

Matthew 6:25-34 (NKJV)

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.

This morning we are going to focus on verses 31 through 34.

There is something we need to look at, because if we misunderstand it, it could undermine our faith during bad times.

Let's look at this.

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.

Jesus is talking about things we need to survive. He gives us reasons earlier why we do not need to worry. Now He says this. I am paraphrasing here.

You don't need to worry about the world's stuff like those fellow humans who do not have faith in God. Why. Because God knows we need them to survive. The assumption is that because God loves us and cares about us **more than He does the birds and flowers**, and He knows what we need, He will surely take care of this.

Then He says, instead of worrying about **getting stuff** or **having stuff**, pour all that intensity you were going to pour into that pursuit of **keeping yourself alive**, pour that intensity into **that which lasts forever**. Seek first something that is much bigger than your survival.

Well what about the other stuff? What about the food, clothing and shelter?

Jesus says-

all these things shall be added to you.

Now we need to look at this very carefully. We need to really think about this. Does this mean if we **seek first the Kingdom that God** will never allow us to **starve**. Is this a promise to this effect?

This is where proper interpretation is vital. On a surface reading we might conclude that a Christian following Christ will never starve. And the next idea is just as true. On a surface reading we might think the only place we should ever pray is in a closet. On a surface reading we might get the idea that it is a sin if we ever reveal to another person the details of an act of our charity. On a surface reading we might get the idea we should never use violence to stop violence.

But we have already looked at all of this and realized how vitally important it is that we **use what Jesus said to interpret what Jesus said** and to use what **Jesus said** to interpret the **rest of scripture**.

Now let's look at the **reasoning** given to us as fuel for not worrying. Let's look how Jesus laid it out.

The birds have **food** provided by God.

The flowers have **clothing** provided by God.

Now this is important. Which point is being made? Which point is being emphasized? That God **feeds all birds** and there is **never** a bird that He does not feed? Does He make the point that you do not need to worry because every bird ever hatched has lived its whole lifetime and none have ever starved?

Is His point that every flower ever sprouted has lived until it was able to bloom and display its beauty?

I don't see any reason to believe that is the point Christ is making. I don't see any reason for us to draw that conclusion. And if we **draw that conclusion** we get ourselves into a dangerous place.

No. So what **is** the point?

When you see a bird, **how** does it get fed?

When you see a flower, **how** does it get clothed?

The overwhelming point in the context is the **ability** and **desire** of God to feed the bird and clothe the flower.

I think the reason goes something like this. God has effectively fed a trillion birds and clothed a trillion flowers. God is exceedingly competent and willing to do this. With a God like that, we do not need to worry that suddenly He will no longer be competent to take care of us. We do not need to worry that one day He will care less about us than He cares about the birds and flowers.

That is the reason that we do not need to worry.

Now notice the illustrations he used.

Feeding birds. The question is, do birds ever starve?

Evidently in September 2020 migrating flycatchers, swallows and warblers were dropping out of the sky in the southwestern US. It was raining birds. It was estimated that 100,000 birds died. The researchers said that the birds showed signs of starvation. And this was probably due to a drought in Mexico where they stayed for the winter.

Now are we to take this as proof that **God does not feed** the birds? No. If he feeds a trillion but does not feed a million, God is still the food supply for the birds. God is still **competent** and **willing** to feed most of the birds most of the time. But while He is competent to feed all the birds all the time, He shows that is not always **His will**.

The same is true for flowers, the other example He used.

So where Jesus says **all these things shall be added to you**. What is He saying? How should we understand that?

Well I think it comes down to trusting again the competence and character of God.

Hebrews 11:6 (NKJV)

⁶ But without faith *it is impossible to please Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him*.

We must **trust this God for reward**. We must see this God, not as a harsh God that reaps where He does not sow, but as the kind of God that will surely make every effort of ours worth the price. He is a **rewarding** God.

Now back to our text.

A paraphrase might be, You have a God that feeds trillions of birds daily. He loves you more than the birds he feeds. Prioritize your **relationship with**

that God in your life above all else. And you can trust that **God will provide** all the stuff that keeps you alive as long as it is His loving will to **keep you alive**.

I think if we understand it like that, we get the gist of what Jesus is saying and we don't box Jesus in with His own words.

But wait, we might say. I don't like this as well. How can I not worry about food clothing and shelter if there is always that unusual possibility that God's will for me might be **to starve**? We might think, if this is not a promise that God will always keep me comfortable, I am not sure I want to follow that God. Well we can think that. But if we choose to **think that**, we are not the people being described in the beatitudes or in Hebrews 11.

Remember the poor in spirit. Remember those who mourn and are comforted? Remember those people who are so blessed because their sin, their greatest obstacle and turmoil in their lives, has been forgiven? Remember the blessing of being identified enough with Christ that we suffer like He did.

Yes, **those are the people** who are being told not to worry.

And the basis is not that we should not worry because God will never allow us to suffer. Based on the rest of the context of this passage, this text cannot **possibly** mean that.

It must be that we need not worry because this God who **forgave our sin** and loves us is **competent to handle any circumstance of life**. Once we believe in His **competence**, we must **trust His character** to give to us that which is in our best interest long term. He rewards those who seek Him.

The people who are described in the beatitudes are also described in Hebrews. They are the same people. And there is something very different about them.

Hebrews 11:13-16 (ESV)

¹³ These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

¹⁴ For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland.

¹⁵ If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return.

¹⁶ But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one.

Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.

When we read this we cannot imagine a person who only signed up for the experience because it was a **free** and **guaranteed** meal ticket. The faithful aren't like that. They believe in a reward. They believe that God will reward them. They believe God will make it worthwhile. But they do not believe they can tell God **the terms** under which He must do it.

Hebrews describes people who have become convinced that **anything God has for us in the future** is worth far more than the price **we pay now**. How can they believe such a thing? Faith. They trust God's character at the pit of their soul and they believe that God would never lie.

So they become fixated on a **better country**. They **seek first** the kingdom of God.

We all enjoy reading the first part of Hebrews 11. We like reading the success stories of how God whooped the world's butt in the lives of the faithful. We like how God feeds His people with Manna. We like it when old people miraculously have babies, even if we might not want to be one of them. We like the story of God taking the Israelites out of the hands of the greatest political power of the day.

And that is often how God deals with His people. He often uses His power to make our lives better, to **heal** sickness, to **provide** resources, to comfort us and strengthen us and give us good things that we are happy to thank Him for. But then we reach the end of the chapter.

Hebrews 11:35-40 (ESV)

³⁵ **...Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life.**

³⁶ **Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment.**

³⁷ **They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated—**

(We need to note this here. Destitute. Destitute means to be in lack. So here are the faithful suffering lack. They are not getting what most birds and flowers get. We have got to interpret Christ's words correctly to allow for this. Just because Christ assures us that His Father always **CAN** feed us, we can not allow ourselves to assume then that He always **WILL**. Sometimes there are more important things at stake than our lives. Sometimes we best serve Him by our **misfortune**, not by our **good** fortune.

The important thing is that the faithful, the beatitude folk, look at all of life differently. We do not serve Christ because He promises to make **this short existence** better. We are willing to trade this life for what Christ has in store

for us. We are not shopping for a better life now. We want an eternal life of glory.

38 of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

39 And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised,

40 since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

So are we driven to worry because God might not feed us? Does that realization undermine our commitment to **not worry**? Do we think, Lord if there is even a chance you might let me starve, all bets are off. I will take care of myself because **not starving** is more important to me than **having what you offer**.

Do you see the problem? What we need at this point is to repent. We need to confess our sins. We might be tempted to think we are just being smart. If God won't feed me, I will feed myself.

But remember what we learned about worry. It cannot carry out its smallest intention. And suppose our commitment to self preservation is successful.

Maybe we do not need to worry. We just make a plan and carry it out.

What does Jesus have to say about that?

Matthew 16:24-27 (NKJV)

24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

25 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.

26 For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

27 For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.

Jesus makes it clear. You can have strategies to save your life. You can have strategies to take care of yourself in a way that you **do not need to trust God or obey Him**. You can do that. And you might gain a large chunk of this world. Lots of unbelieving people do that every day. You might not want to trust God to provide food clothing and shelter to follow Him in the way He is worthy of following. We can do that.

But we cannot do it without **losing our souls**. We cannot do that without it **costing** the very thing we were **trying to save**. Coming after Christ requires this abandonment of one's self onto Christ. It requires daily doing business

with our desires that are contrary to God's commands. We die a little bit each day on that cross. And we need to be absorbed with the things Christ was absorbed with and is still absorbed with. We must follow Christ.

Ok. So when Jesus says this-

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

We can take the Goldilocks approach and find the interpretation that is just right.

First, we do not want to interpret it wrongly to say that **since Jesus said this** we can be confident that God will **never allow a believer** to go without food, clothing and shelter. After all scripture says the faithful were sometimes destitute.

Second, we do not want to conclude that because **it is possible** that God may allow us to become destitute, that we **should not trust** this promise at all. If we are following Christ there are many things that are far more important to us than food, clothing and shelter.

The just right approach is to deeply incorporate what Jesus is telling us. We must allow our world view to emphasize **the competence of God** to feed, clothe, and house **whatever** He wants **whenever** He wants. And it is perfectly like Him to **want to do so** most of the time. We can depend upon the competence of God and the character of God to give us exactly what we need **all the time**. And worry never provides a single thing we need.

That is the application based on the text and context.

Now you and I know that the provision of God is not always that which we would most prefer. In fact sometimes God gives us that which we most fear, that which we most dread.

There is no sense pretending or denying it. All of us have had to suffer dealing with things that were very painful. Sometimes we may find ourselves crying out to the Lord, telling Him we cannot deal with this thing. It feels like more than we can bear.

Well why not take our **own** path? Why not **reject** this provision from God? If God is going to treat us this way, why not take care of ourselves?

It comes back to what Hebrews says.

Hebrews 11:6 (NKJV)

⁶ **But without faith *it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.***

If we are to last with God, we must have this at the core of our beliefs. This is way more than a doctrinal statement we adhere to. It has to **resonate** in our guts.

God **is**. And the God that **is** wants to give me what I **ultimately** want. Is that how you see God? Think about this. When you think of God, is this what you think of? Do you really see Him as a rewarder.

We can never enthusiastically follow Him until this **grips our souls**. God rewards those who give great energy into following God. We are talking about diligence here. Maximum effort. This isn't just **joining a church** or signing a **doctrinal statement** or sacrificing some of our time to go to meetings or to do spiritual things. Those who **seek first** the Kingdom of God, those people who are giving **diligent, dependable effort** to their spiritual growth. Those people will be rewarded. God will give really really good stuff to those people. God has really really good plans for those people.

Do **you** see God like that? If you don't, your spiritual service will just make you miserable because you will feel like you are giving up **the good stuff** to serve God. You will not feel like you are setting yourself up to **GET** the good stuff by serving God.

This morning we sit in our tiny well heated church and we are surrounded by flawed human beings who have the good or bad fortune of knowing our flaws. We are just people with some wonderful traits and some less than wonderful. We sit here in time and space and we talk about God. We think about what we would **prefer to happen** to us in our lifetimes and what we prefer **would not happen**.

But there is something I am certain of.

Suppose Christ were to take you to His throne. And suppose He were to show you the **good He intended** for **every single event** in your life? Suppose He were to show you what the **hurts of others were designed for**. Suppose He were to show you what **life's catastrophes** were designed for. Suppose He were to show you what the situations were designed for that **you got yourself into** due to your **own** foolishness or evil. Suppose He were to show you what even your **evil sinful choices that you wish you could now undo** were designed for? Suppose you could see it all from God's perspective?

If we saw our whole lives from God's viewpoint, we would see that the situations God has for us are **so superior to those that we would choose for**

ourselves that we would beg for them, no matter what they are. We would surely wish that we had not chosen our sinful choices because of how they dishonored Christ, but at the same time we would prefer that we made them and were affected by them rather than to **have not done them** and never learned to **appreciate** the amazing grace of our Lord Christ. Our sin is awful but a failure to appreciate the **grace of our Lord** would be even **more awful**. There are situations we are in against our choice that we would welcome. If we were given the opportunity to sign up for them, after seeing how much they were intended for our good, we would say **Yes Lord**. Sign me up. **Let me be the answer to that person's need**. Let me be the person that is used in this situation. **Let that pain fall upon me** for the good it will do for me and for your Kingdom.

Scripture really does paint a reality like this. This is not imaginary. We know that all things work together for what? For good. Good is better than bad. Good is better than Neutral. Good is really just that. Good. Even bad things work out for the good.

At the end of the day, when we really get the truth, we would not **want** the promise Jesus gives in our text to say that Christ will **always make sure we are fed and watered and clothed**. What we would want is that Christ will do that thing in our lives that will **most glorify Him** because in the end it will **most benefit us**.

If we could only see from the perspective of eternity we would willingly agree to take on every **God ordained situation** in our lives, which is **every situation**, for the glory of God. We would say **Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done** and mean it. It is really **that good**.

You and I probably aren't there yet. We need to experience His mercies new every morning. We need to follow Him, just seeing enough light to make the next step right now. But when we see it from eternity we will say that the **best decisions we ever made** were the ones **we made to trust God**. And our God is worthy to be trusted to provide for us **every moment of our lives**. And there is not a single moment nor a single circumstance that is worthy of worry. Not a single one.