

Do Not Be Anxious: The Great Enemy of Christian Joy

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Matthew

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Which is good because we're preaching on anxiety this morning. So if you have your Bible, turn with me to Matthew 6. We'll be looking at verses 25 to 34. My fear of technology is ill-placed for two different reasons. One, I'm very loud and I'm pretty sure they can hear me in the Ed building if the mic doesn't work. And two, Thomas is really good at his job, so I should just trust him. And it is true, I'm pretty sure I only have three ties, at least three ties that I wear. Actually. I was looking back through SermonAudio the other day, someone had asked me to send them one of my sermons and, yes, this is from Nikki McKay's wedding because that's pretty much the only suit I own. I was looking back through SermonAudio the other day to send a sermon to one of my family members and you can see just the little image of me preaching and it's navy jacket, navy jacket, navy jacket, black jacket, navy jacket, navy jacket, navy jacket, same thing all over again. So I should probably buy something else.

Anyway, our text this morning is in Matthew 6 starting in verse 25. We'll be looking at anxiety and considering how it attacks us and how it is our great enemy. The title of our message this morning is "Do Not Be Anxious: The Great Enemy of Christian Joy." So let's see what the Lord has to say in his Sermon on the Mount, starting in verse 25 of 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? 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.

Let's go before the Lord in prayer.

Our heavenly Father, we thank you for this time that you have given us, the time where we gather together to hear your word read, to hear your word proclaimed, to sing songs of praise to you and to lay all of our burdens before you. Lord, we know that you care for us. We know that you love us. And so, God, I pray that this would be a time where we would see our own worries and our anxieties as nothing compared to your power and to your sovereign will. Lord, I pray that this would be convicting for my own heart as I preach it, that it would not come from a heart of worry or even a heart of pride, but all would be said for the glory of your name and for the building up of your body. Be with us now as we dive deeply into something that is going across the church at a rapid rate, and, Lord, may we learn to trust you and follow you all of our days. We pray all this in Jesus' name. Amen.

I heard a preacher once say that you really get to know a pastor well by listening to his sermons because often he is preaching about his own sin. So this morning we're going to look at something that I have wrestled through in my own life, the concept of anxiety, of being worried. I was actually having a conversation two weeks ago with a dear brother where I was sharing with him some of the things that I was worried about whether it was financials, relationships, work, whatever it was, there were a lot of different areas where I was just feeling worried. I was feeling anxious. I couldn't stop thinking about these issues. It was causing me to have a knot in my stomach when I thought about it. It was changing the way that I was looking at everything else and so I came to him and said, "This is what I've got, what do you have for me? Help me out here. Help me think through this for a moment." His words are going to stick to me for two different reasons. The first of all, they were incredibly wise; second reason, they were very blunt, which is sometimes what I need to hear. He looked at me and said, "You're being anxious because you're not letting go of control. You're being anxious because you're not trusting the will of the Father." Ouch. That one hurt a little bit. And yet, I'm very thankful for those hard words because it's true. When I feel anxious, it's because I'm trying to hold on to control of my own life. And if we're honest, let's be honest for a moment, the majority of us have dealt with anxiety before. We've been worried. We've been worried about every little thing that you can be worried about, and we've been worried about things that you wouldn't think you should be worried about. We are a fearful and anxious people. All throughout the Bible we see this play out. So for a moment, let's lay aside our pride in trying to hide the fact that we feel anxious.

Now let's consider for a second that we live in a fast-paced world. Everything is moving at a rapid rate and it's moving faster every day. You are told to get things done at work faster. You are told to continuously move forward in life. And if you ever have a moment

where you feel like you're paused, you're messing up. And let's consider even more the last few years. Over the last few years we've seen a pandemic go across the world and in that pandemic, fear was spread, worry was spread. There were people that got ill and died. There was also some misinformation around it. All sorts of problems that came out of that. So in this pandemic you see people getting laid off from their jobs. Many of you in this room went through that. I remember the day that they started furloughing people at Dick's Sporting Goods. We all sat there, we were at the store, we didn't know what was going on, but we knew something was happening because all of a sudden people were going home left and right and they were not happy. And my manager, he was a little cruel in doing this, he had been calling everyone all day. I was watching the sales floor. He's calling people, saying, "Hey, you're furloughed. Don't come into work for the next little while. We don't know what's going to happen." So I knew if I got a phone call that meant I was being furloughed. My manager calls me while I'm on the sales floor so I'm immediately thinking and I'm very anxious about this, I have just lost my job. Just called me to say, "Hey, can you do this favor for me really quickly? You're good. We're going to keep you around for a little while but could you help me out with this?" And I said, "Did you really just call me when you could have called me up to the office? Do you know how much I was worried in that moment?"

But there's so many of you in this room that went through that, rounds of phone calls. You lost your job, your primary source of income. Also, what happened in the last few years, the housing market skyrocketed. A lot of you had to go through selling a house and then trying to move into a house afterwards. It was good to sell but terrible to buy. For me, I saw this when the car market exploded and having to buy a car, buying two cars during that time. The cost of living is ever increasing. There's been political unrest, divisions within the church, major scandals within the church, and so much more, and if we just look at all of this, okay, yeah, I can see why we felt a little bit anxious, a little bit worried. There's so many weights and pressures that we're trying to juggle and with all of this and more happening in just the last few years alone, our natural inclination is yes, worry, yes, be anxious, but we weren't made to worry. We were not made to worry.

So what were we made for? Let me ask you a question that comes from the Westminster Shorter Catechism and if somebody tells me the answer, I'm going to be really happy. What is the chief end of man? For those of you that are watching the live stream, what was just said is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. This is what we were made for. This is our primary goal and objective. We were made to glorify God, but within that, so if we're seeking to glorify God, if we're living our lives for his glory, the natural outcome of that is that we are going to enjoy him forever. So if we kind of play around with the words here a little bit to help us understand it better, we exist to glorify God by delighting in him. This is what we are here for, glorify God and delight in him. We were made for that purpose.

Now to live for the purpose of the glory of God and to delight in him means, as one author describes, to see God as infinitely admirable and to savor the diverse excellencies of God. In other words it is to have God as your true and lasting source of joy by seeing him as infinitely greater than anything else. So if we were made to glorify God, if we

were made to delight in him, one of the great enemies that I see, if not the greatest enemy, is worry. I believe that the greatest enemy of true Christian joy, and the thing that distracts us the most from delighting in him is worrying, is being anxious. So in order to truly delight in God, we must first put the great enemy of worry to death.

I appreciated your prayers as I was traveling last week. I was up in Kentucky to visit some friends that I hadn't seen in several years. I'll be back up there at the end of the month when a dear friend of mine gets married, I'm one of the groomsmen in the wedding. But I was having a conversation with two guys that I had actually met that weekend which what's incredible about when Christians get together is you get past all of the nonsense and how's the weather? How's your job? And you just get into the nitty gritty. But we were diving into the word and talking about these things and they said, "What's the best piece of advice that you can give us?" And I said find people in your life that will be devoted to killing sin with you. So this morning, that's our task. We are devoted to killing anxiety. We are going to put it to death so that we can learn to truly glorify God and truly delight in him.

Now let's look at a little bit of context, a little bit of context so we can understand what's going on, because verse 25 starts with a "Therefore." I'm not going to say the old cliché that is always said, but we've got to figure out why it's there. Let's look up... Yeah, you can see what I was doing there. Let's look back a few verses to verse 19. Again, we're in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus is giving a very long exposition. He is teaching them who they are to be in God. He is showing them their sinfulness and their wickedness, and he comes to an interesting point here in chapter 6 right after talking about how you are to pray and how you are to fast. Verse 19 he says, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money."

Now, at first glance, these verses appear to be addressing one specific problem, the love of money, right? These people are living for money. They're trying to lay up treasures on earth or possessions. So they're trying to get as much as they can. "If I can just get this, then I'll be good. If I can just get this job, then my life will have more meaning. If I can get married, my life will be better. If I can have this many kids. If I can have that one thing that I've always wanted, those golf clubs, my golf game will be better." We're trying to gather all of these various different things in order to make ourselves feel better so that we can say, "Yeah, this life is good." So at first glance, it looks like he's just talking about laying up money, gathering possessions, but there's a greater issue that's at work in this. A greater issue. Anxiety is a heart problem. None of us would deny that anxiety is a heart problem. It is focusing on self rather than on God. The anxious person's great problem is providing for their own need. So what Jesus is doing, laying out at verses 19 to 24, is

saying, "You're trying to provide for your own needs. You're trying to take control of your life. If you can just get and get and get, your life will be good." People are becoming anxious about the things that they have. They're worrying about, "Where is my next meal going to come from? Where am I going to live? What is going to happen in this situation?" They're trying to control every little detail of their life. They're trying to provide for their own needs. They are attempting to take control of their own lives and needs rather than trusting in the sovereign provision of God.

Now, anxiety can be caused by a whole host of things. It's not just laying up treasures particularly and just getting as much as you can. Anxiety can happen, yes, and worrying about finances, but you can become anxious about your relationships, anxious about your career, about your family, even about your faith. There's so much more that anxiety creeps into but it leads us to trying to control our own lives, our own financial stability. It leads us to trying to control other people and their views, control how others see us, and it ends up creeping into every facet of our lives. Jesus is not just saying don't try and get money. Jesus is saying you need to let go of trying to hold on to everything you can hold on to, and we'll see more of that play out in the end of our passage.

Matthew Henry describes the anxious thought as this, a disquieting, tormenting thought which harries the mind hither and thither, and hangs it in suspense. It disturbs our joy in God and is damp upon our hope in him. It breaks the sleep and hinders our enjoyment of ourselves, our friends, and of what God has given us. When we become anxious, it impacts every part of our being. I've been anxious about a great number of things. We're just being transparent here. I have felt anxiety before, dealt with it, and it doesn't just attack my mind. It starts there. I start to think about this more and more. If I'm worried about finances, well, where's the money going to come from? And then you notice if you're an anxious person, you get this, you start to daydream about it, or it's a day nightmare, up to you. You start to think about, "Okay, well if this happens then this will happen. Or if this doesn't happen then I won't have this." It starts to consume your thoughts, but it doesn't stop there. It starts to impact the way that you see others, the way that you see life, attacks you physically. Your muscles tighten up. You get a knot in your stomach when you think about it. It impacts the way that you interact with others, become short-tempered and angry and frustrated. Anxiety attacks you spiritually. You stop drawing near to the Lord. You stop trusting the Lord. You stop believing that he has your good in mind. And before you know it, anxiety has attacked literally every single part of your person. Every single part of you. The truth is the anxious thought dwells on everything but, everything but the sovereign provision of God. It attacks the entire person physically, emotionally and spiritually, and it leads us to a joyless and discontented heart. A joyless and discontented heart. We are no longer delighting in God and his promises. We are no longer trusting him. We're no longer believing in him. Before you know it, we have no joy, no lasting and true joy. And so we must put this thing to death.

Here's the great problem with anxiety, with the anxious person. As Sinclair Ferguson writes, the problem with the anxious person is not merely that they think negatively about life. It is not merely that they think negatively about life. It's actually much more radical than that. The anxious person thinks untheologically about life. Again, ouch. You think

unbiblically about life. You're not looking at life the way that God has intended you to look at it. You're not looking at it how God has commanded you approach life. So if this is the problem, we're anxious, we're not trusting God, we're thinking unbiblically, what is the remedy? What is the remedy to this? The remedy then is not found in a self-help book. It's not found in more possessions. "If I can get more, I'll feel better." It's not found in better relationships. It's not found in more friends. Nor can it be found in the bottom of a bottle or in a pill. The only remedy to this great heart issue to thinking untheologically is by thinking rightly according to God's word, namely, thinking according to the word of God and in submission to his sovereign will.

So let's look first at the simple command, verse 25. Since you're anxious, let's go back for a second, since you're anxious, you're worried about all these things, you're trying to take control of your life, you're not submitting to the will of God, what are you to do? Jesus says, "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life." That was not very helpful. In the first approach, that's what we say. Jesus lays out everything that we're anxious about, we're trying to control everything, and his remedy, his cure, is just a simple command, "Do not be anxious." I got frustrated the first time I read this because we approach this and we're trying to figure out what's the steps here, what do we do? I'm struggling with sin, we think practically, "Give me this, give me this, give me this. Step 1, step 2, step 3 and then I'm good." Jesus doesn't do that at all. "Do not be anxious." That's it. That's his command. That's his word. That's his cure. That's his remedy. Do not be anxious.

Now, when you have a serious illness, what do you do? You go to the doctor. When you go to the doctor, they're going to run a lot of tests. "Does this hurt? How do you feel about this? Are you breathing okay?" They're going to check your temperature. They're going to check everything. Once they have diagnosed the problem, what do you expect them to do next? Give me the medicine, right? So if this is the problem, you need to take this medicine this often, you need to get outside and move around a little bit because sitting around when you're sick is not helpful, you need to drink fluids. Those are the steps, practical steps, boom, boom, boom, for how I feel better. What if you went to a doctor and they said you were severely ill, "You have the worst case of the flu that I have ever seen," and so you say, "Okay. Doc, what do I do?" "Feel better." You're going to look at them as if they're crazy. "I will feel better when you give me medicine. I will feel better when you give me the steps to be cured from this illness." And at first glance, it kind of feels like that's what Jesus is doing here. "Okay, you've told me I'm anxious, you've told me I'm worried about these things. Give me the practical steps." And Jesus says, "Do not be anxious." There it is. That's it. You see, we approach the practicalities of putting sin to death as if we're trying to fix the problem ourselves. We want the steps because if I can have the steps, I have control. If you tell me in order to be better you have to do 1, 2 and 3, I'm going to do 1, 2 and 3, and then I'm going to look back and say I fixed the problem. I fixed the problem.

Again, we're looking at self here. We're trying to figure out how we can fix the issue instead of submitting to what God has called us to. Do not be anxious. The practical person is screaming of, "Will you just give me the steps," and Jesus is saying, "You're not

understanding the situation that's playing out here. You're trying to control. I'm trying to tell you you have no control. You're trying to fix this problem. I'm trying to tell you I am the only solution to this problem. If you would just submit to me." Whether we like to admit it or not, we're that person. We are that person. We look at the world around us and we look at our own sin and we say, "If I'm just going to do this, this and this, I'll be fine. I fixed my problem." And then we go up to other people, say our accountability partner, our small group, and we'll say, "I had great victory over sin this week. I was in the word a lot and I did this and I was able to see sin put to death," which is great at face value, but all you're saying is, "I. I. I. Me. Me. Me," instead of saying, "Look what the Lord has done in my life. Look how God has transformed my heart." And we'll get into human responsibility in a minute. Yes, we are responsible in the sanctification process, but it is all in submission to the Lord's will.

You see, anxiety attacks the mind. It takes our eyes off of God. When we become anxious, it dominates our thinking, it impacts the way that we see everything around us. Worry begins to creep in in every area, and we do not trust the Lord. Before we know it, it has robbed us of all of our joy because we are not rightfully focused on God, and Jesus isn't surprised by the fact that we're practical and we're trying to figure out how do I fix the problem and how do I do this. He knows that we're a fearful and anxious and worrisome people, and you even see this consistently throughout the scriptures. What does God say to his people? "Don't fear. Don't worry. Don't be anxious." Over and over and over again. Why? Because we are fearful, worrisome, anxious people. So he's going to address it constantly. It is an incredibly consistent pattern in the scriptures, but at every point it takes the burden off of us and it calls us to pursue the Lord and trusting in him.

Do you find that you worry about the dumbest things? At least I do. I mean, you all may be doing great, but I worry about the dumbest things. I'll give you an example. I enjoy cooking. I'm not great at it, but I enjoy cooking, especially I bought a pellet smoker. If you don't have one of those, go buy one because it's just way easier. Bought a pellet smoker. My cousin's birthday was a couple months ago so I was going to do a brisket for him. I'd done a brisket once before and it turned out pretty good, so I was going to do it again. Had all my seasonings out. I was ready to go. It was midnight at the point that I was putting it on the smoker. As I started to put the rub on there, I realized really quickly I did not have enough rub that I needed. So I just made it up. You just put a little bit of that in there and put a little bit of that in there and we'll figure it out. And I started to worry about it. Now here's the thing you need to know about these pellet smokers: they do like 98% of the work for you. Your job is to put it on there. That's about it. That's your job. They have these little control boards on there that will control the temperature and make sure that it continuously cooks at the same temperature. I was so worried about this goofy piece of meat that I paid a lot of money for, honestly but goofy piece of meat on the grill that I slept on the couch, checking the temperature every two hours. Now if you have a regular smoker that makes sense, you're going to have to feed the wood in there constantly tend the fire. I don't. I could have gone to bed, slept in, and it would have been the same all the way through, but I woke up every two hours. "Temperature still good?" Yep, we're good. Go back to sleep. "Temperature still good?" Yep, we're good. Go back to sleep.

I was worried also about this stinking rub that I did not have, so when I took it, finally took it off the grill, I put it in the cooler to rest. The entire time it was in the cooler I'm thinking, "Man, I just got to try this thing because I'm afraid it's going to be awful and I'm going to have to go pick up a pizza or something." But if you know anything about smoking a brisket, do not open it when it's resting. All the juices will run out. You're going to ruin it. So I didn't touch it the entire time. I'm worried. I bring it to my family's house – man, this is a long story. Sorry. Bring it to my family's house, they're like, "Hey, how is the brisket? What do you think?" I think it's going to be awful. I don't want to be in here when you cut it because it did not go the way that I wanted it to. I was worried about it constantly. We cut into it, super tender. It was really good. Even my family that doesn't even like brisket was having two and three portions of it, I will say that.

So what was the point? What was the point of being anxious? I didn't change anything about what I was cooking. The brisket is in there doing its own thing. I'm not doing anything about it, I'm just worried about it. I'm not fixing the problem, I'm just plain foolishly worried. We do this all the time. We worry about the things that we cook, the things that we eat, our jobs, our family, fill in the blank. We are constantly worried and we are accomplishing absolutely nothing. So what do we do? You have the problem, we're anxious people. You have the command, "Do not be anxious." And you have the remedy, think biblically. So the problem I'm being anxious, I'm struggling with worrying and not trusting in the Lord, I'm holding onto control of my own life so Jesus gives the command, "Do not be anxious," the question is how? What do I do to put this anxiety to death? It's very simple: we think biblically. If anxiety attacks our thought life, in order to put it to death, you are required to follow the words of Paul in Romans 12:2, renew your mind. Renew your mind. Change the way that you think. You must get the mind under control. Your heart and your feelings will lead you astray so we must get our mind under the control of the scriptures. As one commentator says, in essence Jesus says to us, "Sit down. There are several issues that you need to think through." Think through is the most important phrase because the healing of a diseased spirit, the process that scripture calls sanctification, begins in the mind. That's why Jesus talks about love the Lord your God with all of your mind.

It's important that we impact the thought life. His way of getting them to think, then, is by giving them several "considers." So in the next few minutes we're going to look at those "considers," two different examples and I'll have some other ones that we can consider as well. If we're going to think and we're going to think biblically, let's look at two examples. Verse 26, consider first, "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?" So let's consider birds for a moment. Jesus brought them up. Let's think about it for a second. If we walked outside right now, more than likely we're not going to see a bunch of dead birds on the parking lot. I really hope not. That's going to be really weird if there is. We're not going to see a lot of dead birds on the parking lot. They're well fed. They're taken care of. What do they do? They don't work a 9 to 5. They don't clock in, clock out. A bird husband is not bringing groceries home every day. None of this, right? They do nothing except for fly around. Now they'll build a nest, but you'll

notice in the nest they don't have a pantry or a fridge and yet they're fed. They do not go without. A bird doesn't work. It flies around and yet what we're seeing here is not look how they're feeding themselves. They don't sow. They don't reap. They don't gather in the barns. And yet who feeds them? Who is it that is feeding them? It's not them. Their heavenly Father.

So we're looking at these birds, they're not doing anything and yet God is providing for them abundantly. If you watch a bird, you will see it during the winter fly south to go get more food. It'll come back in the summer months to come up here where it's not as hot. But everywhere they're going, they have food. God has designed them in such a way where they will find the food and he also provides the food. Okay, so why is he talking about a bird? This little, tiny thing that we don't think anything of flies around, they're noisy sometimes when we get near its nest, but it's insignificant to us. God says, "If I provide for them, how much more am I going to provide for you?" Man, how good is our God that if he is going to provide abundantly for these small, insignificant creatures, how much more will he provide for us, his beloved creature? You see, we were created in his image. No other creature on earth was created in the image of God. No other creature. We were created to display the glory of God. There is a special relationship between God and man unlike the rest of creation. So if that's true and the birds that were not created in his image are provided for, how much more abundantly will God provide for us?

Now I want to add a distinction here, one that was pointed out to me and I hadn't seen in the first couple of times reading through this because I think it's really easy to read this part of the passage and say, "Okay, these birds don't work, they don't do anything, so God will provide for me," and we take the human responsibility out of the equation. We take our work out of the equation. God has made us to work. We don't just sit comfortably waiting on God to just lay something down for us. It's really easy, though, to fall into the temptation of, "I'm just going to sit here and I'm going to wait on the couch and God will provide for X, Y and Z," and we do nothing. Laziness is a sin too.

So we are called to get out and work and what Jesus is describing here is, "Okay, those birds don't work, how much more will God provide for my creatures that I created to work?" Okay, now, now we're getting onto something here. We were called to work. We were called to diligently labor and yet in all of that God provides abundantly. So the labor is not taken out of the equation. Don't hear this and say, "I don't have to do anything." Yes, you do but God is sovereign over all of this. God will provide abundantly for his children. And then he asked the question, "And which of you being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?" If we really believe that God is sovereign and if we really believe that God has the days of our lives numbered, he knows exactly how long we're going to live, he has already planned that out, let me tell you this, you will not live a minute longer than God has already ordained and you will not live a minute shorter than God has already planned. Not even a millisecond. To the exact moment that the Lord calls you home you will live, and when he has planned it, you will go home. And the reason for bringing this up is what are you adding to your life by worrying about these things? You're not adding any time. You can't do that. Your life is actually pretty short in

comparison to eternity. So really, what are you accomplishing in this? You're making yourself more miserable. You're not trusting God. And you're robbing yourself of your joy, joy that is rightly found in the Lord.

So what's the point in all of this? Why worry? But he takes it further still. The second "consider," consider the lilies. Consider the lilies. Now I don't know much about flowers. That's not my thing. I don't like flowers. They smell weird. I don't know why people say they smell good. Weird things, right? But they're beautiful to look at. If you drive around and you see a field of lilies, for instance, they come in all sorts of different colors, when they're blooming, that's one of the best things to look at, even if I don't like them that much, and what he's saying here is, "Look at these lilies." I mean, the beauty of them is far greater than the glory of Solomon. I mean, they're incredible things and yet again, they do absolutely nothing and they just sit there. They don't do anything for themselves to make themselves beautiful. It says they don't toil or spin, meaning that they're not going out and gathering yarn or string to knit themselves clothing. The spinning there is the idea there of sewing. They're not doing any of this and yet God has clothed them in incredible beauty. Man, this God that we serve, how kind and gracious is he?

Again, they do nothing, and yet God provides. Are you sensing a theme here? God provides. God provides. God provides. You want the answer to anxiety? Trust that truth. God provides abundantly. He is so loving and so kind that he will not leave us in the dust. He will not leave us without our needs. Now, I said needs there. God is not a divine wish list where we get anything from him that we want but God will provide abundantly for our needs. But let's even take it a step further with what Jesus does here. Those beautiful flowers that you enjoy looking at, they're here today, they're gone tomorrow. Here today and gone tomorrow, thrown into the oven, of no consequence. I don't know really anybody that would see someone take some flowers and then throw it into the oven and just start weeping uncontrollably, or at least I wouldn't, I don't know about you. They're inconsequential. They don't matter that much in the grand scheme of things, and yet again God provides for them, how much more will he provide for you? When we worry about the things of this life, we're not trusting in his provision.

Look at the third "consider." "For the Gentiles seek after all of these things." Okay, so consider the birds, God provides for them. Don't be worried. Consider the lily. God provides for them. Don't be worried. Now look at the Gentiles or the other idea is, look at the rest of the world around you. The rest of the world runs around like chickens with their heads cut off, worry about every little thing, worried about, "Where is my next meal going to come from? Well, where is my next raise going to come from? Or next paycheck, or this relationship or that? Or what will people think about me?" Worried about everything and Jesus is saying, "You serve a massive God," in which we'll look at in just a moment, "so if the world is riddled with anxiety and they don't serve God and yet you do and you belong to him, what do you have to be worried about?" You belong to God. You belong to the God of the entire universe. So basically what he has just described is, okay, you're anxious, you're worried about these things. Look at these small, insignificant things that you pay no attention to on a regular basis. If God provides for

them, how much more will he provide for you? But the problem is we have way too low a view of God and way too high a view of ourselves. That's why we try and take control. We're anxious about these things, we're worried about these things, it's affecting our entire person we're so worried because we're trying to, "Okay God, you've got a little bit of this but I'm going to help you out and I'm going to get what I want and we'll put the two together," and that is not how that works. We don't trust God. We don't trust God to provide because we think too high of ourselves and too low of him.

So let's flip it for a second. Here's some points of application to consider. Let's consider how big God is. Now let's look around this room that we're in right now. Honestly, we're not in that big of a church. There are massive churches all around us. But if this building started to collapse, how many of you could just, "Yeah, I'll hold it up, I got this"? Anybody? All right, let's expand out a little bit. Our county is actually not that big in comparison to the state of Georgia. The state of Georgia is not that big in comparison to the United States. The US is just one small part of the entire globe. Now we look around where we're at right now and go, "Okay, there's a lot of property all around us. It would take me a while to walk from here to my house and back; that would take me a long time." And then we look at the Earth, none of you are going to walk the entire earth and yet that's pretty small. We expand out a little bit more, our planet is not even that big in comparison to the rest of the planets in our solar system. It turns out our solar system is pretty small and our galaxy, and you just keep expanding this out to the point in which we can't even comprehend anymore how big the universe is. We haven't even started to scratch the surface on that. This universe that we are in is massive and glorious and huge, and yet the scripture says God upholds it in his hand. Scripture says that God holds it up by his power.

So this universe that we cannot even comprehend, God is holding it as if it were nothing and you think that God can be overcome by one of your needs? You think God's sitting there going, "Whoa, I didn't think of that"? No. The God that we serve is massive and glorious and all-powerful, and we need to start having a much, much higher view of him, and we also need to realize we're a lot smaller than we think. We are a lot smaller than we think. Here's the second "consider," consider the sovereignty of God. We've seen it playing out in this text. God is in control of all things. God has a plan and his plan is being worked out. And if God is massive and God is sovereign over our most fundamental needs and will provide abundantly for those things, let's then consider the love and grace of God. So God is massive, he's all-powerful, over all things. He cannot be overcome by any need, by any trouble, by any problem, even your greatest worry is nothing to his power. He is sovereign, working in all of those things to provide abundantly for you according to his good pleasure and yet he is also loving and gracious.

You see, the world really goes wrong with other religions in trying to describe who's in control. Most other religions have this large deity that's very disconnected and cold. You see, the God of the Bible and the true God of everything, yes, he is all-powerful, yes, he is holy, yes, he is sovereign, and at the same time, yes, he is loving and, yes, he is gracious. God's not just this big bad meany that's trying to get you. He cares for you. He cares for you in an incredible way and that's what we see play out in the fourth

"consider." Consider the gospel. If there is one thing in life that you should be anxious about, it's this: your sin. That's the one thing. If we were to be anxious about anything, it should be sin. Why? Because we can't fix the problem. There is nothing we can do to fix our sin. The Bible says that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. The Bible also says that because of our sin we are condemned to the wrath of God, to eternity in hell separated from the Father, and there is nothing, nothing, we can do about it. None of us in this room has the power to fix our problem of sin. So if there is anything to be worried about, it's that problem and yet let's go back to the first three "considers," consider how big God is, consider the sovereignty of God, consider his love and his grace because it plays out in the gospel. Yes, the problem of sin was great and yet God had a plan for it all along. God sent his Son to stand in the place where we could not, to die the death that we could not, to pay the penalty that we could not, to put to death sin once and for all, something that none of us could ever do, none of us could ever do, and accomplished salvation for us through the blood of Jesus Christ.

So that one thing that we say, "Okay, maybe you can worry about that one," the Lord has taken care of. So my question is what is there truly to worry about? What is there to be anxious about? If God has overcome the problem of sin and the greatest need of the world, everything else pales in comparison. Your job is important but it's not worth worrying over. God will provide. Your home, important, but God will provide. Your family, God will provide. Time and time again the story of the scriptures is God provides abundantly and the message of the gospel is God has provided abundantly. So why do we worry? Why do we worry? We need to learn to let go of control. Now let me add an important caveat here. I am not arguing for let go and let God. What I'm arguing for is that we let go of our sinful desire to control and follow him in faithful obedience. That's what we're called to do. That's what we're called to do.

It's the very last point that he makes here in the sermon, in this portion of the sermon, considering all these things, why are you anxious about these things, God will provide abundantly, God has provided abundantly, is verse 33, "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be added to you." So we're renewing our mind according to Romans 12. We're renewing our mind. We're setting aside those anxious thoughts that we are worried about, our lack of control, our lack of trust. We are instead renewing our mind according to the gospel, knowing that God has provided abundantly and we are seeking a kingdom. It's called kingdom-mindedness. This is what we are choosing to dwell on day and night. So to be kingdom-minded, you must pursue the Lord. How do we do that? We come to him in prayer. We pursue him in his word. We gather with the local church and are devoted to putting sin to death together. But ultimately, when we pursue the Lord, he will kill the sin. He will kill the anxiety.

If you want to be free from anxiety, fall on your knees before the Lord and trust him. The second thing you do is you dwell on the Lord. If anxiety is this constant dwelling on something that is causing me to worry, the remedy to that is dwelling constantly on the Lord. Psalm 119:11, "I have treasured your word in my heart that I might not sin against you." Psalm 1:2, "I'm meditating on your law day and night." We need to learn to constantly dwell on the things of the Lord and in order to do that, you must know his

word well. I absolutely love, someone told me once, I'll tell you who it was, it was Andrew. I love Andrew. He's great. Andrew one night was going upstairs for the evening and I said, "Man, have a great night." And he said, "Thanks, I'm going upstairs to just chew on the word," and that has just stuck with me, to chew on the word. Man, that's a good line, that we're not just reading through a few words and then passing along, we're actually working through it, we're meditating on it, we're chewing on it. That's how we put anxiety to death. We replace it with trust in the Lord and his word.

The third thing we do is we submit to God's providence and let go of control. We follow obediently where God is calling us to. We trust him. We trust that he is going to work according to his good pleasure, according to his good pleasure. We just step out in faith and follow him and lay everything before him.

And the final thing I want to urge you to do is live for the kingdom and not for yourself. Anxiety lives for "me." You're worried about your life, what can I get? Am I going to be okay? Kingdom-mindedness lives for the Lord. We realize that we really don't have much in this life, that this life really isn't all that long, so we set aside those foolish things that we worry about and we instead pursue the Lord constantly. We pursue his word, his kingdom. We live for his kingdom and not for ourselves.

Now, if you're someone in this room that has struggled with anxiety, I don't want you to leave here thinking, okay, I don't really care about you. Anxiety is really not all that bad. It is. It can be crushing. And yet we serve a God that provides abundantly. Let go of your desire to control everything, submit to the sovereign will of the Lord, trust in the power of his gospel and that he has overcome all things, and then get to work. This is how we put anxiety to death.

Let's go before the Lord in prayer.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for this time that you have given us to be in your word. Lord, I thank you for disjointed thoughts and that even though I am not great, you are. I pray that this would have been an encouragement to anyone listening, and that it would build up the body. Lord, I pray that we would learn to talk about the things that we are struggling with, and that we as a body would be committed together to putting sin to death, that we would let go of anxiety and worrying about the little things in this world and realize that you really are good, you really are sovereign, you are far greater than we could ever imagine. Help us, Lord, to be obedient to you. Help us to trust you more each day. And help us to follow you all of our days for your glory, so that we might learn to delight in you. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.