

**25 "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. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?"**

**26 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?"**

**27 Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?"**

**28 So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin;**

**29 and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.**

**30 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?"**

**31 Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'**

**32 For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.**

**33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.**

**34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.**

I wanted to start with a story this week.

**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."**<sup>1</sup>

I can't think of a better story to capture the attitude that Jesus describes and that we are shooting for. John Wesley, in this story shows us the attitude **we should have** toward stuff. I hope it inspires us to hear what Jesus has to say to us this morning.

Last week we looked at verses 25 and 26. We talked about how absolute this command is. It encompasses **our whole lives**. And the examples given are not just our **preferences**. They are the things **we need to survive**.

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<sup>1</sup> MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1985). [Matthew](#) (Vol. 1, p. 420). Moody Press.

We talked about Jesus giving us a way to think about it all in his first example. And his first example was found in **the birds**. When we look at the birds we should consider **how God keeps them fed** without them **ever worrying** about food. They do nothing to provide the food. They just go take it. And they have no promises from God. Nor do they have any relationship with their provider.

The logical argument, the truth that we will not consider unless we actively make **a point** to consider it is, if God feeds birds. And God's relationship to birds is inferior to His relationship with us, can God not be **even more depended upon** to feed us.

Before we go forward I wanted to mention the four reasons John MacArthur gives for not worrying.

**He gives four reasons why worry, being anxious, is wrong:**

- 1. it is unfaithful because of our Master;**
- 2. it is unnecessary because of our Father;**
- 3. it is unreasonable because of our faith; and**
- 4. it is unwise because of our future.<sup>2</sup>**

Now we will move on to the next reason our Lord provides to not worry.

**<sup>27</sup> Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?**

The word STATURE here could have **2 meanings**. Half the scholars say it means **height**. The other half says it means **length** or **duration**. So it can be translated either way. NKJV says height. ESV says length.

Now how about "**cubit**"? Why would we not think this is applying to a person's height?

Well first, it is because there is precedence in scripture for it apply to **length of days** as well. A handbreadth was a similar measure to a cubit. Look how a handbreadth is used in this sentence.

**Psalm 39:4,5 (NKJV)**

**<sup>4</sup> "LORD, make me to know my end, And what *is* the measure of my days, That I may know how frail I *am*.**

**<sup>5</sup> Indeed, You have made my days *as* handbreadths, And my age *is* as nothing before You; Certainly every man at his best state *is* but vapor. Selah**

So we see we have some permission to use a **measure of length** in relation to **time**. We are following Biblical precedent.

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<sup>2</sup> MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1985). [\*Matthew\*](#) (Vol. 1, p. 418). Moody Press.

Now look at the context. The point is clear that what Jesus is saying is that you cannot do even **the smallest thing** by worrying.

Well a cubit is between 16 and 22 inches. Would Jesus be making much of a point if he were saying by worrying a 5 foot tall person cannot make himself 7 feet tall? That doesn't make sense. That would be a huge thing, not a small thing. If one of us walked in one week 2 feet taller than the week before, we would not see that as being a small thing.

It makes much more sense that Jesus is talking about a tiny measurement of time being added to the huge amount of time made up of the rest of our lives.

Also the context he starts with is **worrying about our life**.

**"Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life,**

Which use of the expression He is using here would best fit in a discussion about **our lives**? How **tall we are** or **how long we live**? I think the length of our lives is far more encompassing of **our lives** than how many inches tall we are. A person's greatest desire about his life is not likely to be it's height. It will be based on it's length.

So I think the safest interpretation here is the ESV's. It says:

**Matthew 6:27 (ESV)**

**<sup>27</sup> And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?**

That makes much more sense in context. Even if you live 80 years and one minute, you cannot get yourself to 80 years and 2 minutes by worrying. I read a study a while ago about the relationship between exercise and length of life. Do you know what they found? A person's **lifespan** is lengthened by about the same amount of time that one **spends exercising**. That did nothing to inspire me to exercise. There is quality of life to be considered, and scripture says some good stuff about exercise. But anyway, Jesus is not saying that humans who exercise won't, on average, live longer than those who don't. But what He is saying is that worry will not add a single second to your life, that life that you **care so deeply about**. And in fact, **nothing** will extend our lives past their appointed minute to die.

If the Lord does not return in our lifetimes, every one of us is going to die. There is an appointed time for it. We need to consider this. It does not matter how good of shape you are in. It doesn't matter how close to a hospital you live. It does not matter what you eat or drink. It does not matter how much food you have stored. It does not matter how much money you have.

One of the most indiscriminating forces in this world is death. It treats everyone the same. And only God has the power over it. We are set free from

the **power of death** to **destroy us**. But we have not been set free of its power to **happen to us**.

Our lives are subject to God's calendar, not ours. And it does not matter how much effort we expend, we **will not** and **cannot** change that. God **started** our lives. God will **end** our lives. Now we need to think about this in regard to worry.

If God is already handling the big things, things that we cannot change, is it not logical to trust Him with the little things?

Look what 1 Chron says

**1 Chron 29:12 Both riches and honor *come* from You,  
And You reign over all.**

**In Your hand *is* power and might;**

**In Your hand *it is* to make great**

**And to give strength to all.<sup>3</sup>**

Scripture tells us that our fate is ultimately in the hand of God. It is **He** who is handling the details. It is **He** who doles out to us what He wants us to have. It is **He** who controls our comings and goings.

There are two sides to what Jesus is saying. There are at least **two implications**. The first is that it makes perfect logical sense not to worry because God has **already shown** how **proficient** He is at **handling our lives**. He is completely competent to start our lives and end them. And we know that we have zero power to do otherwise.

But the other side of this is equally **true** and **compelling**. Worry is completely **ineffective** at providing the desired effect. So our God **IS** effective at providing the desired result. And worry is completely **INEFFECTIVE** at providing the desired result.

Think about it. If you are out driving on icy roads, and a family member is worried sick about you, how much does that worry help you? Might it make your traction more solid? Or might it help you notice a change in the road condition? Of course not. It does NOTHING. Yet it is very costly to the one doing it.

Consider this. If there was a machine that was advertised as being able to plow your garden, and you bought it and brought it home, and you turned it on, and it guzzled up all your gas, but it did nothing to plow your garden, would you buy a second one?

We are doing something equally illogical when **we worry**. We are choosing a **path of action** that does nothing but **cost us dearly**.

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<sup>3</sup> [\*The New King James Version\*](#) (1 Ch 29:12). (1982). Thomas Nelson.

It is like that saying I read in a prior week. **Worry is like a rocking chair. It gives you lots to do but never gets you anywhere.**

So one side of worry is that it is **an insult to our God** who shows perfect competence to control even the biggest things in our lives.

The other side is that no matter how much we worry, it **never accomplishes** even the smallest thing we might desire. It is a futile use of time. It is worse than a **waste** of time. Some wastes of time just costs us **time**. Worry harms us and offends God.

I took a quick look at WEBMD on the internet. Naturally this is not scripture and should not be taken that way. But even doctors recognize how bad worry is for us.

**Worrying too much can trigger a release of "stress hormones" that speed up your heart rate and breathing, raise your blood sugar, and send more blood to your arms and legs. Over time, this can affect your heart, blood vessels, muscles, and other systems**

**When you're troubled about something, the muscles in your shoulder and neck can tense up, and that can lead to migraines or tension headaches.**

**If you're worried a lot, you might breathe more deeply or more often without realizing it. While this usually isn't a big deal, it can be serious if you already have breathing problems linked to asthma, lung disease, or other conditions.**

**If it sticks around long enough, something as small as a nagging concern in the back of your mind can affect your heart. It can make you more likely to have high blood pressure, a heart attack, or a stroke. Higher levels of anxiety can trigger those stress hormones that make your heart beat faster and harder. If that happens over and over, your blood vessels may get inflamed, which can lead to hardened artery walls, unhealthy cholesterol levels, and other problems.**

**When you're worried about something, stress hormones also give you a burst of fuel (in the form of blood sugar). This can be a good thing if you need to run from danger, but what happens if you don't use that fuel? Your body normally stores it to use later. But sometimes, if you're overweight or have diabetes, for example, your blood sugar can stay too high for too long. This can lead to heart disease, strokes, or kidney disease.**

**If your body is affected by the physical effects of worry, it may not fight germs as well. Just thinking about things that made you angry or**

depressed in the past can take a toll. It can make it harder for you to fend off the flu, herpes, shingles, and other viruses.

You may feel “butterflies” in your stomach when you’re nervous -- in more serious times, you may feel nauseous or even vomit. If this happens often, it can lead to stomach pain and sores in your stomach lining (ulcers). And if you eat a lot of foods high in fat and sugar, your stomach has to work harder to digest them, and that makes more acid. This can cause acid reflux -- when acid flows up into your throat.

Now my goal is not to make you worry about worry. But it is to demonstrate that this thing that Christ prohibits is not only not good, but it is very bad.

This is from John MacArthur’s commentary:

**You can worry yourself to death, but not to 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.”<sup>4</sup>**

Someone has said, **“Worry is a thin stream of fear that trickles through the mind, which, if encouraged, will cut a channel so wide that all other thoughts will be drained out.”**

And think about it. Some say that worry is the opposite of contentment. In contentment we **receive the circumstances** that God has given to us and we are **satisfied** with the current state. We accept it for that day. We may work to make changes that are lawful to make. But we do not deny God’s **sovereignty in their arrangement** or claim that we **have the right** to have something better, something better fitting to our taste.

Every believer should be able to say with Paul, **“I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need” (Phil. 4:11–12; cf. 1 Tim. 6:6–8).**

**That contentment** is the state of mind we **should** be in, and **can** be in, in the same circumstances that we will blame for making us worry. **Contentment** is a choice. Paul **LEARNED** it. **Worry** is a choice. Jesus commands us to stop doing it, to stop choosing it.

So not only is worry an **insult to God’s competence** to handle our lives perfectly, not only is it **completely incapable** of producing a single positive

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<sup>4</sup> MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1985). [Matthew](#) (Vol. 1, p. 423). Moody Press.

result, but it is also destroying our mental and physical health. It will ultimately cripple us from doing those productive things we **COULD** do. Let's look at the rest of our passage.

**28 So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin;**

**29 and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.**

**30 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?**

Jesus already gave us an example from nature about why we do not need to worry about **food**. He pointed to the **birds**.

Now Jesus is showing us how to think about **clothes**. And He again points at His creation. Remember that these flowers are not in a relationship with Christ. He has made no promises to them. He is showing His common grace that He displays to **all of nature** and even to the humans who might deny His existence as God graces them.

Look how Christ starts with a question. He wants us to ask ourselves that. Why is it that we worry? There is something that drives us to it. What is it? It is not **reason**. It is something else. Maybe it is lack of self control. Maybe it is lack of belief. Maybe it is lack of trust. Maybe it is fear. What is it?

Whatever it is, it does not come from thinking about the flowers in nature. I used to pick wildflowers and bring them home to Carla. But I rarely considered them as proof that I can trust God to provide for me. But that is what Christ calls us to do. When we see the wild flowers, we are to think about how wonderfully and beautifully God has clothed them.

Have you ever seen one of them with a **paint brush**? Have you ever seen them **picking out the materials** for how they would be clothed? Have you ever seen them order up what they wanted to wear. Of course not. That is silly.

But God has provided for them beautiful adornment. He has ordained that they have a **beautiful presence**. And they did absolutely nothing in that process. The beauty of a flower is not dependent upon the **flower**. It is dependent upon the flower's **Creator**. That is the point.

Now Jesus picks the most wealthy King of Israel as His example. He picks out the best of the best. Now He compares Solomon's clothes to the flowers clothes. And Christ says that the **flower** wins that contest **hands down**. The beauty of a wild flower is better than the best clothed human.

This is emphasizing God's ability to provide **the best** to those **He chooses**. It is completely in His power and competence to provide stuff. And not only just to provide stuff but to provide the very **BEST** stuff.

**<sup>30</sup> 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?**

This is another least to greatest argument. If God will do this for the least, will He not do it for the greatest.

Look at how He makes His point.

Remember how we started by looking at the length of our lives and that worry does not extend that at all. Well here is an example of something that has a lifetime of a **day or two days or just a few days**. It does not have nearly our length of days.

And look at its use. It is an ignoble purpose. It is thrown into an oven to be burned after a few days.

To understand this it will help to realize how their ovens worked. These ovens were made of hardened clay and were mostly used to bake bread.

Mostly the fire was placed **under** the oven. But if you wanted to turn it to High Heat, you would throw dried weeds **inside** the oven and light them. It is like throwing cardboard into a wood stove. It will result in a very hot flame for a very short time. It increases the heat rapidly.

Now think about what kind of items would serve that purpose. You would not use an important legal document or a painting on the wall. You might use briars. It could be tares. It could be any weeds. Or it could be these flowers that were once so beautiful.

I think the point is that God clothes insignificant plants that have no lasting value. He does not value them enough to keep them from being used for tinder. They have no lasting significance. Yet He clothes them beautifully.

We are **much more valued**. God has an eternal destination for us. He has prepared a place for us to live forever. We don't have the destiny of being a useless scrap to give the last burst of heat to a loaf of bread. So it stands to reason that God is much more willing to **provide us** clothing than He is to **provide flowers** their beauty. We know He provides flower their beauty. Therefore we know we can trust Him to provide our clothing.

The beauty of the flower is used as logical evidence that God will take care of us.

Jesus turns two every day props into object lessons that we cannot fail to understand. Birds and Flowers tell us we are safe in the hands of the



Almighty. We are safe to **trust Him** to provide for us. We have more reason to believe that **He will take care of us** than to believe He will provide a flower its beauty. Because we are more valuable to Him than any flower.

That is the point.

Then He closes this point with this statement:

### **O you of little faith**

Jesus used this phrase four times.

(Matt. 8:26; 14:31; 16:8; Luke 12:28)

Each time it was in relation to worry about food, clothing and one's lifespan.

I will return to this passage in a few weeks, but for now I would like to say this.

Jesus helps us here get to the heart of the matter. This is why we worry when we worry. It has to do with **faith**. Look at what that means it **does not** have to do with. It is not caused merely by my propensity to be anxious or my weak frame or my low tolerance to mental challenge. It is not even caused ultimately by lack of discipline. These things might all play a part. But down at the bottom of the issue is Faith. Faith is trust in the character of God to the point we believe what He says and do what He commands. That is the problem with worry. It refuses to trust God to that point.

I would like to close with a John MacArthur quote.

**Worry is not a trivial sin, because it strikes a blow both at God's love and at God's integrity. Worry declares our heavenly Father to be untrustworthy in His Word and His promises. To avow belief in the inerrancy of Scripture and in the next moment to express worry is to speak out of both sides of our mouths. Worry shows that we are mastered by our circumstances and by our own finite perspectives and understanding rather than by God's Word. Worry is therefore not only debilitating and destructive but maligns and impugns God.**

**When a believer is not fresh in the Word every day, so that God is in His mind and heart, then Satan moves into the vacuum and plants worry.**

**Worry then pushes the Lord even further from our minds.<sup>5</sup>**

I hope that you and I are growing together in our commitment to **overcome** any current worry that plagues us. I hope we are growing together to quickly spot the efforts of the enemy and call those faithless thoughts **lies**. And I pray that the words of Jesus will be our **mental fuel** to win this battle in our hearts. He feeds birds. He clothes flowers. What will He do for his beloved children. That is the kind of God that can be trusted.

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<sup>5</sup> MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1985). [Matthew](#) (Vol. 1, p. 425). Moody Press.