

From the window in my office at home, I can see our courtyard and the birdbath under the tree in the front yard. As dry as it has been lately, I have been keeping the birdbath full of clean cool water. I enjoy watching the birds as they fly in for a drink. Occasionally, we have a large hawk that stops by for a drink and bath. Recently as I watched the birds and the flowers, I remembered one of the passages from the Sermon on the Mount in the Gospel of Matthew where Jesus said consider the birds of the air and the lilies of the fields, they don't worry about their needs, why should you. Worry is fretting about something that could happen. Worry has been called "borrowing trouble." Do you worry? Are you a worrywart? Is there anybody here who has never worried? This morning, let's see what Jesus has to tell us about worrying from the sixth chapter of Matthew, verses 25 through 34.

Read Matthew 6:25-34

A man was worrying all the time about everything. He was a chronic worrier. Then one day his friends saw him whistling and happy. They asked him what had changed. He replied: "Well, now I'm paying a man to do all my worrying for me." "You mean you aren't worrying anymore?" "No. Whenever I'm inclined to worry, I just let him do it." "Well, how much are you paying him?" "Two thousand a week!" "Wow! How can you afford that?" "I can't. But that's his worry."

As we dig into this passage, let's make sure we understand what Jesus is saying here. The *King James Bible* indicates that Jesus tells us: "Take no thought for tomorrow." "Take no thought" is an old English expression which means to not worry or be anxious. Now Jesus is not promoting a thoughtless, reckless attitude toward life. He is not saying that we should not plan, save or work, because we must not neglect our responsibilities. But Jesus is telling us to not become obsessed with our needs or let them dominate our thoughts.

In this passage, Jesus is telling us to not worry or be anxious about anything, not just food, drink or clothes, but the other things of life. This point is so important that Jesus repeats it at least three times in this morning's text. Remember what the Apostle Paul said in Philippians 4:6 – "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God." Paul is saying: "Why worry when you can pray?"

"Do not worry about your life," Jesus tells us. Now while it is natural for us to worry a little especially during uncertain times like right now, worry should not be the dominating force in our lives. Our lives should not be consumed with worry. It is a fact that most of the things we spend our time worrying about will never happen. Also worrying about something doesn't change it a bit. Worrying is not going to make a difference one way or the other. Jesus is

encouraging us to relax and trust in God. Worry is a burden that God never meant for us to bear.

In these verses Jesus presents several key arguments against worrying. First, Jesus points out that if God can give us life, then He can surely be trusted to handle the lesser things in life, to provide for our basic needs. If God can do such extraordinary things such as creating the universe and us, how much more capable is He of taking care of us. Don't worry about tomorrow. Remember, God is already there.

In verse 21, Jesus does not use the birds as an illustration by accident. He wants to show us how unreasonable it is to worry. The birds of the air do not worry about their lives or attempt to store up goods for an unforeseen future, and yet their lives go on. As I sat in my courtyard watching the birds flying around and listening to them singing, I didn't see any of them shaking with fear or being anxious. Instead, they appeared to be having fun and enjoying life, like we should be doing. The point that Jesus is making is not that the birds do not work; on the contrary, it has been said that no one works harder than the average sparrow to make a living. They do not worry about a future they cannot see or seek security in stored up possessions. Worry does not improve the future; it only ruins the present.

Here's a little poem that sums up this lesson from Jesus. Said the Robin to the Sparrow: "I really do not know why it is that these human beings rush about and worry so." Said the Sparrow to the Robin: "Friend, I think that it must be that they have no Heavenly Father such as cares for you and me." If God takes care of the birds of the air, surely, He will take care of us, who are His children, created in His image and redeemed by His Son Jesus Christ.

Then in verse 27 Jesus goes on to show how useless worry is. Jesus asks can we add a single hour to our life by worrying. Being anxious does not result in living longer, if anything, it shortens life. Dr. Charles Mayo of the famous Mayo Clinic wrote: "Worry affects the circulation, the heart, the glands, and the whole nervous system. I have never met a man or known a man to die of overwork, but I have known a lot who died of worry."

Now there's a footnote in my Bible that indicates that Jesus also asked if you could increase your height by worrying. And as we all know from experience, the opposite is actually true in life; as we grow older, we get shorter. In reality, gravity sets in and instead of growing taller; we begin to spread out, especially around the waist. Anybody experiencing this? But the key point that Jesus is making here is that worrying is useless. Worry cannot add a single inch to your height, or a single minute to your life. Worry cannot add a single dollar to your bank account or pay the bills. Worry cannot improve your health. As someone once said worry is like a rocking chair; it may give you something to do, but doesn't get you anywhere.

Next Jesus also uses the flowers of the field as an illustration. They bloomed for a short time on the hillsides of Palestine; yet in their brief life they were clothed with beauty beyond our ability to imitate. But when they died, they were only useful for fuel. The Palestinian oven was a clay box set on bricks over the fire. When they wanted to increase the temperature of the oven quickly, a handful of dried flowers was thrown inside. If God gives such beauty to a short-lived flower, how much more can He provide for our daily needs and take care for us, His children?

A research study found the following percent of time that we spend worrying about unnecessary things:

- Things which never happen: 40 percent
- Things in the past which cannot be changed or corrected: 30 percent
- Needless worry about our health: 12 percent
- Petty miscellaneous worries: 10 percent
- Real and legitimate worries: 8 percent

Maybe that's why Jesus said: "Don't be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own." In other words, worry is basically interest paid on trouble before it is due. It has also been said that today is the tomorrow you worried about yesterday.

An executive decided to limit all his worrying to just one day each week. So, he chose Wednesday. When anything happened that gave him anxiety, he would write it down and put it in his worry box and forget about it until the next Wednesday. The interesting thing was that on the following Wednesday when he opened his worry box, he found that most of the things that disturbed him during the past six days were already settled. Thus, it would have been useless to have worried about them in the first place. If you really think about it, this is also true for us. Think about the things you worried about last week. Did your worrying make any difference?

Then Jesus goes on and makes His main argument against worry. Worry is basically not trusting God. Think about it, if you trust God to provide for your basic needs, and to supply your daily bread that you pray for in the Lord's Prayer, why do you need to worry. It is not only wrong to worry, it's unbelief; worrying means that we do not believe that God can take care of our needs. We say: "I will not trust what I cannot see," and that is where unbelief begins. Every tomorrow has two handles. We can take hold of it by the handle of anxiety, or by the handle of faith. Which will you choose? As the old hymn goes "trust and obey, there's no other way."

Your anxiety level is a good indicator of how much you really trust the Lord. It seems incredible, but we seem to have an easier time trusting that God will save our souls from hell because of what Jesus did for us on the cross than we do trusting that God will provide for our daily needs. In his classic devotional *My Utmost for His Highest*, Oswald Chambers states that worry is a sin. Did you hear that; worry is a sin? Have you ever thought of it that way? It's a sin because we fail to trust in God. Do you trust in God or do you worry? Think about how

unnecessary and disrespectful worry is to God. When asked whether or not he ever worried, a wise pastor said: “Of course not; worry is a sin. If I’m going to sin, I’m going to pick something a whole lot more fun than worry.”

Towards the end of this passage, Jesus gives us two ways to overcome worry. First, in verse 33 Jesus says: “But seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be given you as well.” Can you imagine what the people back then must have thought when they heard Jesus say this? This statement goes against common sense. Even the most spiritually-minded of us would argue the exact opposite saying: “But I must make a living; I must feed and take care of my family.” Let’s be honest, for most of us the main concern of our lives is not the kingdom of God but how are we going to take care of ourselves. But Jesus reversed this order by telling us to get into a right relationship with God first, maintaining it as the primary concern of our lives.

In other words, if we focus on God, then everything else will fall into place. We are to put God first in our life. Think about it, if you stay focused on God and what He wants you to do, you will not have time to worry. However, while Jesus tells us not to worry about our life; He does want us to be careful about one thing – our personal relationship with Him. Whenever there are competing concerns in our lives, we must make sure to always put our relationship with the Lord first.

Next in verse 34, Jesus tells us that we can defeat worry by living one day at a time. *The Living Bible* translates this verse as follows: “So don’t be anxious about tomorrow. God will take care of your tomorrow too. Live one day at a time.” Jesus is telling us to deal with our problems one at a time as they come up. We can be assured that God will provide us with the strength and the wisdom needed for each day. The *Message* puts it this way: “God will help you deal with whatever hard things come up when the time comes.” God reminds us to trust Him, take one day at a time, and walk in faith.

Cristy Lane understood this in her classic song *One Day at a Time*. Listen to the words: “Show me the stairway I have to climb. Lord, for my sake, teach me to take one day at a time. One day at a time, Sweet Jesus, that’s all I’m asking from You. Just give me the strength to do every day what I have to do.” Think about it, if we live each day as it comes, if each task is done as it appears, then the sum of all our days is bound to be good. Jesus is telling us to handle the demands of each day as they come, without worrying about the unknown future and the things which may never happen.

Worry is preoccupation in the present due to fear of what may take place in the future. Now there is nothing wrong with having contingency plans. As a matter of fact, worry has been defined as planning without God. We need to plan ahead, but we are not to become

preoccupied and fearful of the future. Tomorrow is in the hands of God. We need to live for God in the present and make the most of each day.

Do you want to overcome worry; then focus on what God is doing right now in your life and don't get worked up about what may or may not happen tomorrow. Remember what we discussed last Sunday. God will help you deal with whatever comes your way. Instead of concerning ourselves with making a living, we would be wise to concern ourselves with the purpose for which we were created. Concentrating on living each day to the fullest for the glory of God will cure us from the harmful effects of worry and make it possible for us to have the abundant life in the here and now. Let's rest on the Lord's promise and trust Him to meet our needs. When we put our cares in His hands, He puts His peace in our hearts. Amen