

Do not Worry; God Cares for You
Matthew 6:25-34

My dear friends,

Throughout the Gospel of Matthew we find that Jesus is primarily concerned with the subject of faith (8:10; 9:2, 22, 29; 15:28; 17:20; 21:21). True faith being a practical trust in God for all things. We are reminded of the famous answer in the Heidelberg Catechism regarding true faith, that it is “*Not only a sure knowledge... but true faith is a wholehearted trust which the Holy Spirit works in me by the gospel*” (Q. 21). We are called by our Lord to the knowing and the applying of the promises of God to our hearts.

In our scripture passage this afternoon we see that our Lord concerning himself with the subject of anxiety (ESV), or worry (NKJV). Seven times in Matthew’s Gospel this word *μεριμνάω* is used, but 6 of them are in this paragraph. There is hardly a sin that our Lord more explicitly warns his disciples about. Why is our Lord so concerned with our anxieties and worries? Worry, according to Jesus in verse 30, is the antithesis to a practical trust in God.

I put the question to you this morning, what causes you to worry? What keeps you up at night? To be clear, our Lord does not forbid all anxiety as we were to go throughout this life without care, or with no eye towards the needs of our families and ourselves. But there is an epidemic of excessive worry in our world and in our churches. Jesus our Good Shepherd shows us,

Lesson: the remedy for excessive worry is found in the King of Heaven

Headings:

1. The King of Heaven cares for your life
2. The King of Heaven cares for your needs
3. The King of Heaven cares for your soul

Point 1: The King of Heaven Cares for your life (25-27).

It should go without saying that life is not easy. As we progress from childhood through our youth and into adulthood, we become increasingly aware of this essential truth, we need to eat. We need money to buy food, we need a job to make money, since I have a job I should look for a wife, since I have a wife I should have children. And without realizing it the burdens of life begin to weigh upon us.

This anxiety is seen in the disciples attitude towards their material needs and possessions (19-24). Even in the presence of the Messiah and as ministers of his kingdom we see that the anxieties of life had realigned their principles. Verse 25 starts with *Therefore* connecting it to Jesus prior teaching in Matthew 6. *Therefore* those who accept that they ought not to store up treasure on earth, *therefore* those who accept the demand to be a slave to God and not money, might wonder how their needs will be provided for?

1.1 - God provides for the bird’s life

Jesus sitting on the Mount draws our attention to the birds in order to illustrate God’s care. Now Palestine and the neighbouring countries were full of birds. Interestingly William Hendrickson calls our attention to a book titled *All the birds of the Bible*, which cites the country where the Sermon on the Mount was as the “crossroads of bird migration”. Leviticus 11 names no less the 20 different kinds of birds. It’s safe to say that the listeners would have been familiar with fowl.

Yet even if Jesus named every species of bird on the face of the earth, it’s truth would remain the same, “*Your heavenly Father cares for them*”. That is that the whole of their lives, their gathering worms and insects, preparing their nests, caring for their young, teaching them to fly, and their eventual death, is entirely upheld by the providence of God that he is pleased to extend even to them. As the catechism says, Q. 27, **Providence is the almighty and ever present power of God by which he upholds, as with his hand, heaven and earth and all creatures.** As Christians we can often assume, “Of course God upholds heaven, of course God sustains the earth”. But Jesus draws our attention to even the lowest of creatures. They too are the subjects of God’s care. God ordains the moth that rests on the blade of grass for Chickadee bird, the worm in the earth from the Robin’s chicks.

The Apostle Luke in his account of this teaching refers to the Raven. The Raven of course being an unclean, scavenging bird, that can be a symbol of judgement in the scriptures (Prov. 30:17). Yet Jesus says in both Gospel accounts, that God cares not only for the clean, mighty, and the noble, but all of his creation. Though they do not raise crops, or store for the future, they always have enough. Here is Jesus' point: they instinctively trust their creator to provide for their needs, while we, who have experienced so many more of his promises, often fail to trust him.

1.2 - God will provide for your life

It's a remarkable thing to consider the Amazon rainforest, the dry deserts, the frozen tundra and to consider that every living thing that exists in our ecosystems is cared for and upheld by God. But our Lord continues, "*Are you not of more value than they?*" Of all the created beings the human alone is said to be made in the image of God, the human alone has been given dominion over the earth, the human alone is the crown of God's creation.

You see that men are entirely different from the rest of creation, the animals trust God for their creator has endowed them with these instincts, but the very crown of God's creation who engages in the sowing, the reaping, the gathering into barns, is often filled with excessive anxiety because we do not often meditate on God's promises.

If God has provided for even these lower creatures, how much more will he care for you, oh you who were formed in his very image?

In verse 27 Jesus makes it all the more apparent why excessive worry is fruitless. "*Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?*" (NKJV). It is fruitless to try to stretch yourself out to become taller. The ESV translates this as, "*And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?*" It's a rhetorical question, "What good does worrying get you?" (693 Million hours in a life) An hour is here and gone quickly, an hour is an insignificant, tiny fraction of your life, which none of us can add to our life by anxiety.

I am sure we are all aware of the negative side effects of excessive worry and stress. Chest pain, insomnia, headaches, high blood pressure, muscle spasms, lowered sex drive, depression, panic attacks, and at worst suicide. You see, a man may worry himself to death, but he surely cannot worry himself to life (Ps. 39:4-6). Jesus calls us to a simple trust (like the birds) that our heavenly Father will provide for our needs in this life.

Application:

1. Martin Luther once said, "God cares for the bird but he doesn't just drop the worm in their beaks". Jesus' call to trust God does encourage laziness or carelessness. Paul said, "*If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat*" (2 Thess. 3:10). It is the will of God that every man has a calling, that he should mind his calling, make business of it, while recognizing that all provision comes from God. Everything we receive is a gift - he will provide.
2. Anxiety profits us nothing. Worry is the faithlessness that our God is sovereign and has a good and perfect plan for his people. Worrying cannot add a single decimal point to our grade, provide for us a spouse, or make our bodies healthy. So what shall we do with anxiety? Peter says, "*Cast (your anxieties) them upon him*" (1 Pet. 5:7). We ought to bring them to God in prayer, applying the promises of God to our own hearts, that God loves me, God will not leave me or forsake me, God will provide for my life. Jesus is calling you, I don't know everyone here today but I know all of us have anxieties, worries and cares, Jesus says on the mount "bring them to me, I will take care of you".
 - a. What a wonderful thing to lay in our bed each night, and to have these promises of God as our lullaby. God knows me needs, God loves me, he cares for me, and will provide for me.

Point 2: The King of Heaven cares for your needs (28-29).

Secondly we see that God also cares for the physical needs of his people. The disciples concern in verse 19-24 regarded their money and possessions. They were concerned if this gospel way of life, if their commitment to Christ would leave them poor and destitute. Jesus again, uses an illustration to show that God not only cares for the souls, and the life of his people but also their needs. He cares for their bodies, and even their clothes.

2.1 - God clothes the Lilies.

Jesus says, "*So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.*" (vv. 28,29). Now this illustration evidences God's care even more than the one prior. Birds though not farmers still have to get up early to get the worm, still must find a mate, build a nest, etc, in order to survive. Wildflowers are obviously more passive than the birds (Even more dependant upon God), but what is drawn to our attention is not only their mere survival, but their magnificence. To the disciples their survival was not in question, flowers are here today and gone tomorrow. Yet, God lavishes upon them a beauty that a monarch can only envy.

Vegetation once dead would often be used as fuel for the ovens in Ancient Palestine. If God creates and clothes with such extravagant loving care something destined for such an unsanctimonious end, his care for his higher creation, his people, may be confidently expected to be much higher.

Now the point here is not to say that you all will be clothed with more beauty than Solomon. No, the point is that the God who is and sustainer of such a magnificent and beautiful universe can be trusted to meet his disciples' needs. Believers ought to be convinced that though all other means fail they will want for nothing necessary for their full satisfaction.

2.2 - God will clothe you

At first, we may be taken aback by Jesus' words "*O you of little faith*" (v.30), doesn't he know that I need to provide for my family? Doesn't Jesus know I need clothes on my back? Gas in my car? A house over my head? To the human mind it seems entirely reasonable to have anxiety about such important things as these.

I think if we should be taken aback by anything we should be taken aback at how true Jesus' words actually are. You see, when anxiety is the master of our minds, when our nights are filled with sorrow about the prospect of the future, **we are being fearful that God's plan for the future will not go as we would like it.** John Calvin says, "Christ justly accuses us of deficiency or weakness of faith: for the more powerfully we are affected... by anxiety about the present life, the more we do show our unbelief, if everything does not happen to our wish".¹

Take heart. Though Jesus accuses his disciples of having *little faith*, notice that little faith is different from no faith or an absent faith. The whole of this Gospel is a call to faith. Even here, in Jesus' right evaluation of our faith is a call to true faith. That God can and will act on his people's behalf - you do not need to be filled with anxiety. This is the point of the instructor of the catechism in Q. 27, **God so rules them that leaf and blade, rain and drought, fruitful and lean years, food and drink, health and sickness, prosperity and poverty - all things come to us not by chance but by his Fatherly Hand.**

Application:

1. There is great comfort that is ours when we believe these truths. That through all things God is working in and through his creation to accomplish his sovereign, good, church glorifying purposes. Christians then ought not to believe in chance. Chance is the belief that things happen randomly, without purpose or plan. Our Lord teaches us that every single bird in the air, blade of grass on the ground. **For all creatures are so completely in his hand that without his will they can neither move or be moved.** Every person here and in the world is intimately known and care for by our heavenly Father.
 - a. Nothing happens in this life that is not intimately known and cared for by our heavenly Father. Thus we can say in times of trial, "Lord, I don't know your purposes but I believe your promises." **We can be patient in adversity and thankful in prosperity.**

Point 3: The King of Heaven Cares for your Soul (vv.31-35) (Q. 28).

Jesus summarizes this lesson with two prohibitions and an exhortation, we are not to worry about today (v.31) and we are not to worry about tomorrow (v.34) we are to seek the kingdom and his righteousness (v.33).

3.1 - The prohibitions (vv.31, 32, & 34)

Again we see *therefore*, bracketing verses 25-31. *Therefore* because God cares for your life, because God cares for your needs, you ought not to say "what shall we eat, drink, or wear?" For this is what the Gentiles do (v.32). Unbelievers are totally consumed with human concerns, ignore God as the provider, and consider themselves as the captain of their own souls. A believer is not to be marked by these things. To allow such things to control our minds is to lower ourselves to the level of the pagans who have no trust in God and nothing beyond this life.

But take heart, O you of little faith, "*For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things*" (v.32). All these things, all our concerns, stresses, anxieties, need to be put in their proper place. That is, at the feet of our heavenly Father who loves us and cares for us.

Don't miss this. *Your heavenly Father knows.* Consider the words of Jesus very carefully. *Your*, a possessive word. It is not someone else's heavenly Father, or a distant Father, but *your Father*. He is intimately concerned and cares for you. Jesus refers to his abode in *heaven*. He is high and lifted up, exalted, seated upon the throne, our God is the one with the highest authority and power. Yet he is your *Father*, you are adopted by faith into the family of God, given a seat at the table. And he *knows*, as the all knowing God he is aware of all your stress, your worries, and anxieties. **We can have good confidence in our faithful heavenly Father.**

Your heavenly Father knows about your stressful boss. *Your heavenly Father knows* that you desire a better grade. That the bills are due. That your health is failing. That your kids are wayward. **Yet Jesus' admonition is that the only way you can be sure that you will be provided for tomorrow**, is that you look to him to provide. There is no other way to be sure. Our houses can burn down, cars rust, stock markets crash, you can have all the promises of the world, but the only one you can be sure will never go back on his promises is Jesus.

3.2 - The Exhortation (v.33).

Jesus teaches us, "*But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you*" (v.33). The verb seek, implies a being absorbed in the search for, that we would make it our priority to find God's kingdom. William

¹ John Calvin Commentaries Vol. XVI pg. 342.

Hendrickson again makes an important insight here, he notes that the kingdom and its righteousness are *gifts graciously bestowed*. We are commanded to earnestly seek for the gift of the *kingdom* and righteousness.

Where do we find this gift?

Well, of course, we must seek first the *gift* giver. Here we are told of the proper use of care and anxiety. What we ought to be concerned with and to give our lives to. Not the worrying of the future, the concerns of tomorrow, but *the kingdom of God*. How do we do this?

First, “*we seek the kingdom of God*” By desiring to enter into it. Charles Spurgeon says in this kingdom is, “new life, the kingdom of perfect liberty, the kingdom of faith in Christ, the kingdom of union to Christ, the kingdom of the power of the Spirit of God”.² How does one find the door, and have access to this heavenly place? The admission required is such, “*if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved*” (Rom. 10:9).

Second, we *seek the kingdom* by enjoying its privileges. God has provided for all the citizens of this kingdom perfect satisfaction (1 Chr. 29:11), protection (Lk. 12:32), new life (jn. 3:3), belonging (Eph. 2:19-20), healing (Lk. 10:9), salvation (Isa. 33:22), and victory (Zec. 14:9). Listen to the words of David in Psalm 37 “*I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging for bread*”. Now we agree with that first statement, of course God does not forget the righteous, but our experience tells us that there are poor Christian children. What are we to make of David and Christ's statement?

I think we should take these truisms as such, God does indeed provide for the righteous and their children. But we may experience persecution but we are never forsaken (1 Cor. 4:9), we may be as those who have nothing, but possess all things (Ps. 37:16-20), struck down but not destroyed (1 Cor. 4:9). The principle set forth here is the same as Jesus' statement, God has not dealt wickedly with you. But we receive all things begging now and into eternity in the kingdom of God.

Third, we *seek the kingdom* by embracing and living in the righteousness of the king of heaven. Jesus Christ, is the prince of heaven, the captain of our salvation. It is his righteousness who is given to all citizens of heaven. We are to relish, delight, and meditate on the fact that Jesus Christ so loved the church that he would give his life that you would be an heir to eternal life by his blood.

Conclusion:

Therefore, brothers and sisters, why do we worry? We have a good heavenly Father who so loves us to not only to care for all of creation, but who has given us citizenship in his heavenly kingdom. Our *father knows* our anxieties so let us cast them before him knowing that he cares for us (1 Pet. 5:7). God wants us to come to him with our worries, cares, and anxieties because he loves us. And **no creature will separate us from his love** (Q.28).

² Charles Spurgeon, *Something Worth Seeking*