

Worry

Matthew 6:25-33 (November 21, 2021)

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²⁵“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? ²⁸And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. ³⁰But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? ³¹Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ ³²For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Historical Context

The Sermon on the Mount is a collection of the teachings of Jesus which Matthew records in Chapters 5 through 7. The context coming into Chapter 6 verses 25-34 is important as Jesus is continuing a line of thought from verses 19-24, talking specifically about possessions, how we view the material things around us, and how we cannot serve both God & mammon.

Theme: Worry

Jesus says not to worry about having enough food, water and clothing because God will provide. Middle class Americans can afford to take a romantic view that we don’t need to worry about food and clothing because middle class Americans aren’t on the brink of starvation. But Jesus’ audience was. They were peasants struggling to survive with no margin of safety. How could Jesus possibly suggest to them that they didn’t need to worry about food, water and shelter?

The issue that Jesus wants us to look at more carefully is worry. What does worry say about us? What does worry say about what we believe about God? For those who know God, life is not about survival. It is not about having enough food and shelter. It is about doing God’s will in this world. If that is what we seek first of all, we ultimately have nothing to worry about.

Does that mean survival is unimportant? No. In fact, striving first for God’s kingdom means, among other things, helping people to survive! It means feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and giving the thirsty something to drink. Striving first for God’s kingdom means caring about the suffering of others and doing all we can to bring physical as well as spiritual wellness to all people. And we also care about our own physical wellbeing, and we work hard to feed and clothe ourselves. But we don’t need to *worry* about it; because even if we don’t have the physical things we need, we have the comfort of knowing that God’s care for us can never be lost, not even in death.

But most fundamentally of all, worry reveals that we don’t truly trust in God’s never-ending power and care. Jesus’ message to us: Have faith in God, stop worrying, and strive first for God’s goodness to be done in this world.