

Money, Worry, and Perspective

Matthew 6:19-34

September 3rd, 2017

Intro –

Illustration – high school students given a beeper, every time it went off they were to write down their thoughts at that moment. 80% (majority) were things they were worrying about.

Worry lives in the land of “what if” –

“What if my husband is late because he’s in a car crash? What if I don’t get in to the grad program I want? What if I get fired? What if my cancer returns?”

The big “what if’s” that Jesus addresses here revolve around money. Many of our fears and worries do, don’t they?

What if we can’t pay the rent this month? What if I lose my job and can’t afford the vacation my kids have their hearts set on? What if my insurance premiums triple and I have to figure out what to cut from my budget? What if I outlive my retirement savings?

In writing on fear and worry, Ed Welch says that they “can be triggered by the past, react to crises in the present, or anticipate them in the future. Its preferred time zone, however, is the future . . . Worriers are visionaries minus the optimism.”

Not talking about money because giving is down. Giving has far exceeded our plans for the year to the point where we are making plans for wisely handling the extra funds, including some building improvement projects and reducing the debt on this facility.

1. Money provides an opportunity to choose between a series of **contrasts**. (6:19-24)
 - a. Where will I store my **treasure**? (6:19-21)
 - i. The Bible is not opposed to wise preparation for the future or even enjoyment of things we can buy with money.
 1. **Proverbs 6:6-8** ⁶ Go to the ant, O sluggard, Observe her ways and be wise, ⁷ Which, having no chief, Officer or ruler, ⁸ Prepares her food in the summer *And* gathers her provision in the harvest.
 - ii. But anything on earth can be destroyed, stolen, or lost. In fact, it WILL BE lost to us eventually when we die.
 - iii. Jesus instructs us to invest our money in that which will last into eternity.
 1. **1 Timothy 6:17-19** Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. ¹⁸ *Instruct them* to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, ¹⁹ storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.
 - a. Don’t be conceited or fix your hope on riches
 - b. Riches are uncertain
 - i. Floods as we’ve seen in Houston this week, fewer than 20% have flood insurance

- c. Fix your hope on God
 - d. God supplies you with all things, even your wealth
 - e. You can even enjoy the things he has supplied to you!
 - i. But do you grasp it and hoard it like Gollum and his precious, or use it, thank God for it, and share.
 - f. But be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share (mindset)
 - g. As you do you store up treasures in heaven
- iv. The location of my treasure dictates the affections of my heart.
1. What goes first, treasure or heart? Treasure!
 2. If you feel like you don't have a heart for eternal things or for people, Jesus tells us how to change that. Put your money where you want your heart to be.
 - a. Example –One man recounted that he didn't really have a heart for a certain church plant that his church was supporting overseas, but he wants to. So what is he doing? Starting to support it financially.
 - b. Missions – start supporting a missionary; you'll find your attention much more attuned to what is happening in that country and with that person or family
- b. Will I see money from God's *perspective*? (6:22-23)
- i. This passage can seem a bit cryptic, but the key is to see it in the surrounding context about money. It doesn't mention money specifically but everything around it is about money.
 - ii. Like a lamp shines light in a room so the eye lets light into the body, not literally but in the sense that we perceive the world around us using our eyes.
 - iii. Additionally, having an "evil eye" in the OT was a way of referring to stinginess rather than generosity with money.
 1. **Proverbs 28:22** A man with an evil eye hastens after wealth And does not know that want will come upon him.
 2. **Deuteronomy 15:9** "Beware that there is no base thought in your heart, saying, 'The seventh year, the year of remission, is near,' and your eye is hostile toward your poor brother, and you give him nothing; then he may cry to the LORD against you, and it will be a sin in you.
- iv. Alcorn – physical vision is used here as a metaphor for *perspective*, the way we look at life. Unbelievers look at life as a brief interval that begins at birth and ends at death. They look no further than their own life span, if even that. ... "if this life is all there is, why deny myself any pleasure or possessions?" People only live for a higher purpose when they see a higher purpose.
1. As believers in Christ, our theology gives us perspective. It tells us that this life is the preface – not the book. It's the preliminaries – not the main event. It's the tune-up – not the concert.
 2. *Two sections of rope, one short, one very long and stretching off stage with a small piece of tape representing the present.*

- a. Dot vs line approach
- b. Giving is living for the line
- 3. To live for the dot is folly
 - a. **Luke 12:16-21** ¹⁶ And He told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man was very productive. ¹⁷ "And he began reasoning to himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?' ¹⁸ "Then he said, 'This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. ¹⁹ 'And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years *to come*; take your ease, eat, drink *and* be merry.'" ²⁰ "But God said to him, 'You fool! This *very* night your soul is required of you; and *now* who will own what you have prepared?' ²¹ "So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

c. Will I serve God or money? (6:24)

- i. "Cannot" serve both not "should not" – it is impossible.
 - ii. Money makes a good servant but a poor master.
 - iii. Ed Welch in an intro to this section from the Sermon on the Mount, "You will be expecting him to reduce the issue to right and wrong: It is right to be generous with your money; it is wrong to worry about it. But God will talk about entire kingdoms and ask us to consider in which kingdom we want to live. Money points to our kingdom allegiances."
2. Do not worry about the basic needs of life. (6:25-34)

Jesus' big "therefore" is do not be worried.

Worry and money are linked in the minds of so many. Could be worrying about basic essentials – what will I eat today? How can I afford rent for my family? Or worrying about luxuries - Is my 401k invested in the right mutual funds? Should I sell my 2 year old car to buy a new car?

Doesn't just say, "don't worry," He gently persuades you not to worry.

a. Because life is more than food and clothing (vv. 25, 33)

- i. Do those things matter? Of course, and He makes it clear that the Father cares about those needs in our life.
- ii. **Luke 12:15** Then He said to them, "Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not *even* when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions."
- iii. But we should prioritize God's kingdom and righteousness and trust Him to provide.
 - 1. 5:1 – Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom
 - 2. 6:10 – Your kingdom come
 - 3. 6:33 – seek first the kingdom

a. Live for the spread of His kingdom reign

b. Because you are valuable to God (v. 26)

- i. Argues from the lesser to the greater – God provides for the birds, God cares about you even more than the birds, of course He will provide for you.

- ii. How does He feed the birds? Does He drop the bugs in their mouths? No, He normally operates through the normal means of the life cycle.
 - 1. Likewise we should work, but we shouldn't worry.
 - 2. What's great is He doesn't say the daily needs are irrelevant. He has just told us to pray for them. Now He reassures us that the Father cares for us and will take care of our needs.
- iii. God is in charge of His world, providentially feeding the animals
 - 1. Ed Welch – "Fear is nurtured by ignorance. If you know very little about snakes, you will panic when you see a garter snake slithering through the garden. But a herpetologist will be delighted by the cute little creature. When you see that the 747 is full and every overhead bin stuffed, you can't imagine such a heavy machine getting off the ground and staying aloft. But if you know the rudiments of aerodynamics, you catch a nap before takeoff. When we don't know the true God, we assume that he is like ourselves, which is a terrifying thought. What if he is impatient, incapable of multitasking, and prone to taking time off for naps—or worse? But as you listen and come to know him, as you learn about his ways, you can rest."
- c. Because worry is **unproductive** (v. 27)
 - i. It doesn't actually accomplish anything!
 - 1. Planning helps. Making checklists of things you can do. Looking for a job. Praying. All these things can help. But worrying does nothing! Planning is good, worrying is not good.
 - ii. O'donnell – Many teachings in the health industry advocate remedies and regimes to live an active and long life. However, I have yet to hear anyone advocate anxiety: "What you need every day is to wake up first thing in the morning and stress yourself out. It will really help you get through your day. And it will add years, possibly decades, to your life."
 - iii. The number of your days are already numbered by God.
 - 1. **Psalm 139:16** Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Your book were all written The days that were ordained *for me*, When as yet there was not one of them.
 - 2. You're worrying doesn't extend out your length of rope, but it can tarnish the dot.
 - ~~iv. —Worry is a cycle of inefficient thoughts whirling around a center of fear. —Corrie Ten Boom~~
- d. Because worry demonstrates little **faith** in God (vv. 28-32)
 - i. Returns to nature but this time the focus is on flowers and God's careful clothing of them in beauty even though their life span is brief. He then gently chastised their little faith.
 - ii. 5 times in the gospel Jesus calls someone "you of little faith." Each time it is in reference to an area of fear or worry. Here in Matt. 6 and in a similar setting in Luke 12; in Matt. 8 in the midst of a storm, in Matt. 14 when Peter walked on the water, became fearful, and started to sink; in Matt. 16 regarding bread
 - 1. Like a title for them - *oligopistoi* in the Greek
 - 2. "You're acting like Gentiles!" – or you're acting like practical atheists!

- iii. Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones says the following - "Faith, according to our Lord's teaching in this paragraph, is primarily thinking; and the whole trouble with a man of little faith is that he does not think. He allows circumstances to bludgeon him. That is the real difficulty in life. Life comes to us with a club in its hand and strikes us upon the head, and we become incapable of thought, helpless and defeated. The way to avoid that, according to our Lord, is to think."
- e. Because the present day has enough ***real trouble*** (v. 34)
 - i. Jesus is a realist. He acknowledges that life is hard and full of trouble. You don't need to invent future trouble that may not happen!
 - ii. PTSD book by Richard K Thomas "According to the National Bureau of Standards, a dense fog covering seven city blocks 100 feet deep could be, if it were gotten all together, held in a single drinking glass; it would not quite fill it."
 - 1. In the same way our worries about the future seem immense and foreboding and cloud or sights. Really, most of the things we worry about won't even happen.
 - iii. Martin Luther – We should always keep two days in mind: this day and *that* day.
 - 1. Jesus encourages us to do both. Think about the day you are in, but also recognize that you can't add even an hour to your life and must therefore live for treasures in heaven.

3. Key ideas

- a. Worry can be a ***warning light***.
 - i. Don't ignore the warning light but figure out what is causing it. Similar to anger.
 - ii. When you find yourself worrying, ask yourself why don't just try to make yourself quit.
 - 1. What do I really think will happen? How likely is it? What's the worst that will happen? How might God show His faithfulness in a new way? What am I believing (or not believing) about God right now?
- b. Good ***theology*** helps fight anxiety.
 - i. What have we learned about God from this passage?
 - 1. He cares about you because you are an image bearer that is more valuable than a bird.
 - 2. He is in providential control of His world, feeding the birds and clothing the flowers.
 - 3. He numbers your days, not you.
 - ii. Don't think of theology as the "T" word to be avoided!
- c. Your most critical concern should be where you will spend ***eternity***.
 - i. **John 8:24** "Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am *He*, you will die in your sins."
 - ii. **John 1:12** But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name,
 - iii. It's been said that this world is the closest thing to heaven a non-Christian will ever experience and the closest thing to hell a Christian will ever know.

- iv. “Seek first His righteousness” – not “work really hard to be righteous” because we’ve already learned in the sermon on the mount that it’s only those who recognize their own unrighteousness who inherit the kingdom.
 - 1. Seek the righteousness He provides, His own righteousness.



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