

## **Introduction**

This morning in the word I read Psalm 119:152. It says, "Long have I known from your testimonies that You have founded them forever." One of the first and fundamental things we prize about the Bible is that it is not going anywhere. It proceeds from the eternal God and He has founded his testimonies forever. God does not change and neither does his law. His law, his will for human beings, will ever be the same because it is part of who God is. This reality is brought before us as we study the Sermon on the Mount. Here is Jesus setting forth the blessing of belonging to the kingdom alongside the life to be lived by those who are in the kingdom, and it looks remarkably like the law given to Moses on Mt. Sinai. Then God brought out his people from Egypt, set them free and saved them. He then gave them the law to show them how they were to live in the context of the salvation he had given them. Jesus is doing the same thing. From the beginning of the Sermon he shows who gets into the kingdom—the poor in spirit, those who mourn over their sin, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, and so on. Next Jesus shows us how the kingdom citizens function in the world—as salt and light. Then he shows that the law of God should be lived out in them from their hearts. He points out that it is easier to look holy than to be holy. Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people. And today we are in a section that deals with how kingdom citizens relate to the things of the world while living in the world.

[Read Text; Pray]

Jesus had said, "No one can serve two masters . . . you cannot serve God and money." In our previous study we saw that since you cannot serve two masters, you must not be laying up for yourself treasures on earth. In today's study we further see that neither should you be anxious about your basic earthly needs. If you serve God, then you will not be living for daily needs. If you serve God, then you will be living for his kingdom and righteousness.

## **I. The Prohibition.**

A. So, do not be anxious.

Notice how many times Jesus says it in this section of the sermon. Here it is in verse 25. "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life." Then we see the same in verse 31. "Therefore, do not be anxious saying, 'what shall we eat.'" And there it is again in verse 34. "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow."

B. Here is a command. It is a prohibition. It is a restriction. This statement makes a disallowance. Here is a state of heart and mind that is not to be manifest in the lives of those who belong to the kingdom of God. That state of mind and heart is the state of anxiousness.

Being anxious expresses the idea of hand-wringing. It expresses fear and doubt. It looks at life from a pessimistic point of view. Anxiety is grounded in uncertainty and the expectation of doom. It looks at the present and the future with wonderings and questionings. Anxiety asks, "'what shall we eat?' or 'what shall we drink' or 'what shall we wear?'" It worries that there will not be food, drink, and clothing. It feels that if it does not stew and wring its hands and pace up and down, back and forth that there certainly will not be food, drink, and clothing or that some catastrophe will occur.

C. Now Jesus is not forbidding us from planning and working to meet the basic needs of ourselves and our families. He does not say, "do not sow or reap or gather into barns." In fact what he says about the birds assumes you will be busy working for daily provisions. The Bible underscores the necessity of work and providing for families. Jesus is not suggesting inactivity with respect to our daily needs, but he is forbidding anxiety in regard to them. And he provides several reasons for why this is so.

We must not be anxious because of ....

## **II. Who God Is**

There are several assurances related to who God is which defy a place for worry and anxiety in the life of a citizen of the kingdom of God.

A. First Assurance. God is EXCLUSIVE. There is only one true God. And there is no other, there is none like him. You cannot serve God if you are

-serving the things of this world. We saw this last week. This world is a master. If you live for it, you cannot be living for God. It is true in terms of laying up for yourself treasures on earth, but it is also true when it comes the menial things on the earth. It is because of the fact that no one can serve two masters that Jesus says not to be anxious about food, drink, and clothing. The first word in verse 25 makes the connection. Verse 24: no one can serve 2 masters. You cannot serve God and money. Verse 25: THEREFORE I tell you do not be anxious.

If you worry about the base things of life, you are not serving God. When you worry about even the small things in life, you reveal that this is where your main concern is. You are not living as a servant of the Lord but as a servant of stuff because your overriding concern is for the stuff. It is not just what you lay up; it is also what you fear might not be there.

B. Second Assurance. God has a greater purpose for his people. Jesus asks, "Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?" Well indeed they are. God did not make us to be people who just sit around in clothes and eat. In fact when God made human beings, we didn't even need clothes! Until sin entered the world Adam and Ever were naked and unashamed. For what did God make us? God made us to be blessed in reflecting him to this world. When we look back to Genesis 1, we read how God purposed to make man in his image, after his likeness. And God blessed them telling the two of them to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it. This is God's purpose for his people—to represent God on the earth, filling it and exercising rule within it. God created the heavens and the earth, and he filled the universe with stars and the earth with all sorts of plants and animals and birds and creeping things. And now God places the man on the earth to reflect God to his creation with a happy command to fill it and subdue it. This is God's plan for his people.

And now then if you continue down in Genesis 1, you find that having declared to the man his purpose and place, he said to him, "And by the way, I have given you food." "Every plant yielding seed and every tree with seed in its fruit . . .you shall have them for food."

God did not make man to eat. He made him to image him on the earth and rule for him. And he gave him food in order to nourish him for the task. Yes indeed, life is more than food and the body is more than clothing. Food is a gracious and delicious gift of God that fuels us for living lives that glorify him. God made us to engage ourselves in living for his glory by being productive. So food is not the end. Clothing is not the end. When we get our eyes on the food and such we have taken them off the goal. God made us for a greater purpose than eating and drinking. So we shouldn't be so wrapped up in the food and drink. That's like being glad we have gasoline in the tank.

C. Third Assurance. God cares for his people. And he cares immensely. Jesus points his listeners to birds. Ponder this remarkable fact. Unlike humans, their calling is not to till the soil, and sow, and reap, and gather into barns. But God sees to it that they have food. They do work for their food; they gather it; and they feed their young; and they eat of it themselves, but they do not wring their feathers wondering if there will be more the next time they are hungry. God cares about birds; it is evident in his provision for their needs. And Jesus asks, "Are you not more valuable than they?"

MacArthur points out, ". . . no bird is created in the image of God or recreated in the image of Christ. No bird was ever promised heirship with Jesus Christ throughout all eternity. . . . and if God gives and sustains life for birds, will he not take care of us who are his children and who have been given all those glorious promises?"

After pointing to birds, Jesus turns to the lilies of the field and the beauty with which God adorns the grass. God does beautiful things. Jesus mentions how grass one day is alive and the next is thrown into the oven. Dried grass was burned to produce heat in ovens. But God clothes the mere grass of the field with flowers in such a way that Jesus says it surpasses even Solomon in his glory. And if he clothes the grass of the field in this way, Jesus assures his people that the Lord will do much more for his people.

This is glorious indeed. Certainly God will provide necessary temporal clothing for his people. But it seems that Jesus is even looking beyond our dress of this age to our spiritual clothing before God. The clothing we most need is what is acceptable in heaven. We need to be clothed in righteousness. And God has provided that. God provided garments for Adam and Eve. When they fell, they made for themselves coverings of fig leaves. And yet after God confronted them for their sin and cursed them, he made new garments for them. These were garments of skins. Blood had to be shed. Sacrifice had to be made for these garments. This is the language of Genesis 3:21, "And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them." Isaiah looks forward to God's clothing of his people saying, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness." If God takes care of the eternal garments of his people, he will certainly see to it that we have the everyday clothing that we need. He cares for his people! Therefore his people should not wring their hands. They should not be anxious. The one who loves them more than birds and more than grass will certainly see that they are fed and clothed both now and then!

It is a truth of great encouragement that God really, really, really, really cares for his people! The truest and greatest demonstration of that care is that God spared not his own son. It was the blood of Jesus that had to be shed to purchase our eternal garments of salvation. God cares for the souls of his people. And if he cares for their souls, he certainly cares for their bodies. Paul exults in Romans 8:32, "He who did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?" And so he can confidently declare to the Philippians (4:19), "And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus."

D. Fourth Assurance. God holds your very life in his hand. In between talking about the birds of the air and the grass of the field, at the end of verse 27, Jesus asks, "And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?" A rhetorical question if ever there was one! Worry is the most useless and destructive pastime. It accomplishes nothing, it

cannot extend our life span. It cannot prevent catastrophes and tragedies. But it can harm us. It harms our bodies and robs our joy.

Worry will have no impact on the things with which they are consumed. But God holds our lives in his hand. We have assurance through the sovereign plan and purpose of God that everything is in his control, even the number of our days have been determined by his plan and decree. Psalm 139:16 says, "In your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them." Worry cannot change what God has already determined. God is the one whose counsel shall stand, whose purpose will be brought to pass. All of his promises are insured by his trustworthy faithfulness.

E. Fifth Assurance. He knows what we need. Down in verse 32, Jesus says that "Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all." He knows what the birds need and he knows better than we do what we need. The God who searches me and knows me, who knows when I sit down and when I rise up; who discerns my thoughts from afar; he knows what I need. He searches out my path and my lying down and is acquainted with all my ways. He hems me in and lays his hand upon me. He knows my need!

And he who knows my need causes all things to work together for good for those who are the called according to his purpose! He who cares for me and knows me is he whose purpose I exist to fulfill and he knows my need! I can surely trust him. If I trust God about eternal things, how could I not trust him for the temporal? And yet worry and anxiety refuse to trust him.

F. These aspects of the person of God highlight why worry and anxiety are serious sins. Jesus puts a rebuke right here in the sermon. He calls his listeners, O you of little faith. It is an indication of weak faith when you fail to grasp the greatness of God and live in the unrest of anxiety. It is a failure to really believe his love and his faithfulness to his word. The character of God is at stake in our anxiety.

So we must not worry because of who God is, but we must further not be anxious because of . . .

### **III. Who God Has Made Us to Be**

A. God made us to be DISTINCT. All through the Bible God's people are set apart. In a world full of darkness they are meant to be the light that shines. Jesus already made that point when he began this sermon with the beatitudes, saying Blessed are the poor in spirit; blessed are those who mourn; blessed are the meek. Then he went on to indicate that kingdom citizens are salt and light. In the darkness they are light. In the blandness they are salt. In Romans 12:2, Paul says: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed." Peter says that "as he who called you is holy; you also be holy in all your conduct." Holy conduct is conduct that stands out. It is different from worldly. It is set apart. This is because the people of God, the people of the kingdom, are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that [they] may proclaim the excellencies of him who called [them] out of darkness into his marvelous light."

And when it comes to worry and anxiety over basic matters of living, Jesus says kingdom citizens are to be different from the world. The world is consumed with the stuff of the world. The world loves the world and the things in the world. The world is anxious about food and clothing and drink and what might happen. God's people are not to be obsessed with the stuff of this world. Jesus orders his people not be anxious saying, "What shall we eat? What shall we drink? What shall we wear?" For the Gentiles seek after all these things. If by our lives and by our holy conduct we are proclaiming in this world the excellencies of our great God, then we will not be anxious people. And these things will not be what we seek, what we live for.

God is our refuge and strength a very present help in trouble; therefore we will not fear though the earth be moved and the mountains be cast into the heart of the sea. God has always been putting his people into the midst of the world to show God to the world. And we don't do that by being like the world. We do that by reflecting the greatness of who he is. And he is our one true treasure and the mighty God who cares. He has called us to his own glory and excellence and when we live out life not fretting over what is or what might be but trusting and resting in the Lord, we tell the world what faithful God he is.

B. Not only did God make us to be distinct, he also made us to be kingdom seekers. "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

By assuring his people of his divine provision, the Lord has said to us, "you have one central task. I am taking care of the every day stuff and you are to set your sights on one central thing—seeking the kingdom and the righteousness of God. This imperative sits in contrast to what the world seeks. The nations/the Gentiles seek the things of the world. The people of God are to seek the things of heaven and the righteousness of heaven. That righteousness is embodied on the law of God. It is doing the will of God. And what is doing the will of God but embracing with affection everything he commands. It is pursuing obedience and sanctification in all our conduct. It is rejecting sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness. It is putting away anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk. It is putting on compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. It is loving God and loving your neighbor.

So there is every reason to not be anxious, but I want to close this morning by applying what Christ says here to the question "how?" How can I overcome worry and anxiety? How can I refuse to be anxious over worldly things?

#### **IV. How to Overcome the Temptation to Worry.**

A. Reject it as idolatry. Anxiety tries to usurp the role that only belongs to God. It tries to shoulder up under God's prerogative and run the universe. This is idolatry because it is an attempt to undercut God and replace him with you. So when you realize worry is bubbling up within you, reject it. Preach this truth to your soul. God is the ruler of the universe not me, and choose to be at peace by keeping your mind stayed on the Lord.

B. Choose to trust God. Preach to yourself the glorious truths of who God is to his people. He has a greater purpose for his people. He cares. He really cares! He holds your life in his hand. And he knows your need. Pray, "Give us this day our daily bread," and know he taught you to pray this way. Trust him to meet your needs. It's what Paul says in Philippians 4:6-7. DO not be anxious about anything but in everything by prayer and



supplication with thanksgiving, let your request be made known to God and the peace of God will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

C. Remind yourself you are called to be distinct from the world. Remember God wants to display his glory through you. And that does not happen when you get all concerned with your earthly stuff, even the basics.

D. Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Set your mind not on what the flesh is trying to trouble you with but on what it is going to take to obey and on the glory and beauty of the savior.

### **Conclusion**

Don't make a serious mistake in regard to this teaching. I am not teaching you nor was it the purpose of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount to teach people what to do so they would be accepted by God. I am not teaching you nor was it the purpose of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount to teach people what to do so they would be accepted by God. Acceptance with God is not based upon what we do. Acceptance with God is based upon the work of Jesus Christ on the cross. He suffered in the place of sinners to redeem us from our sins. We must believe on him to find acceptance with God.

But there is a matter of obedience. God saved us for his glory. He saved us to glorify him. He saved us to love him, trust him, to obey him, and to reflect him to a lost world.