

Matthew 6:19-34 Jesus' Teaching on Anxiety

(Read vv. 25-34) I love this text. In the middle of Jesus' famous Sermon on the Mount, he speaks about a topic that EVERYONE can understand: Anxiety. He tells his listeners and us not to worry. Does anybody here worry? Is anyone anxious? Yes, is our answer. Today, Jesus teaches us about anxiety. And we need his words. So, I have three truths from the text with applications throughout. 1) Anxiety is real. 2) We are commanded NOT to be anxious. 3) There is a solution to relieve anxiety.

1. Jesus teaches us that anxiety is real. The fact that he teaches on this topic right in the middle of the Sermon on the Mount tells me that ALL of his listeners (and us) understand what he is talking about. Worry and anxiety in this world is a reality! God says one day I will wipe away the tears. In Rev. 21:4 we read: **"He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."** We wait for that day. But, for now, as long as we live in these physical bodies in this world, AND sin remains, there will be anxiety and worries. This side of heaven ALL of US will worry. ALL of US will be anxious.

Probably, my most favorite children's book is called Tasman the Turtle. I get to read it to Nora when we are together. It is about one of a million baby turtles named Tasman that has to make its way out into the ocean after it is hatched. And along the way it runs into sooooo many troubles, whether it is the currents, the storms, the seagulls, the barracudas, the shark, etc, there are troubles. And every time there is trouble, Tasman says, "Oceans bubbles turtles troubles." This is life: "Oceans bubbles turtles troubles." Have you ever played dodge ball? You are in the middle of the circle and everyone is throwing the ball at you. Well, this is life! And life throws all kinds of balls at us; sickness, death of loved ones, relationship problems, physical maladies that seem to exhaust all our energies. On and on I could go! And so we worry and so we are anxious! In this text Jesus speaks about the cares of normal life, what we will eat, what we will drink, what we will wear, etc. I believe this list represents ALL the cares of life.

ALL of US will experience varying levels of anxiety, sometimes MORE, sometimes LESS. And, some of us deal with anxiety and worry more than others. As a pastor here at Grace I am more privy to information as I (we as elders) know much more about your struggles, whatever they may be. And at the end of the day, I think what we are trying to do as pastors is to help those under our care not to be anxious, not to worry, and at the end of the day, not to be sinful in our anxiety.

2. Jesus commands us not to be anxious. In v. 25 Jesus commands us not to worry, not to be anxious. We read: **"Therefore, I tell you, Do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on."** And then Jesus uses the same word three more times telling us the same. In v. 27: **"And which of you be being anxious can add a single hours to his span of life."** Again in v. 31: **"Therefore, do not be anxious . . ."** Finally in v. 34 he says, **"Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."**

So, what is our response? Well, I think our response as Christians, at least in our motive, is very positive. This is one of those commands we REALLY want to obey. I want to mention two GENERAL reasons: 1) It is sinful to disobey the commands of Christ. Our mission as a church is to *“teach them to obey ALL the commands of Christ”* (Matt. 28:18-20). He is the Lord! And He knows what is best for us! As followers of Christ, as Jesus commands us not to be anxious, I believe we honestly want to obey this command because to disobey is to sin. And, 2) We want to obey because of the effects anxiety and worry have on us. This is a very practical reason. As we’ve already noted, none of us are immune (except maybe toddlers who don’t worry about eating and drinking and clothing and what they think may be coming the next day). (Recall my experience in CA).

So, with this command before us, I want to finish our time by getting to the heart as to WHY anxiety and worrying is sinful, which will help us with the solution to relieve anxiety.

3. Jesus provides us with the solution to relieve anxiety. Now, I use the word, “relieve” because I don’t think we will ever rid anxiety and worry this side of heaven. Though, the solution to relieve anxiety is right before us in this text. In vv. 25-34 Jesus gives some help with how to relieve anxiety. Here, Jesus says, God cares for his people. And He will provide. Therefore, he says Don’t worry. If God provides for the birds, how much more will he provide for you. In Phil. 4:19 Paul says: **“And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”** So, our application is ALWAYS to trust our Father who supplies EVERYTHING we need. But, in order to get to the heart of relief, in order for us to grow in sanctification, we must go back to vv. 19-24.

I say this because in v. 25 Jesus says, **“THEREFORE, do not be anxious . . .”** Whenever we see the word “therefore,” we must go back to what comes before, for here lies the KEY to Jesus’ teaching on this subject. Let me read these verses. And as I read them, see if you can pick up on HOW this key. **“19 Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. 22 The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, 23 but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! 24 No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.”** There is a lot here. But, let me walk us through this text to find the key to relieve anxiety.

Let’s go through this backwards. In v. 24 he says, **“Do not be anxious about your life because you cannot serve both God and money.”** I think he is saying, there is a connection between anxiety and valuing earthly possessions. He is saying, **“If you fix your eyes on earthly possessions, you will despise God. And there is no greater ONE to whom we must give attention and value than God.”** He is saying **“Do not be anxious about your life, for if you fix your eyes on earthly treasures instead of heaven’s rewards, this will lead to all kinds of moral darkness (vv.**

22-23). But instead, your focus in life should be to lay up treasure in heaven which will never perish or pass away (vv. 19-20).

So, with these things in mind, what is Jesus' connection with verses 25-34 and his command not to worry? Think about anxiety in general. If you consider the nature of anxiety, what do you worry about? We are anxious and we worry about the things that concern us. And what are the things that concern us in this passage? They are things we really care about, food, drink, clothing, health, money, security, safety, amusing ourselves, etc. And when we care about such things we show what is really valuable to us. And here is the key: "what you value shows what you truly treasure in your heart." Brothers and sisters, we all care about such things. These are the things we value. And it's not like we can throw such things away. Why? Because all the things I mentioned are part of life. So what is Jesus saying, "get rid of these things?" NO. He is saying, we must not treasure the things of this world, but instead treasure God and his kingdom (Matt. 6:33). In v. 21 he says, **"Where your treasure is, there your heart will also be."**

So what is the connection to anxiety? He is saying, **"where your treasure is, there your anxiety will be also."** What do you treasure? Is it money? Is it health? Is it safety? Is it to be accepted by your peers regardless of what God says? Is it amusement in the form of sports or other forms of entertainment? Is it sexual desires? Is it personal appearance? I could speak of many things. And all these things in and of themselves are not bad. They are a part of life. But, when we treasure these things more than God, we will be anxious! We will worry! And all kinds of effects will follow! Brothers and sisters, our anxieties grow out of what we are actively serving and loving, the things that fill our hearts. Our worries come from whatever is "masters" our hearts. Verse 24: **"No one can serve two masters."**

Let's do a short test. Think about what brings you anxiety. If you tell me what you are usually anxious about, then you are telling me what you are often tempted to treasure in your heart, whether this material possessions, the praise of man, your own personal appearance or strength, your reputation at work, etc. etc. Treasuring earthly things will ALWAYS lead you down the road of anxiety. Why? Because those things will pass away. Those things are uncertain. Brothers and sisters, "What is your life but a vapor, here today and gone tomorrow." The things of this world are uncertain. This means that if you truly treasure what is transient and passing away (temporary), something that can be taken away so easily (even your life), then you're naturally going to be anxious about losing it, or not getting it in the first place.

This is why I am saying Jesus gives us the solution to relieve anxiety. I don't think it will ever go away. But, we can learn to treasure God and his Kingdom more and more. (We can all think of older folks that truly don't worry because they know whom they have believed. If there was ever a man who could have been anxious it was Paul. But, he says, **"I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me"** (2 Tim. 1:12).

As I've said before, there is more going on here than we know. We are body and soul. And some may suffer more physically than others because of anxiety. And only God knows our hearts. And

there is great mystery. When I think back to my panic attack which affected my body greatly, I would not have said I was worrying or anxious. But, I must have been. And I have to say that I am grateful for that anxiety. Why? It was God's gift to me that I might seek him more. For those of you who are affected physically because of anxiety, I urge you to count such things as a gift from God who gives to you that you might seek him, that you might treasure him . . . more.

One might ask, "*What about medication and anxiety?*" That's a good question. I think those who suffer more with worry and anxiety certainly can find some relief (physically) with medication, depending on each individual situation. At the same time, I don't think medication should be the default for various reasons. We don't know the other effects medications may have on us long term. And, maybe God wants you to endure longer periods of testing, without medication. At the end of the day, I don't have all the answers here. I don't know! We tend to be black and white about our judgments. I think there is more to when Jesus says, "**it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth; this defiles a person**" (Matt. 15:11).

at the end of the day, Jesus' response, Jesus' counsel for his people to relieve anxiety is found in Matt. 6:33: "**Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.**" This is about the heart! When we seek FIRST the things of this world, things that will pass away, we will be more anxious. Of course we will worry! If the things of this world are the affections of our hearts, how can we not worry! And the physical effects will follow. So, what do we do? What does it mean to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness? Well, the obvious answer here is that WE, in and of ourselves do not have this kind of righteousness. Our problem, ALWAYS, is sin. Our righteousness is like a filthy rag (Is. 64:6). We are sinners. We are the sons and daughters of Adam. And outside of Christ we seek EVERYTHING else but Christ. Why? Because we don't treasure HIM. We want what we want. When we look at the world, this is what we see and experience. James says, "**What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel . . .**" (James 4:1-2)

But, for the Christian, (though sin still remains) our hearts have been changed, along with our desires. I think of Paul's words to the Corinthians: "**Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God**" (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

How can this be? What kind of righteousness is this? Brothers and sisters, the righteousness we seek comes from heaven, it comes from the Son of God who laid down his life as a perfect sacrifice for sinners like you and me. This is the cross of Christ! This is the fountain of blood that Zechariah looked forward to! Christ is the righteousness of God. This is what we celebrate in the new covenant. As Christians, YES, we still sin. YES, anxiety and worry still remain. But, the blood of Christ covers our sins. AND, the answer to relieve our anxiety is still the same. As

Christians we are all at different places. We all struggle with different sins. We are all being sanctified. So, the answer is still the same. LOOK UNTO CHRIST! Seek Him and his righteousness. And as you do, we will work together to do this and relieve anxieties along the way.

And, let me say before closing that if you are not