

# Prayer and Your Physical Needs

By Don Green

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**Truth Community Church**  
4183 Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road  
Cincinnati, OH 45255

**Website:** [truthcommunitychurch.org](http://truthcommunitychurch.org)  
**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm](http://www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm)

That was really a wonderful hymn to lead us into our time in God's word this morning, "The Deep Deep Love of Jesus," a reminder that his love is so profound and that he cares for us and that he provides for our needs; that he has, and this is where I really pivot into the text here this morning for you to remember as an opening thought, that Christ has at all times your best interest at heart; that he leads and guides in your life ever to bring about the best possible result by the wisest of possible ways, and for those of us that belong to him through faith in Christ, to realize that we have a Lord over us who doesn't simply exercise authority and to direct us into the way that we should be and the way we should behave, but that we have a Lord who loves us as demonstrated perfectly and irrefutably at the cross of Calvary where he laid down his life, where he suffered for your sins, where he paid the price and bore God's wrath that could have fallen upon you. Through no external compulsion outside of the Godhead, Christ voluntarily gave himself for us and gave himself that we might be eternally saved from our sin, that we might enjoy the bliss and the perfection of heaven forever and ever. This is what our Lord has done for us and why did he do this? He did it because of his deep deep love and we emphasize that this morning, we need to recall this because we understand that the world and Satan and even our own distorted thoughts, would make us think unworthy thoughts of the love of Christ; to question whether he is really good; to question whether he really does mean our best; to question is God just somebody who is just irritable and always unhappy with me because I can never quite measure up. That's a very real struggle for some of you, I know. Well look, look, clear all of that stuff out of your mind, clear all of that wrong thinking out of your head this morning and focus once again on the wonder of the cross of Christ where he loved us and gave himself up for us; where he endured the wrath of God; where he suffered physically and spiritually. "O my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Out of a loving intention to make sure that all of his own would one day be saved. Hallelujah is right.

So we come with the expectation that our Lord has good things for us at all times, we come with the expectation that he has good things for us in his word here this morning as well. So I invite you to turn to Matthew 6 as we continue our consideration of the way the Lord taught us as his disciples to pray in Matthew 6, beginning in verse 9. And as you're turning there, let me just make what I think is a pretty simple and basic observation: Jesus said this, he said this, this just occurred to me to put it in this frame, Jesus said that the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart. Whether good things or bad things, clean

things or dirty things come out of our mouths, things that glorify Christ or things that are sinful and wrong and angry and all of that, our mouths are simply a barometer, simply a symptom of what's going on in the human heart and so if you carry that over and apply it to the area of prayer, you realize that what we pray about is what's really animating our hearts. And here in Matthew 6:9 through 15, Jesus is not just teaching us how to pray, he is giving us an entire mindset and an entire attitude in which to think about God, to think about external physical life and to think about the inner life of the soul. He's teaching us an entire way to think. He's giving us a compressed crash course in discipleship and what it means to be a Christian and the way that we think about all of life.

That's very obvious to me because let's read the text and then we'll follow up on that thought, beginning in verse 9, chapter 6, verse 9, understanding that he's cultivating attitudes and affections in our heart not simply giving us words to repeat with our lips. If you can grasp that, then much of the Lord's prayer is opened up to a greater understanding for you. Matthew 6:9, Jesus said,

9 "Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. 10 Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. 11 Give us this day our daily bread. 12 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.' 14 For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions."

Now, going back to what I was saying about the Lord's prayer being sort of a crash course in Christian discipleship in cultivating affections and attitudes that should guide all that we think and do, notice as we've said many times, that the first half of this prayer is devoted to the glory of God. "Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done." What is this other than the attitude that should reflect every true disciple of Christ; that the supreme desire and focus and attention of our heart, that what we most want should be the glory of God. Why? Because Christ has saved us. He has rescued us. He has delivered us from sin and judgment and hell and damnation and we realize that he did for us what we could never have done on our own. The works of our hands could never save us. The things that we do could never save our souls. You could never wash away the sin of your soul with the deeds of your hands.

So we realize that Christ has done for us the great eternal act that we could never have done for ourselves and now instead of being in a place of judgment and condemnation, we are in a position of reconciliation with God; we are in a position of having all of our sins forgiven, restored to his favor, new life given to our hearts and a certain expectation that we'll go to heaven when we die. Isn't that a great blessing? Isn't it wonderful to know that Christ loved us like that with that kind of deep love and that that's what we have? Well, there is a response to that and the response is that your heart is overwhelmed with

affection and love for Christ. You realize that you want to love him, you give your life in response to him because he first loved you, and the surpassing gift, the indescribable gift as Scripture describes it of salvation, it means that we are consumed with the glory of God as the consuming passion and the consuming motivation of our life wherever life takes us. "Father, you have saved me from sin. O Lord Jesus, what can I say except hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done. I am thy servant. Give me understanding that I may know thy testimonies," Psalm 119:125. So the Lord's prayer reflects that heart orientation.

Now, that's not all that the Lord's prayer contains. We've gone through that first section where it teaches us to seek the glory of God, now we're going to move into the second section of the prayer and today we're just going to focus on verse 11. Chapter 6, verse 11, look at it with me again so we can kind of pull it up and highlight it and isolate it for our thinking. Having given ourselves over to the glory of God, we see this prayer instructed and commanded to us by our Lord Jesus. He says to pray this way,

11 Give us this day our daily bread.

And what Jesus is doing in this prayer is this, just by way of an overview statement and then we'll try to unpack it and bring some other Scripture to bear on our understanding of it. Let's back up again and approach it from this perspective. Beloved, you and I, we are all creatures of dust. Our breath is in our nostrils. Our lives are vulnerable. We never know when somebody is going to run a red light, crash into you and suddenly you are face-to-face with a holy God. We are vulnerable. God graciously preserves us from so much of our vulnerability but we are creatures of weak flesh and we are creatures that don't know what tomorrow holds. Well, as those that have been redeemed by the blood of Christ and belong to this great God, part of our response to God is to recognize that we are dependent upon him. Scripture says that we live and move and have our being in him; that all that we have comes from him; every good and perfect gift comes from the Father above. That breath I just took was done as a gift from God that was done in dependence upon him. We are dependent for him for our life and for our daily needs. Part of the aspect of prayer, part of what Jesus is cultivating in your life as he teaches you about prayer, is that you would remember your dependence upon him and honor God by expressing that dependence in the way that you pray and this is the opposite of the spirit of the world that says, "I'm a self-made man. I can do this. I can handle it on my own. I don't need anyone. I don't need God. I don't need you. I can do it on my own." Scripture and our Lord Jesus teaches us to have a completely different spirit and attitude toward life as we approach God in prayer and here in this verse, Jesus is doing this: he is teaching you to express your dependence on your heavenly Father as you bring your physical and your spiritual needs to him.

We're only going to focus on the physical needs here in verse 11 but one more time let's put it there before us, "Give us this day our daily bread," and that's what we're going to look at. We're going to break this message down in three parts here this morning. "Give us this day our daily bread," and what I want to do is this, I want to give you the perspective by which you should understand this prayer; the petition itself, what it means;

and then to bring you to an understanding of the peace that this kind of dependence is meant to promote in your life. The perspective, the petition, and the peace. That's where we're going here this morning.

So point 1: the perspective. And by the end of this time together in God's word, you should all be greatly encouraged. You should all be greatly encouraged by the fact that God invites you to bring your needs before him; that it is his intention to honor and bless you as you depend upon him like this. And the whole idea, think about it this way, beloved: Jesus says, "Pray this way. Father, give us this day our daily bread." What can that mean, what can that apply except that God has every intention of answering that favorably? He would not teach us to pray in a manner that was fruitless and meaningless and that God would not respond to. The mere fact that you are commanded to pray this way is a reflection of the Father's desire and intention to bless you as you do. Scripture says you don't have because you don't ask sometimes.

So let's look at this perspective and start the perspective not on what we say specifically in words, or not even starting with what it is that we want or what we think that we need. Let's start with this perspective: we serve a gracious and caring heavenly Father. God is a God who cares and provides for his children and that's a blessed place to be. He is a father to us. We realize that earthly fathers often fail us, earthly fathers have sometimes sinned greatly against us, but the truth of the matter is that most fathers know how to care for their children and want to do so. Well, multiply that by infinity and this is what our God is like: he cares for us and he intends to provide for us.

Jesus said he knows our needs. Look at verse 8 just before he begins teaching us on this. He says, "do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him." It's an indication that God not only has power and God not only dwells in heaven, but that he is with us and that he knows us and he knows the unique circumstances that each one of us is facing and that he is favorably disposed to his children who come to him and express their dependence in the midst of life that way. Brothers and sisters in Christ, he knows your need. He has promised to provide for you, to care for you, and here in this prayer, he invites you to come with the expectation of blessing. That's the perspective that you should have on this. It's so very important.

And I can remember times in the past early in my Christian life where you have this perspective on prayer maybe without even recognizing it or thinking about it, that somehow in prayer what you are trying to do is to overcome God's reluctance to help you. Settled somewhere, unarticulated maybe in your mind, God is stingy, God is not caring and I've got to do this in order to prompt him to do something that he would not otherwise do. People think that way about God sometimes without even recognizing it. What you need to understand is that that whole mindset and perspective of God is untrue, it is unbiblical, it is something to forsake and repent of and say, "God, I have approached you in prayer all of these years with an entirely wrong perspective. I have approached you as if you were unwilling to bless me. God, how good I think such unworthy thoughts about you? You are good. You are loving. You are ready to receive me. God, I will approach you on the assumption that you are ready to bless me rather than thinking that

you're not." That's fundamental. For some of you, that's an entire change of worldview. Well, good, let's go for it then. Remember what Peter said in 1 Peter 5, broader context to it but the Apostle Peter told us, he said, "You can cast all your anxiety upon him." Why? "Because he cares for us. Because he loves us." So we come with that mindset that we come approaching a God who is willing to bless us.

Now, that's one aspect of the perspective. There is another aspect that I think we need to deal with and there is just so much nuance. We all stumble, as I said earlier from the book of James, we all stumble in so many ways and it is so easy to stumble on these things and I want to help you in every way that I can and bring God's word to bear on every aspect that I possibly can. The first perspective: God is willing to bless us and so we approach a God favorably disposed to us. But secondly kind of looking at ourselves and examining ourselves here, it's quite easy for us to just be consumed in prayer, consumed in our mindset about life, not just the time that we verbally speak to God, to be consumed with this earthly life and to treat prayer as though the most preeminent priority in prayer is that I could get through this day or that I could have what I want or this problem could be solved or that this need could be met, all with an earthbound perspective on it. I know some of you are like that, not because I've heard you pray, this is the way we are. And what we need to think about as we contemplate bringing our physical needs, the needs of our life in prayer before God, is we need to be mindful of this, we need to have this having a track playing in our mind: is that Christ has taught us not to be consumed with this earthly life and the day-to-day things that happen in life. He has taught us not to let that be the consuming focus of everything that we do and think.

Look back at Matthew 4 when he was refuting the devil's temptations. In Matthew 4:4, remember our text today says, "Give us this day our daily bread," and he invites us to pray that way. That's wonderful but at the same time, there should be in our minds a perspective that says, "There is more to life and there is more to prayer than simply the daily needs at hand. God, help me through this day. Amen." Jesus said, quoted to the devil and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.'" "God, that which I most need is the spiritual food of your word which feeds me and brings me into communion with you. God, it is your word that strengthens me. God, I'm not a Christian, I need your word to show me the path that leads to Christ so that I might have eternal life. God, help me with the spiritual food of your word. That is more important than the daily bread that I also need." So beloved, it's not just the bread, it's not just the physical needs, it's not just the financial concerns that you have that motivate you when you come to God, you realize that that is a smaller part of a greater whole. "Man does not live by bread alone but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." The priority of Scripture, the priority is spiritual. That will change the way that you pray.

Now, keeping that in mind, let's look at Matthew 6 a little bit further on to also help this perspective in a verse that we'll get to in just a few short weeks. Jesus said in Matthew 6:25, he said, "For this reason," Matthew 6:25. I'll give you a moment to turn there to help us see that we are not to be consumed with the physical in our attitudes, our affections and our prayers. 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?" There is more than bread, there is more than financial concerns that should be animating your approach to life and animating your perspective as you come to God. "God, I have these needs but I present them with the perspective that I know that there are other transcendent principles at stake." Lots of people have walked with God in poverty. Lots of people have honored Christ when their physical needs were not met. Lots of people have glorified Christ with an infinitesimal fraction of the prosperity that you and I enjoy. We should keep that in mind as we pray and let that inform the perspective with which we approach our Lord.

One other thing as we contemplate these things, beloved, and all of this is designed to help you and encourage you and to maybe settle some fears that have dominated you. Remember this also about the nature of our Lord, remember him in his earthly life. Do you know what was true of the Lord? Do you know what he said about himself? He said, "The Son of Man has no place to lay his head." He had no bed of his own to lay down on. Well, here we are, not too many of us, if any, are in that dire strait and so we realize that our Lord walked a path of want, of human want, in order to serve us. We realize that God is willing and able to bless us. We realize that there is more to life. All of this perspective informs the way that we pray in this manner.

Now, why is this perspective so important? Beloved, look, you and I have legitimate needs for this physical life. Absolutely, period, end of sentence, end of paragraph, end of chapter. The needs of this physical life are legitimate and it is a great encouragement to us to realize that the Lord validates that in the way that he teaches us to pray; that this is a proper subject, a proper matter to bring before the Lord. "Lord, I have these needs today. I ask for your help." That is legitimate and the Lord invites us and indeed commands us to ask. He has validated the realm of our physical existence. All we are saying here is this: is that prayer is not the place to bring before God a materialistic, self-centered, selfish, earthbound perspective. That's all we're saying, that we present this petition in a greater context that shapes the way that we think about it and even what we ask. So that's the perspective. I hope that's clear.

Secondly, let's look at the petition itself. The petition itself. Look at verse 11 with me again as we consider what this means. Matthew 6:11, "Give us this day our daily bread." There is a simple trust behind this petition, there is a simple focus, and it will help us if we remember something a little bit about the nature of life in the first century of those who were hearing this teaching from our Lord at the time. In Jesus' day, many people, if not most of them, were paid on a daily basis for their work. One day's pay, one day's food. Existence was very much a hand-to-mouth, day-to-day experience, and this prayer is given in a culture and in an environment that knew nothing but a daily dependence of this kind. They weren't blessed with bank accounts and retirement accounts and freezers full of provision that could feed them for three or four months. They didn't have any thoughts about survivalist tactics and all of that. It was a day-to-day matter for them and Jesus graciously speaks to them and says, "You can come to your Father and ask and express your dependence upon him."

Now, when Jesus says, "Give us this day our daily bread," that word "bread," it's the common word for "the loaf"; the loaf of bread and wheat and yeast or whatever you put into your bread these days. But we should understand this: that bread is simply a shorthand term for the necessities of life. It's shorthand. It's not like Jesus says you can ask for bread but not for water. You can ask for bread but not for other things. It's not narrow like that. The bread is a metaphor for that which we need to sustain our daily life. So it's an invitation to bring the daily necessities of life before him.

Now, this idea of daily has the sense of looking forward to the immediate future. If you are praying it in the morning, you're looking at the day ahead. If you were somehow praying this in the evening, you're looking at the next day. It's not so much about a 24 hour window of time and what has to happen today before 11:59 PM, rather it's looking at that which is just ahead, that which is just on the horizon of life, looking to the immediate future. So what he's doing is this: he's teaching us to be mindful of the daily experience of life that we are in as we speak, and to say, "Lord, this is what I need. I'm asking you to provide it for me. Be gracious and provide what I need for this day."

And what is that teaching us to do? It's teaching us this: in one sense, God gives in response in our asking and so it's the way that he provides for us, he gives in response to our asking, bless his name, our prayers are not meaningless exercises in that way, but it's teaching you something else. It's teaching you beyond that. It's more than just the physical provision that it provides. This is what I want you to see and understand, is that Jesus is cultivating in you a conscious dependence for your daily life upon the provision of your heavenly Father. That is the greater principle being taught here. "God, as I look to my immediate future, my future is in your hands. You are God sovereign over all. I am a weak, sinful creature. I need you to provide for me as I look to the future. I look to you to give what I need to make it through this day." It's the dependent spirit which strikes a blow at the pride of man, strikes a blow at our self-sufficiency whether it's conscious and intentional and rebellious or simply an unthinking, "Ah, you know, what's to pray about? I've got a roast in the oven, why do I need to pray for my daily food?" Well, it's because there is more than what you physically put in your mouth, it's the concept of dependence, that you would be secure and find your security, find your confidence in the provision of God rather than whatever you have at hand, and that security and confidence is available, that spiritual well-placed security, trust and confidence is available whether you have plenty of whether you have virtually nothing. We are all brought to the same point of expressing our confidence in the provision of our generous God for what is ahead, rather than looking at our accumulated stuff.

Now, so what this prayer is doing is this: it's teaching us to humble ourselves and to depend upon our Lord consciously for life and breath and our every need. And just to put it in opposition to a health and wealth prosperity thing, this prayer is not about, "God, I want to accumulate all I can because this is my best life now and if I don't get it now, what am I going to do?" It's not from that materialistic, selfish, greedy spirit that we pray this way. It is from the position of a humble disciple who says, "God, I have been saved by grace. You're a good and heavenly Father and I remember that. As I look to my need

ahead, O God, I ask you to meet it. I look to you dependently. I trust not in myself, not in my own resources. I look to you and place my confidence in you for life and breath and every need that I have." This is a prayer that everyone can adapt. It's not just about physical provision. The student who is overwhelmed with the demands of education, "Lord, help me through this time." The one overwhelmed at work, "Lord, help me through this challenge." The one overwhelmed with other aspects of relational existence, "Lord, help me through this. There is so much difficulty and I don't know what to do. God, this situation is so long-standing, it is so complex, I am so frustrated. I don't know what to do. God, help me just today to walk the right step that you would have me to take. Give to me this day my daily bread."

So this is not an outlet for selfish desires, beloved, this prayer is a breath of trust in an uncertain world in which what we truly need is beyond our control to provide. This is the prayer that those who are unmarried and long for a spouse can pray. "Lord, I'm in this life. I don't want to be alone but here I am. Lord, I look to you dependently. I won't go to a bar to try and find somebody. I won't stray into sin, Lord. I just trust you and I bring this need before you and I thank you that today in Christ I have one who loves me and supplies all my needs. My heart is content today in him." The application of this goes everywhere. That's the petition, "Lord, give us this day our daily bread."

Now let's look at point 3 here: the peace. The peace. As you cultivate this conscious dependence on God, what is the result? Let me give you a couple of things. First of all, instead of greed, praying this way teaches you contentment. Instead of greed, it teaches you contentment.

Look over at the book of Philippians 4, toward the back of your New Testament between Ephesians and Colossians. Philippians 4, teaching us contentment, in verse 19 reinforcing, as it were, the things that we've already said about our gracious God. In verse 19 it says, "my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus." All of your needs provided by God according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. Do you know what? Look at that last phrase there: according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. It's not simply that God invites you to come and to pray, what you must see here is that he does so generously and he does it abundantly. He is not a stingy God. Get that out of your mind. According to the fullness of his riches and glory in Christ Jesus, it is from that generosity and that abundance that God provides for us. You say, "It doesn't seem that way right now. Things are going pretty slow." All right, but do you have what you need for today? Do you have food and covering for today? Then hasn't God provided for you today? And you have reason to give thanks today?

Look over at 1 Timothy, a little further to the right in your Bibles, 1 Timothy 6. This perspective is so important. 1 Timothy 6:7 says, "we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content." Prayer teaches you that contentment. "God, I bring my need of today before you. Ah, I see how you are providing. God, thank you. I'm content to live in the moment here with what you have provided." So it takes you away from the greedy spirit that says, "I've got to have more. I've got to have it and I've got to have it now. Well God,

do you know what? You're going to provide for me. You'll provide in your time. You'll provide in your way. God, whatever I receive is going to be from your hand. God, I give to you my contented heart in response. I trust you. I might want more, I would have anticipated, I would have thought that the provision would be greater, it's not what I planned, Father, we have suffered reversal but, Father, what I see today is that you have provided for me here. I have food to eat today. I have clothes on my back. I have a place to lay my head. I have more than Jesus had when he was on earth, Lord. Thank you. I'm content. I'm satisfied with what you've done. Lord, there are these other things out here that I don't know where it's going to come from, I don't know how that bill is going to get paid but, God, let me come back and ask you to provide." So that this manner of praying always orients you back, orients you back to your gracious Father who provides abundantly, faithfully, in his time, and leaves you in a place of contentment before him. You could make the argument that developing that kind of contented spirit in the midst of our materialistic anxious world might be one of the most glorious ways to bring honor to Christ, showing, "I can be content in this world and I don't have to have more before I get there. I've got food and covering, Lord. I'm content. Thank you. Thank you."

So this manner of praying leads us away from greed and into contentment. There's another thing that this prayer does when you think through it and you are praying from the fullness of the perspective that we have talked about here today. It does this: it teaches you peace instead of fear. Peace instead of fear. Contentment instead of anxiety.

Let's go to Philippians again since we were just there and we'll bounce our way back into Matthew before we close. Philippians 4. Do you know what? Here's the thing, this is to be the reality in which we live. This is real. This is spiritual reality. This is what God has given to us. This is what he has promised to us. This is what Christ has given to us. You as a Christian are meant to live in this spiritual environment, not to just dismiss it and say, "That's nice theory but, oh, you don't know what I've got a head today." No. No, whenever people talk that way, they're saying that they have never heard it for the first time. You cannot dismiss the word of God in such a cavalier manner that says, "Yeah, I hear that. I've heard it before. God provides, yada yada yada. What about, you know, I've got this." Well, no. No, we don't go there. We don't go there because Scripture is giving us spiritual realities that we are commanded and invited and intended to live in, to live in this realm of peace and contentment, being content simply to be a saved sinner in the hand of a glorious, great, gracious God, and to say, "That's enough for me."

If you want to glorify God in your life, start there. Don't worry about trying to be a great missionary to Africa, don't worry about trying to do big great things for God like so many people tell our youth, "You've got to try great things for God." Do you know what? If you want to do something really great, you want to do something that very few people actually do, young people? You want to be great for Christ? Go here, "God, I trust you and I am content with whatever you provide and I'm going to praise you no matter what." That is the kind of faith that God honors. This other stuff can sometimes be nothing more than just a desire for the glory of man and self-glory, "I did something great for God." Do you know what? That should never be our thinking. Our thinking should always be, "God did something great for me. Christ did something great for me and I love him for that and

I'm content to be in his hand." This is not to be lightly dismissed saying, "But I've got too many things that are too important for me to think this way." No. No. No. No, this is the command of Christ. This is the testimony of Scripture. This is what the Puritans used to call experimental Christianity. This is to be true in our experience. This is our responsibility but even more, beloved, it is our privilege. It is our prerogative to live this way and to have a mind like that is the highest act of worship that you can respond to God with.

So we don't accept that which would easily dismiss it, we say this is what God has called us to, an inner spiritual response of faith that honors him and trusts him no matter what. And when we go there, we find peace. Look at chapter 4, verse 4. Not just peace but joy. Philippians 4:4, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near." What is that except the reflection and Spirit-inspired language of what I have feebly been trying to say for the past 35 minutes? He goes on and says, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

One last text, Matthew 6 again. Matthew 6, and as you turn to Matthew 6, let me say this. I'll turn to Matthew 6 also while you're turning to Matthew 6. That's not what I wanted to say. This is what I wanted to say. It would be easy in my position to say these things with a detached spirit, to say these things in a cold manner. That's not what I'm trying to do at all. I realize as we are gathered together in this room for this all too brief hour, that for many of you, you are faced with substantial uncertainties in your life and it really is unclear what the future is going to hold and you do have to plan and you do need to know and you do need God to act and it seems like he just waits and waits and waits and I sympathize with that. I've been in those positions too. "God, what is going to happen with my life? What is going to happen?" I've asked that question so many times over the years. "What's going to become of me if this doesn't change?" So I want you to know as a pastor here as I say these things, it's with that heart of sympathy for what many of you are going through, and if I can dribble out that kind of human sympathy, how much greater the sympathy of God for your plight and your concern which he designed and prepared for you for your ultimate good?

But beloved, here's the way that you need to think. In the midst of that, "God, what's going to become of me? What's going to become of my life? I don't know, God." When you get into that mindset, step back and remember some really important things. Remember the fullness of what Jesus Christ has done for you. Did he not – follow me here, and it's okay to make eye contact. I'm not going to call anybody out or anything. Did he not leave the glories of heaven in order to secure your salvation? Did he not give his own soul over to the punishment of God on your behalf? Did he not give himself up even to the lesser physical sufferings of crucifixion in order to secure your eternal salvation? Didn't he do that? Didn't he love you and give himself up for you? Beloved, think, think true thoughts. Think true thoughts and don't feed your anxiety. If Christ has done for greater thing for you at greater personal cost and has already established that at

Calvary, gone to the tomb, out from the tomb, up into heaven, ascended where he intercedes for you, always watching over you, always with you, always working out his eternal plan for you which culminates in glory, if he has already done all of that, beloved, isn't it true, don't you think that in time he'll do the lesser thing of providing what you need in this life? If he's done the greater thing out of love and generosity, it's unthinkable that he would withhold the lesser thing. You see, this ultimately comes down to who you believe God to be and who God is. If God is generous and has been generous in the salvation of our souls, he's going to be generous and provide what we need in this life. Not according to what we define and what we want, according to his grace and mercy in Christ Jesus.

Look at Matthew 6:31. Jesus teaches us to think and to pray this way. I said verse 31, I actually want you to go to verse 26. This is a preview of coming attractions when we get to this text, but knowing that many of you deal mightily with anxiety and your spirit is weak in this way, the only way to overcome that is to strengthen it with truth, not with drugs, not with pharmaceuticals, not with psychology, not with human counseling. You must understand that the answer to all of that is right here in God's word! This matters! This is for the good of your soul and for the glory of God! For the glory of God, we look at Matthew 6:26 and Jesus 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? 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." Here is where you must think biblically, you must think spiritually and you must commit yourself to thinking according to truth and to the glory of God. Anything less is not worthy of him.

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! Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things." Your Father already knows. It's not lost on him, your state of need. So what do you do? Verse 33, "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

What you want to see in this text of Scripture is the undeniable argument. He goes from the greater to the lesser, he goes from the lesser to the greater to make his point. Greater to the lesser, God has given you salvation, surely he will give you what you need for your physical life, right? If he's so loving and gracious and generous, surely he'll give you the incidentals that he knows you need, right? Right. Then he goes from the lesser to the greater. Look at what he does for the flowers of the field. Look what he does for sparrows, for birds. He feeds them. He provides for the lesser order of creation on a consistent daily basis. He feeds birds, he clothes flowers with beauty. That's who God is. He's just this loving caretaker of his entire creation. Well, don't you think as one who has put your faith in Christ and has been born again into his family, don't you think that if he

does that for flowers and birds that he's going to provide for you too? You see, ultimately this becomes about the way that you think about God. This becomes about whether you are thinking thoughts that are worthy of his truth, of his glory, of his generosity or not. And once that is clear in your mind, then these other things about proper praying and peace will flow.

So beloved, think high and lofty and good thoughts about God. You will never think high enough thoughts about God. You will never think highly enough. You will never trust enough in his abundant love because it surpasses human understanding. It surpasses human merit. This is who God is and we pray in response to who he is and we trust him in response to who he is. It's not about what you deserve, whether you have sinned and don't feel like you can approach him or whether you think you're good enough or whatever. It's not about that at all. This is who God is: the gracious God who sent Christ to Calvary to save your soul, the gracious God who feeds birds and clothes flowers. If that's who God is, surely you and I can trust him for the needs of this life and approach him with the confidence that he intends to give. So you show your trust in him. Show your trust in his goodness by the way you pray.

Let's go before the throne. I know for some of you, you really need to just look beyond this life altogether to the state of your sinful soul. Your heart is in rebellion against God and, my friend, you need a mercy that transcends any physical need in this life. I call upon you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to believe in him and to be saved; to forsake this world, to forsake your sin, and to embrace Christ as he is presented to you in the Gospel, crucified for sinners, raised by God, ascended into heaven where he alone can save you from your sin. You who don't know Christ, trust him like that. For the rest of us,

*Our Father, we thank you that you are a good and generous and gracious God. There is no possible outcome for us except that we will see your goodness and your faithful loyal love shown to us because Scripture says, "I fear no evil for you are with me. Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." O God, O God, help us each one not to look to the earthly trinkets, earthly distractions, of things that really are simply matters of faith and trusting and believing you for who you are. You are a good God. Father, today we in this moment, in this hour, we tell you that we are content with what you have provided for us. We ask you to continue to provide as we look to the immediate future, and we entrust our eternal souls to you to look after as well. God, to be in your hands is to be in a place of ultimate comprehensive care and we thank you for that. And now in line with your word, our God, we would say now to our God and Father who loves us and cares for us without fail, to that God be the glory forever and ever. Amen.*

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