

September 1/2, 2018

## **How to Stop Worrying**

*2018 Time, Talent, Treasure Series*

**Matthew 6:19-34**

Pastor Bryan Clark

*(Video)*

*“I’m just a sinner that’s been saved by the grace of God! Just a mechanic the Lord has blessed. I love my machinery but I have to prove to the Lord I love Him more than the machinery.”*

*Referring to the 1930's a man once said, “Dirt and money had some strange kind of parting ways,” and in Oklahoma there seemed to be a lot more dirt than anyone knew what to do with, but there wasn't a dollar among any one of them. In the man R. G. LeTourneau, dirt and money somehow found their way back together again. LeTourneau was one of the few people who amassed a fortune during the Great Depression, and he did it doing one thing he really understood: moving dirt.*

*There was no question the uneducated mechanic from Duluth had a knack for inventions—big ones—pioneering the industry of so-called earthmoving equipment. His equipment not only built Hoover Dam but was also found landing on the beaches of Normandy. But what was perhaps more unique about LeTourneau was the partnership he had formed in business some years earlier, a partnership which directed him to make some of the most non-business-like decisions at some of the most difficult times: decisions like giving employees Sundays off when they were already failing to meet their weekly production quotas, like increasing corporate giving to the church when they couldn't even meet payroll. It was a partnership which earned R. G. the reputation as a religious crackpot. It was a partnership which, nevertheless, always seemed to work.*

*Over the years, R. G. and his wife Evelyn put 90% of the company stock into a foundation, as well as 90% of their personal salary. LeTourneau didn't find it fitting that he drew more than a salary from a company which God really owned. One thing LeTourneau always said is that he never wanted to seek personal security in this life, a fact which often made clients a little nervous. R.G. felt that if God wanted to take his company away, for whatever reason, that was God's right. After all, it was His company to begin with. His responsibility was to run it in a way that was pleasing to his partner. In the end, R.G. and his wife Evelyn left very little of their vast wealth to their children. Their view was rather than leaving much of the world to their children, they'd rather leave their children to the world. As fellow partners with God, and with a great sense of mission and purpose, R. G. and Evelyn, they lived a generous life!*

*(Bryan)*

So pretty much through the month of August we've just reminded ourselves to live for the things that ultimately matter. It's been a big theme in this decade. We've offered a lot of reminders, also a lot of very practical ways to do that. Hopefully that's been helpful. I would guess if we took a poll of the people in the room today, pretty much everyone would say, “I don't want to waste my life; I want my life to matter; I want to invest in the things that ultimately matter.” So one question we might wrestle with is, “What prevents us from doing that?” Another question might be, “What might be a distraction that kind of lures us away from living that way?”

Well, Jesus talks about that in the Sermon on the Mount and that's what we want to talk about this morning. If you have a Bible, please turn to Matthew 6. We are going to do this passage a little bit differently today. I am in a bit of a backwards mood today, so we are going to work the text

backwards. The reason for that is I want us to see how this argument builds all the way back to a foundational issue, and if you don't get that issue correct, then what follows is not going to happen. This is the Sermon on the Mount; Jesus is talking, and he says in verse 34:

**“So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”** (\*NASB, Matthew 6:34)

Basically there are hundreds of things we can choose to worry about—things I can't control, things I can't change. No matter how much I worry about them, I don't change them. People can waste their lives, so worried about tomorrow, they miss the moments today. One of the best ways to get distracted, one of the best ways to waste your life, is to spend your life anxious, fearful, worried about tomorrow, so that you miss today. Jesus is saying, *“You can't fix or change or control those things, so don't worry about tomorrow. What you have is today. So live for the things that matter today.”* Verse 34 starts with the word **So**, which is a connective that means *for this reason*. Well, for what reason? We're working backwards, so look at verse 33:

**“But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”**

*Seek first His Kingdom today, and trust God with tomorrow.* Verse 33 starts with the word: **But**, which is a contrast. What is the alternative? We go backwards to verse 32:

**“For the Gentiles (in this context, simply meaning unbelievers) seek all these things; for your Heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.”**

So there's the contrast. Unbelievers don't trust God. They don't want to trust God. Who do they trust? They trust themselves. Therefore they worry. They're fearful; they're anxious, and the implication of the text is: you should be worried if you're an unbeliever for the only one you have to trust is yourself. You should be worried; you should be fearful; you should be anxious. But...verse 33, the contrast...if you're a child of God, then **seek first His kingdom and His righteousness**, and trust Him with the rest. Don't miss today because you're so worried about tomorrow! That's the idea. Now skip all the way back to verse 25 and you get the definition of **these things** that Jesus is talking about:

**“For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, *as to* what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, *as to* what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and *yet* your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? And who of you by being worried can add a *single* hour to his life? And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is *alive* today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, *will He* not much more *clothe* you? You of little faith! Do not worry then, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear for clothing?’ For the Gentiles (the unbelievers) eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”** (Vs. 25-33)

So basically **these things** refer to the basics of life, the necessities of life. The argument is, “If you trust God, can't you trust Him with the basics of life—the illustration is: look at the birds, look at the flowers—if God so takes care of the birds and the flowers, don't you matter more to Him than the birds and the flowers? Can't you trust Him to take care of you?”

He says, “**Oh You of little faith.** The issue is an issue of belief. When I waste my days with worry, fear and anxiety, apparently I don't think God tells the truth. Jesus just said, “*You matter more to me than the flowers and the birds. I'll take care of you. Trust me.*” But when we worry, when we're anxious, when we're fearful, apparently we don't think Jesus is telling the truth; He can't be trusted. That's the idea of, “**Oh you of little faith.**” “You just don't believe that I'm telling you the truth.”

The unbelievers worry because they don't trust God, and they should! But we as God's children should spend our days *seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness*, and trust God with the rest. What a tragedy that I spend my life always worrying about things I cannot control or change, and in the process I miss the moments that ultimately matter. So that's basically the argument that Jesus is laying out. But if you look in verse 25, it starts with: **For this reason.** For what reason? We have to go backward, and this now is the foundation for the whole discussion in verses 19-34, and that is a discussion related to, “What we do with our money?”

So before we talk about that, let me give you just a little bit of an introduction to think about. This whole conversation related to money and what the Bible says about money can get kind of confusing. There are a number of Christian organizations dedicated to helping people manage their money—good organizations—they've helped a lot of people. I'm not criticizing that but it's helpful to understand that in most cases the content is not driven from the Scriptures. They are actually just good money-management principles. Here is how I will illustrate this: You could have two seminars side by side. One is completely secular and one is done by a Christian organization. The content in both will be almost identical—just good money management. “Here's how you do a budget; here's what you do with debt; here's how you invest; here's how you save.” They're good, helpful money-management principles. They're almost identical. Both would even emphasize charitable giving; that's fairly common. The only difference is the Christian organization will put verses in parentheses around certain principles. But at the end of the day, it's just basic money management; it isn't really driven out of the content of Scripture. Where there is a great divide between a lot of what is offered both Christian and non-Christian and what the Bible really talks about when it has to do with money, there are two things:

One is the ultimate goals of good money management is *not* to accumulate wealth. There is virtually nowhere in the Bible where that is promoted. What is promoted in the Scriptures is to be a good, faithful steward of what you have been given, to invest into the things that ultimately matter. Sadly there are a lot of Christian organizations today that promote building wealth as the goal. That's not biblical and it's not driven out of biblical content. So that is one of the places where there is a great separation.

The second would be: when you study the Scriptures cover to cover as it deals with money, it's not primarily about debt or budgets or that sort of thing. Primarily it comes down to one thing, and that is that money is one of the most accurate barometers of what you value! Passage after passage comes back to this one theme. It's the theme that Jesus summarizes in the Sermon on the Mount. This is one of the most accurate, practical barometers to measure your value system and what ultimately matters to you...what you are really living for.

I mentioned several months ago we put together a short video series titled *Money Talks*. This is the heartbeat of that series. It's not about budgeting or investing, not about debt. It's trying to capture that this is actually the focus of the Scriptures: what you do with your money as a way to measure your value system. One of the things that we have been very passionate about in this decade is encouraging people to live for the things that matter! One of the most practical ways to measure that is: what am I doing with my money? So if you're serious about living for the things that matter, I would encourage you to go through that series to measure: How am I doing? What needs to change? You can either pick up that study at the *Publication Center*, or from the website to get it

digitally free. It's meant to be done with a group, so grab a group of friends...six weeks. It's a great way to measure how you are doing in this decade and are you are living on track, living the way you want to live?

With all of that in mind, what Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount is basically a summary of the major theme of what the Bible talks about when it talks about money. Verse 19:

**“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.”**

We're going to keep this as simple as possible this morning. Jesus says in verse 19, *“Don't store up treasures on earth.”* Why? “Because you lose them!” You can't keep them. Even if you have it all in the bank until the day you die, you lose it. You can't keep it; you can't take it with you. What sense does it make to spend a lifetime accumulating that which you cannot keep? It is a life wasted! The alternative? Verses 20 and 21:

**“But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”**

This is where it is counter-intuitive. When we give to God, we tend to think, *“I'm giving it away,”* and what I hold onto, *“I'm keeping!”* That is exactly backwards. What Jesus just said is, *“The only amount I will keep is what I've given to God, and everything I hold onto, I ultimately lose.”* So that's the basic biblical principal, cover to cover. Why live for the things of this world when you will ultimately lose it all? And why not invest in the things of eternity, which will matter forever? Then Jesus goes on to say something that what I've found over the years doesn't make people very happy. Verse 21:

**“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”**

Over the years I have found people do not like that verse. People want to convince themselves, *“I am seeking first the kingdom of God. I do trust God! Even though God doesn't have my money, God doesn't have my treasure, I still love Him! I still am seeking first His kingdom; I still trust Him.”* Then Jesus has the audacity to come along and say, *“Hey, if I don't have your treasure, I don't have your heart. Where your treasure is, that's where your heart is!”* People say, “No, that's not true!” That's when the blood pressure goes up; you get a little red in the neck. Some of you are thinking, “What am I doing here today?” (*laughter*) But before you get too upset at me, I didn't say it; Jesus said it; take it up with Him! But Jesus is very clear, *“Where your treasure is, that's where your heart is!”*

We can convince ourselves, “I love Jesus; I'm a good Christian. I'm seeking first the kingdom of God,” but then Jesus comes along and we're busted; we're exposed. He says, “If you don't trust Me with your money, you don't trust Me! That exposes our heart, and we don't like that. I think rather than get upset, it's helpful to wrestle with the question, “Why don't I trust Jesus with my treasure?” Some would say, “I just can't. I don't have it; I have all these bills. I am so stressed; I have all these credit card bills. I am stretched to the max; I just can't do it,” to which I would say, “Isn't that the point? That's where your heart is. We all understand we come up with the money we need for the things we want. Of course we do. So if we're coming up with the money for those things, that's because that's where my heart is. It's exposing, “That's what matters to me more!” That's the whole point. Is that how we want to live? Is that the value system by which we want to define our lives?”

The ancients believed that the eye was kind of a metaphor for like a lens through which you viewed the world. So physically my eye is what I see and that essentially controls my behavior and actions. Verses 22:

**“The eye is the lamp of the body (that’s the metaphor); so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light.** (The idea is: if my eye is healthy, it’s the lens through which I view life, and if it is healthy, if I treasure treasures in heaven, then the light, the truth is going to come through and it will affect how I view everything.) Verse 23:

**But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness.** (If your eye is full of covetousness, which is often the way the Bible talks of the eye, if I am storing up treasures on earth, then the light doesn't come through. Darkness comes through; therefore I am probably going to have a wrong perspective on almost everything else in life.)

You've often heard me say if you don't get this one issue right, you are not likely to get much else right. This is where He’s saying it. If your eye is bad, meaning the lens through which you see life, it's going to cause you to be wrong on almost everything else in life. He goes on to say:

**If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!”** Essentially he says, “You think you see clearly, you think your eye is healthy, but actually it's not. What you think is light, it's darkness. That is the greatest deception of all!”

Think of it just physically: I have two good eyes; therefore I live my life accordingly. Someone else in the room might be blind; therefore that person needs to live life accordingly. Where it gets frightening is if the blind person thinks he can see. I don't want that person behind the wheel of a car going seventy miles an hour. You may think you're seeking first the kingdom of God; you may think you trust God. You may think you're doing really well as a Christian, but the fact is if you do not trust God with your money, you do not trust God! Where your treasure is, that’s where your heart is! The ultimate deception would be if you get to the end of your life, thinking you are on track because the culture around you is applauding, only to realize you completely wasted your life! That would be the greatest deception of all! That’s what those verses are talking about and it’s talked about again and again throughout Scripture. Verse 24:

**“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.”**

It's like a fork in the road; you can't have it both ways. You can't treasure treasures on earth and treasure treasures in heaven. There is a divide there. You have to decide if you are going to store up for yourself treasures on earth—if you’re going to choose to trust yourself instead of God. Then you’re not going to seek first the kingdom of God; your days are going to be filled with worry and anxiety and fear, and that’s the path you’re going to travel. You’re going to serve money rather than God. If you choose to trust God with what He has given you, then you will treasure treasures in heaven. You will seek first the kingdom of God because that's where your heart is, and you will trust God with the things you cannot control or change!

I'm going to guess there are three categories of people in the room this morning: One would be those who somewhere along the way have taken steps of faith and are going to trust God with their money. They have experienced the joy of giving, a life of generosity. They have seen God show up and be faithful again and again and again. There are a lot of people like that at Berean. If you'd ask them, they would say, “I wouldn't have it any other way; I'd never go back.” There are a lot of people like that.

The second category of people is people who are not interested in anything I've said this morning. “My money is mine; God can keep his hands off of it. I can't wait for this service to be over; get me out of here!” Fine! I'm not interested in twisting your arm to get you to do something you don't want to do. It's your choice!

But I do think there is a third category of people that would say, “I really do love Jesus; I really do want to trust God; I really want to seek first the kingdom of God; that is really how I want to live! I’m just learning and growing and I’ve taken steps of faith.” Maybe you've never understood this; maybe you’ve never been exposed to it. Maybe you’ve just never taken that step, but sincerely in your heart, this is really what you want! I would encourage you to prayerfully consider taking these steps of faith. If you don't trust God with your money, you don't trust God! It exposes your heart. **Where your treasure is, that's where your heart is.** Is it easy? No! Is it a little bit scary? Yes! Does it require faith? Absolutely it does!

I'll give you a little bit of Patty's and my story. Neither of us grew up around money but both of us grew up having generosity modeled. When I was in seminary in California, I was working almost full time and going to school full time. Patty was working full time and overtime just to get the bills paid. I came up with the brilliant idea that: “Since I am in seminary training for ministry, let's just count the school bill as our giving. That makes sense doesn't it?” (I remember the first celebration we had in California was we walked to McDonalds and we both got a bag of French fries. That was our big splurge. So that's just to say, things were tight.)

That lasted about two months before Patty voiced her discomfort with my great idea. As soon as she said it I was on board, for I was uncomfortable with it also. We decided that's a bad way to start a marriage. So we decided, “Let's make a commitment.” We decided to trust God with ten percent of our income, and God is going to have to help pay the bills! We graduated from seminary with all of my school bills completely paid. The first ten years of ministry out of school, the entire ten years I worked a second job just to buy shoes and put food on the table. That's just to say, we weren't giving because we had extra money, but I don't think there was a single month in those ten years we ever failed to give less than ten percent of our income to God. And again and again we saw God provide; we saw God be faithful. Now thirty-seven years later, I honestly don't think since that moment in seminary there's ever been a month in those thirty plus years we ever failed to give at least ten percent, and often more. Is it hard? Yes! Does it affect our lifestyle? Dramatically! Is it a sacrifice? Yes, it is! But I can't imagine living any other way! Thirty plus years of God's faithfulness...God's provision...God's goodness; thirty years of seeking first the kingdom of God, thirty years of trusting that God will take care of the things I can't change or control. It's very hard deep in your heart to really trust God with the stuff of today if you don't trust Him with your money. Every time you make that decision each month there is a reminder that I trust God, “This is the path I want to travel; this is the way I want to live my life. I want to invest in the things that matter.” There are people all over this auditorium that could tell similar stories of their decision to be generous and of God's faithfulness. None of us would go back and do it any other way. But there is a reality to what's necessary to take that first step of faith and to trust God and to believe that God will be faithful. Our desire is that you would join the journey and experience God's faithfulness, as God will be faithful to be true to His word.

Now the ten percent part gets confusing. In the Old Testament there is this thing called a tithe, and tithe means a tenth. But in Israel, which was a theocracy, there were multiple tithes, so it is not correct to say in the Old Testament it was ten percent. There were three different tithes plus one every three years, so if you're going to do an Old Testament tithe it's thirty-three percent which affects people's theology. (*laughter*) I don't think the tithe is re-upped in the new covenant but I do think it's a biblical framework, like a goal in order to organize your giving. I can't imagine in an economy of grace it would be less than that. It's just a good framework, a target. Some people can do a lot more than that; for others it would be a huge stretch. If you're not giving anything now, give something. Give two percent; give five percent. Just step out by faith—trust God; give something! Our desire is that you would seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and then trust

God with the rest. If you don't trust God with your money, you don't trust God. It's indicative of where you heart it. Rather than fighting that and arguing that, wrestle with that! Our desire is that you would take courageous steps of faith; trust God and treasure the treasures of heaven. Remember that, **“Where your treasure is, that's where your heart is!”**

*Our Father, my prayer would be that every person in the room would seek first Your kingdom and that we would honestly trust You with the rest. Jesus taught us that if that's going to be true, we have to trust You with our money. God, I pray for those here this morning that are wrestling with a decision that many of us can identify with, of the challenge of taking those steps of faith to faithfully give and trust You to meet our needs. God, may we be a generous people for Your glory! In Jesus' name, Amen.*

*(Life video):*

*(Wife) So my parents were missionaries. They started when I was eighteen months old and so we relied on people supporting us. Looking back, I see how tight it was, and there were instances when groceries would appear on our door. My mom would later say that we didn't have anything for supper that night and she didn't know what she would feed us, and then groceries would appear.*

*(Husband) Growing up, we viewed money very differently. From my perspective there wasn't much thought of money at all. Everything that I needed was provided. When I started to earn my own money, then it was mine! I was going to hold onto it. There were these two battling ideas in my mind even then, One: it's mine! I should be able to do what I wanted to do with it and two: generosity was always modeled growing up so its important to be generous! There was a tension between those two things, so which will I decide to do? Am I going to decide to be generous or hold onto what's mine and do what I want to do with it?*

*(Wife) When we were first married, we both had fulltime jobs and we could give ten percent or more or what we thought was appropriate at the time and then still go out to eat on the weekends and go to movies and do all these things. We felt that a little bit. We're giving, and maybe we're not able to do bigger things, but we can still do a lot of things that we like, versus when we decided it's important for me to stay home while our kids were little and we went to one income. Things got a lot tighter, and we wanted to provide things for our kids, like diapers (laugh) and things like that (Husband... and food.) Then it was, “Okay, am I going to choose to give first and not consume upon myself or am I going to just choose to consume upon myself?”*

*(Husband) We would do an annual analysis of how things were going with our finances, and tallying everything up at the end of the year, we had pretty much charged identically the same amount to our credit card as we had given that year. So the thought goes through my mind, “If we don't give, we can one: pay off the bill, and also continue to live the same way that we are, or we can make tough decisions and change the way we are living so we can continue to give the way we feel God is calling us to.*

*(Wife) So as I think about it more, it comes down to my pride. That's my money issue. So coming down to, am I embarrassed because I want to provide for my kids things I didn't have for myself?*

*(Husband) The natural outflow of that, I guess, is having, at least in our culture's economy, is having things. But for me, it's definitely more of an internal thing. I could be happy driving a '97 Jeep Wrangler for the rest of my life (yeah, but that's a cool car). Okay, so how about the blue*

*minivan? (laughter) But the other day I did walk the long way around it so someone wouldn't know I was getting into the blue minivan. (laughter)*

*(Wife) I think being generous is so much fun. I was the recipient of people's generosity. That's how we lived the first thirteen years of my life. And now some other fun things we're doing are things like "Gifts of Love" or helping with "The Hope Venture." But our main focus and the majority of our giving is to church. We've been passionate about giving to the benevolence and missions' areas, and so hearing the missionary stories and seeing God do cool things is really rewarding, and seeing our kids get excited about God doing cool things! We want to teach them to do these things, and we can only do that by showing them and living it in front of them.*

*(Husband) Generosity is external and it's internal. God changes me through being generous and I'm thankful that He does. God doesn't want my money; He wants my heart. He wants me to learn to be dependent on Him, and to trust Him.*

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