

Anxiety and God's Kingdom

Matthew 6:25-34

King of Kings! (Gospel of Matthew Series)


Prepared by: Matthew S. Black

Sunday, September 8, 2013, 10:30am at Living Hope Church of Roselle, Illinois

“Anxiety does not empty tomorrow of its sorrows, but only empties today of its strength.”

CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON

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 Open your Bible to **Matthew 6:25-34**. We are continuing in a series through the Sermon on the Mount entitled: “King of kings.” This morning we are looking a message entitled: “Anxiety and God's Kingdom.”

The Definition of Anxiety

According to the dictionary, anxiety is “a feeling of worry, nervousness, unease, or even terror or fear – typically about an imminent event or something with **an uncertain outcome**.”

Why is Anxiety So Destructive?

Anxiety can cripple you; it can steal your joy, zap your energy and fill you with terror and dread. “What if” is a question we often ask ourselves. We want to control our uncertain future. We would feel much better if we had more control. But we don't. So we worry.

Worry is Atheism

Worry is a form of atheism. Atheism is forgetting God. When we worry and forget that God is in control and that He loves us, then we willfully remove ourselves from His embrace, His security, and His comfort. Don't be an “anxiety atheist.” What can we do to rid ourselves of anxiety? Jesus tells us in Matthew 6. Let's look there at Matthew 6:25-34.

Reading of Holy Scripture

Matthew 6:25–34, “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. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? 26 Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? 27 And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? 28 And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, 29 yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 30 But if

God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

31 Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ 32 For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. 34 “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”

Outline

We are going to see today that:

1. Anxiety is your **choice**.
2. Instead we should choose to focus on God’s **greatness**.
3. And we should choose to focus on God’s **graciousness** to us.

I. Anxiety is your **choice** (6:25).

Anxiety is a choice! **Matthew 6:25**, “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. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?” Jesus gives us a command. That means we have a choice. We can choose not to be anxious.

Losing Your Keys

Anxiety can creep up on us unexpectedly. Let me illustrate the how you have a choice to worry or not to worry. Have you ever lost your keys? I do all the time. I just bought a GPS tile that attaches to my keys and it will track my keys in my house.

Why is it that I always lose my keys on the days when I have an important meeting and I have no extra time? I’m just fine. I’ve got to leave in five minutes if I’m going to make it on time. No problem. Just need my keys. Oh no! I’m going to be late!!!

My Choice of Dread or Joy

At that moment I have a choice. I can worry, or I can pray and trust God. Either way I’m going to be looking. While I’m looking I can allow **dread** to control me or **joy**. It’s my choice. If I allow dread and worry to control me, I might yell. If my wife and kids are around I might scold them for not STOPPING their lives and helping me find my keys. If I’m like most husbands, I might blame my wife and accuse her of hiding my keys. If no one’s home, I might just yell at the wall.

The Goal Cannot be “Remove Fear” – Must be “Please God”

Do you see that the behavior I exhibit when I am anxious exhibits atheistic convictions? God’s not in control, so I have to do what ever it takes to find my keys. This is where “finding my keys are the goal. The goal can never be “remove the fear” by “finding my keys.” The goal always has to be: pleasing God no matter what I feel like or how hard life is. Pleasing God!

Some People *Like* to Worry

I've even met people who worry so much, they almost enjoy it. God lifts a burden, and sometimes we are looking for something else to worry about. Poor pitiful anxious creatures we are!

“Don’t Fear” 365 Times in Scripture

I read somewhere that 365 times in the Bible God says, “Fear not” or “Don’t worry” or “Take no thought.” Do you think God is trying to tell us something?

Spurgeon Quote

Charles Spurgeon rightly said, “Anxiety does not empty tomorrow of its sorrows, but only empties today of its strength.” And truly, anxiety, worry, and fear empties us of our joy and effectiveness for the Kingdom. This morning we see that anxiety is a type of atheism – it is taking on burdens and cares in our lives that only God was meant to handle.

There is no room in God’s Kingdom for anxiety. Imagine how peaceful and joyful we will be in heaven. Yet God is in control of your temporary life as much as he controls your life in eternity.

Worry, A Powerful Motivator

Worry and fear are powerful motivators in our society. People who are afraid will do things they would never do in a normal state of mind. Fear pushes people to do a lot of irrational things. But God says the right response to fear and worry is to talk with the God who controls all things!

Worry is a fact of life. What is the cure for worry? In our day, some people deal with it through drugs or alcohol, covering the symptoms. Others turn to mindless entertainment. Some become bitter. And some even end their lives.

Worry, a Slavemaster

Worry is a merciless slavemaster that keeps us from God. Instead we need to find the Bible’s solution! And the Biblical solution for worry is prayer, or more specifically, *worship*, or seeing the smallness of your problems in light of the greatness of God!

A Detached “Who Cares” Attitude?

Kent Hughes makes a great insight:

“I do not believe Christ’s intent here is to foster in us a detached “who cares” attitude. There is a type of good worry (or perhaps I should say good concern) that all healthy Christians have. For example, Luther says we are to be anxious about the spiritual well-being of others and points to Paul as the example in **2 Corinthians 11:28, 29**:

“Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?”¹

¹ Hughes, R. K. (2001). *The sermon on the mount: the message of the kingdom*. Preaching the Word (p. 220). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

Definition of Sinful Worry

You might ask, what is the difference between sinful, idolatrous worry and bearing God given burdens? A worry is burden you are carrying alone. A worry is a burden with God removed from it. And so removing this worry becomes the point of living, or an idol—an idol of the heart. We see this in **Ezekiel 14:3**. We learn there that the people of Israel had “set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumblingblock of their iniquity before their face”. Worry is an idol of the heart. It is a stumbling block that robs us of our view of God.

God is Good!

You need something? God will give it to you if He thinks you need it.

- **Romans 8:32**, “He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?”
- **Psalm 84:11**, “No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly. 12 O LORD of hosts, blessed is the one who trusts in you!”
- **Ephesians 1:3–4**, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places....”

God has lavished His love upon us in Christ and he promises...

- **Philippians 4:19** (ESV), “And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”

Worry, the Opposite of Contentment

Worry is the opposite of contentment, which should be a believer’s normal and consistent state of mind. Every believer should be able to say with Paul, Phil. 4:11–12 “for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. 12 I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need” (**Phil. 4:11–12**; cf. 1 Tim. 6:6–8).²

Worry Defined

Worry has been defined this way:

Worry is the sin of distrusting the promise and providence of God, and yet it is a sin that Christians commit perhaps more frequently than any other. The English term *worry* comes from an **old German word meaning to strangle, or choke**. That is exactly what worry does; it is a kind of mental and emotional strangulation, which probably causes more mental and physical afflictions than any other single cause.

Two Visions that Take Away Sinful Worry

Two things will take away our worry according to Jesus: a view of God’s **sovereignty** and a view of our **sonship** through Christ.

Two Antidotes to Worry

This morning two antidotes to worry in this text that grab out attention. We’re going to see:

1. Choose to focus on God’s greatness—he’s sovereign
2. Choose to focus on God’s great love for you—you are His son or daughter.

² MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1985). *Matthew*. MacArthur New Testament Commentary (419). Chicago: Moody Press.

II. Choose to focus on God's **greatness** or **sovereignty**: *God is King over everything* (6:25-30).

God's Greatness

Matthew 6:25–30, “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. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? 26 Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? 27 And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? 28 And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, 29 yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 30 But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, **O you of little faith?**”

God is in control of the universe. He is the owner and the controller and the provider of all resources of time and eternity. He provides for all the living creatures on earth. All plants, all animals, all people. God can handle your problems.

God So Much Greater than Our Problems

We are fascinated by little gadgets, iPhones, now iWatches. We are fascinated with technology and advancement. Recently doctors successfully accomplished a face transplant reconnecting thousands of nerves – fascinating!

But this is nothing in light of the greatness of God. God made the face. We can reconnect it, but God makes it. And these are just things on this earth. God rules the earth and the Solar System. And even the Solar System is quite small compared to the rest of the universe.

We usually worry about little things – food, fashion, the future. But God at this moment is maintaining the rings around Saturn. And that's just in our tiny solar system.

We start worrying. We really don't worry about many big things. Mostly what we worry about is the small stuff.

Three Examples of Worry – Frailty, Food, & Fashion

1. FRAILTY

Matthew 6:25, 27, “Therefore I tell you, do not be **anxious about your life**... 27 And which of you by being anxious can add **a single hour to his span of life?**” (KJV: “a single cubit to your stature”)

You can't control life is what Jesus is saying. Since you can't control life then, **how should you respond** when everything crashes in your life? Two images come to my mind.

- **Job** – when everything was taken away from him, what did he do? He fell down before the Lord and worshipped. He said, “The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away, and Blessed be the Name of the Lord!”
- Another man I think of is **John Wesley**

John Wesley's House

One day when he was away from home someone came running up to John Wesley saying, "Your house has burned down! Your house has burned down!" To which Wesley replied, "No it hasn't, because I don't own a house. The one I have been living in belongs to the Lord, and if it has burned down, that is one less responsibility for me to worry about."³

2. FOOD

Matthew 6:25a, "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink..." God feeds the birds, does he not?

Birds – Ravens (Luke 12:24) – the lowest rank of living creatures – God provides!

Matthew 6:26-27, "Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? 27 And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?"

The ravens don't plant or harvest. They don't build barns. They don't know how to plan or save or stockpile for the future; but God takes care of them. So there goes the whole "God-helps-those-who-help-themselves" theory. And we're way more valuable to God than birds because we're made in God's image. This is not an excuse to quit planning for a financial future, or counting the cost of our plans. But it is a reason to quit fretting over that future as we try to plan for it. If God cares so tenderly for the birds, then how must he treat people who put their trust in Him and submit their plans to Him?

3. FASHION

Matthew 6:28-30, "28 And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, 29 yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 30 But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, **O you of little faith?**"

Some of you worry about your clothes, whether you have enough clothes or whether you have the right clothes to fit into the fashions of the day, and I'm telling you when you're all done dressing yourself you can't be dressed as beautifully as a lily so why don't you let God do the dressing, He dresses the lilies. Solomon, the richest man there was couldn't make a robe as fine as the petal of a flower.

Or think about the flowers in the field. They don't sit at a weaver's wheel and spin their own clothes; yet God ensconces them with a glory that even Solomon himself never wore. God makes the grass beautiful, even though it's here today and gone tomorrow, because God is good. He is a generous provider, and it suits His kindness to clothe the grass in lush color, even for the brief time that it lives. If God is so kind to the evanescent, inanimate grass, then how much more will He provide for all those who trust in Him? He calls them "you of little faith." The antidote to anxiety is faith.

The gymnasium of faith is prayer. Prayer builds and exercises faith, and in that way reduces anxiety. That's why Paul says in Phil 4:6 "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication make your requests known to God."

³ Ibid., 420.

Peter Worried A Lot

Think about Peter. He worried a lot. He worried about things all the time.

- **Walking on the Water.** He worried about drowning when he was walking on the water, even though the Lord was right there.
- **Jesus Being Crucified.** He worried about the things that were going to happen to Jesus in the garden, pulled a sword and tried to fight the Romans. He worried about Jesus being crucified and told Him not to do that.
- **Cast Your Care on God.** Peter worried, but God changed him, and he wrote in **1 Peter 5:7** that we ought to what? – “cast all your cares on God, for He cares for you.”

Jesus' conclusion: God loves you and will provide for you!

God Owns it All

We as believers are all stewards. The biblical teaching of stewardship is that I'm a manager of things I do not own.

Psalm 24:1 (ESV), “The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein...”

Haggai 2:8 (ESV), “The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, declares the LORD of hosts.”

Psalm 50:10 (ESV), “For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills.”

Ultimately things don't belong to me; ultimately everything belongs to God. God has given me possessions, income, a home, a place to sleep. And He's given those things to us that we might manage them in such a way that it glorifies God and builds His kingdom.

You of Little Faith

So Jesus says to His beloved disciples – you are of little faith. The phrase, “O you (ye) of little faith,” is used four other times in the Gospels and it is most fascinating the way it's used.

It is used for example in **Luke 12:28** when people worry about **clothing**.

It is used in **Matthew 8:26** when the disciples worried about **drowning**, they worried about the **length of their life**, they were afraid of death, afraid of drowning, as if the Lord was going to let them drown. They said to Him, how can You sleep when the storm is going to drown us?

In **Matthew 14** again it was Peter worrying about drowning, fear of **losing his life**.

And then it is used in Matthew 16:8 when they were worried about their **food**. Every time that phrase is used, “O ye of little faith,” it is used about somebody who worried about **food, fashion** or the **frailty** of their life span.

For Believers

We can believe God for the awesome gift of eternal life – the biggest thing in the world, but then we stumble around and can't believe Him for the lesser gifts, like food and clothing. We believe God's going to put us in heaven when we die, but we don't believe God's going to provide us a meal or take care of the length of our life, how foolish.

He's not speaking to unbelievers. He'd have said, “You of what? No faith.” We have the faith, we just don't use it, and we don't apply it. God's people who worry have little faith.

Focus on the greatness of God

We need to focus on the greatness of God. He formed the universe. He cares for the flowers and the birds. He gave His own Son for you. He'll take care of you.

III. Choose to think on God's **great love** for you, your **sonship**: *You are the King's child* (6:31-34).

The Greatness of God's Love for You

Matthew 6:31-34, "Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'" 32 For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. 34 "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."

Don't Live Like Orphans, Like the Gentiles

They don't live like God loves them. You need to live differently from them. They live as orphans. All those who have not God as their heavenly Father are orphans. But you are NOT orphans.

Live in the Greatness of God's Love

Your Father knows you have needs. Live in the greatness of God's love for you! **Romans 8:31-32**, "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?"

Seek God's Kingdom

Matthew 6:33, "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." We are to turn our focus from our worry to God's greatness and graciousness toward us. Seek His Kingdom. What does that mean?

Lean Not To Your Own Understanding

Daniel Bock said: "Anxiety, though perhaps a natural response to sensing events that are beyond our control, is ... [a] profitless activity" (Bock, IVP Luke, 349). We should follow the advice of wise Solomon in **Proverbs 3:5-6**:

5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart,
and do not lean on your own understanding.

6 In all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make straight your paths.

Focus on God's Great Love!!

You need something? God will give it to you if He thinks you need it.

- **Romans 8:32** (ESV), "He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?"
- **Psalm 84:11** (ESV), "No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly. 12 O LORD of hosts, blessed is the one who trusts in you!"
- **Ephesians 1:3-4** (ESV), "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,..."

God has lavished His love upon us in Christ and he promises...

- **Philippians 4:19** (ESV), “And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”

Examples of Seeking God’s Kingdom: Hannah and Hezekiah

Prayer is the gymnasium of faith. Those who trade in worry must replace it with something. They replace it with worship and prayer and drawing near to God.

Two examples come to mind: Hannah and Hezekiah.

Hannah. What was Hannah’s worry? She was barren. What did she do about her barrenness? She took her pain to the Lord. She dedicated herself, and if God chose so, to give her child to the Lord. Remember Eli the priest thought she was drunk because she was out of control talking at the altar? Look over at **1 Samuel 1:15-16, 20** where Hannah is accused of being drunk by Eli the priest. What does Hannah say? “No, my lord, I am a woman troubled in spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the LORD. 16 Do not regard your servant as a worthless woman, for all along I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation.” ...20 And in due time Hannah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Samuel, for she said, “I have asked for him from the LORD.”

Hezekiah. What about Hezekiah? Remember what Hezekiah did when Hezekiah hears that Sennacherib, King of Assyria has arrived with a 185,000 man army? He turned his worry into worship. **2 Kings 19:14-19**, “Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers and read it; and Hezekiah went up to the house of the LORD and spread it before the LORD. 15 And Hezekiah prayed before the LORD and said: “O LORD, the God of Israel, enthroned above the cherubim, you are the God, you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; you have made heaven and earth. 16 Incline your ear, O LORD, and hear; open your eyes, O LORD, and see; and hear the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to mock the living God. 17 Truly, O LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste the nations and their lands 18 and have cast their gods into the fire, for they were not gods, but the work of men’s hands, wood and stone. Therefore they were destroyed. 19 So now, O LORD our God, save us, please, from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you, O LORD, are God alone.”

Then Isaiah prophesies: **1 Kings 19:32-37**, “Therefore thus says the LORD concerning the king of Assyria: He shall not come into this city or shoot an arrow there, or come before it with a shield or cast up a siege mound against it. 33 By the way that he came, by the same he shall return, and he shall not come into this city, declares the LORD. 34 For I will defend this city to save it, for my own sake and for the sake of my servant David.”

35 And that night the angel of the LORD went out and struck down 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians. And when people arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies. 36 Then Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and went home and lived at Nineveh. 37 And as he was worshiping in the house of Nisroch his god, Adrammelech and Sharezer, his sons, struck him down with the sword and escaped into the land of Ararat. And Esarhaddon his son reigned in his place.”

Turn Worry into Worship

The Biblical solution for sinful worry is worship. Now we are going to see this in the life of Hannah in just a moment, but I want you to look at this principle from the New Testament in Our

theme verse for March is **Philippians 4:6-7**, “do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

When we are tempted to worry, first we need to replace that worry with worship. The word that is translated “prayer” in verse 6 includes the idea of worship. In the Bible there are a number of words used to describe prayer, and this particular one is a broad term that refers to the whole aspect of worship. What Paul is saying is “Don’t worry; worship!”

So every worry you have is an invitation to worship God.

All These Things Added

In **Psalm 34:10** it says, “The young lions do lack and suffer hunger.” Consider the animal kingdom and you’ll find there are times when lion cubs hunger, the mother is unavailable, the mother doesn’t provide the food or it’s not there, and yet he says, “but they who seek the LORD shall not lack any good thing.” Animals may lack, but God’s people – they will not.

Conclusion

Ava and Anxiety

God wants us to rest in His loving sovereignty over His life. We need to remember that God is good and go running to Him when we are afraid.

Each morning when I get out of bed, the first thing I want to do is hug our little baby Ava (though she’s not so little any more). Usually very early in the morning I hear her crying. Sometimes I get to hold her before Jill does. She’s starting to let me hold her now. I used to just be the “Mama finder” but now Ava’s letting me bond with her. Maybe it was those two weeks of vacation you gave me!

At any rate, the looks that babies can give you when they are upset! They look so worried. They look frightful actually. But the joy I receive when I hold her and she lays her head on my shoulder is amazing.

I believe God gives some people children so that we can reflect the joy He has when we *as His children* find rest and trust and peace in Him. Sadly, though God’s arms are always open, we often choose worry over worship and rest in our loving Father in heaven. Instead of giving our burdens and sorrows to our Father, we often choose to carry them and be crushed and discouraged by them.