

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 8/29/93 PM
Matthew 6:31-34 "Identifying the Cure for Anxiety"

Intro:

Tonight we want to finish a brief, 2 week mini-series, "God's Prescription for Dealing with Stress." Last week we asked the question...

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

A: We discovered the answer in Mt 6:25-30.

READ Mt 6:25-30.

Transp:

- 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.

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

A: It is Unbelief (v 30 "O ye of little faith"). Worry is sin. When we worry we are questioning God's sufficiency and love and care. 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."

Illust:

Objection: "Ok, so that's the cause of anxiety. I'm a worrier, but I don't want to be. I want to change. What's the cure for anxiety?" We'll see tonight in vv 31-34.

Proposition: According to Matthew 6:31-34, the cure for anxiety involves 3 very critical choices.

- I. Choice #1: Reject worry (31-32)
 - A. Worry is Inappropriate for us (32a).
 - B. Worry is Unnecessary for us (32b).
- II. Choice #2: Replace worry with Kingdom Values (33).
- III. Choice #3: Resolve to live in the Present, not in the future (34).

I. Choice #1: Reject worry (31-32)

V 31 "Therefore, be not anxious saying..."

Be not anxious. Remember that's a command. In 10 verses, Jesus mentions anxiety 6 times. There's no room for anxiety in the life of a disciple of Christ.

v 25 "Be not anxious" (tense indicates, "Stop worrying!")

v 31 "Be not anxious" (tense, "If you haven't started worrying, don't!")

Notice something. What does Jesus do in v 31? He repeats the very same issues He mentioned in v 25. Don't be anxious about what you eat, drink, and wear.

If you'll recall our discussion last week, we observed that the secular world is obsessed with these 3 issues. What was the #1 factor in our last presidential race? The economy. Society is captivated by consumer concerns.

As children of God, we must make a critical choice. We must reject worry.

Q: "Why should I reject worry?"

Our Lord gives us 2 reasons to reject worry in v 32 ("for...for").

A. Worry is Inappropriate for us (32a).

V 32 "For after all these things do the Gentiles seek"

Who does Jesus have in mind when He says "the Gentiles"? The Gentiles are those who are not the people of God. They are individuals who live life without God.

Gentiles worry. Do you know why? Because their lives are consumed with pursuing things that are out of their control. Their ambition in life goes no further than material things. Their religion is nothing more than materialism. "After THESE THINGS do the Gentiles seek"--what they eat, drink, and wear.

Shelby Friedman made the comical observation, "Credit cards have 3 dimensions: height, width, and debt." That's the way a lot of people operate. They're consumed with a passion to GET, and that kind of passion results in great anxiety.

Quote: Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "Anxiety is characteristic of Gentiles for they rely on their own strength and work instead of relying on God."

Illust:

Listen. The world has no real antidote for anxiety. Oh, they try to cover anxiety up with drink and drugs, and they try to bury it with the pursuit of pleasure, but they can't get rid of it.

Here's the point. The world worries. But for us, worry is inappropriate. We're called to live with a different ambition, as we'll see in a moment.

B. Worry is Unnecessary for us (32b).

V 32 "For your Heavenly Father..."

Worry is inappropriate. It's also unnecessary. Let that phrase sink in--"Your Father knows that you have need of these things."

Ps 24:1, "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." Ps 50:10, 12, "For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills...If I were hungry I would not tell you, for the world and all that is in it is mine."

No wonder worry is unnecessary!

Please notice what Jesus did NOT say. V 32 does NOT say, "Don't be anxious about what you will eat, drink, and wear, because your Father knows you really don't need those things." No.

There's nothing wrong with food, and drink, and clothing. Those are legitimate needs. Remember, it was God who fed Elijah in the wilderness. And God gave the Israelites drink in the Sinai desert. God clothed Adam and Eve after the fall in the garden. What we're going to eat, drink, and wear are viable concerns (I Cor 10:31).

The reason worry is unnecessary for us is clear, isn't it? We don't need to worry because our Father knows our needs all along. He knows.

See: Mt 7:9-11 "If you being evil know how to give good gifts..."

Illust: When we lived in G.R. a man named Warren attended the same church. Warren had an unmarried daughter. When she got out of school, she decided she wanted to continue living at home. Her father said that would be Ok, but to teach her responsibility, he established a minimal rent fee which she was responsible to pay. After a couple of years, the daughter decided she wanted to move out and set up her own residence. Obviously there are a lot of extra financial needs you encounter when you move on your own. Guess what her parents did? They came to her and handed her a gift. It was a couple of thousand dollars, as I recall. All along as the daughter paid her rent, they kept it in an account, just for her, to be used just when she would need it.

Worry is both inappropriate and unnecessary. Why? We have a Heavenly Father who knows what we need, and has promised to take care of our needs. So why worry?

Illust:

Tran: There's step #1 in our Lord's cure for anxiety. Reject worry.

II. Choice #2: Replace worry with Kingdom Values (33).

V 33 is one of the most familiar verses in the Bible. And so it should be. But I want you to see it in light of its context. Notice the play on words involving the term "seek."

v 32 "After these things do the Gentiles SEEK"

v 33 "But SEEK ye first the kingdom."

This is key. As disciples of Christ, we are not to be anxious about our needs in life. We're to reject the pursuit of materialism and the anxiety that goes along with it. And we are to replace such earthly ambitions with a higher aim.

Q: What higher aim are we to seek?

A: "the kingdom of God and His righteousness"

What does it mean to seek God's kingdom and righteousness? It does not mean to seek justification. Jesus does not use the word "righteousness" here in the legal sense that Paul uses it in Romans and Galatians (i.e. "seek to be justified with God").

In Matthew's gospel, the word righteousness refers to right living. It describes the kind of life that God requires. Jesus calls us to live on a higher level.

How do we do that?

Key: We are to replace worry with Kingdom Values.

We're to seek first the Kingdom of God. What is the Kingdom of God? It's the saving reign of God. The message of the Bible is united by this great theme. God is

King. But the world has rejected His Kingship. The story of the Bible is how God is reclaiming His rightful rule in the universe.

The Kingdom of God refers to the rule of God. Jesus taught us to pray for it in Mt 6:10, "Thy kingdom come." Now He tells us to seek it.

Q: How do we seek God's Kingdom?

We seek His kingdom by first submitting our lives to the rule of His Son, the King of kings, Jesus Christ. When we trust and obey the Lord Jesus Christ, we are seeking first the kingdom of God. We also seek His kingdom when we work to see others submit their lives to the Lordship of Christ. When we pray for the lost, we are seeking His kingdom. When we share the gospel, we are seeking His kingdom. When we encourage a fellow Christian to obey Christ, we are seeking His kingdom.

I want to camp on that word "first." The Greek word means "first in a line of more than one option" (MacArthur, 27). There are plenty of things we can choose to live for in life. The options are numerous. But only one is acceptable to God. Our Lord calls us to place God's kingdom as priority #1 in our lives.

Someone has said, "Plenty of people are willing to give God credit, yet few are willing to give Him cash." Someone else said this, "When wealth is lost, nothing is lost. When health is lost, something is lost. When character is lost, all is lost."

Paul gives us an excellent life motto in Col 3:2, "Set your affection on things above, not on things of the earth."

Application: There are really only 2 kinds of ambitions. There are ambitions for Self, and there are ambitions for God.

Let me ask you, "Are you living with Kingdom values? Do you desire more than anything else to live your life in complete submission to God, and to invest your life to promote God's rule over His creation?"

Listen. This has a lot to say about the way we view our jobs. Can a school teacher seek first God's kingdom? How about a nurse? Can an engineer? You better believe it! You don't have to quit your job and be a missionary to seek first God's kingdom (unless of course that's what God is calling you to do!). You can seek to promote God's reign right where you are!

Illust:

What's the cure for anxiety? First, I must choose to reject worry. Second, I must choose to replace worry with kingdom values.

Before we consider the third step, let me offer a word of caution. Anxiety can paralyze a person, even a Christian. And as we've seen, God can help us to overcome anxiety. But our aim in living is not to get rid of anxiety. Our aim is to seek first God's Kingdom. If we do that, the anxiety will take care of itself.

Quote: Jay Adams (in pamphlet, "What Do You Do When Fear Overcomes You?" in MacArthur, 27), "God wants you to seek to please Him first, and think about the problem of fear secondly. That is why when speaking of worry (a lesser form of fear), in Mt 6:33 He commands 'Seek FIRST the kingdom of God and His righteousness.' If you put anything else first--even the desire to rid yourself of a

terrifying fear--you will discover that you will fail to achieve either goal. God will not take second place, even to a legitimate concern to be free of fear."

Tran: The third choice...

III. Choice #3: Resolve to live in the Present, not in the future (34).

V 34 "Be ye therefore not anxious..."

Here's choice #3. Resolve to live in the present, not in the future.

Did you ever think about the fact that many of the things we worry about never happen anyway! Jesus' counsel in v 34 is so practical. He tells us not to worry about tomorrow's potential problems. It just doesn't make sense to get worked up over something which may never happen anyway! A London Doctor once said, "Please remember the biggest troubles you have got to face are those that never come."

I like the way the NASB puts it, "Each day has enough trouble of its own."

Q: What's one of the best ways to defeat worry?

A: By living one day at a time.

Don't try to win tomorrow's battles today. It's impossible.

What does Heb 13:8 say? "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today...and forever." Do you know what that means practically? There's no reason to worry about the future. In fact, I like the way John MacArthur put it in his recent book Anxiety Attacked, "If you have any question about the future, look at the past. Did He sustain you then? He will sustain you in the future." (27)

Our God will be doing the same thing tomorrow that He was doing yesterday and is doing today. He cares for us.

Listen. There are two things we know are sufficient for today.

1. Evil for today (lit. trouble, misfortune)
2. Grace for today (II Cor 12:9 "My grace is sufficient for thee.")

So here's the choice I must make. I must resolve to live in the present, not in the future. We've got enough trouble for today, and enough grace for today to handle that trouble, that there's no sense being anxious for tomorrow.

Challenge: When anxiety strikes, it tries to take us mentally into tomorrow. But do you know what we need to do? Refuse to go along for the ride! (MacArthur, 26) Live today for the Lord. Don't live in the future.

Quote: Jay Adams (Mac, 26) "Tomorrow always belongs to God...Whenever we try to take hold of it, we try to steal what belongs to Him. Sinners want what is not theirs to have, and thereby destroy themselves. God has given us only today. He strongly forbids us to become concerned about what might happen...Worriers not only want what has been forbidden, but also fail to use what has been given to them."

Summary: God's Cure for Anxiety--3 Choices: Reject worry. Replace worry. Resolve to live in the present.