

Worrying

Call to Worship: Psalm 15

1st Scripture: Matthew 6:1-24

2nd Scripture: Matthew 6:25-34

Hymn #689- *One Day!*

Hymn #579- *Be Still My Soul*

Hymn #696- *God Will Take Care of You*

Introduction

We've been working through the ungodly actions of the religious leaders, who had managed to corrupt the worship of God, by seeking to use religion even, as a means of amassing the praises of men. As we've seen over the last few weeks, the root of these self-serving actions was found in their love for the world (wealth and material possessions). And so, our Lord charges His disciples (and secondarily, the listening multitudes) not to lay up treasures on the earth, but rather, to lay up eternal, incorruptible treasures in heaven. And indeed, a true follower of Christ; a true subject of the Kingdom of God, is one whose heart is not divided. One cannot serve both God and wealth. In fact, to love the one, and to be loyal to the one, is to despise and reject the other. And so, we are challenged to examine our own hearts, and to make an honest assessment of where our hearts truly are, by considering the direction of our lives, especially concerning how we relate to the material things of this world.

Well, this morning, our Lord addresses another important theme, within this same context. You see, while we are called not to love the things of this world, it is also true, at the same time, that we do need certain things in order to survive. We are *physical* beings. That's why the Apostle Paul told Timothy that we must learn to be content with food and drink; because such things as food and drink and clothing and shelter are life necessities, aren't they? And so, the question must further be asked then, "How do we relate to the material necessities of life, which we need to survive, and how does this mesh with our Lord's emphasis on the importance of prioritizing the Kingdom of God?" One might even say, "How can I focus on the Kingdom of God; How can I live a life of 'all-out' sacrifice, when I have basic physical needs that need to be met, at the same time? Do I really have time for the work of a "spiritual" kingdom, when I have important "physical" needs to consider? And so, continuing on then, in our Lord's "Sermon on the Mount," we come to address such questions as these.

I. Worrying (vs. 25-32)

“Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on” (vs. 25a). Now, right from the outset, is our Lord saying here, that we ought to ignore our physical needs, trusting that He will drop all necessary supplies from heaven, which will land right next to us, as we serve Him? Of course not. If that were the case, the Apostle Paul would not have been a tent maker, nor would he have emphasized the importance of working, to the extent that he stated that a person who doesn’t work, ought not to eat. And so, this is not, in any way shape or form, our Lord commanding us to be idle or lazy, or to look for miraculous providences or others in the church to provide for our needs. Well, what then is our Lord saying here?

He is dealing primarily with the issue of “worrying,” or being overly concerned about attempting to store up goods, so as to ensure that we will always be provided for in life. He is dealing with the issue of faith, to the extent, that we ought also to trust God to provide for us, as we put His Kingdom first, and commit ourselves to maintaining a healthy and balanced stewardship over the resources that God grants us through the labors of our hands. He wants us to concentrate on, and to live within, the reality of “today,” without constantly worrying about what will happen tomorrow, or next week, or next year...etc. And think about this for a moment, brethren. If we are not to “worry” about what we will eat and drink and clothe ourselves with; if such *necessary* concerns ought not to overwhelm us, where does that leave all of the unnecessary things that can often overwhelm us in life? Our Lord tells us here, not to worry about the *necessities* of life even. *They* ought not to overwhelm us with anxiety, stress or worry. How much more then, everything else?

“Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?” (vs. 25b). Now, what does our Lord mean by this statement? Our Lord has just exhorted His followers not to “worry” (or fret) about even the bear necessities of life, and this statement is obviously meant to build on that exhortation. So, here’s His point. The life that we have within us, and the body that houses this life are of far greater importance, value and complication than the food and clothing that are required to help sustain it. And the fact that we exist, in these complicated, amazingly held-

together machines, which encase an invisible, but very real soul, that animates the body, should encourage us to recognize two key things:

First, the God who has already performed the greater act of providing us with this amazingly complicated life and body, is beyond able to provide us with the much less important and far less complicated things, such as food, clothing and sustenance, to maintain them. If He can do the far greater thing of designing us, with very little effort on His part, how much easier is it for Him to supply what we need to maintain our lives?

Secondly, the fact that God has already given us these life and bodies indicates that He is more than willing to do the much lesser work of giving us all that is needed to sustain them. The body and life are far, far, far more valuable and complicated than food, clothing and drink. He's already shown that He can provide the greatest blessing, of life itself. Should we then doubt that He is able or willing to give us all that is needed to keep the motor running, as it were? The next portion of the text, builds on this point, as our Lord reminds us of what God does even for much less significant birds, and even lesser significant flowers (which blossom and die very shortly after), to sustain and care for them.

“Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?” (vs. 26). Birds are incapable of working. They cannot farm land or grow crops, or store away food for the colder months. In our technologically advanced age, we might add, they can't go to college and learn a trade, become post office workers, police birds, construction workers, nurses, doctors, janitors...etc. They can't invest in IRA's, they don't have medical insurance or a retirement account. They have to depend upon God to provide them with food, through various providential means, each and every day. Now, they do look for food, but just for the next meal, and God ensures that when the next mealtime comes, they will find more food. And so, our Lord emphasizes how God looks out for, and provides for the birds. And then, He follows up this fact with the rhetorical question, “Are you not of more value than they?”

You see, what's the assumption here, that our Lord is making? If God so cares for such creatures of very little significance, who do not bare His image, how much more will He care for, and provide for us? Birds are virtually helpless, but He aides them. All the more, He will

provide for us, His image bearers, if we trust in Him. We are much more valuable and precious than birds. Now, before further illustrating His point with lilies (particularly addressing the matter of clothing), which are even less valuable than birds, our Lord adds another rhetorical question, which exposes the foolish and useless nature of “worrying.”

“Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?” (vs. 27). Here, our Lord asks, as it were, What exactly does worrying accomplish, anyway? It offers no benefit, whatsoever, and in fact, actually serves to cripple us, so that, we are even more hindered from accomplishing anything that could help sustain our lives. Worrying doesn’t fulfill our need in the slightest degree. Now, when our Lord uses the terms “cubit” and “stature” here, he is using measurement terms, as an analogy which speaks to the length of days that an individual lives. And so, it were as if He were saying, “How do you think worrying, will, in any way, shape or form, serve to increase the number of days you are able to live on this earth?” “Worrying is not going to increase your life span, in any sense, whatsoever. So, why be driven by worry, anxiety and fear? Stop, and look to the God who has *designed you!* Trust Him! Focus on His will, first, and be confident, that even as He provides for all things, including birds, He will provide for you. Stop being controlled by the worries of tomorrow and the future, and live for the glory of God today! Honor Him, and He will provide!”

“So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now, if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?” (Vs. 28-30).

Again, having addressed how God feeds and provides drink for the birds, now our Lord addresses the matter of clothing and attire. And so, He asks, in essence, “Why do you worry about clothing? Look at the extent that God goes, and the care that He takes in designing beautiful lilies of the field, which come and go, in but a day’s time. If God so designs flowers, with such intricate care and beauty, do we think that He will leave us, the capstone of His creation, without the *necessary* clothing that we need to protect us from the elements? In other words, if God so carefully designs frail flowers, just to display their beauty for but a short time, how much more is He going to provide clothing and shelter for His image bearers? Indeed, even

King Solomon with all of his royal pomp, covered with the most costly jewels and materials, was not as gloriously arrayed as a frail, short-lived, lily, which had no part in dressing (nor the ability to dress) itself. If God decks the grassy fields with such glory, which are mowed and burned in the oven, all the more, He is both willing and able to give careful attention toward ensuring that we are properly clothed and cared for. However, we are so easily given over to worry. Why? “O you of little faith.” We fail to trust the very God who has designed our bodies and souls; we fail to trust the very God who has given us the amazing gift of life itself, to provide for our basic needs in sustaining the very life that He has already given us. The problem is not with God being incapable or unwilling to provide. The problem is that we have so little faith. And so, we worry, because we want absolute control over everything. We want to be God, and we don’t naturally trust God. Our very life is from Him, and our very life-breath is constantly in His hands, but, we can’t trust Him to continue to provide the much lesser blessings of daily and future sustenance. And so, we worry. And by worrying, we do nothing, whatsoever, to improve our situation.

Finally, our Lord, repeats His exhortation, in light of the motivational arguments that He has just presented, but He also adds an additional important addendum to the exhortation. “Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ *For* after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things” (vs. 31-32).

The word “*for*” here, introduces us to the addendum. And what then is our Lord saying here? It is characteristic for the heathen, for the gentiles, who do not know the true and living God, to worry, and to make it their primary focus and priority, to seek these things. Their gods do not provide for them, and in fact, they have to provide for their gods. And so, those naturally outside of the kingdom of God will spend their entire lives, vainly attempting to secure their future, because they have no understanding of what it means to walk by faith, and to rest in the providential care of the true and living God. They live lives full of anxiety and stress, constantly worrying about what may or may not happen in the future. They have no stability, lasting comfort or a true sense that all will turn out well. They are full of worry, toil and unrest. And they are miserable because what they attempt to control, in order to secure a sense of peace and

rest, is just not within their control. They cannot take what rightfully belongs to God alone. And so, they are caught in a web of worry and unrest.

However, the children of God can have this confidence, if they will but have faith. “For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.” What is the Lord’s point in making this statement? Is it simply to say that God is cognizant of what our needs are? No, of course He knows that. He knows all things. But rather, our *Father* (our Lord intentionally uses the term “Father” here, to emphasize our filial relationship to God) is directly concerned about our well-being. He cares for us. Better than our earthly fathers, even, God is very aware of our specific needs, and He intends on meeting those needs for us. Indeed, He only delays and/or leaves some room for having to wait for His providential care, so as, to build up and increase our faith and trust in Him. But, we don’t have to worry even about the necessities of life (food, drink and clothing), because God is consciously and directly aware of our needs, and He is intent on meeting them, because He loves us. In other words, God not only has the ability to meet our needs, but He also has the desire and the will to meet them, as well. And so, Jesus covers all ground here. God is able, God is willing, and God desires!

And so, we ought not to worry then, even about the necessities and essentials of life. But, here then is one of the critical issues at stake, concerning our Lord’s purpose for this exhortation, especially as it relates to the Kingdom of God. We ought not to worry, so that, we will be able to do something else, which we will not be able to do, if we worry. When we trust God, concerning His providential care, we will be able then, by faith, to serve our great King, in His glorious Kingdom, as our utmost priority.

II. Seeking First the Kingdom of God (vs. 33)

“But (contrary to worrying) seek *first* the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (vs. 33).

And so, here we get down to the real issue, related to the Kingdom of God, and how “worrying” affects it. Notice, our Lord doesn’t say that you should just sit back and wait for God to drop down “material resource crates” from heaven. No, we are to work and to seek out means of providing for our necessities. However, our first and foremost priority ought to be directed

toward seeking first the Kingdom of God. Now, what does our Lord mean by this? Is He simply addressing the matter of salvation, and making sure you are saved before you concern yourself with even physical necessities? Well, that would most certainly apply; the unbeliever should be firstly concerned with his/her spiritual well-being, above his/her physical well-being, because eternal life in heaven or hell is in the balance. Certainly, we want to make sure that we are right with God, in Christ, as our utmost priority!

However, here, our Lord is speaking about a much broader reality, which concerns the entire disposition of our lives. He means that, in all that we do, we ought to set the interests of Christ and His Kingdom first in our hearts, and when we do this, He will ensure that our physical necessities are taken care of. This is a matter of prioritizing; it involves living with a biblical worldview, walking daily by faith, and committing ourselves to putting Christ and His Kingdom first, over and above all else, trusting even that God will provide for the needs that He knows that we have, and which keep our physical motors running.

Now, here's the very clear and important assumption that comes out of our Lord's exhortation here. If we are "worried," even about the necessities of life (let alone all of the trimmings), whatever it is that we are worried about, will inevitably become our master. It will control our minds and demand all of our attention. It will become our God, in a very real sense, and it will keep us from focusing on God's present and daily will for us. Often times, worrying keeps us anywhere but in the present. We are either worried about something that has happened in the past, or the possibility of what might (or might not) happen in the future. This being the case, it keeps us from beholding the opportunities of serving Christ and His Kingdom, right here in the present, where Christ is. Worrying robs us of the "here and now," passing up all that God puts before us, to do in the present, as we are fixated on future realities that are usually beyond our control anyway. But, concentrating on the "here and now;" looking for present opportunities to serve Christ and to glorify Him, within the context that He has presently placed us, requires a faith that rests in God, knowing that He will provide for all of our needs, as the needs come up.

Now, we are not saying that planning, in any sense, is wrong. Planning is a very wise thing to do. However, it is the worrying that is the problem, and the losing of our focus on serving God in the present, which ought not to be sacrificed during our planning. We are called

to seek first the Kingdom of God; to put God's interests first, utilizing the very present moments that He has entrusted to us, for His glory, and not passing up or losing sight of these opportunities, because our minds and hearts are caught up in some past or future reality.

III. Applications

1) Making the Lord's Day a Day of rest, by laying aside other general responsibilities, and not infringing upon it. [Mary and Martha illustration; Mrs. B's college courses]

2) Looking for present evangelistic opportunities that lie in front of us, daily. None of what enters into your daily context is "happen chance." Looking for ways to manifest the love and glory of Christ through our lives, as we seek to invade the lives of others with sacrificial acts of kindness. Taking time to look at our surroundings and engaging them biblically.

3) Looking for present opportunities to minister to the needs of others in the body.

4) Investing time and energy into serving in the church. [Take the risk; see what God does!]

5) Not taking short-cuts that compromise God's revealed will. Be willing to miss out, and to honor God first.

6) Daily devotional times.

7) All in all, giving the preeminence to Christ and His Kingdom.

[The Gospel, and the lie of having no time to seek God first...etc]

Amen!!!

Benediction: Jude 1:24-25