through this passage more quickly than any of us should go through it, but now let me call your attention to:

III. THE LORD’S QUESTIONS.

There are five that I want to call your attention to.

A. The question at the end of verse 25.

The meaning of the question seems to be this: If God gave us these bodies of ours, and breathed into them the breath of life, isn’t it reasonable to believe that He is going to give us food to feed our bodies and clothing to cover them? He gave us our bodies and our lives before we could possibly have asked for them. This is where the evolutionists are left to themselves. But since we believe that we are the creatures of an all-wise and all-powerful God, we know that He is not going to create anything that He is not prepared to care for. There is plenty of comfort for us in this.

B. The question at the end of verse 26.

God indeed made the birds, and such a wonderful variety of them, with different colors, and different songs which they sing. And it is undeniable that God cares for them. But we have one great advantage over birds. We were made in the image and likeness of God. And we who are true disciples are destined to be conformed to the likeness of Christ. Aren’t we therefore on higher ground than the birds, so that if He cares for the birds (and He does), He will do that and much more for us!

It is good for us to spend some time meditating on the divine logic that the Lord gives us in verse 26. “Are ye not much better than they?” The answer is obvious: Yes!

C. The question in verse 27.

There are some who question the translation here, that is, whether the Lord was talking about physical growth or the length of a person's life. Since the subject is food, the length of the person's life is probably what the Lord was emphasizing. If we don't eat, we will soon die. But who has found that by worrying, he has been able to live a little longer. Worrying never caused anyone to grow even an inch, nor is there anything on record to prove that worrying extended a person's life. It might shorten it, but not lengthen it.

The Lord was seeking to point out how foolish it is to worry.

D. The question at the beginning of verse 28 goes with the question in verse 30.

The same reasoning needs to be applied to the lilies and grass of the field. They are here today, and gone tomorrow. They don't even last a whole season. We are destined to live eternally. Isn't it reasonable to think that if God would clothe a lily with such beauty when it only exists for such a short time that we could say that it is here today, and gone tomorrow, will He not be careful to clothe us who will live eternally.

The person who believes that death ends it all, does not have the comfort that the Lord suggested here. How different our lives should be because of what God has revealed to us through His Word!

So much for the questions, but let us make sure that we understand what the Lord was saying.

But at the end of the last question in verse 30 we see that the Lord said why it is that we worry.

IV. THE CAUSE OF WORRY.

Notice how He addressed the disciples who in these commands were both commanded not to worry, but also to stop worrying which they were already doing.

The cause of worry: "O ye of little faith?" The reason we worry is because we are not trusting our heavenly Father as we should. And the

same applies to our relationship with the Lord Jesus. Let me read a story to you found in Matt. 8, beginning with verse 23. It took place apparently not long after the disciples had listened to His Sermon on the Mount.

23 And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him.

24 And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep.

25 And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish.

26 And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.

27 But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him! (Matt. 8:23-27).

Were the disciples worried? Not about what they were going to eat, nor about what they were going to drink, nor about what they were going to wear. But they were terrified about whether or not they were going to live to see another day.

The answer to worry is faith. Most of us have not yet really discovered how powerful and how faithful our Savior is.

How many of us will be blessed today by what we have seen in the Word, but then will scarcely be out the door before we pick up our dark clouds of worry again?

V. THE REMEDY FOR WORRY.

The first remedy as we have already seen is a stronger faith. This means that we need to spend more time “looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith” (Heb. 12:1).

But there are three other points that our Lord mentioned which I want to point out in closing.

A. What our heavenly Father knows (Matt. 6:32).

Our Lord’s reference to the Gentiles here is a reference to the world of people who do not know the Lord. God is not their heavenly Father, and so the only recourse they have when trouble arises is to worry. But when trouble arises for us, we know that our Father in heaven knows, and that

is true before we tell Him. Cf. Matt. 6:7 and 8.

I love that little children's poem which goes like this, picturing the conversation between a robin and a sparrow:

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.

May the Lord keep us from responding to our trials like unsaved Gentiles respond to theirs.

B. What our greatest priority should be (Matt. 6:33).

Seeking the kingdom of God means being submissive to God's will, and being concerned about carrying out the will of God as it relates to our lives. God never does anything without a purpose, a good purpose, which may involve blessing for others as well as for ourselves. As we concern ourselves with the work and will of God, He promises to take care of all of our needs.

C. We are to trust God for all of our tomorrows.

I don't know who is responsible for this saying, but I like it and I believe that it is supported by Scripture. I hope it will mean something to you:

Remember that today is the tomorrow
that you worried about yesterday.

But let the words of the Apostle Peter be my closing words today:

6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that
he may exalt you in due time:

7 Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you (1 Peter
5:6-7).