

## Introduction

This morning I would like to direct your attention to a problem that we all have at one time or another: the problem of being worrywarts. We worry about many things, especially our daily needs, our work, and our health. Preachers worry about sermons, even about sermons on worry. I may have to begin next Sunday's sermon this afternoon, but I must work at not worrying about how I can come up with another sermon given how depleted I may be today. My mind can be like a tabula rasa (a blank sheet) when I finish one sermon and look ahead to the next. I often ask myself, "Can I do this again starting from what seems to be an empty spiritual tank, starting from scratch?"

A definition of worry is important to pin down and all the ingredients for it are here in our text (Mat.6.25-34). We have anxiety connected to life, food, drink, and clothing (v. 25) in relation to the future (v. 34). Simply put, worry is an undue concern for the future, an anxious concern for the security of your life, anxiety over food, drink, and clothing, over life and health as each day lunges forward toward tomorrow.

Jesus says in response to these things, "do not be anxious, and do not worry." This would have a hollow sound except for the fact that He then spells out a number of specific principles to help us counteract worry. In Matthew 6.25-34, Jesus gives a solution to this problem. He tells us how to break the worry habit, how to counter the tendency to worry.

He gave the foundation already in 6.19-24 as indicated by the opening word of verse 25 (therefore). The foundation is the basic stance of the Christian with regard to earthly things, namely, the principle of detachment from earthly things with a corresponding attachment to God because you cannot serve God and money (v. 24). This detachment/attachment means that all of life and all earthly things are valued as instruments by which to serve God and through which to receive God's heavenly reward. In this way, we deal with things with a clear and unhampered eye and our outlook on life is flooded with light.

Per the foundation, we can say the following. Because you are heavenly minded (vs. 19-20) or heavenly hearted (v. 21) with clear perspective on life (vs. 22-23) as you serve God exclusively, as you serve Him only with regard to all things (v. 24), then "do not worry." The foundation for solving the worry problem is a strong heavenly and godly perspective. Therefore, because you are a Christian, it is your duty to keep worry in check.

With that foundation in mind, we are ready for the principles that Jesus outlines in 6.25-34. These are the basics for handling the problem of worry.

### 1A. First, you must put life into perspective (v. 25b)

**Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?** So do not worry "about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on" (25a). In other words, life is more; it is more than food and clothing.

This is so basic. We need to define life. It is not merely security in the temporal and earthly things of food, drink, and clothes for the sustenance and protection of the body. Life is more and the body is more, which means that your bodily life, your bodily existence, is more than these things. With regard to the rich fool, Jesus said, "**a man's life does not consist in the abundance of what he possesses**" (Lk. 12.15). To Martha Jesus said, "**I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,**"<sup>26</sup> **and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die**" (Jn. 11.25-26). Therefore, life involves the security of your whole existence body and soul before God.

Christian, why worry about the security of your life as to what you eat, drink, and wear? Is not life much more? With your life hidden with Christ in God, is not your life safe and secure

(cf. Col. 3.1-4, bound for glory)? It is safe and secure. Yes, you have unparalleled and matchless security to your life. You have come to the sacred city, which has foundations whose builder, and maker is God. Your life is imperishable, durable, and eternal in the heavens. You are totally at home in the universe in the fullest possible way; you are forever safe and secure.

When my mother was dying, she grappled with the safety question by asking, “What is going to happen to me?” What a pungent question: what is going to happen, what is going to happen to me? It looks to the future; it reaches out with longing for personal security – to me. My answer to her was, “it is time now for you to rest, to enter into your final rest with the Lord.”

Life is a secure existence before God and His judgment; it is resurrection life, in death never dying because of Christ the first fruits of resurrection harvest.

If you forget this basic security then you will easily worry about your life. Therefore, you need to put “life” into perspective. Think about it for a moment and ask yourself, “What am I worrying about?” Ultimately, the answer is that I am worrying about my life so a first step of solution is to define life.

## 2A. You must put God’s Fatherly love into perspective (v. 26)

**Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?**

We have here the fundamental dignity of man in contrast to the lower forms of animate life on earth. Man is worth more than birds of the air!

There is a great deal more here. Your worth refers to the value that you have before God *as your heavenly Father*. You are His beloved children. He loves you and therefore His care for you far exceeds the care He gives to the birds of the air.

Look, He feeds them in all their ignorance and lack of intelligence. They do not plan. They do not sow in order to reap. They do not save for the future by storing up things in barns. They lack likeness to God; they are not His image bearers. Nonetheless, the Father feeds them.

Likewise, “greater-wise,” He will nurture and nourish you who are His children created anew to reflect His image on earth.

Worry has God’s love out of focus. Look at the birds and you will see a small sample of His provision for your life, your safety, and your security. He is doing much more for you. He is taking care of you in ways you do not know or understand.

Sometimes we are like the birds with our failings, sins, ignorance, poor planning, and lack of wisdom. Nevertheless, we are beloved children because of the work of Christ. God lovingly cares for us even if He sometimes chastens us; the rod of our Father may hurt, but it is a rod of love; it advances our greatest good. His love is constant and unending. Every fluttering bird you see, every chirp you hear is a reminder of the Father’s love and your abiding safety and security.

## 3A. You must put worry into perspective (v. 27)

**Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? (KJV)**

**And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? (ESV)**

The King James Version gives us a literal but somewhat misleading translation of this verse. It accurately and literally speaks of a cubit but it suggests the idea of adding to a person’s height or stature. The English Standard Version corrects this idea of stature replacing it with “span of life.” In other words, the cubit (about 18 inches) is not designating height but length and the ESV gets that right. However, the ESV incorrectly (over precisely) translates the cubit into an hour. What we need to do is to think more literally along the lines of the cubit (a spatial unit) in relation to a person’s age (the size of their life, a temporal unit).

If we begin to think more literally then we will read the question as asking, “Who, by worrying, can add even eighteen inches to his journey on earth?” In other words, worry does not

extend life on earth. It does not even extend it eighteen inches further on your pathway. It does not add a single step!

If we translate this into time, we get a smaller unit than an hour. How long does it take to put one foot in front of another? Perhaps it takes about a second. Worry does not add even one second to the time of your life on earth. It does not even give you one more breath.

Worry has no value. In fact, it is counter-productive because it lessens the quality of your life while adding nothing to its quantity. It does no good. It does not help you get through or cope with difficulties and trials. It only becomes part of the problem. So don't go there.

#### 4A. You must put God's glorious purpose into perspective (vs. 28-30)

**And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin,<sup>29</sup> yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.<sup>30</sup> But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?**

Solomon was a glorious king. His clothing reflected his glory but he has been and continues to be surpassed in glory by the flowering growth of the field lily that is arrayed, dressed, and clothed by God.

Thus, *a fortiori*, on an even greater scale, will not your Father do much more for you even if you stand before Him with a most frail faith? I am still inclined to take "O you of little faith" as an encouragement and not a rebuke. If there is any rebuke here, it is mild and subordinate. The entire flow of thought goes in the direction of encouragement. Thus, the simplest and feeblest faith in Jesus Christ is the way of life and glory.

Therefore, when you are troubled on your journey, look again and look often at the lilies of the field. Consider the array of flowers and see there a small display of the glory that God has in store for you. Since He is going to do so much more for you in the priceless gift of glory, honor, and immortality, how can you worry about food, drink and clothing?

You may abound. You may not abound, but rich or poor, great or small, there is a great glory ahead of you in the Father's purpose of glory for you. He will clothe your body with resurrection glory! (cf. the true message of flowers at a funeral or graveside for the saint; a promise of the beauty and fragrance of resurrection glory!)

#### 5A. You must have kingdom righteousness in perspective (vs. 31-33)

**Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'<sup>32</sup> For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.<sup>33</sup> But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.**

We possess a secure life with much more to it than food, drink and clothing *by seeking*. The promise is to searching, to strenuously searching for God's kingdom rule over your life. In other words, we are back to loving God in all earthly things. Thus, to love God means to seek His kingdom principles. It means seeking righteousness for daily living with reference to earthly things (to live the choice you have made for God over all else).

In this way, you will have what you need. For example, kingdom righteousness involves the principle of "you must work in order to eat." There is a great value placed on work, labor, and industry. The eighth commandment in its true spirit and intent includes the promotion of our own wealth and outward estate as well as the wealth and outward estate of others (cf. the answer to WSC, Q74, **The eighth commandment requireth the lawful procuring and furthering the wealth and outward estate of ourselves and others**).

Furthermore, the promise of verse 33 does not mean you will have no problems or that life will be trouble free. That is obviously not the case (cf. v. 34, each day has its own trouble). The promise is that in seeking kingdom righteousness first as a distinct priority, you will have what you need on earth, you will grow in being "**rich toward God**" (Lk. 12.21), and you have an inheritance of glory and splendor beyond that of the greatest princes and kings.

Keep the promise of kingdom righteousness in focus and you will have no room for worry. Keep this focus knowing that the Father knows what you need (you heavenly Father knows, v. 32).

6A. Finally, you must put tomorrow into perspective (v. 34)

**Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.**

You must live one day at a time tackling today's problems and troubles today and leaving tomorrow's troubles until tomorrow comes.

Again, the principle is as basic as it is clear. If you add tomorrow's troubles or presumed (perhaps misperceived) troubles to today, you over tax yourself and you cultivate worry in a compounded way.

We have a wonderful use of personification with tomorrow presented as a person that can and will take care of himself. You have no need to try to take care of him and if you do try, he will slap you around and make you miserable for intruding into his territory (into his time zone). He punishes those who violate his turf! (He says, "I would rather do it myself.").

You have sufficient trouble to deal with each day. This is realistic. Jesus prepares us for life in the real world. We do not need additional troubles added to today from tomorrow.

Thus, when you put tomorrow into proper perspective, you will live one day at a time dealing with current daily priorities one at a time, one day at a time.

The wrong way here will divert energy and concentration from today's tasks and duties. You will lose quality of life and compound your problems. Tomorrow worries, frets, and gets mean; so don't go to him to borrow trouble for today!

## Conclusion

What we have in this text is a Christian and believing solution to the worry habit. It is for Christians for those who commit themselves to God absolutely as His servants. It is for those who commit themselves to God's kingly authority in Christ, who choose love for God above all earthly things, who choose to serve God in every earthly thing.

There is a pointed warning here as well. If you do not choose God above all else, then you have a great deal to worry about. The present and future are then both clouded with darkness and how great is that darkness!

However, he says to those who make the choice of love for God above all earthly things, "you have life now and forevermore." That is His word to those who seek to serve Him in everything under His kingly authority and rule.

Because of the Father's matchless love, because He has a glorious purpose for you in the future, because you have the safety and security of your entire existence body and soul now and in the coming judgment, you are not to worry but face each day's challenges in earnest pursuit of kingdom righteousness.