

WHY _____ WORRY? (Part 1)

Matthew 6:25-34

I. INTRODUCTION

A. WHAT IS WORRY?

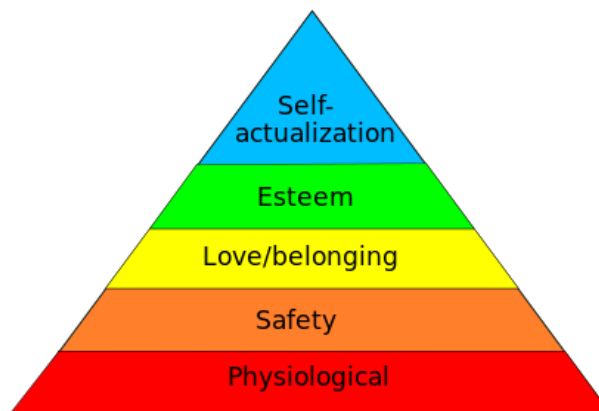
- Old English meaning = to strangle'
- Middle English = to grasp by the throat with teeth and lacerate [as a wolf with sheep]
- 16th century = to harass
- 17th century = bother, distress, persecute
- 19th century = feel troubled or uneasy

B. DIFFERENT FORMS OF THE QUESTION

- Why do we worry?
- Why shouldn't we worry?
- Why should we worry?

C. WHY **DO WE** WORRY?

1. **Danger**—**threat** to some level of **need** [Maslow's Hierarchy]



2. **Guilt**—and fear of **consequences** or punishment
3. **Insecurity**—lack of confidence or trust
4. **Dependence**—on the world—[and independence from God]

“Earthly goods deceive the human heart into believing that they give it security and freedom from worry. But in truth, they are what cause anxiety.”—Dietrich Bonhoeffer

D. WHY SHOULDN'T WE WORRY?

- Needless—no danger or threat—waste of time

“Worry is the down payment for trouble that never happens.”

- Distractive—disables us from tackling the problem that causes it
- Hopelessness—that leads to depression—causes psychological problems
- Stress—compounds the worry and problem—causes health problems
- Selfishness—worry focuses on self and is not concerned for others
- Self-focused—feeling alone—seeking no outside help—trying to solve problem alone

E. WHY SHOULD WE WORRY?

- Concern for others' welfare
- Concern for unity and health of the church
- Concern God's kingdom and His righteousness

F. THE REMEDY FOR WORRY

1. Solution

a. Trust

Jn 14:1—*Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in me.*

b. Pray and give thanks

Ph 4:6—*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be known to God.*

2. Result

- **Peace**

Jn 14:27—*Peace, I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world give do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.*

Ph 4:7—*And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and our minds in Christ Jesus.*

II. THE TEXT

NIV—25 *Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothes? 26 Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? 27 Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? 28 “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. 29 Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like none of these. 30 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? 31 So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ 32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*

The Message—*If you decide for God, living a life of God-worship, it follows that you don’t fuss about what’s on the table at mealtimes or whether the clothes in your closet are in fashion. There is far more to your life than the food you put in your stomach, more to your outer appearance than the clothes you hang on your body. Look at the birds, free and unfettered, not tied down to a job description, careless in the care of God. And you count far more to him than birds. Has anyone by fussing in front of the mirror ever gotten taller by so much as an inch? All this time and money wasted on fashion—do you think it makes that much difference? Instead of looking at the fashions, walk out into the fields and look at the wildflowers. They never primp or shop, but have you ever seen color and design quite like it? The ten best-dressed men and women in the country look shabby alongside them. If God gives such attention to the appearance of wildflowers—most of which are never even seen—don’t you think he’ll attend to you, take pride in you, do his best for you? What I’m trying to do here is to get you to relax, to not be so preoccupied with getting, so you can respond to God’s giving. People who don’t know God and the way he works fuss over these things, but you know both God and how he works. Steep your life in God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions. Don’t worry about missing out. You’ll find all your everyday human concerns will be met. Give your entire attention to what God is doing right now, and don’t get worked up about what may or may not happen tomorrow. God will help you deal with whatever hard things come up when the time comes.*

III. BACKGROUND

A. BIBLICAL CONTEXT

1. IN THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

1. **Verse 25**—“For this reason”—do not worry about everyday earthly concerns
 - a. Retrospective view—points back to previous **verses 19-24**
 - b. Three reasons not to worry—based on what you should already *have done*:
 1. If you have become more concerned about heavenly than earthly treasures—**vv 19-20**
 2. If you have become fully illumined—and see things in proper perspective—**vv 22-23**
 3. If you have become singly devoted to God—**v 24**
 - a. Then you are no a slave to the world—or things of the world

b. And the following examples prove this point—you are not captive to these things

- What you eat
- What you drink
- What you wear

2. **Verse 33-34**—A Matter of Perspective

a. Summary perspective—**v33**—“But seek first His kingdom . . .”

1. All this—**verses 19-34**— is about serving God and His eternal purposes
2. It is not just about us—and our finite existence
3. Fit properly into God’s plan—and God will take care for us better we can do so

b. Future perspective—**v34**—“So do not worry about tomorrow . . .”

1. Just as we don’t know all God’s eternal kingdom purposes
2. We also do not know the future—and cannot control it
3. Only God knows the future—and we must trust Him with it

2. PARALLEL TEXT—**Luke 12:22-34**

22 And He said to His disciples, “For this reason I say to you, do not worry about your life, as to what you will eat; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. 23 For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. 24 Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap; they have no store room nor barn, and yet God feeds them; how much more valuable you are than the birds! 25 And which of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life’s span? 26 If then you cannot do even a very little thing, why do you worry about other matters? 27 Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; but I tell you, not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. 28 But if God so clothes the grass in the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, how much more will He clothe you? You men of little faith! 29 And do not seek what you will eat and what you will drink, and do not keep worrying. 30 For all these things the nations of the world eagerly seek; but your Father knows that you need these things. 31 But seek His kingdom, and these things will be added to you. 32 Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom. 33 “Sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves money belts which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near nor moth destroys. 34 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

a. Context

1. Jesus is addressing the problem of covetousness
2. A man asked Jesus to tell his brother to divide the family inheritance with him
3. Jesus told the Parable of the Rich Fool—[then the passage on anxiety]

- b. Differences in text
 1. Jesus adds the promise—the Father has chosen to give you the kingdom
 2. He tells them to sell their possessions and give to charity—like Rich Young Ruler
 3. Then closes by describing heavenly treasure—where your heart is—there it will be

B. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1. AT BEGINNING OF JESUS' MINISTRY—IN MATTHEW

- a. He had performed miracles of healing and exorcism—[4:23-25](#)
- b. But not yet provided basic needs such as food/drink—before feeding of 5000/4000

2. DIFFICULTY OF LIFE IN JESUS' DAY

- a. Day laborers—making money only day-to-day
- b. Scarcity of food and drink for the common person
- c. One set of clothes only—with one outer garment

IV. EXPLANATION OF TEXT—VERSE 25

A. “DO NOT WORRY” [NIV and NASB]

1. OTHER TRANSLATIONS

- **KJV** = take no thought
- **ESV** = do not be anxious

2. GENERAL MEANING

1. Worry = **μεριμνάω**
 - o Based on root word—**μεριζώ** = be **divided**—**distracted**
2. Other meanings:
 - o Be troubled
 - o Care [too much] about
 - o Be concerned
 - o Promote one's own interests
3. Two ways to read this imperative
 - a. Do not worry!

b. Stop worrying!

3. USAGE IN GOSPELS—THREE OCCASIONS

a. Here and parallel text—**Lk 12**

b. Jesus told disciples—don't worry about what to say when you are brought to trial

Mt 10:19—Mk 13:11—Lk 12:11

c. Jesus told Martha—you are worried about too many things—**Lk 10:41**

4. PAULINE USAGE

a. Natural caring responsibilities—based on situations in life

I Cor 7:32-34

- Unmarried men care first about things of the Lord in order to please Him
- Married men first care about worldly things in order to please his wife
- Unmarried women care first about things of the Lord in order to be holy
- Married women care first about worldly things in order to please husband

b. Good caring

1. Paul's loving care for the church

II Cor 11:28—*Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches.*

2. Care for one another in the body of Christ—to maintain unity

I Cor 12:25—*so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.*

c. Wrongful caring—*anxiety as here in the Sermon on the Mount*

Ph 4:6—*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be known to God.*

5. MEANING IN THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

a. Don't be anxiety-ridden or overwrought—to the point of distraction

b. Look at the context of previous verses—**6:22-24**

1. When we are **distracted/divided** by worldly cares

2. Opposite of 'singleness of the eye—**6:22**—"If your eye is clear"

3. Opposite of focusing on God—6:24—single-minded devotion to God

c. Then we cannot focus on God—His kingdom—His righteousness [our relationship with Him]

B. DO NOT WORRY ABOUT TWO THINGS—LIFE AND BODY

1. TWO SOURCES OF ANXIETY

a. Life = **ψυχη**

1. Not the normal word for 'life' = **ζωη**

o Which means the state of living—being animate

2. Instead = the 'soul'

o The animating force and center of being

3. The **inside**—the inner person

o What controls the outside body

o Which needs nourishment of food and drink

b. Body = **σωμα**

1. The **outside** person

2. That which appears to others—and needs protection from the elements

c. Comprehensiveness

1. Together—these constitute the whole person—body and soul

2. So—don't worry about anything that affects you physically—altogether

2. BASIC PHYSIOLOGICAL NECESSITIES

a. Jesus is not talking about spiritual life—'soul'

b. But necessities for survival and functioning

c. Basic physiological things—everyone is concerned about

d. Bottom of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

C. WHICH IS MORE IMPORTANT?

1. **A Matter of Priorities—Keep them straight**

- a. 'Life' is more [important] than what sustains it
 - b. 'Body' is more [important] than what protects it
 - c. The person [body and soul] is more important than what serves it
 - d. Implication—don't become a slave to what is supposed to serve you
2. **A Matter of Providence—Remember God's provision**
- a. If God has given you 'life'—won't he give you what it needs to be sustained?
 - b. If God has given you 'body'—won't he give you what it needs for protection?
3. **Spiritual implications**—leading to the rest of the passage
- a. **Condition 1:** if God made us in his image, as His crowning achievement of creation
 - **Implication 1:** doesn't He care for us greatly—more than the rest of creation?
 - b. **Condition 2:** if God 'cares' for all the rest of creation—and 'takes care' of it
 - **Implication 2:** won't He likewise take 'care' of us?
 - c. **Condition 3:** if life and body are greater than what serves them physically
 - **Implication 3:** mustn't there be a greater purpose in life than just the physical?
 - d. **Condition 4:** if there is something of higher priority than just the physical
 - **Implication 4:** shouldn't we be more concerned about it?

V. EXPLANATION OF TEXT—VERSES 26-34

A. OUTLINE

1. OUR IMPORTANCE TO GOD AND HIS CARE FOR US—**vv 26-30**
2. TWO SUGGESTIONS AND ONE COMMAND—**vv 31-34**

B. OUR IMPORTANCE TO GOD AND HIS CARE FOR US—**vv 26-30**

1. CONTEXT AND OUTLINE
 - a. Two illustration of importance of 'life' and 'body'—over food/drink and clothing
 - b. Each illustration shows how much God cares for us
 - c. First illustration ends with question—about the futility of worry
 - d. Second illustration ends with rebuke for lack of faith—the cause of worry

- e. Illustration 1 = Life Example = **Birds of the Air**—vv 26-27
 - f. Illustration 2 = Clothing Example = **Lilies of the Field**—vv 28-30
2. ILLUSTRATION ONE—BIRDS OF THE AIR—vv 26-27
- a. Purpose of illustration
 - Jesus used birds to illustrate ‘life’ and making a ‘living’—from **verse 25**
 - b. Birds were of little importance—commonplace
 - 1. Cheap cost
 - a. Two sparrows sold for one ‘cent’—**Mt 10:29**
 - b. Five sparrows sold for two ‘cents’—**Lk 12:6**
 - c. ‘Cent’ = copper coin *assarion* = 1/10 drachma (1/10 of a day’s pay)
 - 2. Least of living offerings
 - a. **Leviticus 1**—lists them from most to least expensive/meaningful
 - o Cattle from the herd—**vv 3-9**
 - o Sheep/goats from the flock—**vv 10-13**
 - o Birds (turtledoves/pigeons)—**vv 14-17**
 - b. For those who could not afford more
 - 1. Offering of purification after childbirth—a lamb and turtledove—**Lev 12:6**
 - 2. For the poor who could not afford a lamb—two turtledoves—**Lev 12:8**
 - 3. Numerous
 - o Currently about 10,000 species globally
 - o Average annual population in North America—20 billion birds (40/1 people ratio)
 - c. But God still cares for them
 - 1. He **feeds** them—though they do nothing to produce/provide food—**verse 26**
 - 2. He **cares** when one falls to the ground—**Mt 10:29; Lk 12:6**
 - d. And God cares even more for you

1. Are you not worth much more than they?—**v 26**

o Literally: “Are you not more excellent than they?”

2. God cares for you more than He cares for them

Mt 10:29-31—*Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But the very hairs on your head are all numbered. So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows.*

Lk 12:6—*Are not five sparrows sold for two cents? Yet not one of them is forgotten before God . . . [verse 7 parallels Mt 10:31]*

e. Conclusion—**verse 27**

1. The futility of worry—about ‘life’

a. Worrying cannot add one **cubit** to your **stature**—or **life**

b. **ἡλικία** = either ‘stature/height’ or ‘age/time of life’

2. Implication—don’t worry—it is useless to do so

3. ILLUSTRATION TWO—LILIES OF THE FIELD—**vv 28-30**

a. Purpose of illustration

• Jesus uses lilies to illustrate ‘clothing’ and the ‘body’—from **verse 25**

b. The lilies—and grass—of the field

1. **Lilies** = **κρίνα** **verse 28** m

• Probably the white lily known as *candidum lilium*

2. **Grass** = **χόρτος** **verse 30**

• Common grass (hay) to feed cattle—which included common field flowers (and lilies)

c. The process of adornment

1. The lilies grow—on their own accord—but without adornment (**verse 28**)

• They don’t make their own ‘clothes’—don’t toil or spin

2. But God adorns them (**verse 30**)

a. To ‘clothe’—**ἀμφιέννυμι** = ‘to deck out’—to dress with fine clothing/raiment

- b. His clothing of the ‘grass’ could refer to His adornment of the lilies themselves
- c. Or it could mean he sets the lilies in the grass—to adorn it
- 3. Their beauty is attributable to God—not their own ingenuity or power—but His creativity
- d. More splendid than Solomon’s clothing
 - 1. Nothing in the OT about Solomon’s clothing
 - 2. But the OT speaks of his splendor (which included clothing and all)

I K 3:13—I have also given you what you have not asked, both riches and honor, s that there will not be any among the kings like you all your days

I K 10:14-22—describes Solomon’s incredible wealth and majesty
- e. Tomorrow it is cast in the oven
 - 1. Wood was rare/expensive—grass was used to fire the ovens—to bake bread
 - 2. Irony—the beautiful flowers die and are sacrificed—to produce the ‘food’ of life
- f. God’s care—**verse 30**
 - 1. He cares more for you—than for the flowers
 - 2. He will make sure to clothe you
- g. Conclusion—**verse 30**
 - 1. Jesus’ assumption—that they are still worried—about clothing
 - 2. Jesus’s conclusion—there is a correlation between faith and worry
 - a. You have ‘little faith’—you don’t trust God
 - b. Your lack of faith is the **cause** of your worry
 - c. Your worry is **evidence** you don’t trust God

B. TWO SUGGESTIONS AND ONE COMMAND WITH A PROMISE—vv 31-34

1. THE TWO SUGGESTIONS

- a. **Suggestion One:** You should not worry about basic necessities (today)—**vv 31-32**
- b. **Suggestion Two:** You should not worry about tomorrow—**v 34**

2. ONE COMMAND WITH A PROMISE

- Get your priorities straight—focus on God’s kingdom and His righteousness—**v33**

3. **SUGGESTION ONE—DON’T WORRY ABOUT BASIC NEEDS (TODAY)—vv31-32**

a. Don’t worry about any basic needs—covered in **verse 25**

- o What is necessary for ‘life’—food and drink
- o What is necessary for the ‘body’—clothing

b. Wording

1. Aorist—active—subjunctive—**μεριμναω**
2. Subjunctive—not imperative = should not worry
3. Aorist = **“Don’t worry”** [has the force of an imperative]

[Not present imperative—which would mean **“You should stop worrying . . .”**]

c. Implication—those things necessary for daily living—right now—today

d. Three reasons not to worry like this

1. Already—previously in the Sermon—Jesus has provided the solution
 - a. In the Lord’s prayer—“give us this day our daily bread”—**Mt 6:11**
 - b. Ask God—and He will provide
 - c. Daily bread covers all daily needs—including drink, clothing—housing and the rest!
2. The ‘pagans’ run after these things
 - a. Pagans = **εθνοι** = other nations—Gentiles—non-Jews
 - b. Pejorative term for Jews
 1. Jews looked down on all Gentiles
 2. Jesus may be appealing to their sense of shame—for being no better than pagans
 - c. Jesus had made reference to them already

Mt 5:47—Do not even the pagans do this—[greet their brothers]
 - d. But Jesus is also calling them to a higher standard—in a positive way
 1. You are God’s covenant people—Israel!
 2. More is expected from you

3. You should remember how God has always taken care of you!
- e. The emphasis shifts from ‘worry’ to ‘running’
 1. Pagans show their anxiety by ‘running’ after basic necessities
 2. In this process—they are ‘seeking’ worldly things
 3. This language sets up the ‘seeking’ language of Jesus’ command in **verse 33**
3. Your heavenly Father knows you need them
 - a. Not just omniscience—but individual caring knowledge
 - b. Links back to the Father’s caring concern—and willingness to provide
 1. Are you not much more valuable than birds? **verse 26**
 2. Will He not much more clothe you? **verse 30**
 - c. Implied Promise
 - o God not only know—and cares—but He will also provide!
4. **ONE COMMAND WITH A PROMISE—v 33**

v33—*But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*

 - a. The imperative!
 1. Seek = **ζητέω** = strive—crave—demand
 2. Present—active—imperative = “start seeking”
 - b. Get your priorities straight
 1. Life is more important than food—and the body more important than clothing
 2. This life is not just physical—but spiritual
 3. You were made by God to serve Him and His kingdom
 - c. The process of ‘seeking’
 1. Just as the pagans ‘seek’ **only** worldly things
 2. You must **first** seek God’s spiritual things
 - d. The objects of ‘seeking’

- The Kingdom of God
- His righteousness

e. The Kingdom of God

1. Jesus came preaching ‘the Kingdom of God’
2. His message was:

Mt 4:17—*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*

Mk 1:15—*The time has come; the kingdom of God is near; repent and believe the good news.*

3. Paul put all this into context

Rom 14:17—*for the kingdom of God isn’t eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*

f. His Righteousness

1. Obedience to His commands—righteous mindset and behavior
2. But this begins with:
 - a. Repentance—“repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand”
 - b. Restored relationship with God—being right with Him

g. The Promise

1. States explicitly—what was implied before (**verse 32**)
2. Not only does God *know* your needs—He will also supply them
3. All these things **will be ‘added’** to you
 - a. Wording = **προστίθημι** = gathered—joined to—put to you
 - b. Not ‘added’—in the sense of being added or tacked onto the kingdom
 - c. Future—passive—indicative
 1. Not something we earn—but something that is ‘put to us’ by God
 2. Future tense—points to tomorrow
 - a. Not just for today’s daily need—but beyond
 - b. Provides transition to next verse—not worrying about tomorrow

5. SUGGESTION TWO—DON'T WORRY ABOUT TOMORROW

- a. Wording—same as in [verse 31](#)
 1. Aorist—active—subjunctive—**μεριμνάω**
 2. Subjunctive—not imperative = should not worry
 3. Aorist = **“Don't worry about tomorrow . . .”**
- b. Flows out of first suggestion and the command
 1. If you don't worry about daily needs today—you shouldn't about them for tomorrow
 2. If you are seeking God's Kingdom and righteousness—you will have what you need
- c. A practical suggestion
 1. We really don't control supplies for *today's* needs—God does that
 2. If we cannot control today's needs—how can we control tomorrow's?
 3. Anxiety about tomorrow's problems—is worry about something that may never happen
 4. You can live only one day at a time—don't try to live two days at a time
 5. Each day has enough concern—don't overload ourselves and become ineffective today