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# "SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM"

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## QUESTIONS:

- 1) What does the hypocrite and worry-wart have in common?
- 2) What class of people are the focus of vv25-34?
- 3) What are commercials saying about life?
- 4) If a doctor told you, you had a serious and deadly disease, what would you want to know after he told you this?
- 5) (Here's a "no-brainer") If a circumstance can be changed, what should be done?
- 6) What is the difference between "toil" and "spin" (v28)?
- 7) What does Jesus command Christians to worry about?
- 8) What does it mean to seek the kingdom "first"?

## INTRODUCTION

### **Matthew 6:25-34**

<sup>25</sup> "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?"

<sup>26</sup> 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?"

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

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

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

<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?"

<sup>31</sup> "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'

<sup>32</sup> For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.

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

<sup>34</sup> Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

## CONTEXT

Look at the structure of this chapter:

- vv1-18 – Jesus deals with hypocrites
- vv25-34 – He deals with people who worry.

At first this seems like an odd combination, but the hypocrite and anxious person are more similar than we first realize.

**Q:** What makes a person worry?

**A:** The same thing that makes people hypocrites:

- Neither person is aware of the fact that **God is watching over them and knows what is going on.**
- Neither person has grasped **the concept of God's grace.**

If men could learn that God sees, knows and understands their lives and cares for them, they would be neither hypocritical, nor anxious.

## **THE RICH**

Jesus begins a great contrast:

- vv19-24 – the focus is on **the rich** (earthly treasures – **luxuries** that you don't have to have).
- vv25-34 – the focus is **the poor** (the **necessities** of life).

It's true that both the poor and rich are subject to seeking after and serving mammon, but the rich are particularly vulnerable:

### **1 Timothy 6:17**

<sup>17</sup> Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to **trust in uncertain riches** but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy.

Here the rich are singled out and specifically warned. So the problem is particularly present with the wealthy.

### **Matthew 19:23-24**

<sup>23</sup> Then Jesus said to His disciples, "Assuredly, I say to you that **it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.**

<sup>24</sup> And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for **a rich man** to enter the kingdom of God."

## **THE POOR**

But Jesus will also turn His attention to poor people. They also have a temptation that is rather peculiar to them: **worry and anxiety about food, clothes and shelter.**

- **The rich fail to trust God** – trusting in their earthly possessions instead.

- **The poor also fail to trust God** – in the absence of material wealth to trust in they merely worry.

Once again we see Jesus zeroing in on the problems that money causes in our lives!

**NOTE:** Jesus deals with anxiety and worry in His first major discourse. This shows how important He considered the subject – how wrong He thought it to be for men to distrust God.

## **TEXT (1)**

### **Matthew 6:25**

<sup>25</sup> "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?"

**"therefore"** – this points to v24. God is our only Master and *"therefore"* we cannot be all absorbed with physical necessities.

Jesus is forbidding us from worrying about the physical necessities of life.

## **THE PROBLEM WITH THIS PASSAGE**

We have a hard time relating to this section of Scripture don't we? The people in this country that are starving to death and don't know where their next meal is coming from are few and far between.

(Many of the *"homeless"* we hear about are homeless by choice! And if you look close, many of them are over weight!)

**Q:** What person here is concerned and worried about what he shall **eat** or **wear** tomorrow?

### 1) For us, worrying about what we shall EAT means:

- Shall I eat Mazzios?
- Western Sizzlin?
- Olive Garden?
- Cazadorez?
- Bosco Joe's?
- If worse comes to worse – we eat a pizza *at home!*

### 2) Worrying about what we shall DRINK means:

- Shall I drink Coke?
- Dr. Pepper?
- Sweet Tea?
- Unsweetened Tea?
- Coffee?
- Chocolate Milk?
- Orange juice?
- Gatorade?
- If worse comes to worse – we drink *water!*

### 3) Worrying about what we shall WEAR means simply:

- Shall I wear my boots?
- Tennis shoes?
- Black dress shoes?
- Brown dress shoes?
- Slip on shoes?
- Tie up shoes?
- Suede shoes?
- Leather shoes?
- High-tops?
- Low-tops?
- High heels?
- Street shoes?
- Dancing shoes?

I'm not suggesting that no one has financial problems. Some do, but I doubt it has reached the point that they are worrying there may be no food to eat and they shall starve to death!

Yet many of those people in Jesus' audience could very well have wondered where their next meal was coming from.

## **COMMERCIALS**

When Jesus asked, "*Is not the life more than meat and the body than raiment?*" He intended for us to answer: "**Yes, life IS more than meat and the body IS more than raiment.**"

BUT if you've watched any commercials you will see that men today are answering:

"NO! Life is **not** more than meat and the body is **not** more than raiment!"

We are being brainwashed into thinking that unless we:

- Wear the right kind of **underwear**
- The right kind of **shirt**
- The right kind of **cologne**
- The right kind of **shoes** and
- Drive the right kind of **car**

then we are living a substandard, miserable life. If you want to enjoy life to it's fullest, we're told, it all hinges on food and raiment!

Caring for the body has become an obsession with people, whether Christians or sinners and whether rich or poor.

- We pamper the body.
- We decorate it.
- Paint its toenail & fingernails.
- Exercise it.
- Slim it down.
- Protect it from disease.
- Drape it with jewelry.
- Keep it warm.
- Keep it cool.
- Train it to work.
- Help it get to sleep.
- Help it wake up.

- And a hundred other things.

BUT Jesus is here to tell us that "**Life** is more than food and **the body** is more than clothing!"

You'll remember when Martha became agitated and worried because her sister Mary was not helping in the kitchen.

(Martha's sense of priorities had become so distorted that she considered food to be more important than listening to God's word.)

### **Luke 10:41-42**

<sup>41</sup> And Jesus answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things.

<sup>42</sup> But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her."

By contrast, here's what Job said:

### **Job 23:12**

<sup>12</sup> ... I have treasured the words of His mouth  
More than my necessary food.

## **BACKGROUND REASON**

Now the command from Jesus is, "*Don't worry.*" But to simply give the command was not good enough for Him. He wanted to give a reason for this command.

**ILL:** Suppose a doctor told you that you had a serious and deadly disease, but "*Don't worry about it!*" You would probably say, "*I won't worry only if you tell me there's a cure for this disease.*"

In like manner, Jesus knew that simply commanding His disciples not to worry would not be good enough. He explains there's a "**cure**" for our problems and knowing there's a cure ought to make it easier to "*not worry.*"

Jesus gives 4 reasons to not worry:

### **REASON #1**

The first reason Jesus gives for not worrying is found in this very first verse of our text:

#### **Matthew 6:25**

<sup>25</sup> ... Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?

***Here Jesus is arguing from the greater to the lesser.*** If God created the physical body and life, He will surely provide the food and clothing necessary to maintain that life!

<b>Mammon Provides</b>	<b>God Provides</b>
Food Clothes	The life The body

***God is greater than mammon!*** If He can supply the life and the body, don't you think He can also supply the food and raiment as well?

### **REASON #2**

The second reason Jesus gives for not worrying is based on God's provisions for lower life forms:



**Matthew 6:26**

<sup>26</sup> 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?

Jesus now uses the exact opposite reasoning of what He used in v25.

Verse 25	Verse 26
Jesus argues from <b>the greater to the lesser.</b>	Jesus argues from <b>the lesser to the greater.</b>
<b>If God provides the greater gift</b> (life itself), then He will surely provide the lesser gift (food to sustain life)!	<b>If God provided for the lesser forms of life</b> (birds), He will surely provide for the greatest form of life (man – especially a disciple)!

Any way you look at it, God will provide!

**REASON #3**

The third reason why we should not worry, but trust in God's provisions:

**Matthew 6:27**

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

**stature** (ἡλικία) – may be translated either "stature" (height) or "age," but in this verse it means "age."

Some, though, feel that Jesus was referring to height because He used a linear measure in connection with the word stature. They believe Jesus was saying:

*"Who by worrying can add a cubit (18 inches) to his height?"*

However, the Scriptures often describe the length of men's lives with linear measurements:

**Psalms 39:4-5**

<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.

Men ordinarily do not worry about growing a foot and a half taller, but they do worry about their lives being lengthened.

Jesus is saying that worry is ineffective; it does not accomplish anything.

**Luke 12:26**

<sup>26</sup> If you then are not able to do the least, why are you anxious for the rest?

Anytime we worry, we will be worrying about one of two things:

- Something we can change.
- Something we cannot change.

**If we CAN change our circumstances, why worry?** Just get busy and change things.

**If we CANNOT change our circumstances, why worry?** Worry will not change things, but only make matters worse.

The only thing worrying can do is: *Make us even more unworthy of receiving God's provisions.*  
We are in effect murmuring against His providential care.

## TEXT (2)

Jesus will give a 4<sup>th</sup> reason for not worrying, but He's not finished with reason #3:

### **Matthew 6:28-30**

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

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

<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?

- **The birds** illustrate that God will **feed** us.
- **The lilies** illustrate that God will **clothe** us.

Jesus is telling these people to ponder and meditate upon these teachings which nature provides.

The lilies do not:

- **Toil** – the work of a man
- **Spin** – the work of a woman

Not only are lilies clothed, but they are finer in appearance than even Solomon.

## **SOLOMON'S GLORY**

Solomon was considered by these Jews as the epitome of wealth and grandeur.

## **1 Kings 10**

<sup>21</sup> All King Solomon's drinking vessels were gold, and all the vessels of the House of the Forest of Lebanon were pure gold. Not one was silver, for this was accounted as nothing in the days of Solomon.

<sup>23</sup> So King Solomon surpassed all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom.

<sup>27</sup> The king made silver as common in Jerusalem as stones, and he made cedar trees as abundant as the sycamores which are in the lowland.

And yet, for all this wealth, a lily is more beautifully clothed than even Solomon!

But Jesus said more than this: "*Will [God] not much more clothe you?*" (v30).

## **THE GRASS**

Someone might argue with Jesus:

*"Jesus, it may be true that a lily is more beautifully robed than Solomon, but I'm not like a lily. Flowers are special, but I'm just ordinary – I'm just a nobody."*

I suspect Jesus anticipated this, and so He says:

## **Matthew 6:30**

<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?

God cares for and clothes the ordinary common grass just as much as He clothes the beautiful lily.

**"O you of little faith"** – this is the only term of rebuke Jesus ever applied to His disciples.

To be anxious over material things is to distrust God. The same faith needed to save our souls must also trust God to provide for:

- Garments and
- Groceries

If we don't trust God for food and clothing, how will we ever have enough faith in Him to save our souls?

Worry and anxiety is no little matter. It is a sin that must be pardoned:

**Matthew 13:22**

<sup>22</sup> Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and **the cares of this world** and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful.

Worry and anxiety over material things makes us unfruitful and useless to God.

**REASON #4**

Jesus gives His fourth reason for not making material possessions our number one priority:

**Matthew 6:31-32**

<sup>31</sup> "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'

<sup>32</sup> For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.

To be consumed with worry about food, drink and clothing is heathenish! That's all they have to live for:

**1 Corinthians 15:32**

<sup>32</sup> ... **If the dead do not rise, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!"**

## **GOD – ABLE, WILLING, KNOWLEDGEABLE**

If the God in heaven does not supply our physical needs it is because of one of three reasons:

- **He is not able** to supply our needs
- **He is not willing** to supply our needs
- **He is ignorant** about our needs

Jesus addresses each of these arguments:

**FIRST: He is able** to supply the needs of every living creature on the face of the earth (birds & grass), and He is able to supply our needs also.

**SECOND: He is willing** to supply our needs. Jesus calls God our Father – indicating His concern for our welfare.

**THIRD: He is not ignorant** about our needs. Jesus said, "Your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things" (v32).

### **TEXT (3)**

#### **Matthew 6:33**

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

**"seek"** – this is set in contrast with "*do not worry.*" In other words, Jesus is saying:

- Don't worry about what you will eat, drink, wear ...
- The **heathen Gentiles "seek after"** these things. ("**Seek after"** means worry in this context.)

BUT ... here's something you must worry about:

- "Seek first" (i.e., worry about) the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

To "*seek first*" the kingdom grants us permission, even the obligation:

- to worry,
- fret over and
- be extremely concerned for the kingdom
- and being made righteous with God.

These worries should consume our lives!

### **2 Corinthians 11:28**

<sup>28</sup> besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: **my deep concern for all the churches.**

Paul was full of **care (μέριμνα), worry and concern** for the congregations of the Lord's church! It dominated and consumed his life!

We cannot worry about physical necessities, because we have greater cares to give our attention to.

## **KINGDOM COMES "FIRST"**

**"seek FIRST the kingdom"** – above all things

**Q:** What will be the result of seeking first the kingdom of God?

**A:** "All these things (food, drink, clothing) will be added unto you."

**1) This promise is only for those who place the kingdom first in their lives.**

How many people are "*missing out*" simply because the kingdom is not first in their lives?

### **Psalms 37:25**

<sup>25</sup> I have been young, and now am old;  
Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken,  
Nor his descendants begging bread.

## **2) Only the essentials are promised by God.**

He has never pledged Himself to provide luxuries.

### **APPLICATION**

How can we apply this passage to our lives today? Ask yourself these questions:

- 1) If I am required to work on Sundays, which would be most important: (a) my job, (b) assembling for worship?
- 2) If relatives showed up on Sunday morning, which would be most important: (a) staying home to visit with them, (b) assembling for worship?
- 3) What is the major determining factor in the styles of clothes I wear: (a) what everyone else is wearing, (b) that which would glorify and honor my God?
- 4) What do I visit with people about: (a) secular things, (b) the Scriptures?
- 5) When a young person chooses a spouse, what is the most important thing to consider: (a) good looks, (b) spirituality?

In every decision of our lives we must allow God's kingdom and His righteousness become the overruling factor.



## **TEXT (4)**

### **Matthew 6:34**

<sup>34</sup> Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

### **NIV**

<sup>34</sup> ... Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Notice that "*tomorrow*" will certainly bring troubles. Jesus did not tell His audience that Christians would be free from troubles.

Some people borrow problems from tomorrow and add them to the problems of today. Jesus says it's wrong to do that.

## **PETER**

Peter is a good example of a man who learned not to worry.

Previously Peter had been a big worry-wart:

- He worried about a storm on the sea.
- He worried about how he and Jesus would pay the tax money.
- He worried about Jesus dying on the cross.
- He worried about whether John would live until the second coming of Jesus!
- He worried about everything.

But after all this worrying, he finally learned to say:

### **1 Peter 5:7**

<sup>7</sup> [cast] all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

## **-THINGS CAN CHANGE IN A DAY**

Over and over again Jesus taught that things can change drastically in just a day.

**2 Kings 7** – In the days of **Elisha** the city of Samaria went from starvation to abundance in a single day.

**2 Kings 19** – In the days of **Hezekiah**, the nation of Judah went from being surrounded by Assyrians to burying Assyrians in a single day.

### **Matthew 24:38-39**

<sup>38</sup> For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark,  
<sup>39</sup> and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

Jesus is telling us the condition we find ourselves in today has no bearing on where we may be tomorrow. Therefore, don't worry about tomorrow.

## **CONCLUSION**

Why worry then? *"If God be for us, who can be against us"* (Rom 8:31)?

These teachings of Jesus are not mere suggestions! If we hope to enter the kingdom of heaven we must place God in the center of our lives and by doing so we prevent:

- Hypocrisy
- Anxiety

### **Philippians 4:6-7**

<sup>6</sup> **Be anxious for nothing**, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;

<sup>7</sup> and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.