

## AUTUMN ON THE MOUNT

Here in Matthew 6:19-34 we get some of the most famous passages Jesus ever preached. And in verse 19 we get to- ironically- the least favorite sermon subject matter - **MONEY**.

We aren't digging deep into money alone tonight. *Some of you are thinking, "thank goodness."* But while many people roll their eyes when a pastor gets to preaching on money, many people also love when pastors work through a passage or book of scripture like we're doing with the sermon on the mount.

("Expositional Preaching" as opposed to "Topical Preaching.")

But here's my point – if you were to expositionally preach through the New Testament, you guys would hear about money a LOT. Just how much?

16 of the 38 parables of Christ deal with money!

1 out of every 12 verses in the NT is about money!

There are about 500 verses on prayer, less than 500 verses on faith, and over 2000 on money!

Why? Why does money get so much facetime in scripture?

Why does money get addressed in the most famous sermon of all time?

And why does he intertwine it with the teachings we'll dig deeply into tonight on worry?

***"Worry is a bad sign that both the treasure and the heart are on the earth."***

Matthew Henry

Matthew 6:19

***Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.***

In an American culture that champions working from rags to riches, forsaking riches here for riches in the next life doesn't jive.

We love status symbols in this life.

And yet the greatest status symbol Jesus achieved in this life was what? A cross.

But Jesus isn't dissing wealth.

He is juxtaposing **TWO TREASURES**. Treasures on earth. Treasures in Heaven.

And there's nothing fundamentally wrong about treasures on Earth.

God doesn't shame people for having earthly wealth. In fact He shows love for people by blessing them *with* earthly wealth like Abraham, Job, or Solomon.

So this is not a call to live poor. But it is a call to live open handed. Live generously.

Don't let your possessions become your heart's treasure.

“**Lay up**” = hoard or heap up. To cling to things instead of recognizing them as gifts of God’s grace that we simply steward.

Use possessions. But use them as a steward, recognizing it’s all a gift of grace from God. And recognizing that the greatest treasures are eternal in nature.

***TWO EYES.** Healthy eyes and unhealthy eyes.*

***The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!***

I’ve heard this verse often applied to lustful looking. And it’s a powerful application. But this is surrounded in *both* Matthew and Luke by teachings on money and material things. This isn’t just about eyes trained lustfully on flesh. It’s about eyes trained on all types earthly things. Consumed with desire for what we can see. What’s present and not what’s eternal.

But the problem isn’t things. So the solution isn’t to shut our eyes. God created us to experience pleasure & in doing so praise him. It’s why he put us in Eden. But when his creation takes our focus and dependence off him, there’s trouble. It’s why Adam and Eve bit the apple and we’re no longer in Eden.

Eve didn’t sin because of a rumble in her stomach. What caused her to stumble? Her eyes. *When she saw that the fruit was good...and pleasing to the eye... she desired it...*

And since the first sin in the Garden, caused by unhealthy eyes, man has been born a slave to sin.

### ***TWO MASTERS***

***No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.***

*What is this talk of masters about? We’re dealing with inanimate material stuff?* Sometimes the things we own end up owning us. Dominating our days, our habits, our thoughts. When you become entirely consumed by money, material things, and things of this world, you aren’t just enslaved to the things itself. You become slave to anxiety. To worry. To fear.

Matthew 6:25 - ***“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life...”***

**Jesus ties together money and worry.**

We shouldn’t be surprised. “Mo money mo problems.”

And this link joining money & worry is important, especially in our context & culture. We live in one of the richest cultures known to man throughout history, and we also suffer as a culture at an alarming rate from worry and anxiety.

The **American Psychiatric Association** recently stated that over 40+ million Americans- about 18% of the population- suffer from an anxiety disorder.

MONEY is a top cause along with health and safety.

A recent Time magazine looked at the effects of anxiety on our bodies and showed how we are in fact worrying ourselves to death.

So we should heed these words, perhaps even MORE in our context:

Matthew 6:25 - *“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life...”*

I love that Jesus speaks to worry in the most famous sermon ever.

God cares about your worries. Big and small.

Because God recognizes worry as a big deal.

He doesn't want us to worry.

*“Therefore I tell you, do not worry...”*

But the command “don't worry” is hard if He drops the mic and walks away and we all go home. Praise Jesus he doesn't end there. He asks questions.

In 60+ conversations that Jesus is involved in in the book of Mark, he asks no fewer than 50 Qs! People come to Jesus with questions throughout the Gospels. And Jesus often doesn't give them the canned simple answer that they desire. He often answers them with a question.

Why? Jesus doesn't want to just hand us the answer. Jesus wants to lead us to the right questions so we can consider it in our hearts and wrestle with it for ourselves.

Why? So it's not just regurgitation, it's a revelation we've come to in our hearts.

In a similar way, Jesus addresses our worry by asking a series of questions.

I want to look at these questions, but first I think its helpful to define worry, and then consider what it is by looking at what it isn't.

**Worry** - *to allow one's mind to dwell on difficulty or troubles.*

We'll look at it more tonight as it's within this very passage- but Jesus promises we will have trouble. So to think about troubles and difficulties isn't wrong. But worry is insidious as it is a dwelling on the difficulties, being paralyzed by trouble.

## **WORRY vs. ANXIETY**

Worry can be a noun. But it's also a verb. Something you do.

Anxiety is a noun. It's a feeling. We feel all kinds of things in life.

Feeling anxiety isn't wrong.

What we do when we feel it is key.

What do you *DO* with your anxiety?

In scripture, specifically Philippians 4, we're taught to let anxiety pave the way to prayer.

We're told to bring it to God. Again and again.

**1 Peter 5:7 - *Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.***

God cares about it. Because God cares about you. Take it to God.

Yet for some anxiety is not a matter of an off switch.  
And to act like faith is supposed to flip a switch for these people brings shame instead of the reality that HE CARES FOR YOU.

For some anxiety is a domineering, permanent fixture, because it's a matter of mental health. Clinical anxiety is a matter of the brain. PTSD is a matter of the brain.

We don't say of other health problems like cancer - "pray it away."  
Yet in the past that's been the answer to anxiety.  
Do I believe in healing prayer? Absolutely. Do we pray for cancer? Absolutely.  
I believe in a healing God. Yet we also get treatment. We act as we ask.

**Stuart Scott** - *When you die, it does not mean that you lose to cancer. You beat cancer by how you live, why you live, and in the manner in which you live.*

Many believers loved by God wrestle with anxiety. How do you beat anxiety as a believer?  
*By how you live, why you live, and the manner in which you live.*  
*Don't surrender. Don't let it define you and the manner you live in.*

**Steph** lives with chronic pain. The problem isn't with her brain. It's her skull down her spine. She's about to get major brain surgery and a spinal fusion. And even then after this major brain surgery, with EDS, victory for her may not mean living without pain.

That doesn't mean she's lost the battle to pain.  
That doesn't mean she doesn't walk in victory.  
Victory for her means not letting it control the manner in which she lives. Her how. Her why.  
Victory for her means choosing joy.  
Victory for her means the manner she lives in is one that still trusts and worships God.  
Victory for her means walking in the faith of heroes like Shadrach, M, and A, who said I believe God can deliver us, but even if he doesn't...

For some with clinically diagnosed anxiety, it doesn't come with an off switch.  
Victory means the manner in which you live and the way you run to God in it.

The insidious work of anxiety and depression is to make you feel alone.  
The idea that we should all be able to switch it off can make some feel more ashamed and more alone. Yet the reality is it is so much more common in our world where we suffer from sickness, disease, and broken health. So much more common than we often address.

When I use the word worry tonight know that I'm speaking to non-clinical, day to day anxiety, what I believe Jesus is speaking to specifically in this passage: surrendering to day to day stress and succumbing to worry.

*And I think it's also important to note the difference between:*

## **WORRY vs. CONCERN**

Jesus doesn't say don't concern yourself. He says don't worry.

We turn "don't worry" into "I'm not going to worry about it"

*I'm not going to plan, prepare, think about it or work on it...*

Here's a news flash for you if that's you. Everything you have you've been given to steward by God. That is a crucially significant realization. Don't be the servant in the parable of the talents who buries his & shrugs off thinking about it. Things didn't end well for him.

Legitimate concern is healthy and good for you. Especially when we can manage it in 3 ways: When it's directed at the right things. When it's kept from extremes. When it causes us to act.

Concern is good for you. Care is good for you.

It's key to your survival:

Proverbs 20:4 - *A farmer too lazy [who doesn't care; is unconcerned] to plow his fields at the right time will have nothing to harvest.*

It's not just key to your survival. It's key to your compassion.

Proverbs 29:7 - *The righteous care about justice for the poor, but the wicked have no such **concern**.*

The call not to worry doesn't eliminate WORK.

There's a weight that God gives you that you were created to carry and execute in his grace.

But let's get to the text on worry: *"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?"***

For us, food and clothing for us are fun topics of conversation.

We ask each other what we're going to eat after church not out of concern because we're at risk of starving, but because there's 100 different options to fill our stomach.

But these issues for the Israelites in Jesus' audience were life and death.

Much of their daily routine was to make sure they had enough food to make it.

(talk about worry vs. concern, tell these people concern was bad and they'd laugh in your face)

There's a legitimate, healthy concern that causes us to plan for the future.

And then there's a worry that bogs us down in indecision and wears us out... and steals our **joy**.

As an example of his provision, Jesus points to the birds.

*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?***

Think about your answer.

Jesus is asking a rhetorical question.

The answer is yes. You have value. Far more value than birds.

But the value and worth of something is determined by what somebody will pay for it.

God doesn't leave us with a guessing game when it comes to our value.

How valuable are we to God? It's already been answered emphatically.

What did he pay. He gave his only Son. He died for us. Gave his life.

Few things are more important to mental health and anxiety than self worth and identity in Christ

Anxiety- clinical and non-clinical- affects your daily life like a cold or any other sicknesses.

It makes you feel miserable, it slows you down.... BUT- it doesn't change who you are.

We have to acknowledge it effects us. But it doesn't change who you are, or who you are to God.

Within the church historically we have equated a struggle with anxiety with losing the fight.

*Struggle with anxiety? How's your prayer life? Read the Bible more. DO more. Here's a checklist. Your faith is frail. Strengthen it. Toughen up.*

That simply adds exhaustion to somebody already dealing with anxiety of any kind.

Research shows that people living with clinical depression and anxiety have an overactive amygdala. This means the threat center in their brain is in constant fight, flight, or freeze mode. The counsel to fight harder and toughen up or do more is re-triggering the amygdala to stay in high alert mode.

And it's often interpreted as ... *"you'll be good when you fight through 'x, y, and z,' and then God will bring his promise of peace."* ...adding exhaustion to depression.

I've heard it stated that living with anxiety is like driving with the pedal to the floor, your mind is going at full speed while your soul is begging you to rest and find peace.

What happens is like what happens to a car driven like that. You burn out.

That's why I think Jesus' advice is so telling. Jesus' words for the anxious and worried:

*Are you not more valuable than the birds of the air and the lilies of the field?*

Jesus isn't pointing to work that makes us valuable.

The birds don't sow or reap, the lilies don't labor or spin.

Jesus' prescription for anxiety isn't to fight or work harder, it's pointing to who we are in God.

It's a call for us to find peace and rest in our identity. Valued by God. His son. His daughter.

Let that be where you run. Not striving and fighting. But resting in your identity.

And not JUST who you are.

Who Christ is. Resting in the work of Jesus on the cross.  
The Bible prophecies in Isaiah that he carried "*the punishment that brings us peace.*"  
The victory has been won.  
Jesus didn't just carry the cross so you could have Heaven after whatever Hell you endure here on Earth. Jesus carried that cross to offer YOU peace.  
Peace for every circumstance that never runs out.

A trap that we so easily fall into is we can become consumed by how strong we gage our faith, and worrying it its "enough." Is it too weak or frail?

And we need to be reminded again and again:  
**You aren't saved by the strength of your faith.**  
**You're saved by the object of your faith.**  
Jesus. Is. Enough. And his death was a punishment that brought us peace.  
Let your worries drive you to him again and again.

If you struggle with anxiety... Begin from a place of identity.  
You have to be honest in that anxiety *affects* you. But don't let it change you.  
How you see yourself. Or how you think God sees you. Eternally valuable.

And for all of us, whether the anxiety is clinical or it comes in waves in stressful days and seasons... don't let it give way to the paralyzed dwelling that comes with worry. Why?

### ***Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?***

Jesus is basically asking: *How's worry working out for you?*

Worry is like a rocking chair. Like a dog chasing its tail.  
It gives you something to do but never gets you anywhere.

Not only do I not gain by worrying... often I LOSE hours of sleep if I dare to dwell in it!  
And if you look at studies on not getting enough sleep... it isn't adding an hour to my life, it is actually taking hours, days, months, even YEARS off my life!

But this phrase: "*Add a single hour to one's life*" is actually an ancient common phrase that doesn't translate well. It is actually- can you add a single inch to your height?  
***"add one forearm length to his stature"***

Why the emphasis on height?  
Napoleon complex. Short man syndrome. If you're short, you get less respect, so you have to be overly-aggressive or domineering to compensate.  
This picture painted in an ancient phrase is missed by many a translation.

What is it pointing to?  
Worry is often about *perception*.  
I'm worried about how the people around me see me. I'm worried about public perception.  
But who of us by being worried can make ourselves more awesome?

Remember God's provision. But also- just as importantly- remember our purpose.

We live paralyzed by the approval of our peers. Why? We're worried about our kingdom. My purpose is not to make myself awesome, or build my kingdom. It's to build His.

***"Worry is a bad sign that both the treasure and the heart are on the earth."***

That's why Jesus' prescription and alternative to a life of worry is so powerful:  
***"Seek first the Kingdom."*** (pointing back to the Our Father)

*But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*

Our focus isn't just getting to Heaven. It's about bringing God's kingdom to Earth. And as we do this, what happens?

***"and all these things will be added unto you..."***

Sounds like we get to receive everything on our Christmas list and then some. Prosperity gospel swag. But keep reading...

*Each day has enough trouble of its own.*

Jesus indirectly promises your days will have trouble. Today will have trouble. Tomorrow will probably have trouble...

But don't let it stress you out. Don't worry!

God is fully present in tomorrow. He's there and he's not worried.

Why? It's troubles are not permanent.

A life verse for this upcoming season: *"and it came to pass"*

Steph and I about to step into a season that is going to suck. And it too will come to pass.

Job 11:16 - *you will surely forget your trouble, recalling it only as waters gone by.*

You will have trouble. But it will come to pass.

So Jesus doubles down on the statement he makes at the beginning of the passage:

***"Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself."***

Corrie Ten Boom -

***"Worry is carrying tomorrow load with today's strength... Worry doesn't empty tomorrow of its sorrow, it empties today of its strength."***

Reality is this: you are confined to now and this moment. That's not a bad thing. Because now matters. And too often we're absent from right now.

Why? Because we're worried about the past, or worried about the future.



It's possible your future self will look back and thank you for seeds planted today that spared you from worry. Reduce tomorrow's worries by living today well.

### **HEBREWS 13:5-6**

*Don't love money; be satisfied with what you have. For God has said,  
"I will never fail you. I will never abandon you."*

*So we can say with confidence,*

***"The Lord is my helper, so I will have no fear. What can mere people do to me?"***

The author of Hebrews is quoting Psalm 118, where the statement about not having fear or worry is preceded by this:

*In my distress [Stress. Worry. Anxiety] I prayed to the Lord, and the Lord answered me.*

In life you will feel worry. You will feel anxiety. Because you will have trouble!  
But what will you do with it?

May we be like David in Psalm 118. When we feel distressed. Stressed. Worried. Anxious.  
We run to God in prayer.  
Anxiety wants us to feel shamed and alone.  
May we run to his grace and his presence that never leaves or forsakes.

P E A C E lyrics:

*You will stay true  
Even when the lies come  
Your word remains truth  
Even when my thoughts don't line up  
I will stand tall  
On each promise You made  
Let the rest fade away*

*There's a peace far beyond all understanding  
May it ever set my heart at ease  
Dare anxiety come,  
I'll remember that peace is a promise You keep  
Peace is a promise You keep*

*You will stay true  
Even in the chaos  
Your word remains truth  
Even when my mind wreaks havoc  
I will be still  
For I've known all along  
My Jehovah Shalom*