

Do Not Worry: *A Gospel View*

Scripture: *Matthew 6:24-34.*

Summary of Sermon: The gospel of Jesus Christ *rescues* us from the *reality* and the *reasons* of our worrying.

Introduction

Matthew 6:24-34 is a brief passage of only eleven verses. And yet, the word, *worry*, appears six times in this brief passage.

This is because, in this passage, Christ calls on the people of God to stop worrying so much about their daily lives. What Christ teaches in this passage about worry shows us, first, the *reality* of the experience of worrying. Second, we see the *reason* for our worrying. Third, and most importantly, we see how the gospel of Christ *rescues* us from worrying. Together, these **3R's** give us the gospel's response to worrying.

The dictionary defines this word *worry* is this: *The experience of feeling anxious and troubled about actual or potential problems that we face or that we may face.*

So, may the Lord use these **3R's** from this passage that show us the gospel's response to worry, to deliver us from the experience of feeling anxious and troubled about actual or potential problems that we face in our lives.

I. Reality

- 1) Our passage, **Matthew 6:24-34**, is part of a very long passage that begins in **Matthew 5** and ends in **Matthew 7**. Bible scholars refer to this long passage as the *Sermon on the Mount*. This is because Christ presented the teaching in these three chapters on a mount on the north end of the Sea of Galilee, near Capernaum, where Christ was based in those days.

Capernaum was in the northern region of Israel, which was called Galilee. In those days, in Galilee, as well as in the rest of Israel, although there were a few rich and powerful people, most of the people were ordinary people whose chief concern was basic survival because of their low wages that was coupled with high prices, debt, and high taxes.

- 2) For example, in addition to the OT tithe of 10% percent, the ordinary people also had to pay for Temple sacrifices, costly offerings, gifts for cleansing ceremonies, and the annual Temple Tax. These payments often took almost 50% of the income of an ordinary working person.

In those days most people lived in villages where they depended on their farms and fishing boats to earn a living. Others earned their living through trade, commerce, and light manufacturing in the small towns and cities.

In those days, the foundation of the Israel economy was agriculture. Farmers produced a wide variety of crops and they raised various forms of livestock. Farmers, however, faced the constant threat of losing their land because of oppressive laws and taxes required by both the Jewish and Roman authorities.

Farmers constantly faced losses from unfavorable climatic conditions, natural disasters, and agricultural pests. In addition, they were required to pay rental fees to the owners of large estates, and very high interest on loans which agricultural reversals forced them to borrow at high interest rates from extortionate lenders who were merciless in demanding payment.

Many farmers were thus driven from their land by forces beyond their control. These displaced peasant farmers were most likely the ones depicted in Jesus' parable in **Matt. 20:1-16** about the laborers in the vineyard, some of whom were so desperate that they searched for work all day.

- 3) So, for many of these simple people, right from waking up very early in the morning, until falling exhausted into bed at night, their daily lives were consumed mentally and physically with staying alive to have the strength to do it all over again tomorrow! So, worrying about their basic survival was a very present reality in the lives of these people.
- 4) This is why, in **verse 25**, Christ, recognizing the reality of worry in the lives of these ordinary people, addressed them by saying: *Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear.* Again, in **verse 31**, He says to them: *Do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'*
- 5) And so, as you can see, these people that Christ was addressing in this passage were simple everyday people like you and I who were faced with all the financial hardships and challenges that you and I face today. So, just like these people, we worry about our rent, we worry about the rising cost of living, we worry about our children's school fees, about the cost of health care, and so much more.
- 6) So, we can summarize **our first R** from this passage by saying that what Christ says to these people, and to us, in this passage shows us that He recognized the **reality** of worry in their lives, and He knows all about the reality of worry in our own lives today.

II. Reason

- 1) In the first verse of our passage, **verses 24**, Jesus said: *No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.*

In the next verse, **verse 25**, Jesus goes on to say this: *Therefore, I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear.*

- 2) The word *therefore* that begins **verse 25** means, *for this reason*. So, this word, *therefore*, that begins **verse 25**, is connected to the idea in **verse 24**. This means that in these two verses, Christ was saying: *Because you cannot serve the two masters of God and money at the same time, do not worry, because if you worry, you are not serving God, but instead, you are serving money.*

- 3) The Greek word that is translated in **verse 24** as the English word *serve* has in it the meaning of *to obey*, or *to worship*. So, Christ was saying in these two verses that, when we worry, we are worshipping money, not God, and we are showing that money has displaced God in our lives to become the real god that we are worshipping. In other words, when we worry, we are guilty of the sin of idolatry.

An idol is anything that, if we lost, we would not consider life worth living because it is what gives us our sense of meaning, security, purpose, and satisfaction in life. This can include our work, our ministry, our family, our identity, our assets, but especially, our money and our assets. So, consciously or unconsciously, money, for these people in this passage that Christ was addressing, had become the idol in their lives that they worshipped.

- 4) We use the word *worship* these days to refer to the music we sing in church, but the original meaning of the word is: *To acknowledge the worth of a person or an object*. The original old English word is actually, *worth-ship*.

To worship, therefore, means to express great admiration, devotion, or reverence towards a person or an object in recognition of their merit, their *worth* or *worthiness* because of what we obtain, or hope to obtain, from that person or object. So, Christ was pointing out to the people He was addressing in this passage that, by inadvertently worshipping money, they were regarding money with more admiration, devotion, and reverence than God.

This applies to many of us today. And this is because, when we have, or when we earn a lot of money, we get a feeling of being in control of our lives. Money, as the means by which we obtain food, clothing, and shelter, easily makes us feel secure and safe. Without money we feel anxious and, we worry.

This explains why we envy and we honor people with much money, and we pity and look down on people with little or no money. This is also why we sometimes find it so hard to share our money with others, even in the church. We think that our financial net worth is what gives us self-worth, and so we become ungenerous, fearful, and self-protective about giving our money away.

Don't get me wrong; I'm not saying that money is a bad thing. Money, in and of itself, is a good thing, if we allow it to have its God-intended place in our lives as a store of value, as a measure of wealth, and as a means of exchange in trade. But, being the sinful, fallen human beings that we are, we easily make money the ultimate thing in our lives and we allow it to replace God as the source of our meaning, our purpose, and our sense of fulfillment, and power.

- 5) And yet, the problem is that money is very fickle and uncertain; it can be here today, and gone tomorrow. This is why, in **Matt. 13:22**, Christ refers to the deceitfulness of wealth. Again, **I Tim. 6:17** tells us that because of the uncertainty of money, we should not put our hope in it, but rather, we should put our hope in God, who richly provides us with everything we need.
- 6) You see, the simple truth is that, in the end, we will lose anything, including money, that we put our hope and trust in more than God. It will fail us. Only God lasts forever, and for this reason, the only thing we cannot lose is God and our relationship with Him, which stretches into all eternity.

- 7) So, we can summarize **our second R** by saying that, in this passage, Christ was saying that the **reason** we worry is that, consciously or unconsciously, in our hearts, we allow money, which is so uncertain, to displace the true worship of God, who is forever solid and sure.

III. Rescue

- 1) In **verses 31 to 33**, Christ explains how the gospel rescues us from worry by saying this: *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.*

There are three important parts to the words of Christ in these three verses.

- 2) The first important part is the concept of the Kingdom of God. The word *kingdom* is made up of two words; *king* and *domain*. The word *kingdom*, therefore, refers to the reign of a king over the people in a domain, like the United Kingdom, for example. So, *the kingdom of God* refers to *God's people living in God's place, under God's rule, and therefore enjoying God's blessing of peace and well-being.*

The first two chapters of the Bible show us that God created our world to be His Kingdom because our first parents were God's people living in God's place in the Garden of Eden under God's rule, and therefore enjoying God's blessing of peace with one another, peace with nature, and most importantly, peace with God.

The third chapter of the Bible narrates the very sad story of how the original reality of God's Kingdom was disrupted when our first parents, with all of us inside them, chose to obey the voice of Satan instead of the voice of God. By doing this, our first parents turned away from God's Kingdom, and became separated and alienated from God, so that all of us, inside them at that time, are born spiritually alienated and separated from God, as **Isaiah 53:6** and **Rom. 5:12-19** confirm to us.

In **Matt. 4:17**, at the beginning of His earthly ministry, the first words Christ spoke were these words: *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.* The Gospel of Matthew emphasizes that the entire ministry of Christ was based on His teaching and preaching about the Kingdom of God as we see Him doing in this passage.

This was because Christ came into the world to re-introduce into real human experience the spiritual Kingdom of God.

Through His death and resurrection, Christ ushered into this world the Kingdom of God as a spiritual reality that we can experience when we confess our sin and when we place our faith in Him, so that God forgives our sin, and we are in-dwelt by His Holy Spirit to be spiritually born again and we receive God's eternal life.

- 3) This brings us to the second important part of the words of Christ in these verses. This is that, when we place our faith in Him, God becomes our heavenly Father, as we see Christ referring to God in this passage.

In **John 16:23**, on the night before He went to the cross, Christ assured His disciples that, after His work on the cross, they would receive from the heavenly Father everything they need when they pray according to His will. Christ said this to them because, on the cross, He would lose His relationship with His heavenly Father, so that when we repent of our sin, and we place our faith in Him, you and I would become the Father's children who can obtain everything we need from Him.

You see, the good news of the gospel is that, when in **Matt. 27:46**, Christ, on the cross, cried out these words in a loud voice, *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?* He was being forsaken by the Father, so that when we place our faith in what He did for us there on the cross, the Father will never forsake us.

- 4) This brings us to the third important part of the words of Christ in these verses, which refers to faith in God as our Father. We see this in **verse 26**, and again in **verses 28 to 30**, where Christ said this:

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. And why do you worry about clothes? 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. 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?

Jesus was saying: *Look at the birds, God feeds them. Look at the flowers, look at the grass, God takes care of these every day! So, what kind of heavenly Father do you think you have who will feed the birds of the air and clothes the flowers of the field and yet neglect His own children who are much more valuable to Him than birds and flowers?*

To the people Christ was addressing in this passage, Christ referred to God as their heavenly Father because God had delivered their forefathers from bondage in Egypt, and He had enacted the Old Covenant with them at Sinai, and made them His people purely by His grace, not because they deserved it. Faith in God was therefore their expected response to this covenant of grace.

You and I today enter the New Covenant and become God's children also by God's grace through the work of Christ on the cross for us, as **Eph. 2:8** reminds us. So, for you and I too, our faith in God is based on the gospel good news of what God has done for us in Christ to make us His people.

In both the OT and the NT, we see that God never asks us to blindly put our faith in Him. Instead, God always calls us to look at what He has done for us in the past, and based on that revelation of His love, His power, and His faithfulness, to place our trust in Him.

This is why **Heb. 11:1** tells us that biblical faith does not exist as a separate reality, but only as an attitude of trust in something or someone that allows that thing or person to act on our behalf. So, in these verses, Christ was saying to these people in this passage, stop expressing such little faith in God by worrying so much. Look at what God has done for you and your ancestors throughout your covenantal history, and trust Him to provide for your needs as your heavenly Father.

This explains why in **verse 32**, Christ says: *For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.* He was calling on these people not to be like the people who are not in a covenant relationship with God, and therefore do not know God as their Father.

This applies to us when we look at what God has done for us in the gospel of Christ. **Rom. 8:32**: confirms this with these words: *He who did not spare His own Son, but gave him up for us all, how will He not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?* This verse is declaring that, based on the gospel good news of the finished work of Christ for us on the cross, we can rightly expect our Father in heaven to meet all our material needs.

Paul's *all things* in **Rom. 8:32** corresponds to the *all these things* of Christ here in **verse 33** where Christ makes this declaration: *But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.* The Greek word translated in this verse as *righteousness* means *to be in right standing with God*.

So, what Christ is saying here in **verse 33** is this: *Let the greatest priority in your life be to live with faith in God, and in obedience to God, who is your heavenly Father. He has brought you into His Kingdom. So, allow your right standing with Him to be reflected in your daily lives as you depend on Him to meet all your needs.*

- 5) Earlier on in **verse 8** of this same chapter, Christ had said: *Your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.* In **verses 25** and **27**, Christ asks these questions: *Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?* And, then, in **verse 34**, Christ concludes by saying: *Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*

We tend to think that worrying is an unconscious experience that we can't control or do anything about so we tend to see worrying as something we just find ourselves doing. But, from this passage, we see that this is just not the case, otherwise Christ would not have commanded us not to worry.

By commanding us not to worry Christ is helping us to see that worrying is a choice we make to respond to our circumstances that is based on our worldview about God and money. So, in this passage, Christ is saying, if you let the gospel shape your worldview you will naturally stop worrying.

- 6) In short, Christ was saying to these people, and to us today: *Stop worrying so much about your daily lives because God has all your today, and all your tomorrow, covered! Stop worrying!*
- 7) So, we can summarize **our third R** from this passage by saying that the gospel **rescues** us from worry when we look at what God has done for us in Christ on the cross, because the gospel enables us to shift our faith from money to God.

Conclusion

This is how these **3R's** from this passage present to us the gospel's view of worrying. So, as you can see, God would have us take the gospel seriously and stop worrying, and instead, to trust God to provide for us, no matter what!

In **Matt. 8:20**, Jesus said that foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head. This was because Christ had left home, and his artisanal trade, to become an itinerant preacher. We know from **Luke 8:1-3** that, having left His artisanal trade, Christ was now supported financially by His followers.

This tells us that the faithfulness of God in providing for the needs of His people that Christ was teaching in this passage was from his own very human experience of having His needs faithfully met by his Father in heaven. So, in this passage, Christ was not just teaching something that sounded good – He was teaching from his own very real experience.

I'll end by sharing with you one of my own many personal experiences of how true this gospel view of worrying is.

Let us pray!

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