

## MESSAGE FROM THE MASTER

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Series theme: Cast Your Cares On Jesus

Text: Matthew 6:25-34 (Cast Your Material Anxiety On Jesus)

The text for this morning is a portion of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, recorded in Matthew 6:25-34. Jesus said: <sup>25</sup>"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 important than food, and the body more important than clothes? <sup>26</sup>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? <sup>27</sup>Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?

<sup>28</sup>"And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. <sup>29</sup>Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. <sup>30</sup>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, O you of little faith?

<sup>31</sup>So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' <sup>32</sup>For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. <sup>33</sup>But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. <sup>34</sup>Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

There are few things, if anything, more precious to Christians than the Bible. It tells us who God is and what God has done for us. It is a lamp to our feet and a light for our path. It is a road map that shows us the way to heaven. It is a constant source of comfort and hope and joy.

But not everyone feels this way. There are some people who don't appreciate the Bible. There are people who expend a whole lot of time and energy trying to discredit its message. They question the Bible's authority, claiming that it's just another book. They question the Bible's authenticity, claiming that the text has been corrupted over the years and is no longer reliable. They question the Bible's relevancy, claiming that a book that was written thousands of years ago doesn't speak to people and their problems today.

I wonder if the critics would change their mind about that last criticism if they read the text for today. The cost of gas is approaching \$4 a gallon. Home prices are sagging. Food prices are soaring. The weak U.S. dollar is giving many people weak stomachs. The state of the nation's economy has some Americans worried about meeting their most basic needs...just like the people who lived in Jesus' day.

They worried about having enough food to eat. They worried about having clothes to wear. Jesus sympathized with these people. Jesus cared about these people, but he also wanted them to

recognize that there was more at stake than survival. The real problem they needed to confront was worry, and Jesus provided a simple solution.

He said: “Don’t! Don’t worry! Instead of worrying about your problems, give them to me.” And the Lord extends the same invitation to you and me today. Instead of worrying, instead of focusing on all of your worldly cares and concerns...

## CAST YOUR MATERIAL ANXIETY ON JESUS

In the span of ten short verses Jesus repeats the same three-word phrase three times: “Do not worry.” First he says: **“Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear” (25a)**. And he could have stopped right there. He could have said: “Don’t worry because I said so,” and left it at that. But he didn’t. Instead he went on to explain why disciples of Jesus don’t need to worry.

The first reason comes in the form of a question: **“Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes” (25b)?** This is an argument from the greater to the lesser, and it goes like this. If God gave you the gift of life, do you doubt that he will provide you with the food you need to stay alive? And if God gave you your body, doesn’t it stand to reason that he will supply you with the clothing you need to cover your body?

The answer to both of those questions is the same: YES. If you are listening to these words Jesus wants you to know that you are no accident. You are a special creation of God. You are fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139:14). Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19). And the God who breathed in you the breath of life, the God who knit you together in your mother’s womb, will supply all that you need for body and life.

Do you still need to be convinced? Do you need more proof that God will provide? All you have to do is look at the world around you. All you have to do is look up into the sky. Jesus said: **“Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your Father feeds them” (26a)**.

You don’t have to be a bird watcher to understand Jesus’ point. You don’t have to watch birds for hours to see how they fly from tree to tree like they don’t have a worry in the world. What’s their secret? What do they know that we don’t know? Nothing. In fact, we are the ones who are in the know. We know God as our loving Father, and we know that because he feeds the birds (who aren’t worth nearly as much to him) he will certainly take care of us.

Jesus’ “Don’t Worry” discourse continues with another argument from the lesser to the greater, and this time he focuses on why believers don’t have to worry about clothes: **“See how the lilies 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” (28, 29)**.

Solomon was Israel’s wisest and wealthiest king. He had everything. He had access to the finest fabrics and the best tailors. His royal wardrobe rivaled that of any king in any kingdom. And yet

his beautifully ornate clothes were plain and ordinary compared to the lilies of the field, wildflowers that were unceremoniously bundled up and burned.

If you are concerned about having enough clothes, if you are worried about having enough money to buy clothes for your family, Jesus says: “Look at the lilies. Look at the lilies and see how silly it is to worry.” **“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, O you of little faith” (30)?**

Apparently worry was a big problem for the people who were listening to Jesus. Otherwise he wouldn't have addressed the issue in his Sermon on the Mount. Otherwise he wouldn't have called them **“O you of little faith.”** Those words must have stung a little bit. Those words must have made some of the people feel guilty. They knew Jesus. They knew Jesus' promises. They knew that they had no reason to worry, but it was still hard for them to trust in God to provide for their needs.

If Jesus came back today and preached another sermon on another mount, do you think he would have to change anything? Would he still need to talk about worrying? Would he address his audience as “O you of great faith”? I don't think Jesus would change a thing because worry is still a problem that believers struggle with today.

Think about the last time you drove past a gas station and looked up at the prices on the sign. Did your hands grip the steering wheel a little tighter? Think about the last time you looked at your grocery bill. Did you get a sick feeling in your stomach? Think about the last time you had some medical tests done and had to wait a couple days for the results. How did you sleep at night?

You can't get arrested for worrying. There is no commandment that says, “Thou shall not worry,” but it is still a sin, and all sin is serious. The word, “worry,” comes from an Old English word that means “to strangle/choke,” and that is exactly what worry does. Worry chokes our trust in God. Worry puts a strange hold on faith until it eventually dies. And without faith, without faith in Jesus as our Savior from sin, a person should be worried, worried about the future, worried about death, worried about what will happen after death.

If you are concerned about this sin, if you are bothered by this sin, if you are worried about how much you worry, you aren't a lost cause. You're actually on the right path, a path that leads to Jesus. He is the one who tells you not to worry. He is the one who tells you why you don't have to worry. And most importantly, he is the solution to the sin of worry.

Jesus said: **“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” (31, 32).**

These verses contain a caution and a comfort. Jesus cautions us against living like the pagans (in other words, unbelievers). They spend their whole lives chasing after the things of this world because they don't know any better. But we do know better. We know that everything we have

comes from God, the God who knows all things, the God who knows exactly what we need. And that is a great comfort. The Lord knows your individual needs. He promises that he will give you everything you need, and he has already met your greatest need.

Jesus says: **“Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (33)**. It isn't wrong to work hard for a living (in fact, God commands Christians to work). It isn't wrong to want a freezer full of food or a closet full of clothes. It's about priorities. The key is to put first things first. The key to a worry-free life is to put God first in our lives...like Jesus did.

The one who teaches us not to worry put his complete and total trust in God. He left his heavenly throne. He obeyed his Father's will. He died on the cross. He died for our sins. He died in our place. Why? So that we might live with him in his kingdom, so that we might serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness, so that we might experience eternity in heaven.

In 1988 a song by musician Bobby McFerrin soared to the top of the Billboard charts. The title was simple, yet memorable: “Don't Worry, Be Happy.” While that is a nice sentiment, the song never gets beyond that initial thought. The lyrics fail to explain why a person shouldn't worry. The refrain just repeats itself over and over and over: “Don't worry. Be happy.”

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus tells us several times that we shouldn't worry, but he doesn't make the same mistake Bobby McFerrin made. Our Lord takes the command a step farther by explaining why his followers have no reason to worry. Christians, you don't have to worry because you have a God who will provide for all of your needs. And you can be happy too. You can be happy because you have a Savior who has met your greatest need. Amen.

**Prayer: O Lord God, our great Protector and Provider, everything we have comes from your gracious hand. Even though we know that, even though we see the evidence of that in our lives, we are still prone to worry. When we worry about food and clothes, when we worry about the future, forgive us and then give us the faith to trust that you will take care of all our physical and spiritual needs. Amen.**