

Matthew 6:25-34—The Kingdom and Anxiety

- Worry, just like a love of money and a judgmental attitude toward others, will stifle our growth as Christians and will tarnish our witness. This is why Jesus warns against them.
- The primary reason we store up treasures on earth is because we are ANXIOUS about the future and don't believe in a God who will care for us or we don't actually trust the God we believe in.
- This text is marked by "therefores" in vv. 25, 31, 34—why followers of Jesus aren't anxious!
- These verses are the necessary overflow of the text on possessions—a natural question we would ask is, "Ok, so I am not storing up treasures on earth...so how am I going to eat, live and provide for myself/family!?"
 - Jesus is saying, "I'm not here to take away your stuff, but to take away your stress!"
- We cannot serve God and have our anxiety too (v.25)
 - THEREFORE—because you can't serve God and money...don't be anxious!
 - Worry = sin—a refusal to acknowledge or believe the truth, promises and character of God that causes us to depend on, trust in and worship things/others rather than God.
 - Why can't we have both—because anxiety reveals we aren't actually worshiping God!
 - Worry is a worship problem—our worship is misdirected either toward the thing we are worried about or to the place (other than God) we are looking to satisfy and fulfill.
 - Our behavior flows out of our beliefs—said another way, our theology leads to our biology which determines our doxology—beliefs lead to behavior which necessarily is worshipful. Question is—who/what is being worshiped?
- Our anxiety overlooks God's sovereign care of all creation (v.26-30)
 - We would never predict this path on teaching on anxiety—worry, fear and birds. Anxiety, fear, flowers...really, Jesus?
 - Birds, flowers, grass—he cares for and provides for them, don't you think he will provide for us, his crowning work of creation?
 - Jesus not concerned w/ savvy self-help but sinking us DEEP in the soil of his sovereign goodness!
 - To worry is to slander God's knowledge, wisdom, power, goodness and providence.
 - Spurgeon—"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: 'Friend, I think that it must be that they have no heavenly Father, such as cares for you and me.'"
 - Jesus is making the Lillies and the sparrow our schoolmaster and theologian. When we see and hear them, may we hear their simple, humble and deeply theological voices saying, "trust the Lord. He made heaven and earth. Surely, he will care for you!"
 - God is being tender with us—he's saying, "don't you see what I do for all creation!? Don't you know you're more valuable and that I will take care of you!"
 - If I do THIS for dirty, nasty ravens, won't I do it for my child, made in my image!?
 - God, in kindness, is reminding us that he is the Sovereign King who upholds the universe.
 - He doesn't say—you're tough. you'll figure it out and be fine
 - He does say—you have a loving Father who is a King. You will be fine!
 - God is reminding us here that it is HIM, not us, that is totally sovereign and good!
 - In our sin, we LOVE to grab for functional sovereignty in our lives. See the future clearly, predict the outcomes, plan flawlessly and execute.
 - Problem is—that mentality leads us into slavery and anxiety and forces us to idolize ourselves, others and the stuff we are working to GET or KEEP!
 - God has no mysteries, surprises, unexpected turns, unforeseen circumstances! God, in his kindness is offering us an alternative to enslaving anxiety—faith-filled TRUST! Everything about our lives that we DON'T KNOW, is in the full control of a sovereign and loving Father! Let's put off functional sovereignty and actual lean in to these blessings!

- Seeking God first and throwing off anxiety is our only hope for a purposeful life. (v.31-34)
- Westminster Confession—we were created to know, serve, and enjoy God. Living a life of trust and dependence on him is our only pathway to joy and freedom
- God has saved and redeemed us through the work of Christ, will he not also care for us and provide for us all we need.
- Preoccupation with food, drink and clothing could be justified if mere survival was the end-all be-all of existence. If we only need to survive, it would make sense. But now how God made us. We aren't animals. We have souls and we have been given the task of glorifying God with our bodies/lives and to spread his rule and reign throughout the world via the gospel.
- Material things engrossing our attention, absorbing our energy and burdening us with anxiety is incompatible with Christian faith.
- Why anxiety is so destructive/sinful—it is AGAINST the grain of why God made you—to know and enjoy God as we live in glad dependence on him!
- All people are 'seekers'. It is not natural for people to drift aimlessly. We need something to live for, to set our minds and hearts on, something to give us meaning.
 - This is what we do with food—we ask immediately after breakfast, "what's for dinner?" Why? Because we want to dwell on, meditate on, prepare for and anticipate it! Problem—that's what we are supposed to do with God!
 - Also, we cope with food. We relate to food, in many ways, like we ought to relate to God—we run there for comfort, relief, de-stressing, celebration
- We Must Recognize that Ambition is at the root of anxiety (v.31-33)
 - The emphasis on the contrast is that food, drink and clothing are what the Gentiles SEEK. The SEEKING of these things reveals a heart of unbelief that, in turn, must result in ANXIETY
 - Jesus is now calling his followers to a HIGHER AMBITION...a deeper reason for living. We don't live for material things but spiritual things; not our own glory but God's; not our kingdoms but God's and his righteousness!
 - Ultimately only two ambitions for EVERY HUMAN—ambition for self or ambition for God
 - Clear that God is King—ambitious for the spread of his kingdom and righteousness everywhere in our lives and the entire world.
 - Now—all our other ambitions are liberated from being our gods to actually being healthy in that they serve our ambition for God's glory rather than compete against it.
 - So—cultivate the gifts, widen opportunities, seek promotions, start businesses, extend influence...not for ego but for God's glory
- Gospel Implications for our Anxiety
 - Rather than physical food—hunger and thirst for righteousness
 - Rather than physical clothes—put off the old clothes of the flesh and put on the new clothes of godliness and righteousness
 - Rather than a physical house—live for the Kingdom of God & church (spiritual house)
 - Actually believing in and receiving by faith the finished work of Christ on your behalf is the ONLY pathway to be freed from anxiety. Truly, for those who reject Christ, there is no true, deep, lasting relief! These promises in this text are for believers.
 - Slavery to earthly possessions and things of this earth necessarily produces an anxiety—all those things give us the endless message, "if you lose me, you will die." Therefore, we MUST anxiously and worriedly strive to increase and maintain those things. The gospel steps into that chaos with the refreshing words of a triumphant Savior, "it is finished; come to me all who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest; if the Father has given you eternal life in my work, how will he not then also give you all things; TRUST ME!"