

Unburdened of Worry (Matthew 6:25-34)

For the Travelling Light Series (Part 7)

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²⁵ “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? ²⁷ Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?

²⁸ “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. ²⁹ Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ³⁰ If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? ³¹ So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³² For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³ But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. ³⁴ Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

I. What Is Worry Good For?

Fear is one of our primary emotions. And it’s an emotion that plays an important function in our lives.

There might also be a “warranted worry” that we feel when we’re seeking to live well, love well, and honour God with our lives – especially when we find ourselves in difficult situations.

“Worry and stress are meant to arise in us for short amounts of time so that we can get ourselves out of challenging situations, but we are not made to live in stress 24/7.”

The problem is that too many of us live in stress and worry 24/7.

“Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?” (Matthew 6:27)

II. The Way That Worry Works: The ‘What If’

Jesus concludes this whole section with an important command, which offer us an insight into the way worry often works.

“Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.” (Matthew 6:34)

There is a well-known study by a group of researchers that found that 85% of what the participants worried about never even happened. Furthermore, of the 15% of worries that did come to fruition, 79% of the time, the participants said they handled those situations better than they thought they would. That means that 97% of the things we worry about we really don’t need to.

Usually, our worries take the form of ‘what if’s, which then become blown out of proportion as we tell ourselves stories about the worst case scenario.

I’ve often heard this helpful piece of advice for those of us who tend to worry: “Stop the script.”

III. What Are We Paying Attention To?

“Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?” (Matthew 6:26)

“See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these.” (Matthew 6:28b-29)

Jesus is telling us to pay attention to God and what He does.

Look at the birds and look at the flowers through the lens of faith. If you do, you’ll discover that God is a faithful God who cares for his creation. And that means he will most certainly care for his people too.

One question I’ve been encouraged to ask myself: “How did things turn out last time you felt this way?” The answer: “Actually, things turned out ok. God was faithful and he brought me through that.”

When we do pay attention to God and what He does – both in the way He cares for creation and in the ways he’s been faithful in our own lives – the worry and stress we live with might start to decrease just a little bit.

Jesus invites us to ask: What are you paying attention to?

Your own worries? Your own self? Or are you lifting up eyes of faith to see where God is at work in the world and how He has been at work in your own life?

IV. What Are We Running After?

“So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” (Matthew 6:31-33)

Last week we looked at Matthew 6:19-24, and Pastor Dave talked about being unburdened of that need for more money, wealth, stuff. Go check out that message!

When we “run after those things,” we worry about them. If our lives revolve around stuff, then our lives revolve around something that can never truly satisfy and something that is also so uncertain.

Jesus invites us to ask: What are you running after?

Are you running after “stuff”? Or running after God and His kingdom purposes?

V. A Future That Is Secure

The one thing in the future that perhaps we should fear: death. It’s that one thing in the future that – unless Jesus returns first – we all will experience.

And Jesus not only tells us not to worry about the future, and therefore not to worry about death, he does *something* that transforms your future and mine.

“Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.” (Hebrews 2:14-15)

Jesus enters death itself to break its power. He gives death the deathblow through his own death on the cross. And Jesus is raised again, proving that death truly has been defeated.

He'll take care of you today. He'll take care of you tomorrow. He'll take care of you in the future, even through the grave.

We remind ourselves of that reality and rehearse that story as we take the bread and cup and participate in communion.

Questions for Reflection

1. What are some of those 'what if' questions that run through your mind? Have you experienced those 'what if's becoming "worst case scenario" stories you tell yourself?
2. What do you tend to focus on when you're worried? What might it look like in your own life to pay attention to God and what He does in those moments?
3. What are you running after? In other words, what does your life revolve around? What might it look like for you to more fully "seek first [God's] kingdom and righteousness" (Matthew 6:33)?