

“His Kingdom First” – Part 2

Matthew 6:25-34

July 29, 2018

Summary of Congregational Meeting

For those of you who were not able to attend the congregational meeting last Sunday, I want to take a few minutes to give an update on our expansion project and then turn back to Matthew 6 as a biblical perspective on this season we are in.

Our recent survey of the congregation indicated that we should

- expand our facility by 10,000 sq ft to accommodate 200-300 people,
- have 70% of the project funded in advance to remain debt-free,
- ranging in cost from under \$500,000 to \$1 million
- and to build as soon as possible.

The current challenge for our building team is to establish a budget to work within to create a final design. So the building team is suggesting that we set January 1, 2019 as a target date so that whatever amount is in the building fund by Jan 1, will be considered 35% of our overall budget. So the building team is calling for faithful giving and aggressive prayer over the next 5 months, trusting God to provide in such a way as to direct our steps for the next design phase. So let's give as God enables us to with joy, and let's pray that God would do what only He can for His glory!

Ebenezer

To encourage you by being able to see the progress from week to week, we are building an Ebenezer in the foyer. The term comes from 1 Samuel 7 when Israel repented of their idolatry and God delivered them from the Philistines with a great victory. And so Samuel set up a commemorative stone and named it Ebenezer saying, “thus far the Lord has helped us.” So our “stone” wall in the foyer reminds us that we are building on Christ as our Cornerstone and helping us rejoice each week by saying, “this far the Lord has helped us.”

2020 Vision

- 20 New Believers (**Open heart, home, word**; Prayerwalking)
- \$200,000 p/year added to building fund
- 20% increase in general giving to support new facility
- Vision check on all our ministries
- Break ground, summer 2020

More than a Building, We need to build the Church

- To live and walk by faith
- To be an established people of prayer
- A giving church characterized by generosity
- Sacrificial living for the Kingdom
- Employing the gifts, talents, and skills of the body
- Gratitude and praise in response to seeing the hand of God
- Sharpening our vision for gospel effectiveness
- Growing in our love for one another: valuing personal relationships over personal preferences
- Unity: doing it together

What an incredible season of opportunity! So let's begin today praying for God to work through us and beyond us. What will your part be? What will your trust God to do beyond what you can do with your prayers? **[Pray]**

Matthew 6:25-34 – A Biblical Perspective for this season

Let's turn our hearts to Matthew 6 now, where we are facing the two hurdles that must always be overcome every time we deal with money (personal budget, building expansion, mission field, college). The first hurdle that we addressed last week was the love of money and what it can buy. Today we are going to address the second hurdle which is our tendency to worry about money. The reason I am treating these two sermons as part 1 & 2 is because verse 25 begins with “for this reason.” So what is said in the latter part of the passage about worry has a direct relationship to what was said earlier about what we treasure. If we take the whole of vs. 19-34

together, I think we can summarize our response to Jesus teaching in this way:

Because we can only serve one master, we must focus our resources on God's interests, free of worry, knowing that He will meet our needs as we serve His kingdom.

I built this summary statement around some key verses in Matt 6. Let me point them out.

- Vs. 19-21
- Vs. 24
- **Vs. 33**

The main theme of today's portion is obvious: *Don't worry!* Jesus not only commands us not to worry but reasons and illustrates at length to help us overcome worry.

Notice that vs. 25 begins with the word "therefore." The command to not worry in vs. 25 is based on what Jesus taught in the previous passage. What Jesus just taught us is that you can only store up treasure in one place, you can only live with one primary vision, because you can only have one true master. Now assuming that as a Christian you say, I want God to be my master, not temporary earthly wealth, Jesus says, then don't worry about earthly cares because your Master, God Himself, will take care of you.

Too often we live as though our lives depend on basic physical necessities like food and clothing when in reality life depends on God. The first step to breaking out of the prison of worry is to put this life's cares in perspective.

First Jesus says, the essence of your life is about more than food (25). If you think of your life primarily as physical, then you will see basic necessities like food and water as most essential. But in reality our life is more than physical. It is a gift from God. He creates life. And He has the power to sustain life. The value of our life is determined not by our earthly existence but by God.

When we become consumed with worry about our basic necessities and our self-preservation on this earth, we have forgotten that the purpose of life exceeds our physical existence. Food is not the most important thing for our life because our physical bodies are not the whole of what life is about. Paul said for me to live is Christ and to die is gain. That means that our highest purpose supersedes physical life and the most important thing in life, more important than food, is having a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, whereby God becomes our heavenly Father in the most intimate sense. So what we rely on most is not food to sustain our bodies, but our Father's care who provides all we need for both life and eternity.

In vs. 26, Jesus illustrates God's care for us by comparing us to the birds. "They do not sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them." Now there's a sense in which birds work. They have to go find their food. They don't just wait for someone to bring it to them. Birds work, but they don't worry. God always provides what they need. Now comes the punch line: "are you not worth much more than they?" In other words, if God, in His kindness, is faithful to feed the birds won't He take even better care of His children! If God is so faithful in providing for the birds that they don't need to stockpile or store their food, is it reasonable to think that He will let His children starve?

Take note that Jesus refers to God as our heavenly Father. As our Father He loves and cares for us and not allow anything to hinder His best purposes for our lives. As our *heavenly* Father, He has all power and authority to ensure that His loving intentions toward us are fulfilled. Perhaps the greatest deterrent to worry is grasping the glorious reality that God is your heavenly Father.

Then in vs. 27 Jesus adds, "and who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life?" Worry is absolutely vain. It is a waste of time because we can do nothing to ultimately sustain our lives. Only God can do that.

It's important for us to realize that when we get wrapped up in worry, it's not because we are trusting God to meet our needs but because we have placed the hope of our existence in our own ability to sustain ourselves. Worry reveals that "our perspective on life is tragically godless" in that moment. We have forgotten who our heavenly Father is. So what is the best

response to worry? Prayer. Re-centering our hope and trust on God who alone has the power to give and sustain life.

The second thing Jesus says in vs. 25, is that the body is more than clothing. In other words, if God has given you a body, will he not provide the clothes it needs which are of lesser value? Then to drive His point home, he compares us to the lilies of the field. The grass of the fields only lasts for a short season, yet God adorns the grass with flowers that are more beautiful than Solomon with all his wealth. If God cares for the flowers so lavishly that they don't even need to work, will He not care for the needs of His children to whom He gives eternal life?

At the end of vs. 25, Jesus strikes to the very heart of worry when He says, "You of little faith." Worry grows where faith doesn't. Worry is the result of weakness in our faith.

Now notice that Jesus did not say, "you of no faith." Those who have no faith, who don't know God has their heavenly Father, have every reason to worry because all of life rests on their shoulders. Worry is a realistic response when a person realizes he is no match for his overwhelming circumstances and doesn't have faith in a heavenly Father to undertake for Him. But in Matt 6, Jesus is speaking to those who know God as their Father, yet are suffering from the weakness of their faith.

Let me paraphrase 31-32 this way: You of weak faith, do not worry like the unbelievers who don't know God, for your heavenly Father is well aware of your needs. And if your Father takes care of the birds and nourishes the flowers, are you not confident that He will take care of you, His child.

So what do we need to do when we are tempted to worry? Bolster our faith. *Faith does not work automatically.* We must employ it. We must put our faith to work! *Faith does not grow automatically.* We must tell it what to believe. The answer to worry is not a change of circumstances. The answer to worry is resting on the changeless character of God and the unchanging hope of His promises. So when you feel worry creeping into your heart, you tell your heart what is true about God and rehearse in your heart what God has promised you. When you start to worry about money, you say, "heart, our God is the Creator, He owns all things and never lacks provision for what I need. Heart, our God is faithful and He said He would

never leave us or forsake us. Heart, our God is all-wise and all-powerful and has all authority. Nothing can prevent Him from meeting our need and if we should linger any longer in the midst of this need it is because He has purposes yet to fulfill which are holy and right.

A life of faith frees us to live for God and His interests and His purposes, trusting Him to provide the lesser things that we need on this earth. That's why Jesus says in vs. 33, "***But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you***" (33). In other words, set your aim on living for God's interests, in alignment with God's character, and there will be nothing to hinder God's provision for your earthly needs.

What Jesus doesn't mean here is that we should not plan ahead or prepare for tomorrow. Planning ahead and preparing for the future is not worry. In fact, the more you plan ahead and prepare for tomorrow the less you will have to worry about. Planning ahead is wisdom. Worry is longing to control future circumstances in a way that undermines God's sovereign care.

Vs. 33 is really a summary of the Christian life. "Seek first His kingdom." Notice the word *first*. Our primary passion is spending our life on God's interests, advancing His kingdom. We will still have to work and eat, and wash clothes. But those are secondary things that serve our greater purpose of living for God and His eternal purposes. The danger is becoming so distracted and consumed with the cares of this world that we spend more time looking at our circumstances than we do looking at God.

"Seek first His kingdom *and His righteousness...*" The best insurance you can have in this world is a life of growing holiness that aligns with God's character and pursues His favor.

Finally, in vs. 34 Jesus repeats His command for the 3rd time, indicating the level at which we would struggle with worry: "Do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own." So don't borrow the burdens from tomorrow which God will provide the grace for tomorrow. God has mercy enough for today and for tomorrow and He will supply it as its needed.

Lamentations 3 says, "The Lord's lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning. Great is Thy

faithfulness.” Tomorrow’s troubles will be met with tomorrow’s mercies, so we don’t need to worry about tomorrow. God allows no trouble into our lives but what He has sufficient mercy to meet in that moment.

Worry comes so naturally to us that it can be hard for us to adopt a wartime mentality toward it. We know we shouldn’t worry, but have we really taken into consideration how destructive worry is. Let me close by summarizing what worry is from a number of different angles.

1. **Worry is counterproductive.**

Jesus said you can’t add a single hour to your life. Worry is a waste of time and energy. The only thing that worry actually accomplishes is making your hard situation harder.

So what should we do instead of worry. The one productive thing we can always do when we can’t do anything else—pray!

2. **Worry is evidence of weak faith.**

To those who worry, Jesus said, “You of little faith.” Yet our faith need not remain small. We can strengthen our faith by focusing on the character of God, power of God, presence of God, and promises of God. So the right response to worry is to not only prayer in general, but robust, believing prayer. And if we are going to get from weak faith to powerful prayer, we need to speak to ourselves and to God more about His character than about our circumstances. We need to rehearse His promises more than our problems.

3. **Worry is lazy thinking.**

It may not feel lazy because you are expending all kinds of needless energy. Worrying is refusing to do the hard work of thinking biblically when you don’t want to. When you worry you are letting your mind run away with your natural sinful inclinations rather than disciplining your mind and heart to believe what God has said, to trust His righteous character and to rest in His sovereign care. Whenever you begin to worry, it is a sign that you need to insist on thinking according to what is true and pressing yourself to believe what God has said.

4. **Worry is sin.**

This should seem obvious because Jesus commands us not to worry. But let’s be more specific.

- **Worry is sin because it defames God’s character.** Worry acts as if God is not sovereign, all-power, all-wise or sufficient. Worry expresses our belief that God is incompetent and therefore cannot be trusted.
- **Worry is sin because it discredits God’s promises.** Worry acts as if God’s promises will not hold up under the weight of our circumstances. Or at the very least worry reveals that we don’t really know the promises of God.
- **Worry is sin because it is rebellion of the heart.** Worry is longing to control what I cannot control rather than trusting in God’s sovereign control. I worry because I can’t do anything about the situation. But if I could I would. In other words, the spirit of worry is a willingness to usurp God’s place if possible.

5. **Worry is a paralysis of perspective.**

All it takes to fall into the clutches of worry is to focus on our circumstances and problems more than on God.

The answer to worry is faith that is fueled by the character and promises of God and expressed through prayer.