

From Anxiety to Rest

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Bible Verse: Matthew 6:25-30
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Well, when we were together last Sunday, I hit a pause button on our exposition of the 10 Commandments to address the matter of anxiety in the life of the Christian, anxiety in the life of the believer. Scripture speaks to this many many times. It was an important matter to our Lord Jesus Christ and in view of the present condition in which we live and in the present state of our nation, the world, and even in the state of some of your lives, I thought that this might be helpful pastorally for us to come around and refresh our souls to, as it were, come to a fountain of fresh water and take a drink to rest alongside the weary road for just a time to be able to reorient ourselves into the truth of God and what it means for the way that we conduct our lives here on earth, and the way that we experience, you know, the inner nature of our salvation. So we looked at Psalm 37 last Sunday. On Tuesday, I opened up Matthew 6 and I'm going to continue Matthew 6 today and on Tuesday as well and then I expect to be back to our regular schedule next on Sunday.

So last Sunday as we looked at Psalm 37, we saw that there was this call to calm confidence in our faithful sovereign God. Three times in the opening eight verses of Psalm 37 it says "Do not fret. Do not fret. Do not fret." And alongside that are parallel calls to trust the Lord, and so the Psalm really lays things out for us in an extended way. Tuesday, I know many of you were not here, Tuesday we looked at Matthew 6:25-34 and that's going to be our text again this morning and I invite you to turn there with me as we open God's word here today. It is an unspeakable privilege for us to have the word of God in writing, an unchanging standard that we can always come back to, an inerrant word that we can trust implicitly, and it tells us not only how to live life, but more importantly it tells us about the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ who is our Savior, our Lord, and the object of our trust.

Matthew 6:25. Look at it there with me. He says,

25 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? 26 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? 27 And who of you by being worried can add

a single hour to his life? 28 And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, 29 yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. 30 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! 31 Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' 32 For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. 34 So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Now as we looked at the passage on Tuesday, we pointed out three aspects of the larger portion of the text and today we're going to look at the first half of the text, really, but one of the things that I pointed out is this, is that in calling us to deal with anxiety and to help us overcome anxiety and to put it to rest, as it were, Jesus is calling us to think, he's calling us preeminently to think and he's laying out reasons why anxiety is unnecessary and is foolish for a person that professes faith in the living Christ. So just to remind you of that aspect, that this is a call to preeminently to think properly, look at verse 26 where Jesus says, "Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns." Jesus steps back from your anxiety and changes the subject, so to speak, and he says, "Let's not focus on your anxious worried thoughts right now. I want you to think about something else. Look out at the birds and let the birds instruct you about the care of God," so that you're called to think and to consider something that is outside of you, that is outside of your anxious inner man, look at something outside of you and reason from what you see in animal life to understand something that changes your perspective on anxiety. Then in verse 28, he does a similar thing, pointing to a different aspect of creation, an inanimate aspect of creation, he says in verse 28, "Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin." He says, "So you can look up at the birds or look down at the flowers of the field and you can get instruction about the nature of anxiety and the nature of God's provision for all of his creation." Then he leads us through proper thinking in response to those observations.

So the idea is this, is that you set aside your anxiety and contemplate and meditate on the things of God, the things that are true, the things that are external to your circumstances, you grasp those principles and by the help of the Holy Spirit, you internalize them in a way that helps you see that your anxiety is unnecessary. There is no cause for fear. If God is for us, and he is as shown by the cross of Christ, if God is with us as he is in the person of the indwelling Holy Spirit, if God is with us and God is for us, then obviously there is no reason for this prevailing anxiety that troubles and vexes so many of us, and if we believe these things, then they have an impact on the way that we think and feel about life.

Now as Jesus is speaking here in Matthew 6, he's speaking about the kind of daily necessities, that's his emphasis, you know, what are we going to eat, what are we going to

wear for clothing, and what shall we drink, verse 31, but understand this, beloved, that the whole context of Scripture extends far beyond just daily necessities and goes to the entirety of life. The entirety of life is under the umbrella of this command "Do not be anxious." Not long ago, a few months ago, we looked at the book of Philippians and in Philippians 4:6 it says, "Be anxious for," what? "Nothing." In 1 Peter 5:7 it says, "Cast all your anxieties upon Him." So Jesus starts at the basic level of daily needs but as we read all of Scripture, we see that this is to be a manner of life that Christians use in every aspect of their life. We are to be so confident of the love and care of God for us individually that we do not live a life that is controlled by this prevailing anxiety over what's going to happen to us in the future. Anxiety, as we said on Tuesday, it's a symptom of a spiritual disease; it's a symptom that you do not know God as you should or you do not trust him as you should.

Now that might sound a little bit harsh and a little bit severe but, beloved, if we can just come to grips with what anxiety is saying, then we have the opportunity before us to address it, to come to grips with it, and to move in a different and a better direction in the living of our lives. And so it's very important for us to do this and it's important for us to be this way, it's important for us to be humble about it, it's important for us to be willing to receive instruction from God's word and let it convict us, let it puncture our spiritual pride and say, "You know, if my life is dominated by anxiety, maybe there's something wrong inside that goes beyond the condition of my circumstances. Maybe I don't know God as well as I say that I do, as well as I think I do. Maybe I don't trust God as much as I like to say that I do." You know, and especially at a time like this on Sunday morning and we're all gathered together and everybody is brushed up and cleaned up real nice and everything, if I asked for a show of hands how many of you know God, well, most of the hands would go up. And if I asked those people how many of you trust God, most of the hands would go up, and that would all be well and good and I believe with all of my heart that that is the principle that God has placed in your heart that is the controlling principle of your life, but we can have faith and yet have little faith, we can have true faith, let's say, but have little faith as Jesus says there in verse 30.

So maybe if we're dominated by anxiety, there's something missing that we can fill in and grow in a way that would have a heart that is more resting and more trusting in the God that we say that we know and trust and that's what we're looking to accomplish here today. I am certainly not free from anxiety in my life. I'm guilty of this myself and so I speak as one to you today needing the word of God as much as I believe that you need it as well. We're all in the same boat, we all need to grow in Christ and this is an opportunity to do this that I trust will be very encouraging for all of us as we go through it this morning.

In the first five verses, actually the first six verses, verses 25 through 30, Jesus gives us four reasons that support your trust in God. Understanding these four things give you a better basis for trusting him, and it's all very clear, these are not complex things at all that we're going to look at, but they're things that we so easily forget as the press of what we see drowns out the greater things, the more important things that we cannot see. The Bible says we walk by faith, not by sight. It says that we look to the eternal things which

are unseen rather than the earthly things which are seen. And so it's a question of what is dominating your perspective that starts to inform and help you to address anxiety in a permanent way, in an ongoing way that produces real growth.

Now look, for some as they look to battle anxiety turn to a lot of different things, turn to chemical things, turn to alcohol, turn to, you know, different stimulus things like that that alter your mind and your body and we understand that that's not the way to go, but there's also something in the spiritual realm that I think is important to say as well. Some people are constantly looking for an emotion, for an experience that would counteract the bad emotion and the bad experience that they're feeling right now so I need something to change my emotions, or I need a different kind of experience, and those of you that have come from charismatic leaning churches, you have an idea of what I'm talking about, don't you, there's such an emotional element to the services and the emphasis on the worship experience. There's a church just down the road that wants to talk about on their billboard, you know, "Experience worship with us," and all of that and just talking about experience all the time, as if that's the thing but you learn sooner or later, sooner or later that burns you out, sooner or later you realize I need something more than emotion because the emotions come and go, you know, and by the time you reach Sunday afternoon, Sunday evening, the emotion is gone and you're left unchanged as a result of it. Even more conservative Bible-believing Christians can fall into this, being so concerned about what the next podcast is or what the next conference is, and just moving from release to release, moving from conference to conference, and yet really having an underlying instability in their spiritual lives because they're not grounded in these things, because for whatever reason they haven't taken the time or they haven't realized the significance of coming to true convictions based on the word of God that now are the controlling factor in the way that you view everything else about life. So we readily acknowledge that coming to Truth Community Church may not be the most emotional experience for people week after week after week, that's by design. We're not appealing to your emotions, we're appealing to your mind. We're trying to instruct your mind because what your mind thinks is going to have a significant influence on the way that you feel and you cannot reverse the process, you cannot go through the feelings to get to the mind, you go through the mind to get to the feelings. This is very very important. Romans 12:2 says "be transformed by the renewing of your," what? "Your mind." Be transformed by the renewing of your mind "so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." Well, here in Matthew 6, we have another opportunity to have our minds renewed by the truth of Scripture and as we come to the Scripture, we are confident in the help of the Holy Spirit to illuminate us, to expand our understanding, to help us grow in our mind and to help us mentally and then to work these things out in application to our hearts so that we're living life differently as a result of coming to deep convictions about these things.

So let's take a look at these four reasons that we have from Christ to trust our God, and not only for daily things but for the deepest things of life: the personal losses that we have gone through, the personal challenges that we face just immediately in front of us, the uncertainty of what our government is going to do next. All of these things come under the realm of these things for which we can trust God and you do not have to live a

life, my friends, you do not have to live a life, beloved, that is dominated by fear. You do not have to live a life that is dominated by that controlling anxiety that wakes you up in the middle of the night and causes you to lose sleep again and again and again. You don't have to live that way, and not only that, according to Scripture, you're not supposed to live that way. That's not the nature of the reality of Christian life. So if you're like me, you say, "Well, let me in to this better position. Lead me into this," and that's what Christ does for us here in the Sermon on the Mount in verses 25 through 34 of chapter 6.

So we're going to start with the first reason that supports our trust in God and it is profoundly theological. First of all, Jesus is teaching us in chapter 6 about the blessedness of God. The blessedness of God, and what I mean by that is the surpassing excellencies of his character, the surpassing wonder and majesty of who God is and who he is to his people that he has brought into relationship with himself. Who is God? What is the nature of God? What is he like? What can we expect him to do in the future based on what he has revealed about himself in Scripture and what he has done in the past? And what I want you to see is that Jesus' teaching on anxiety rests squarely on the character of God, squarely on the character of God. Seventeen times in the Sermon on the Mount chapters 5 through 7, 17 times in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus refers to God as "your Father," 12 of those times occur in chapter 6 alone. He is making an emphasis to his disciples about the kind of relationship that God has to them and God has chosen to embrace us in a relationship by which we view him and relate to him as our Father, as one who loves us. As our Father in a spiritual sense and in a physical sense as well but I'm emphasizing the spiritual, God the Father has given us life. Through the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of God gave you new life in Christ, he has literally begotten you in a way that he gave new life to you in Christ. And so he's Father by the new birth and he's Father by the nature of the character and the relationship that he sustains with us. So if we want to know something about our Father and it's important for us to understand our Father in relationship to our anxiety – watch this – then it's important for us to know who he is like, what he is like, I should say. What is he like? What is his nature like? What are his attributes? Because, beloved, the Father's character lays the foundation for trust in every aspect of your life.

Now I'm going to run through eight things here, eight subpoints in this and we're going to go through them very quickly. I just want you to get the broad overview here. Jesus in this teaching on anxiety is doing it in the context of things that he has said about the nature of God and the character of God elsewhere in the Sermon on the Mount. This is very, in my humble opinion, this is very encouraging and very cool to see. So what can we say about the nature of God? Well, first of all, he is holy. He is holy. Look at Matthew 5:48, and we're just going to stay right here in the Sermon on the Mount. We don't need to cross reference other places. Jesus says in Matthew 5:48, "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." God is morally unblemished. God is perfect. God cannot lie. God cannot sin. He cannot do wrong. And to state it positively, he always does what is right, he is always good, he is always faithful in a way that transcends anything that we have experienced in human relationships on earth. Our heavenly Father is perfect and his care and his love for us is utterly perfect. There is nothing outside of his holiness that could threaten the intimate care that he gives to us as our heavenly Father. He is holy.

Now secondly, he is omniscient. He is omniscient by which we mean that God knows everything that there is to know. There is nothing outside the knowledge of God anywhere in the universe. He has a perfect knowledge of everything. And look at Matthew 6:4 where Jesus, not speaking to this explicitly, is relying on this doctrine to help us understand the knowledge that our Father has of us. So having told people to give in secret rather than trying to draw attention to themselves through men, he says at the end of verse 4, he says, "your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you." In verse 6 he says, "your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you." And in verse 18, he says, "your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you." In other words, Jesus is saying, "God knows your situation. God sees it. He knows. He understands. He is perfectly acquainted with every aspect and every detail of your life." His omniscience is perfect, so much so, that when in the context of prayer, for example, when you bow down to pray, you're not giving new information to God. He's not waiting for you to instruct him on your situation so he can process that and understand and then decide what to do. It's not like that at all. God already knows what you need, because he's omniscient he knows everything about his creation. He knows everything about his people, past, present and future.

So our Father is not only holy, our Father knows everything that there is to know, so much so that he sees us when we are acting in private, he knows what's on our tongue before we speak it, he knows our inner thoughts, he knows us thoroughly, and that is part of who our Father is and the relationship that he sustains to us. He's holy. He's omniscient. Now beyond that, he is omnipotent. He is omnipotent. And so staying in verse 4 there for a moment he says, and these other verses as well, I'll just review verse 4 with you, he says, "your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you." God will act in a way that honors you for your proper giving, honor you for your proper praying, honor you for your proper fasting, and the reason that God will reward you, the reason that Jesus can say that in an unconditional way is because God has the power to do his will. For God to be omnipotent, what we mean by that is God has the full power to execute his will without it ever being thwarted by anything by man or by creation or anything else. God is able to do what he has promised to do because he is omnipotent. He has all power. He spoke creation into existence by his spoken word, he sustains it by his providence, one day he will bring human history to an end when Jesus Christ intervenes at the end of time. He is omnipotent. He is in full, complete, sovereign control of everything that happens. That's who our Father is.

Now moving along, he is omnipresent. He is omnipresent. Look at verse 6. He says, "But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you." You can go into your home, go into the inner part of your house, go into that inner room, close the door, and God sees you right there and God knows what's going on right there. So he sees in secret, meaning that you are under his watchful care. Every moment of every day is under the watchful care of God. Now that doesn't mean that everything's going to be pleasant, that doesn't mean that we're always going to have feelings of exhilaration in this life as we walk through. We live in a cursed, fallen world. We face the opposition of

Satan as we walk through life. We face divisions in our family and sometimes in the church and there's conflict, and those things aren't pleasant and so we're not going to coast along through life on a fluffy cloud avoiding any kind of conflict, that's not the point of his omnipresence, rather it's what I've been saying for so many weeks now, he is with us even in the midst of those adversities, even in the midst of the trials he's with us. It pleases him to let us suffer, it pleases him to let us struggle so that we would learn to depend upon him more and upon ourselves less but that suffering doesn't diminish his omnipresence. If the question ever crosses your mind, "Where is God in all of this?" The answer is always, "He's right here. I fear no evil," Psalm 23, "for You are with me. Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me." So even in a difficult marriage, even in financial distress, even in the funeral home as you're making arrangements to lay a loved one to rest, even in the hospital where the things are so uncertain about what might happen and life literally hangs in the balance, he is with you. That's who your heavenly Father is. He doesn't go away on a long trip and he's absent. No, no, it's nothing like that. He is with you because he is omnipresent.

Now staying in verse 6, another thing you can say about this God that is our heavenly Father, he's a God of love. He's a God of love. Looking there again at verse 6, he sees what is done in secret, he will reward you. It's an expression of his love that he cares and that he's going to bless you for your obedience to him. He has already blessed you in Christ and he will bless your obedience in Christ because he loves you, and as he said, "I will never ever ever leave you nor will I ever ever forsake you," Hebrews 13. In fact, we should look over there, shouldn't we, just so you see this. I said I wasn't going to cross reference but I'm going to anyway. Hebrews 13:5-6. In the original language, in the Greek language, verse 5 has a triple negative which is an almost unprecedented level of emphasis that God will not do this. He will not not not do this. And in English, you know, double negatives contradict one another, in the Greek language they reinforce one another so that in Hebrews 13:5 it says, "Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content," in other words, not being anxious, "with what you have; for He Himself has said, 'I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you.'" I will never desert you nor with I ever forsake you. This is an impossibility. "So that," verse 6, "we may confidently say, 'The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What will man do to me?'" In the language of Matthew 6, we could appropriate this and say, "This Lord who will never forsake me, He loves me and therefore I will not be anxious." The "therefore" is very important. You grasp the propositional truths that are being set before you about the character of God, who he is. He's a holy God. He is omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent. He is a loving God. And you say, "Okay, all of that is true, therefore, as a result of those truths, my heart is moved away from anxiety and to trust Him instead because I believe His promise, I believe His word. The Spirit of God testifies in my heart that His word is true. The Spirit of God testifies in my heart that I truly belong to Jesus Christ, that He truly has reconciled me to a holy God despite my sin. And because I know those things to be true, because I believe them and I'm confident of them, therefore my response and my reaction to life is different than it would have been before." There is no excuse for a Christian who genuinely knows these things to turn to drugs or alcohol to find comfort in affliction. That's inexcusable. That's inexcusable to

lean on something like that to give help to you to get through the day when your Father is like this, right?

Now beyond that, not only is your Father all of these things, he's also wise. He's wise. He knows what is best. Look at Matthew 6:8. He is wise. The brevity with which Christ speaks and the depth of things that he expresses in such few words has never ceased to astonish me. The more you study God's word, the more you realize how deep it is in even the briefest things that it says so that in verse 8 Jesus says do not be like the Gentiles, "for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him." God is wise. He understands perfectly exactly what you need. It may be different than what you think you need but God knows what you need not only for the moment but for what he has prepared for you to walk in in the remainder of your life. I look back at things in my life and things that devastated me at the time that I would have cast away and avoided that sorrow at any cost at the time, now I see that it was necessary for what life has brought to me today. The things that I despised at the time God knew was exactly necessary for what life would be like today. I did not know. He did because he is wise, because he is omniscient, because he's good to his children, so much so that he won't withhold pain from us if it will produce long-term good for us. That's how wise he is. He's so wise as to be unmoved by our emotional temporary reactions into things and sorrows that we go through because he knows what he's doing, he knows that he's producing a long-term effect, a long-term goal in us, and as Romans 8:28 says, beloved, he will always work it together for good to you who love God and are called according to his purpose. It's all working for good. He knows in advance what he's doing and sometimes he lets the world crush us so that he can come and pick up the pieces and make something new that can accomplish greater purposes for his eternal kingdom than what it could have been if we had avoided it. This gives us a whole new perspective on all of life, doesn't it, and this is just right on the surface of the text.

So he's wise. He knows what you need. Not only that, he's merciful. With all of these things, he's merciful. He gives us help in our need. He forgives our sin as we go through life. Look at verse 12 in Matthew 6. He says, "forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." Verse 14, "if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you." God is merciful and forgiving toward our sins. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Having just sinned against him, having just violated his holiness, just again, God remains unchanged, immovable, ready to forgive his children even as they sin against him again. He's merciful. He's not stingy. He's not quick to anger, just the opposite. He's a God that's slow to anger, ready to forgive.

Look at Psalm 86:5. You know, part of our anxiety, frankly, is just rooted in the fact that we have miserly ideas and a miserly conception of God and we think he's small like we are rather than great and merciful like he actually is. Psalm 86:5 where David says, "You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, And abundant in lovingkindness to all who call upon You." Are you here today feeling the weight of sin and guilt because of the way that you've broken the law of God? Let me encourage you afresh: come to Christ. This is what he's like. He delights in forgiving repentant sinners. He delights in receiving those who

come to him unworthy, confessing their unworthiness, and Scripture says that when we come to him in that kind of humble repentant spirit, he's abundant in loyal love and pours it out upon everyone who calls upon him in that way. You know, those of you that grew up in a legalistic environment and were always concerned about rules and breaking rules and, you know, the truth of the matter is you never knew God in the midst of it, Scripture tells us that God was never like what you were taught he was anyway. He's this merciful gracious God who gladly receives and forgives sinners.

Now let me ask you a question: if he's like that, if he's like that when we come to him in our sin, what's he going to be like now that we're reconciled to him and we've been adopted into the family of God? If he was gracious to us when we were sinners, how much more is he going to be gracious to us when we belong to him in Christ and he has fulfilled his eternal purpose in saving us and planting his Holy Spirit within us as a down payment to show that he's going to be with us forever? If he's gracious to sinners, how much more to his own children? So why this doubt and distrust of your Father if he's like that?

And finally we can say this, he's good. Matthew 7:11, notice how the name Father is there again. Matthew 7:11, he said, "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children," if you're a sinner and you know how to give good things to your own children, then "how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!" He's good. He's kind. He's loving. He's patient. All of these things set forth about his character in Ephesians 2, for example.

Now having done that brief survey of theology proper, who God is, understand this, all of that was preliminary to making this statement: Jesus' command against anxiety is based on the nature of who your heavenly Father is. It's based on the nature of God. Look at verse 26 again, Matthew 6. It's the blessedness of God. It's this blessedness, holy, unspeakably great character that reinforces our trust in him. Jesus says in verse 26, "Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?" Verse 32, "your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things." Well, understand the richness of that term "your heavenly Father" and what that means. This God is your heavenly Father and your heavenly Father, your heavenly Father is holy, omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, loving, wise, merciful and good. That's who your heavenly Father is and if he will feed a bird, don't you think he'll feed you? If he would clothe a lily, don't you think he'll take care of what's necessary to sustain your life? His character demands it. His character demands the outcome.

So beloved, speaking maybe beyond the course and a bit beyond the walls of our church but this probably needs to be said inside the walls as well, God is not an impersonal force like gravity. God is not someone impersonal. He is a personal living God with a genuine character that is unchanging, that is always like this, and you can know his very nature in the Lord Jesus Christ and as he is revealed in Scripture. And as this magnificent Father, God lovingly provides for you just like the fathers in the audience provide for their children and their families. It's a responsibility of love. It's a gladly-embraced duty to be

able to do that. Well, multiply that by infinity and the certainty of the unchangeable character of God and, beloved, you can rest assured that he will take care of you in every matter of life. The blessedness of God requires your trust. It invokes your trust. It invites your trust. You can trust this blessed God for your unseen future.

Now secondly, consider the body of your life. The body of your life. Jesus makes an argument from the greater to the lesser in order to prove the certainty of God's care for you as a believer. Look at verse 25 where Jesus says, "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?" And here's what Jesus is saying, he says God gave you your life and he gave you your body. That's the greater thing. If God bestowed life upon you, if God created you, if God saved you in Christ and has now adopted you into his family, that's the greater gift. That's the overarching aspect of things. Now listen, if he did the greater thing, he didn't do the greater thing simply to withhold what you need to sustain what he already gave you. The fact that he's given you life is an indication that he plans to sustain the life. You did not give yourself life either in a natural sense or in a spiritual sense. God gave you life and he didn't give you life only to withhold what you need to sustain that life. That would be ridiculous. He would be working at cross purposes with himself and God doesn't do that.

So the greater thing is he gave you a body, the lesser included thing is that he'll give you what you need to sustain it. David said elsewhere in Scripture in the Old Testament, he said, "I've been young and now I'm old," he said, "I've never seen the righteous forsaken, never seen them begging for bread." The body of your life indicates that God intends to sustain it, and so you just look and you say, "Okay, I've got this life. God, I'm still here. God, I still have needs. God, apparently in one way or another You're going to sustain that need for me because You're an intelligent God with a consistent purpose." So in one way or another, we're going to have what we need, not necessarily all we want but Scripture says in the New Testament if we have food and clothing and covering, with these we'll be content. It's enough. We have what we need and we don't have to be anxious about that. So the body of your life supports your trust in God.

Thirdly, the birds of the air, the birds of the air sustain your trust. And so Jesus reinforces all of this teaching with what we've already pointed out but we just want to look at it again a little bit more closely. He reinforces this with an illustration that even the youngest child in the audience can understand. Verse 26, look at it there with me. He says, "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?" Here he's making a different kind of argument in logic, he's reasoning from the lesser to the greater. If God does the lesser thing, he'll certainly do the greater thing. Well, the lesser thing is here that he feeds birds, two sparrows are sold for a cent, Scripture says, if he feeds the birds, then understand that he will feed you as well. And the idea is this, he says birds don't plant crops, they don't harvest crops, they don't even store up for tomorrow like the ants do, and yet without fail your heavenly Father feeds them. The birds have what they need to eat in one way or another, and if you think about it, just think about our

daily lives and our observation of birds, the variety of ways in which God does that is pretty astonishing. If you go to the beach, you see birds eating food that people throw out to them, bread crumbs and things like that, and the birds eat from the hands of humans which is just the way of saying that God is using that human to provide for the birds that way. Some birds on the other side, the less pleasant aspect of life, some birds eat roadkill on the highway, don't they? You know, you run over a raccoon and then you've got these vultures coming down and feasting at the belly of the beast, so to speak, God feeding birds like that that have different kinds of desires and needs. Some birds eat from your backyard feeders and on and on we could go, and you just see the diversity of the ways that God provides for different birds with different needs according to the needs of their day, and these birds have what is necessary to sustain their life.

Beloved, are you not worth more than a buzzard? Aren't you worth more than a swallow at your bird feeder? Aren't you worthy more than a pelican on the beach? If God feeds them and they're of lesser value in his creation, what's he going to do with you? He's going to provide for you. He's going to care for you. He's provided for you today every one of you here in one way or another. You have a home to go to and you've got food to eat when you get there, right? Every one of you have this. Well, understand that this is a manifestation of the goodness of God and what you are to do, you're to think, you're to break with your anxiety and then use your mind to engage these other things and to think about these little natural illustrations that Jesus uses and realize that these seemingly small illustrations are actually making a point about very great truth. God does for little things he'll do for me as well.

You're meant to appropriate that, so much so that not only is your anxiety unnecessary, we all know by direct experience that it is useless, it is an utter waste of time. Look at verse 27 where Jesus says, "And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life?" The idea could be translated which of you could add a cubit, a small measure to your height? Can you make yourself taller? Can you extend your life by even an hour when the time of death comes? You don't have the power to do that. We don't have the ability to do that. You're unable to add the smallest thing to your life so it's fruitless to worry about the provision. We presuppose our inability to provide for things, to guarantee the future is a better way to say that. We presuppose that and since I can't do anything about it, then I cast aside my worry and cast my cares upon the Lord.

Now look, Scripture elsewhere says, I mean, this is not a call to inactivity and laziness, elsewhere in Scripture it says if a man doesn't work, don't let him eat. You know, you're meant to go out and work and provide and you're working and the work of your hands is the provision by which God provides but it's meant to be done in a spirit of rest and trust, not in a spirit of endless worry and anxiety and, you know, living off bottles of Tums because your stomach is constantly churning about what the next day will bring. Let me say it this way: that is not the Christian life at all.

Now finally, fourthly, the blossoms of the field. The blossoms of the field support your trust. Look at verses 28 and 29. Jesus says, "why are you worried about clothing?" You see, he just keeps going, working over the illustrations, making the same point again and

again and he does this because we're so slow to learn it, we're so slow to absorb this and embrace it and make it the guiding conviction of our life that affects the way that we view everything else. So Jesus says in verse 28, "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." These wild flowers of the field grow up on their own without having done anything of their own to make it happen and yet their beauty exceeds Solomon at the height of his kingdom, and yet they wilt by the end of the day and in Jesus' time they'd be used for fuel for the oven. Beautiful flower, short existence, gathered up, tossed into the fire, and yet such stunning beauty God clothes them with despite the – watch this – despite the temporary purpose of their existence.

Now here you and I are, disciples of Christ, born again by the Spirit of God to a living hope, here we are adopted into the family of God with an eternal purpose that God is working out in his people, we who have had our footsteps ordained before we were born, Ephesians 2:8-10, well, if something with temporary purpose God does this for, how much more those of us that have an eternal purpose that God is working out in us in Christ? If he clothes a passing plant, don't you think he'll meet your needs when you belong to his kingdom? I mean, when you stack these things together and you stack them, you know, with a clear mind as we have the opportunity to do in this room here today, this is an inescapable conclusion. Anxiety is foolish. It's not just unnecessary, it's ridiculous in light of the blessedness of our Father, the body of our life, the birds of the air and the blossom of the field, everything, everything about the natural order and everything about the revealed character of God shows us that as his children, he's going to take care of us. Everything does. It cannot be contradicted.

So then where's the weak link in this? What's the weak link that causes us not to know this as the abiding reality of our spiritual experience? I ask myself even as I ask you. By the way, you know, I know full good and well that this isn't...that women and men alike suffer like this. Men and women alike are weak in this way, even no matter how we might try to hide it. Well, what's the weak link, then? It can't be with God. It can't be with his provision. That can't be it so where's the weak link that allows anxiety to drive a truck through our lives? Verse 30, "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!" There's the problem, you of little faith. If you and I are anxious, it's not because our circumstances are adverse because they come and go. It's not because the future is uncertain because we know that to be a fact. James 4 says, you know, you don't know what your life will be like tomorrow. Well, beloved, listen, we really need to emphasize this and drive this point home. If tomorrow is always going to be contingent and uncertain from our perspective, then it can't be from knowing what tomorrow will bring that brings us peace. We rest our hope not in the knowledge of what's going to happen or in our strength to persevere through it. All of those things are passing. All of those things can go away at a moment's notice and yet here we are, we're called to live a life of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. A life of a sweet spirit of trust, of confidence that smiles at the future.

The answer is not in controlling your circumstances or knowing what's going to happen, the problem when we are in that pit of anxiety is it's little faith. You are anxious, I say this gently, I say this to encourage you and to help you, you are anxious because you do not know God and trust God like you should. I'm not saying that anxiety means that you're not a Christian. I'm not saying that but I'm saying that if you knew God in the fullness of his attributes that we've covered here this morning, you would see that it would be impossible for him to be unfaithful to you. It's utterly impossible for him to be unfaithful to you, and if you trusted him of which he is worthy, he's so faithful, he's so good, he's so kind, if you trusted him for who he really is, then anxiety would have no place in our lives. You see, the problem is little faith. It's not no faith. It's not dead faith. It's not an inactive faith. It's just an immature faith that needs to grow. And if you have been anxious as a pattern of life, beloved, what you're seeing here from Matthew 6 is this is a great opportunity for immediate spiritual growth, to meditate on the character of God, his work in creation, and what that means for your life.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones says this and I quote, he says, "It is a poor type of Christianity that has this wonderful faith with respect to salvation and then whimpers and cries when confronted with the daily trials of life. We must apply our faith. Little faith does not do this."

Now a word of encouragement to you as we close. Jesus here is speaking to his disciples. He is speaking today to true Christians. He does not say that you have no faith, he's not saying that you're not a Christian, but he instructs you so that we can eliminate this inconsistency in our faith and make it more conformed to the reality of who our God is in the Lord Jesus Christ. Beloved, God will care for you no matter what and no matter how uncertain the future seems. Think through these things and come to the inevitable conclusion if you are a Christian, you have nothing to worry about because your Father is in control of the future, your Father is with you, and your Father is for you. So beloved, put anxiety to rest and walk in renewed peace toward your heavenly home.

Let's pray together.

O God, we confess that at one time or another, we've all been this person of little faith. I certainly have been, Lord, as You know all too well. And so we just come before You confessing our weakness as little children, looking to You as our strong and loving heavenly Father and asking You to sustain us, to cause us by Your Holy Spirit to grow in the truth, to sanctify us in the truth, and to produce in our lives in the time that You leave us here on earth to produce more in us, that sweet-spirited, content, trusting character of which You are so preeminently worthy. Help us, Father, not to be anxious but to trust You instead. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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