



### **Jesus' Cure for Your Anxiety**

Matthew 6:25-34

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It is a real privilege for me to preach on the passage that we have before us today in Matthew chapter 6, if you want to start to turn there.

I remember one of my professors in seminary many, many years ago gave this helpful admonition to aspiring preachers as he was preparing us to be in ministry: he said, "Whenever you preach, you need to remember that you are preaching to a room full of broken hearts." And the idea there is that your tone would not be too sharp, that it wouldn't be too harsh, but remember that you are in front of people, bringing God's word to them and applying it to them in situations where they are having difficulties. They have things that burden them and things that sadden them.

And today's message in Matthew chapter 6, beginning in verse 25, is a great passage for a broken heart, for an anxious heart. It is Jesus' primary teaching on dealing with anxiety.

As I was preparing for this message, something struck me and I decided to do a search on the Internet. I did a Google search with the simple search terms, "how to overcome anxiety." I thought it might be interesting to see what the world had to say about it. That search returned 1.9 million web pages, designed to help you.

I looked at just the first two pages, the first 20 results that came back and got a little education on how the world deals with anxiety. Just in those two first pages, those first 20 results – ten results per page – the Internet would give you this invitation to consider solutions to your anxiety: I saw an advertisement for an anxiety coach; I want *out* of my anxiety – I don't need coached *in* it, but whatever – they didn't ask my opinion. Hypnosis therapy. Diaphragm breathing – "Everybody all together: breathe." Cognitive behavior treatment – that sounds a little ominous. Nutrition, psychology, support groups,

and others, too numerous to mention – all of those within the first 20 results, taking you a lot of different directions on dealing with your anxiety.

It occurred to me – it is funny how so many of those so-called solutions involved people making money off of your anxiety. I wonder how much incentive they have to truly help you. The longer you are anxious, the better it is for them. I think that about psychiatry and psychology too.

But beloved, these peddlers of emotional potions cannot bring anyone true relief. Ultimately they leave you worse off than where you were before you began, because they direct your attention away from the truth that is found alone in the word of God.

We have so many things that make us anxious, don't we? Our health, our loved ones, our finances, our jobs – fill in the blank with the troubles that were on your mind when you came in today. And we would all like to have a sense of abiding peace in the midst of it. Praise God, the Bible understands the challenge and the effect of anxiety. It is one of the reasons why we should love the word of God – because it is so greatly meets us right where we are at.

Proverbs 12:25 says:

*Anxiety in a man's heart weighs it down.*

Proverbs 15:13 says:

*When the heart is sad, the spirit is broken.*

You know about that, don't you – either from past experience or from present troubles that you are feeling? The weight and the internal drag on your spirit that anxiety causes is something that we all would love to be free from.

When we talk about anxiety – just to give a definition that I am using here; it is not a technical one, but just to think through what we are talking about when we say “anxiety” – we are talking about that feeling of apprehension that comes in the face of possible danger or misfortune. You look to the future and you are anxious about it. You fear what the future might bring, and it weighs on you.

Anxiety is a controlling distress over circumstances that distracts your mind from trusting the Lord for whatever is to come in your life. That's what we are talking about today, and you hardly need me to give you a lexical definition of it – you can define it from the things that you've dealt with in your own heart over the years.

Here is a question for you as a Christian: How important is it that you get a handle on your anxieties? You can measure the answer to that question – you can measure the significance of this issue by the attention that Jesus gives to it in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus, in these three chapters of Matthew 5, 6 and 7 – this will surprise you, but

just go and read the sermon on the Mount and you can verify this – Jesus devotes more attention to anxiety in the Sermon on the Mount than He does any other subject. Prayer is about equal; give or take a few words here or there – He gives equal attention to anxiety and prayer. But other than that, there is no other subject that receives such attention from Him in the opening sermon that He delivered at the start of His public ministry as He explained to His disciples what it meant to live out a life of repentance.

He speaks about anxiety in the Sermon on the Mount more than He does about murder and hatred, more than adultery and lust, far more than He does about divorce and remarriage, far more than He does about the significance of loving your enemies. All of those hot button issues – either theologically or personally – that we devote most of our time to, Jesus treated shorter and with less attention to detail than He did with the subject of anxiety. Jesus put a premium on this.

I think in part it is because Jesus understands that anxiety is going to be a continual threat to the life of His disciples as they go through this life. What that should bring to you is a sense of encouragement of coming to Christ because He has the answer to the problem.

We will probably spend two or three weeks dealing with this passage. But beloved, here is the opening salvo in this message: You do not have to live in a life full of anxiety – you don't; in fact, you are not supposed to. The Christian life is not supposed to be that way. The Christian life is about transcending the things of this world. Whether it is the daily anxieties that Jesus addresses here of food and clothing and so forth, or whether it is the more significant issues that are included in the intent of what He is saying, you are not supposed to be living in a life full of anxiety. Jesus gives this teaching to deliver us from it decisively. That is a glorious thing that should make your heart welcome what He has to say in this passage.

Whenever Jesus speaks, we should listen. When He speaks at length about a single topic, we should be listening all the more. Let me read the passage to set it in front of you, and then we will go through it in kind of an overview this morning. I am going to begin at verse 24. Matthew 6, beginning at verse 24 – Jesus says:

*No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.*

*For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?*

*Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life?*

*And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you, that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith!*

*Do not worry then, saying, "What will we eat?" or "What will we drink?" or "What will we wear for clothing?" For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.*

*But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*

Now, as we approach this passage and just kind of introduce our handling of it this morning, it is very important for you to realize that Jesus is giving instruction to His disciples – not to the world at large. Jesus distinguishes repeatedly in the Sermon on the Mount those who are in His kingdom from those who are not. And in this matter of dealing with anxiety, the cure for anxiety that Jesus lays out is the exclusive privilege of His children – it does not belong to the world at large.

I want to show you this and take just a moment to speak to any unbelievers that may be in here. Look at Matthew 7:21. This speaks not only to known and professing non-Christians, but perhaps to some that think they are Christians when they are truly not. Jesus says in verse 21:

*Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?" And then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness."*

Why am I pointing that out at this early juncture in the message? Listen, the cure for anxiety is completely different depending on whether you are a Christian or not. If you are not a Christian, hear me carefully: You have a far greater issue, a far greater matter of concern, than anything that you came in here anxious about. The passage that I just read shows that judgment is coming and you face the fearful prospect of Jesus turning you away from heaven when you die. In Revelation 21:8, the Bible expands on this destiny of the lost when it says:

*For the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.*

My non-Christian friend, can I tell you that your earthly anxiety absolutely fades into insignificance compared to the eternal judgment in hell that awaits you as the just punishment for your sins! If you think you had anxieties coming in here, wait until you get a grasp of the eternal hell that awaits you when judgment comes upon you if you do not repent and receive Christ! That is a far greater concern than anything earthly that might trouble your soul. My friend, if you are not a Christian, your only concern in life is to seek the grace of God that would teach your heart to mourn over your sins and to fear Him, and the grace that would lead you to the saving truth found in John 3:16, that:

*God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.*

If you are not a Christian, that is the only issue that matters. Forget about other anxieties – here is a real reason to be nervous! So my friend, I invite you, I beg of you, to repent of your sins and put your faith in Christ who died and rose again so that your sins could be forgiven. You need to seek salvation until you find it and humbly ask Christ to save you. That is the only thing that matters to you if you are not a believer.

And until you deal with that issue, nothing about Jesus' teaching on anxiety applies to you. You are left on your own – you are stranded, you are lost, but for the saving mercy of God that is found in Jesus Christ.

But for the Christians that are here, the analysis for you is different. You have a wealth of spiritual resources, a wealth of spiritual truth at your disposal that you need to take and apply to your anxious heart, and that's what we are going to start to look at this morning.

But I want you to see this: Your anxieties that you carry around, especially those prolonged, persistent anxieties that you just can't seem to get rid of – those anxieties are a symptom of a spiritual disease in your heart. Just like a high fever is a symptom of a physical disease that needs treatment, anxiety is a symptom of a deeper spiritual issues; it is not about your circumstances at all. It has nothing to do with whether your circumstances are negative or not. Your anxious response to that exposes a spiritual disease in your heart.

The good news is that anxiety can be cured. Jesus lays it all out for how to cure anxiety in this passage that is before us. So if you are prone to anxiety, especially as a pattern of your life, beloved, I want to lay out for you three areas of your life that you need to examine so that you can cure that anxiety – three areas of your life that you need to examine that go to the root of why you are anxious. And so what we are going to do is deal with this passage in an overview fashion and come back to the details next week, maybe the week after that – we will see how it goes. The first step in addressing your anxieties is going to probably surprise you:

## **1. Examine Your Priorities**

You need to examine what your priorities are – the things you hold precious, the things that you hold dear. Examine your priorities. Overcoming anxiety requires you to have the right priorities. If you value the kingdom of heaven more than you do earthly treasures, then earthly matters will be less of a distraction to you in your walk with Christ.

Go back to verse 24 of this passage – actually, let’s go back to Matthew 6:19 for fun. Jesus said, and we have already taught on these passages in past weeks, Jesus said in verse 19:

*Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there also will be your heart.*

Your heart – what your priorities are. What you love influences what you are concerned about; we will talk about that more in a minute. Now look at verse 24 – Jesus says:

*No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.*

As you come to this section on the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus is teaching on anxiety, understand very carefully, to get the full impact of what Jesus is saying, that He is teaching on anxiety in the context of addressing your life priorities. He started out talking about where you store up your treasures, on earth or in heaven, what you serve, what you are devoted to. And at the conclusion of the section, look at verse 33 – I’m getting a little ahead of myself, but that’s okay; I’ll figure it out – in verse 33 He says:

*But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness.*

He is addressing your priorities. He started out addressing your priorities; He ends up in this passage addressing your priorities, and in the middle there is all of this great teaching about anxiety. What you have to understand is, the significance of that is, that your anxieties flow out of what your life priorities are.

Notice at the start of verse 25 – as Jesus starts to teach on anxiety, He says, “For this reason...” For what reason? What Jesus is doing here is He is connecting His previous teaching on life priorities to what He is about to say about anxiety. You must see that link. It is crucial for you to unlock the key to cure your anxieties on a permanent basis.

Listen, it would be really easy to try to come up and just apply a superficial salve – at least for some teachers it would be – to just try to apply a superficial salve, say a few things to kind of cheer you up and boost you up, and you walk out feeling good; you have laughed a few times and you are feeling okay. But by the time Monday afternoon or Tuesday morning comes around, you are back in the same pit that you were before, and

what the preacher said on Sunday does not do you any good because it was just a superficial approach to the problem.

What you have to understand is that Jesus does not teach superficially. Jesus teaches at a deep, profound level that addresses the deepest part of your hearts, your deepest motivations, your deepest priorities in life, and He addresses anxiety from that perspective. And so we can't treat this superficially even though I could probably get a few more laughs if I did. Listen, I don't want a few laughs for you; I want your life to be transformed by what Jesus has to say here. I want to see you living out a permanent change from what Jesus teaches on anxiety, and that requires you to go to the very depths of what you consider to be most important in life. Because beloved, if you try to deal with anxiety without thinking through what your priorities are, you are going to end up right back where you started sooner or later – no question about it. Diaphragm breathing – give me a break!

Because, beloved, here is the truth of what Jesus said in verses 19-21, and it is just the reality of life: If your priorities are built around earthly matters, then yes, you will be anxious, because intrinsically you know and understand that those things are subject to loss. The things that you treasure the most – if they are tied to this life in any way, if they are tied to this world in any way – sooner or later God will pull back your fingers which are clutched around them and you will let them go one way or another, if by no other means then when they plant you in the grave. Your earthly priorities are not what you can build your life around. If you try it, you are doomed to an anxious life.

What Jesus says here is: make the kingdom and righteousness of God your first priority, and in the process, as an overflow, God in His great faithfulness and goodness will supply those earthly needs. He just says, get your priorities straight.

How does that help you overcome anxiety? Anxiety flows from what you value. Beloved, you do not get anxious over anything that you do not care about. I will prove that to you pretty simply, I think. How many of you today came to church, parked in the parking lot, and were greatly worried about the price that farmers in Kansas are getting for their corn? Show of hands? Not one. I have relatives in Kansas, and that's important to them. But for you, it is not important here in California – you don't worry about that, you don't even think about that, it is just not important to you.

But if I asked a different question – if I asked who of you came in anxious about your personal finances, or your appearance, or your work, or your ministry, or your school, or whatever, those other such things – I think the response would be a whole lot different. I won't ask for a show of hands on that one because that's just too personal. But you know that your hand would be going up if I did – in great likelihood.

See beloved, your anxieties reveal what you treasure. You get anxious over things that are important to you. And so here is the point – here is where you can become your own spiritual doctor and be able to apply the cure to your own soul because I can't do it for you: Your earthly anxieties expose your earthly priorities. What you are anxious about

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shows what you think is important. Maybe it is good things – maybe it is your family, maybe whatever. All we are saying that your anxieties are a quick barometer – they are the short cue – to see what you think is important in life.

When you understand that, a discerning Christian can quickly see that his real problem is not with his circumstances at all. Your real problem is what you love – it is that you are loving things that are subject to loss. You are loving things; you are making a priority out of things that you cannot ultimately keep – that’s the problem. Your heart is preoccupied with the wrong things. Jesus said, “You cannot serve God and wealth.” You can’t hang on to these things. And so, that should lead you to the logical implication that you have to put your priorities on things that are eternal, because those things can never be taken away from you.

What should your priority be? Look at verse 33 with me again:

*Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*

Your first priority: the kingdom of God, seeing His righteousness played out in your life and in the lives of those around you. Seek it first – seek it as that which exceeds everything else in importance.

Sinclair Fergusson – his writings are almost always extremely helpful; when they are not extremely helpful, they are just helpful – Sinclair Fergusson says this:

The chief drive in our lives should be to live under the authority of Jesus Christ and to see His kingdom extended in every possible way – morally, socially, and geographically – as well as seeing that kingdom extended personally, inwardly and spiritually.

When we have our priorities in order, we will discover: 1) God will provide all that we need; and 2) many of the things that we thought we needed, we do not even want any more. In place of anxiety, we have found contentment.

Now beloved, listen, I am not saying these things to diminish the importance of your trials or to diminish them in any way. What we are saying is – take the worst trial that you have, the worst trial in this room, and we hold that up to the glory of Jesus Christ, we hold it up to the incarnate Son of God, we hold it up to the fact that He chose His people and He redeemed them to take them to heaven, to a place reserved for them forever – and we look at the glory of Christian salvation, we look at the glory of God’s revelation, and we say, “Everything else pales in comparison to that. Christ is more important than my worst trial. The security that my soul enjoys is more important than the worst earthly anxiety that I could ever face.”

And therefore, beloved, what you have to come to in the deepest throne room of your heart is that “nothing can shake me from that kind of foundational joy in my soul because



I understand objectively the surpassing greatness of Christ, the surpassing greatness of His kingdom, and the surpassing blessing that is mine – that He chose me and bought me to bring me into His kingdom. And everything else pales in comparison to that.” It has to be that way. Nothing is more important than that.

Just on a principle level that is true, but what I am saying even more is that you have to take that and adopt that as the supreme thought priority and motivation in your heart. When you love Christ and you love His kingdom more than everything else, then there is a settled peace that comes upon you when you realize that can’t be taken away.

The apostle Peter understood that, writing to precious believers who were struggling in the midst of awful persecution. In 1 Peter 1, beginning in verse 6, he said this – listen to how Peter’s words echo what Jesus teaches here in the Sermon on the Mount in this whole matter of priorities – he says:

*In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

He says your faith in Christ is more precious than gold and in that you can greatly rejoice even though the fires of trial lap at your feet. Beloved, that is not the special province of first-century martyrs; that is the birthright of every true Christian to live in that kind of glorious release – that is what your heart should aim after.

But there is more to overcoming anxiety as Jesus lays it out for us here in this Christian life beyond examining your priorities. You have to examine more than just what you treasure, because there is more to it than that. You have to:

## **2. Examine Christ’s Command**

If we were broken down into small groups – which by the way, I absolutely hate that, don’t you? You are in a big group and you are sitting with people you don’t know, and then: “Let’s break up into small groups.” “Ah!” [Laughter] That’s why I like being up here – there aren’t any small groups up here. Not that I wouldn’t enjoy meeting you; I’m digging a hole for myself here. *Outside* of GraceLife – that’s what I’m talking about! [Laughter] But if we were to have broken down into small groups and given the assignment to list out the really terrible sins that a man could commit, most of us would probably start with egregious external sins like murder, adultery, stealing, those kinds of things that jump quickly to our minds. Few of you – very few of you I would dare to say, before today anyway – would classify anxiety as a spiritual issue that requires self-examination and repentance.

But look at verse 25 – Jesus says: “Do not be worried about your life...”

Look at verse 31 – He says: “Do not worry...”

Verse 34: “So do not worry about tomorrow...”

You see, beloved, Christ commands you not to be anxious. That means – follow me here – that means that you have a moral responsibility to obey Him in this matter of anxiety just as much as you do when He teaches against murder and hatred, when He teaches about loving your enemies, when He teaches against adultery and lust. We don’t slide the authority of Christ based on the topic. If Christ said it and He commands it, we have a moral imperative to respond to it.

Listen, I don’t know how else to say it except plainly: You cannot continue in your anxiety after you read these words of Jesus. You cannot continue in your anxiety without being disobedient to Him – it becomes that much of a spiritual issue.

When He says in verse 25, “Do not be worried...” He uses a Greek form that could be understood as saying “Stop worrying.” He says, “I understand that this is going on; I want you to stop what you are currently doing – stop worrying.” In verses 31 and 34 where He says, “Do not worry...” and “Don’t worry about tomorrow...” He uses a form that expresses a command to never to do a thing. It is interesting when you look at the grammar that underlies this: Taken together, what Jesus is saying in this passage – as we look at it in an overview fashion – taken together what Jesus is saying is, “Stop worrying and don’t start again.”

And beloved, here is the point: When you recognize that Christ has spoken on such a personal matter, you realize that you can no longer nurse your anxieties like you have done in the past – you have to change. Let me say that again: When you realize that Christ has spoken and totally preempted the area of anxiety in your life, you can no longer nurse those anxieties – Christ forbids it as a moral imperative.

Just as a side point, it is very breathtaking to realize the glory and deity of Christ when you understand a command like this. Here is this incarnate Son of God, commanding your inner man, commanding your inner most feelings about things that you most consider important. Jesus Christ stands over that as Lord and commands even that! Even more than what He says about anxiety, if you got nothing else and you just stood back and said, “Wow, the breathtaking scope of His authority! Who is this Man that commands my inner thoughts?”

And once again, you are brought to simply bow the knee to His great authority as the Son of God. It would be ridiculous for any one of us to go up to one another, apart from the scriptures, and say, “Don’t be anxious.” Who are you to tell me what to worry about? Jesus does it, and your only response is, “Yes Lord, help me to obey what You command.” “Command it and give me what You command,” as one ancient writer said.

Why is anxiety so serious? What is the big deal? Who does it hurt? If I am a little gassed up about how I am going to pay my mortgage this month, what does it matter?

Beloved, when you think it through, anxiety is a form of high treason for a Christian to commit against his God – high treason, because when you think it through, your anxiety says that God cannot be trusted. Either you are saying that you do not trust His power to sustain you, or you are saying that you do not trust His love enough to sustain you.

“Either He can’t do it or He might not, and therefore I have to worry about it.”

What an awful charge to lay at the feet of the Son of God who died on the cross to take away your sins – who before eternity began chose you, and – remember, I am speaking to Christians here – who before eternity began chose you to be an heir of salvation, who has been faithful to you up until this very day, to this very day has given you clothes and food and everything that you need for your earthly life and has poured out innumerable, unspeakable spiritual blessings besides, and who has reserved heaven just for you and says, “You will one day see Me face to face”!

“But God, what about my mortgage?” Come on, give me a break! That is not worthy of Christ – it is not worthy of what you say you believe, and you have to kill that because it is the grossest form of ingratitude. It is the grossest form of insult against the faithful character of the sovereign God who has been nothing but good to you throughout your entire life and will be nothing but good to you throughout all of eternity. How can you call His character into question with your anxious heart? That’s abominable!

Those of you that are parents, or those of you that had parents – think about that: that includes everybody, right? – imagine a child old enough to speak, old enough to think, and this child is wondering if you are going to give him his next meal: “Mom, are you going to feed me today? I just don’t know if I’ll get to eat tonight. What if I don’t eat? What if I go to bed hungry? How am I going to sleep without food?” That would be a terrible insult to a loving parent! The parent could well say, “How can you so distrust my character? Of course I’m going to feed you! Of course I’m going to care for you – I always do. What is wrong with you, my child? ... Go to bed without your supper!” No, no – [Laughter] – Forget I said that, because it breaks the point.

No, beloved, the thought of a child acting that way with a loving parent is so absurd in the context of a healthy family that it never even crosses anyone’s mind. That discussion does not take place in the context of a healthy family. Dear Christian, dear beloved Christian, brother and sister in Christ, I say this gently, I say it in love, but look at yourself in your anxiety – look at yourself in your worries and in your distressed state of mind. Hasn’t God always provided for you? Hasn’t He promised to do so throughout your entire earthly life? Isn’t He wise and faithful? Why such distrust toward your loving heavenly Father? What is wrong with you, beloved, that you allow that kind of treason to ferment in your heart? That’s not right.

Philippians 4:6-7 says:

*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

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Christian, when you get wrapped up in that anxiety – twisted and torn about, and your thoughts are just running away with you in panic – understand that when that happens, beloved, you have strayed into forbidden territory. You have a spiritual responsibility to Christ to get it under control. You cannot stay there – that is the wrong place to be, it is wrong to be there, and it is also just not a whole lot of fun, is it?

Now, with that said, you have examined your priorities, you have examined Christ's command, you see that this is a matter of moral imperative – this isn't just whether you have a good quality of life or not; this is a matter of sanctification that we are talking about – with those things in mind, I want you to notice something very key about the rest of this passage: Jesus doesn't just command you to stop being anxious. If that was all that He said – I say it reverently – if He just told us not to be anxious, that would not be helpful. Frankly, it would exacerbate the problem, because not only do you not have a cure for your problem, now you have got the added guilt on top of that and are saying, "He said not to be anxious, but I am anxious" – and you tie up yourself into even tighter knots.

No, Jesus, in His brilliance as a teacher, Jesus in His genius as the Son of God, doesn't just command you to stop being anxious. As you go through the rest of this passage, you see that Jesus gives you reasons to help you overcome anxiety – unanswerable logic to help you overcome your anxiety. So the next point is:

### **3. Examine Your Thinking**

You examine your priorities, you examine Christ's command, and you examine your thinking. What Jesus does here in this passage, in verses 25-34, is He goes beyond the command not to be anxious – that's the negative side of it – and He gives you, on the other hand, positive commands so that you can replace your inner anxiety with right thinking about the nature and character and actions of God – that is the cure to anxiety.

Your thinking is messed up when you are anxious. You are not thinking wisely about God, and you have to straighten out your thinking in your head before you can get rid of those anxious thoughts in your heart. There is a reason why God put your head on top of your shoulders; it is because your head is supposed to govern what goes on in your heart. What you think is supposed to govern and does govern how you feel.

With that in mind, look at verse 26 – again, we are going to come back to some of these things next week – after just commanding His disciples, "Don't be worried about your life," in verse 26 He gives a positive command – not a negative prohibition, a positive command – He says:

*Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?*

Look at birds and think about them. Verse 28 – another positive command:

*And why are you worried about clothing? Observe – positive command: think – how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you, that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these.*

Listen beloved, Jesus in this passage – praise be to His blessed, glorious, gracious, good, loving name! – doesn't simply say, "Don't worry." In essence what He is saying is, "Replace your worry with right thinking about the nature and character of God." He says, "Think about it." And then He takes you to such a simple illustration that a child could understand it. It is completely humbling to think that you could go out into your backyard and, if you are thinking properly, spend ten minutes, watch a few birds, look at a few flowers, and deal with all of the anxiety in your life – that's how simple this is. Charge me \$75 for cognitive behavior therapy? Give me ten minutes in my backyard with a clear mind and I'll deal with anxiety – okay? And you can too.

Jesus says think about this: God feeds birds who cannot feed themselves; God clothes ordinary flowers with stunning beauty. If He does that for animals and for inanimate creation, don't you think He will do so much more for you since He is your heavenly Father? If He will pour out that kind of care on birds, what is He going to do for those who belong to His kingdom? The logic is inescapable.

Child of God, you – in the midst of your anxiety – solve it this way: You examine your fundamental thinking about the character and activity of God. As an objective matter, He is absolutely sovereign over everything. His hand is in everything that happens. He rules over creation. He is your heavenly Father. He holds the future in His hand. He will certainly provide for you, even more certainly than He does for birds and flowers, because of your surpassing worth as one created in His image and bought by the blood of Christ. It is absolutely inescapable; there is no other conclusion to come to.

So look at verse 30 – Jesus says:

*If God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith!*

Do you believe what He said or no? If I had gotten up here and started saying, "Who believes that God created it all and God cares for the birds?" you would all hold up your hands. As soon as you do that, you have forbidden yourself to be anxious – you just have to work through what that means. If He will do it for lesser creatures, how much more will He do it for those that Christ purchased with His own precious blood?

Beloved, your anxiety and my anxiety is completely unnecessary. Whatever comes will be in the hands of God, and He will work it together for good for you. So here is what I want you to see: Your anxieties show forth the health of your soul. Your anxieties intersect with what your priorities are. They intersect with your obedience and your attitude toward Christ Himself. Your anxieties intersect with your fundamental thinking

about the nature and character of God and how the world works. All of that is on the table as we talk about anxiety.

Now listen, beloved, I want to be real personal here. When you get right down to it, since Adam and Eve fell into sin, life is messed up – it’s just messed up. Good people die prematurely. Loved ones lose their health. Wicked people wrong you and get away with it. Investments go bad. Children rebel against Christ. People in authority make decisions that go against you. From an earthly perspective, your future is uncertain. The question for you as a believer in Christ is, what are you going to do with that as you contemplate your uncertain future?

Beloved, are you going to go through life fretting over things that you can’t control anyway – things that are an inevitable result of living in a fallen, broken world? Or will you stand like a man and declare, “I am not living for this world. I will live my life no matter what anybody else does. I will live my life on this fundamental premise: My heavenly Father is good. My heavenly Father loves me. My heavenly Father is in absolute control. He provides for the birds and He will provide for me, it is guaranteed. I will rest and I will trust Him for my every need”?

Beloved, that kind of fundamental commitment of faith deals a death blow to anxiety. It frames your entire approach to life because it means that you live life from a position of incomparable strength. It is where you as a Christian can live; it is where Jesus says you must live. That is the standard to which your heart is accountable; that is the glory to which your life can attain here and now.

In John 16:33, Jesus said:

*In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.*

Beloved, will you embrace what Jesus said and let it transform your life? Let’s pray:

*Our gracious Father, You are worthy of all of our trust. We thank You for this teaching from the lips of Jesus that exposes so much about our hearts and so much about You and Your goodness.*

*Father, we confess that we are prone to anxiety. Our hearts are prone to wander and to forget these important truths. Forgive us for that, Father – forgive us for our anxiety and help us to see and help us to be transformed, Father, as we consider what our priorities are to be and we consider Christ’s command and we consider what Your character is like. Father, help us to think rightly about all these things so that they would create a spiritual fortress around our hearts that would give us the platform to seek first Your kingdom and Your righteousness.*

*And Father, as we say that and as we pray that, we simultaneously express our trust and the direct promise from Jesus Christ Himself that as we do that, Father, all these things will be added to us. There is no cause for anxiety in our lives, Father; Jesus reigns – Hallelujah! Amen.*

*This transcript was prepared by Shari Main.*