

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 8/22/93 PM
Matthew 6:25-30 "Identifying the Cause of Anxiety"

Next Week: "Identifying the Cure for Anxiety" Matthew 6:31-34

Intro:

Stress. Anxiety. Worry. Pressure. These are everyday terms in our society. Christians included. Tonight we want to begin a 2 week series, "God's Prescription for Dealing with Stress."

This morning, we explored I Peter 5:7, "Casting all your care (=to pull apart; anxiety, worry) upon Him for He cares for you." Right there, God gives us an antidote for anxiety. It involves 2 steps. The first step is action. The second is acceptance. The action involves the step of "casting." We are to choose to toss our anxiety on the Lord. The acceptance involves coming to grips with God's unfailing offer to help-- "for He cares for you." It matters to God concerning us.

Q: But why do we become anxious anyway? What's the root cause of anxiety?

A: Jesus answered this question in Matthew 6.

Our goal tonight is to identify the cause of anxiety (vv 25-30). Next Sunday PM we want to identify what Jesus says is the cure for anxiety (vv 31-34).

Turn to Matthew 6. The word "anxious" appears 6 times in 10 verses in the Schofield Bible. The NIV uses the word "worry."

Q: What's the cause of anxiety and worry?

Proposition: According to Matthew 6:25-30, the cause of anxiety boils down to one word. We want to see what that word is tonight.

I. The Imperative concerning Anxiety (25)

II. The Illustrations relating to Anxiety (26-29)

A. The Birds (26)

B. Our Bodies (27)

C. The Flowers (28-30)

III. The Implication of Anxiety (30): An anxious heart reveals a deficient faith.

READ vv 25-30 "Be not anxious...O ye of little faith."

Context:

V 25 "Therefore"

These are Jesus' words. We've landed in the middle of the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus is talking to His disciples about Kingdom Living. It always impresses me how Jesus wasn't too interesting in getting decisions, but in making disciples. Discipleship demands the commitment of our lives.

Key: True Disciples don't give the Lord their "leftovers."

6:24 "No man can serve two masters...You cannot serve God and money."

It's not surprising that Jesus' teaching about anxiety comes on the heels of his teaching about a person's ambition. If our ambitions are wrong, Jesus says we'll experience a very severe consequence--Anxiety. Wrong ambitions lead to anxiety.

Quote: Someone has said, "If your outgo exceeds your income, then your upkeep will be your downfall." (Bill Earle)

Don't miss the connection between ambition and anxiety.

Q: What is the wrong ambition?

Notice what Jesus says. In v 25, Jesus observed that the world is consumed with 3 great obsessions. Spurgeon called them "the world's trinity of cares."

1. What we eat
2. What we drink
3. What we wear

In our society, we are obsessed with those 3 things: what we eat, drink, and wear. If you don't believe that, try a little unscientific experiment. First, glance through a magazine and look at the advertisements. Jot down the products represented. Then turn on the TV, and watch the advertisements. Again, jot down the products promoted. What will you find on your list? I guarantee 3 main categories will be represented: Products we eat, products we drink, and products we wear.

Objection: "Are you saying it's wrong to think about what to eat, drink, and wear?"

Well, first of all, it's not what I'm saying that matters, but what Jesus is saying. And secondly, according to our Lord, thinking about the things of this life is one thing. Being obsessed with them is another.

Tragically, we live in a society saturated with materialism.

Illust:

Let's look at what Jesus has to say about anxiety. Keep this question in mind.

Q: What is the root cause of anxiety and worry?

I. The Imperative concerning Anxiety (25)

V 25 "I say unto you, Be not anxious for your life."

The KJV's old english is kind of misleading, "Take no thought for your life." It's not planning that Jesus forbids, but worry. The greek word means "to worry anxiously." Jesus is not forbidding forethought, but anxious thought.

The word "worry" comes from the Old English term "wyrgan," which means "to choke or strangle." That's what worry does. It strangles the mind. Unchecked worry can paralyze us, even to the point of what modern psychologists would call a "panic attack."

Q: What does Jesus say about worry and anxiety? Notice the imperative.

V 25 "Be not anxious."

Q: What part of speech is that? a) a question b) a statement c) a command

A: It's a command. Jesus commands us not to worry, doesn't He?

Ph 4:6 "Be anxious for NOTHING..."

Anxiety is forbidden.

Let me ask you something. If we do something that the Bible commands us not to, what does the Bible call that? Sin. Then what is worry? Worry is sin.

You say, "Well that's my disposition. My grandmother was a worrier. My mother was a worrier. And I'm a worrier. That's just the way I am."

Oh really? Let Jesus' imperatives sink in.

V 25 "Be not anxious."

The tense in the greek text is present. It could be translated, "Stop worrying."

V 31 "Be not anxious."

The tense here is different (aorist). It means, "Don't start worrying." As MacArthur (16) points out, Jesus brackets our passage with this meaning: If you are worrying, quit; if you haven't started, don't.

Let that sink in. Worry is a sin. Worry is wrong, not just because of what it does to us (the psychological and physiological effects are replete), but more importantly because of what it does to God. The Christian who worries is really saying, "I don't really trust You God. I'm not sure You are able and willing to help me with this problem."

Jesus' imperative makes this clear. Anxiety is not an option for the child of God. It's got to go. In fact, it's unnecessary.

Illust:

Q: How do we know anxiety is unnecessary?

II. The Illustrations relating to Anxiety (26-29)

Jesus gives us 3 illustrations from life in vv 26-29. Each one exemplifies a reason why we ought not to worry if God is our Father.

Q: How many of you like to watch the birds?

Did you know that the Bible commands us to be birdwatchers?

A. The Birds (26)

V 26 "Behold the fowls of the air..."

Can't you just see Jesus standing by the Sea of Galilee. Perhaps He saw a flock of birds fly by while He was speaking. I've read that the northern part of the Sea region was known as a crossroads of bird migration.

Look at the birds in the air! Martin Luther said, "Whenever you listen to a nightingale, you're listening to an excellent preacher!"

Notice the observations Jesus makes about the birds. Birds don't sow. Birds don't reap. Birds don't store produce in barns. But do birds go hungry? No. Why not?

v 26 "your Heavenly Father feeds them"

Now Jesus is not saying that we shouldn't work. Birds don't wait for God to drop food in their mouths. It's been said that no creature works harder than the average sparrow to make a living. Jesus isn't telling us that we need not work, but He is reminding us we need not fret. He's prohibiting worry, not work.

Birds don't worry about where they're going to find food. Birds don't get together and hold a planning session for keeping themselves alive. In fact, birds don't even have the ability to reason. But God has given them the instinct to find what they need to live. Birds don't worry about finding food. They just search until they find it.

Here's the point. If birds don't worry, why should we? Are we not much more important to God than a bird? Did God ever create a bird in His image? If God takes care of the birds, don't you think He'll take care of us?

Illust:

B. Our Bodies (27)

V 27 "Which of you...can add one cubit unto his stature?"

What does Jesus mean by "add one cubit to his stature"? At first, it seems like He'd talking about a person's height. But a cubit is about 18". Why would anyone be worried about growing 18" taller? More likely, He's talking about a person's length of life.

One thing about worry--You can worry all you want and it won't add even a milli-second to your lifespan.

Illust: Charles Mayo, co-founder of the Mayo Clinic, made the observation that worry adversely affects the circulatory system, heart, glands, and entire nervous system. In the medical journal "American Mercury" Mayo said he never knew anyone who died of overwork, but he knew many who died of worry. (MacArthur, 21)

The society in which we live worships beauty. We spend billions of dollars trying to fight off the aging process. We invest a fortune trying to get rid of wrinkles and gray hairs and all the rest. We almost think we can add to our days.

Can we? Job 14:5 reveals that our days are determined by God.

C. The Flowers (28-30)

This is vivid. Birds work, but they really don't work because God sustains them. Flowers don't even work, yet God provides for them.

Vv 28-30 "And why are you anxious for raiment? Consider the lillies..."

The term "lillies" is a general term for the wild flowers which are abundant in Northern Israel. Scarlet poppies, anemones, gladiolus, and narcissus.

Two things are true about flowers:

--They are gorgeous in their splendor.

--They don't spend a fraction of a second thinking about their wardrobe!

And chew on this thought. Flowers are breathtaking in their beauty. But how long does that beauty last? The lifespan of the wild-flowers Jesus had in mind was very

short, maybe a day or so. One day people would see their brilliant colors in the meadow, and the next day they would gather dead batches of them to burn for fuel in their ovens.

We have made a god out of fashion. We fret and stew about our wardrobe. Now don't get me wrong. Dressing appropriately is one thing. But getting ulcers over dressing in style is another.

Illust:

Here's the lesson from the flowers.

V 30 "Wherefore, if God so clothe...much more clothe you?"

III. The Implication of Anxiety (30)

At the beginning of our study, I told you where we were going tonight. I told you that the cause of anxiety boils down to one word. What is that word?

Key: The cause of anxiety boils down to one word--Unbelief.
v 30 "O ye of little faith"

Q: What does an anxious heart indicate?

A: An anxious heart reveals a deficient faith.

Are you a worrier? Do the pressures and concerns of everyday life cause your stomach to tie up in knots?

I want you to think about something. Was God great enough and loving enough to save you from your sins? Yes! Well, if we can believe God for this our greatest need, can't we trust Him for every lesser need? Yes!

Objection: "Why make such a big deal about worry and anxiety? It's just a trivial sin." Really?

When we worry we are in effect saying to God, "God, I just don't think I can trust You. I don't feel comfortable relying totally on You. I'm not convinced You are great enough and loving enough to help me."

Poem: (MacArthur, 23)

"Said the wild flower to the sparrow:
I should really like to know
Why these anxious human beings
Rush about and worry so.

Said the sparrow to the wildflower:
Friend, I think that it must be
That they have to Heavenly Father,
Such as cares for you and me."

Q: What's the cure for anxiety? Next week, vv 31-34.