

Matthew 6:24-34

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 29 January 2017

Preacher: Caleb Waters

[0:00] I see a few faces this morning that I don't recognize. For those that don't know me, my name is Caleb Waters.! First and foremost, I'm a follower of Christ. I'm a husband, and I'm a community group leader here.

For a living, I teach math at West Forsyth High School. And so on Thursday morning, I got a text from Nathan at about 10 o'clock.

And I didn't know what it was going to be about. It just said, call me when you get a chance. And so I was like, okay. And I teach all day long on Thursdays. I don't have any planning periods that day. So it was about 4 o'clock that afternoon when I was able to call him back.

And he was like, do you want to preach Sunday? I was terrified. But I eventually told him that I know I have the Spirit of God working in me. And I know I have the Word of God to preach.

With those things, by His grace, I can do this. So a little bit of background before we get into where we'll be at. Margaret and I live in Cleveland right now, and we work in Forsyth.

[1:01] She's a student, teaches at Liberty Middle School, and I teach at West Forsyth High. And so we have a really, really, really long drive down there and back every day. Really long drive.

Okay. And so we try to redeem a lot of that time by that being a lot of the time that we read Scripture and discuss it together. And so I've been given the advice, and I believe it's fitting, to preach on a topic that I think the Lord is really working on my own heart about.

And it was a passage that we read early last week. And it comes out of Matthew 6. So turn there with me this morning to Matthew chapter 6. So many mornings when we're driving to the school, I'm really nervous.

Having only taught for three weeks that isn't student teaching so far, I feel like I don't have a whole lot figured out. Most days I feel like I have less figured out than I don't have figured out. And so I'm worried, nervous, and anxious about the day to get started.

And then Margaret starts reading the Scripture that we decided on that day. And we'd made it to verses 24 to 34. And it was really, really fitting for me then and continues to be now.

[2:19] And so I pray it serves you well today as well. So let's go ahead and read verses 24 to 34 here in Matthew chapter 6. Starts off saying, No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.

You cannot serve God and money. Therefore, I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?

Look at the birds of the air. They neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you, by being anxious, can add a single hour to his span of life?

And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. They neither toil nor spin. Yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will we not much more clothe you, O you of little faith.

Therefore, do not be anxious, saying, What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or what shall we wear? For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

[3:39] Therefore, do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. Okay, this is God's word to us this morning.

I'm really thankful that he has given it to us. And so, pray with me just real fast, again, before we get going again. Father, we are thankful this morning for your word.

I know that I can rest in it, that its truth will come out no matter how good or bad I speak. Father, and I just pray for all of our hearts, that you would work in them to not be anxious, and to have a greater trust in you this morning.

And I pray that you would just help us to think and listen clearly this morning. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. So, a little bit of my perspective on riding in the car, Margaret reading this passage. I'm still nervous. I'm struggling to focus on the words that I'm hearing her say. That the Lord of the universe said here so many years ago to us, the same God that came to this earth, lived a perfect life, and suffered the death that we deserve for our sins.

[4 : 56] The same God saying these words to not be anxious. That life is so much greater than just food or clothing. I start feeling pretty pathetic for how I was worrying about so much, and not even being able to focus there on this text.

And so, it really served me really well to hear them then. And so, we're just going to walk through it this morning. And before we get to that, I just have a simple dictionary.com definition of anxious. Okay? So, to be clear on what anxiousness means. It's an inward feeling. It's being full of mental distress or uneasiness because of fear of danger or misfortune, or to be greatly worried. Okay? So, it's not a massive concept. It's just this inner feeling inside of us being torn apart just by a lot of worry.

Okay? With that in mind, let's go ahead. And how this passage is kind of laid out. We have the main exhortation in the beginning and at the end. And then Jesus gives us quite a few reasons supporting that.

[6 : 07] And so, that's exactly how we're going to walk through it this morning. And so, just a summary statement that I made. It's very simple. The main exhortation of this passage is just to trust in God and don't be anxious.

Trust in God and don't be anxious. Okay? We can see this early on in verse 25 where the Lord, he just reminds us that life is much more than food and clothing.

Okay? At the end of verse 25, he says, Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? When we're anxious, we're rebelling against this God who's called us to think about higher things than that.

He's calling us away from the simple, the cares of this world and drawing our focus to things that last. And we see down there in verse 33, seeking first the kingdom of God. He's drawing us away from the things of this world and to that.

In the words of Paul, he said that's the same concept later on in Colossians where he said, Set your minds on the things above and not on the things of this earth. And looking back in verse 24, we see how Jesus is telling us that we can't serve two masters.

[7 : 15] That we're either going to hate one and we're going to love the other or vice versa. We can't do two things at once. We have to be fully devoted to God or we'll be fully devoted to this world.

And so throughout this whole passage, Jesus gives quite a few reasons for this. That's how we're going to walk through it this morning. It's just looking at these reasons and talking through the logic of them.

So I have it structured as Jesus's reasons to not be anxious and trust in him. I have seven of them. I promise I won't take three weeks to get through them. I won't take three weeks.

Probably won't even be 40 minutes. Okay, so to start off with number one, number one of Jesus's reasons to not be anxious and trust in him. Come straight out of verse 25.

Life is much greater than food or clothing. Okay, life is much greater than food or clothing. In verse 25, let's go ahead and read that again.

[8 : 13] Therefore, I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? So that's this rhetorical question, which obviously the answer is yes, that life is more than food and it's more than clothing.

But why would he ask that question in such a way? Why wouldn't he just point us to the fact that we do need to be seeking his kingdom first? So why did he ask it?

And so let's think about this. If we didn't have food, we'd eventually die. If we didn't have clothing to keep us warm from the cold, we'd eventually die. But if we didn't have food that we didn't like, we'd just be uncomfortable.

If we didn't have clothes that the people around us liked, we might not have the same image in their minds that we want them to have. So ultimately here, he's talking about three different things, at least three different things.

Preserving our life, comfort, or man's opinions. Okay? The preserving our life, if we didn't have them at all, we'd just die. Our comfort, wanting things that just we want.

[9 : 24] Okay? So just being comfortable. Or man's opinions, what people think about us. As believers, those are not the things we are called to.

Not the things we are called to at all. In this passage here, we're given the exhortation to seek first the kingdom of God. That does not include seeking first our comfort, or our self-preservation, or even, at all, man's opinions of us.

In other words, verse 33 could be called, and it is elsewhere, take up our cross and follow Jesus. The same exhortation, just put a different way. We're called to lose our own life so that we can gain that true and greater life of living each day oriented toward what God's kingdom could use the most. So it's not at all, our calling is not at all about our comfort. It's not at all about what other people would think about us, and it's not at all about preserving our own life.

This could be put another way, and we so often do. We're called to experience, proclaim, and display the supremacy of Jesus Christ in all things to all peoples. That is our calling. It is not to be comfortable.

[10 : 33] It is not to have others have a high opinion of ourselves. So life is more than food and clothing. So point number two of Jesus' reasons to not be anxious and trust in him.

We can only do so much. We can only do so much. Let's look at verse 26. It says, Look at the birds of the air.

They neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? First thing I think we need to clarify that we all know, but we need to clarify it.

Verse 26 is not an excuse for laziness. It's not just saying that, Look at the birds like the heavenly Father feeds them. They don't do any work in this. It's not at all what it's saying.

It's saying Jesus doesn't, I mean, it's saying the birds don't store up just things for, that they could live on and on for eternity. They trust the Lord. They work as hard as they can each day trying to provide for themselves, going around eating food and building their nests.

[11 : 43] When I was riding this section, I was at the Boyk's house, and I saw lots of birds going and getting food at their bird feeder. They were moving around. They weren't just sitting in their nest, staring up at the sky, waiting for food to come down.

That's not how birds work. They do work. They do their best. Each day, they strive. They eat, and they build their nest, and they try to provide for their children.

But ultimately, they control so little. So little. If a just hard winter came, or they were out of food, they couldn't find any worms to eat, or there wasn't a convenient bird feeder, they'd starve.

They'd starve. Look at the middle of that verse 26. Yet your heavenly Father feeds them. It is the Lord who is in control of their well-being.

And that is the same for us. That is the same for us. We control so little about the circumstances around us. So when I immediately think about anxiety, three passages come to my mind.

[12 : 55] This one, Philippians 4 and Psalm 127. Turn with me right now to Psalm 127. Psalm 127. Let's look at verses 1 and 2 here.

Go ahead and read those. It says, Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil.

For he gives to his beloved sleep. I think these verses here demonstrate really well what I believe the middle of verse 26 is saying when it's clarifying that it's our heavenly Father that's providing for the birds.

The same for us. If the Lord was not orchestrating all the events around them, they wouldn't survive. They would starve. They would freeze. They wouldn't make it. And that's the same thing for us. Remember, the whole universe is being upheld by the word of his power.

That's present tense. It's not as if God created everything and stepped away. That is present tense. We are here. I am breathing. I am talking. You are breathing. You are writing things down because the Lord is holding everything together.

[14 : 23] It's not at all that we just do all of our own thing after the Lord created us and walked away. So ultimately, it is the Lord providing for all of us.

Amen. Amen. And so we can only do, we can only do so much. Unless the Lord wills whatever we're trying to do, we're not going to be able to do it.

Just thinking about college and how many times I failed tests. A lot. A lot. Unless the Lord wills us to pass it. It's in vain that we stay up until 2 in the morning and get up at 4 two hours later to study for it.

It's in vain that you take the same class three times. Okay? It is. Unless the Lord wills us to be liked in the side of our boss or our coworkers, it's just not going to happen.

No matter our efforts. The Lord is orchestrating all of the events around us. Every single one. And this is a good thing. It's a good thing that we don't have full control.

[15 : 28] Because the Lord always has our best interest in mind. The Lord works all things together for our good. And that good is that we will become more and more like Him.

Ultimately, we can't survive. We can't provide for ourselves unless the Lord wills it. But, as I mentioned earlier, this is not at all an excuse for laziness.

We see birds moving around, building their nests. They've got string. They've got straw. They're building it. They're eating worms. They're diligent. Okay? This concept reminds me of a verse that when we're going through 1 Peter in college Bible study a couple years back.

Probably a lot of y'all remember that. 1 Peter 4.19. It says, Therefore, let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful creator while doing good.

Therefore, let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful creator while doing good. That command applies for us as well.

[16 : 33] That's what we can do. All we can do is trust God and to do our best. Notice that verse says, Entrust their souls to a faithful creator while doing good. It doesn't just say, Entrust their souls to a faithful creator.

It doesn't say, Just do good. We could never just keep doing good and keep doing good with no trust in our heavenly father. And we could never have true trust in our heavenly father without doing good.

Those are right there together. So we're active in this. But we can only do so much. So point number three of Jesus' reasons to not be anxious and trust in him.

Worrying doesn't fix anything. Worrying doesn't fix anything. So let's look at verse 27 here. And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?

None of us. We can't. We can't. Okay. And many times when I'm worrying, I'm anxious about something. It's taken up the time that I could be spent doing good.

[17 : 42] It's taken up the time that I could be using, accomplishing that thing that I'm worrying so much about by dwelling in that worry, just wallowing in that worry. We can't even add an hour to the next 24 hours, although how much I would have loved to these past few.

We can't. We can't. Ultimately, it's about trusting in the Lord and doing good. In true CFC form, I decided to quote Spurgeon on this one because he had a really good quote.

I don't have a fancy book, but I do have Google. And he made a quote. Anxiety does not empty tomorrow of its sorrows, but only empties today of its strength.

Anxiety does not empty tomorrow of its sorrows, but only empties today of its strength. Worrying will ultimately not help us at all. It will steal the strength for the good we could be doing while we're entrusting our souls to God for today, and it's not going to fix the things about tomorrow.

Number four. God values his people and therefore provides. God values his people and therefore provides.

[19 : 04] In verse 26, let's look at that verse again. Look at the birds of the air. They neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.

Are you not of more value than they? Let's also jump down to verses 28 through 30. Read those. And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow.

They neither toil nor spin. Yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into

the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

So in that rhetorical question in verse 26, where he's asking if we're more important than birds, the obvious answer is yes. And then in 28 through 30, he gives us a couple more examples of some seemingly more helpless things than us, flowers and grass.

He shows the point of grass. A lot of people in this day used it as fuel in their oven to keep warm, to cook, to have fire. That was its point. The Lord clothed that grass.

[20 : 12] He orchestrated all the events around the grass to have people use that. That was its point. And then Jesus shows us how Solomon, one of the richest men to ever live, in all of his glory, everything he had in this world, is not as good as what the Lord has to offer us.

Thinking even about in our sanctification and our salvation, those gifts are so much greater than anything we could ever amass for ourselves, whether it be food or clothing or anything we could think of.

So much greater. So I've heard a lot of people around here sum these up as, we're more important than birds. We're more important than flowers.

And therefore, the Lord will provide for us. Simple as that. He'll give us what we need. It says down there in verse 32, For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.

The Lord already knows that we need provision. The Lord knows that we need these things, and he will provide for them. The Lord will take care of us as people, of us as his people.

[21 : 26] Let's talk a little bit about why. Going all the way back to the beginning, the Lord created us as mirrors to reflect his glory. He made Adam. He made Eve. And they were there to reflect the glory of God to one another.

They sinned. They broke those mirrors. They became shattered mirrors that would reflect either a distorted image of God or really no true image at all. All of us individually, we all have also disobeyed God.

All of us. And just like they, we are deserving of eternal wrath, eternal punishment because of that. All of us.

But God, being rich in mercy, and he's desiring to show his steadfast love, decided that he would send his son, Jesus, to take on the sin of all of us. He lived a perfect life.

He deserved no death. He deserved no bad thing. But he took on all of the sin of the world for us and suffered the punishment that we deserved for our sin.

[22 : 33] So that for those of us that put our trust in him, we were given his righteousness. He took our sin. He bled and died for that on the cross. And we were given his righteousness. That's called the great exchange many times.

When we were given his righteousness in exchange for our sin. That's the love that he demonstrated for us. While we were yet sinners, when we had done nothing good, when we were not desirable at all, he did that for us.

And that's that great love. And he valued us that much. Quite a lot. He valued us quite a lot. And to think that this same God that was willing to go to those extents, this God that condescended, became a man, took on flesh, went through all of this life, living a perfect life.

He was tempted just as we were, but without sin. He went to the cross. He suffered and died for us. And on the third day, he rose again and now sits at the right hand of the Father.

Thinking about that, him going through all of that, it would make no sense at all that he would not provide for our daily needs. And how often do we still worry we are not willing to give our burdens over to him, this God that is all-powerful and loves us so much, both sovereign and good and loving.

[23 : 58] He can do all things, and he wants to give his children good gifts. He's going to provide for our needs. He cares about us so much. Let's look at verse 33 again.

But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. I want to make it really clear that this verse cannot be used to preach the prosperity gospel.

Not at all. Verse 33 says in that phrase, all these things. There's a lot riding on that phrase right there. What does that phrase mean?

And so let's look at it. All the these things in this context, he's been talking about food. He's been talking about clothing. He's been talking about water. The all these things in this case does not include a free Lamborghini for all Christ followers.

It does not include even a perfect life here. It doesn't even include escaping from really hard things. But he will provide for us.

[25 : 04] He will provide for our needs. It doesn't say all things here. So we know ultimately that the Lord works everything together for our good, and that that good is becoming more and more like him.

And we can trust him that he will provide to that end. So point number five of Jesus's reasons to not be anxious and to trust in him is that anxiety characterizes unbelievers.

Anxiety characterizes unbelievers. Let's look at verses 31 and 32. It says, Therefore do not be anxious, saying, What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or what shall we wear?

For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. So here Gentiles is being used to talk about people that are outside outside the realm of the promises of God, outside salvation.

He's speaking to a Jewish audience here, and so people outside that realm. So in common language now, we could say that unbelievers worry a lot about what they're going to eat, what they're going to drink, what they're going to wear.

[26 : 18] So that meaning, the unbelievers care too much about their appearance before other people and their comfort. That's something that characterizes unbelievers.

They really care. And we, when we're caught up in these ideas, really care about what other people think about us and what our comfort. We care so much about that that we forget what the Lord has called us to in seeking first his kingdom and that all those things will just work out.

Ultimately, our approval comes from God and not from man. And therefore, these are not fitting for a believer to care so much about how we look to other people or how comfortable we are.

That sounds like the polar opposite of taking up our cross and following Jesus. Exactly the opposite. Wanting to not sacrifice anything for the cause of Christ, of living in comfort and what haven't wanting to look good in other people's eyes.

So to point six, tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Tomorrow will be anxious for itself. So look down in verse 34.

[27 : 38] I don't think I can say it a whole lot. I can't say it any better. This is a word of God than this. But it says, do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself.

Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. This is such a comforting verse. Don't be anxious about tomorrow. Tomorrow will be anxious for itself.

Don't worry so much on that. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. That's how Firm of Foundation says, As thy days may demand, shall thy strength ever be.

The Lord will provide what we need for each day to be able to get through it. But, He doesn't want us to bring that trouble that He will provide the grace to get through into the previous day by worrying and dwelling on that at all.

As Spurgeon said earlier, dwelling on tomorrow's trouble doesn't make the trouble of tomorrow get any better. But it's just taking the strength away from what we have to face today. Not doing anything for it.

[28 : 43] One of the biggest, biggest things to take away from this passage, point number seven, anxiety is sin. Anxiety is sin.

So many times I am tempted in my heart to say, I know that Jesus has told me not to be anxious about tomorrow. but look at tomorrow.

Look at everything that is coming ahead and hold on to that anxiety. That is not at all what we're called to. That's telling Jesus that He is not enough. That's telling Him that we want to hold on to our burdens for ourselves.

We can't make statements like that. We can't say that Jesus has commanded us to be anxious but we want to just hold on to that. Not okay at all.

We've forgotten what the Lord has done for us and who He has made us. We've forgotten that He is a good Father that can also control all events, that He is sovereign. He is working everything out for our good because He is both good and sovereign.

[29 : 54] He cares about us and wants to give good gifts to His children. look over probably one page in most of y'all's Bibles to Matthew 7.

We're going to read verses 7 through 11 over here which I think communicates this idea. This was just a minute or two later in Jesus' sermon here. Same train of thought.

So let's read verses 7 through 11. It says, Ask and it will be given to you. Seek and you will find. Knock and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives and the one who seeks finds and to the one who knocks it will be opened.

Or which one of you if his son asks him for bread will give him a stone or if he asks for a fish will give him a serpent. If you then who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him?

We so often forget that that is our God. That He is a good God. And that He can do all things.

[31 : 03] And He commands us to ask and these things will be given. He truly does care for us. He loves us. He went to the cross. How much more can anyone do? None.

He took all of that for us and so He allows us to cast our cares upon Him because He does care for us. And so when we're anxious we're telling Him that He is not enough to carry our burdens.

We're telling Him that He is not providing well enough for us. And we're telling Him that these events aren't truly working for our good. So these past few weeks of being a new teacher I've had to preach this to myself constantly.

Constantly. And being newly married as well having all different responsibilities and it's so easy no matter where we're at we all struggle in some form of anxiousness.

And that's sin. That is telling God that He is not enough for us. Think about our relationship with Christ in the church. It's given in many different places that that is just like the relationship of a husband and a wife.

[32 : 17] I can't imagine how painful it would be if Margaret came to me and told me that she didn't trust that I would provide for her. That's what we're telling Christ when we're anxious.

That's what we're telling Christ when we're anxious that we don't trust Him that He will provide. So the exhortation here is to not be anxious and trust in Him.

That's it. Simple message. Not be anxious and to trust in Him. One more quote from R.C. Sproul. He says of this text, We are to make God's sovereign rule and a right relationship with Him the highest priority in life.

Worry is inconsistent with this priority. It doubts the sovereignty or goodness of God and distracts from the true goals of life. God will meet all the needs of those who risk off for Him.

We can be confident in that that because our God is both sovereign and He is good that He will meet all of our needs. With that in mind we have no room to worry.

[33 : 31] We have no room to be anxious and so we often need to go to the Lord about that. That is something I struggle with on a daily basis.

Just fight and fight and fight my flesh. But ultimately we know that God is sovereign and He is good and so we can trust Him with our lives.

So in closing I'd just like to ask a couple of questions. Number one being what are you seeking first? What are you seeking first?

many of our lives just become disoriented. We revert back to looking for that comfort or looking for that approval of man so often and then put sharing the gospel and living out a life oriented to God's kingdom on the back burner.

We try to do it but it's not the first priority. All of our life it says here seek first the kingdom of God is the first priority we got. And then question number two why are you anxious?

[34 : 39] Why are you anxious? It shows in our heart that we're believing either a lie about who God has made us or a lie about who God is. We either don't trust in His sovereignty we don't trust in His goodness we don't trust He's working out everything for our good.

So why are we anxious? And so trust in God and don't be anxious and let's pray.