

Jesus On Worry

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Worry Is Linked With Our Treasure.

When Jesus spoke about worry, he began with the word “therefore”. In scripture, whenever you come across the word “therefore” ask yourself “Wherefore the therefore?” What does the “therefore” refer to? In his teaching on the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus connected money and worry together. Before Jesus spoke about worry, he was talking about money. He was talking about investing in things that will last for all eternity. He was speaking about having our treasure in heaven. So why did Jesus connect wealth and worry together? Because wealth and worry are two things that can become major distractions when we follow Jesus. In the first passage he invites us to choose our master – God or wealth. In the second passage he invites us to choose our provider – God or worry.

If we have invested our treasure in heaven, we won't have to worry about it, because we have already put it in God's hands. When our treasure is in heaven, we don't need to insure it against theft, because no one is going to be able to steal it. If our treasure is in heaven, it's in a worry free place. When we put our treasure in God's hands, we don't need to worry about it, because it's his responsibility to look after it.

Concern Or Anxiety?

The word that is translated “worry” in the Sermon On The Mount is also used in other places in the New Testament. In 1 Corinthians 7 Paul uses the word to talk about concerns people have for the church. In Philippians 2:20 he uses the same word to describe Timothy's concern for other believers. So there can be a healthy concern that motivates us to care for others. A concern about the pollution of the environment, or human rights abuses in Syria is a healthy concern. If I'm concerned about a child who is suffering from an illness, or a relationship between two people that is turning sour, or a person who is wandering away from the Lord, those are healthy concerns. All of these concerns indicate that I'm engaged with my world. They compel me to pray and push me out of my complacency into action. Concern can be a good thing. But the way Jesus is uses the word in his Sermon on the Mount, he's referring to acute anxiety. The Australians have a phrase they use often – “no worries mate”. It means “Don't get uptight about it. Relax. Chill out. It's no big deal. No problem”. But that's not the meaning of the word “worry” in this passage. So as I read the scripture today, I'm going to change the word “worry”, to the word “anxiety”.

“Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? 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 than they? Who of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his life? “And why do you get anxious about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So do not get anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not get anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.” (Matthew 6:25-34 NIV)

The Anxiety Syndrome.

It's been said that from the time a woman gets pregnant, she gets equipped with a "worry meter". There are certain things that will make the lights flash on the worry meter. When the baby won't stop crying. When the child comes home from school and says "Mum, the teacher wants to see you". When your 15 year old says "I'm getting some piercings and tattoos done this week". Or there is a phrase that makes the worry meter go just about off the scale "I've got a new boyfriend". There are an infinite number of things in this life that we can get anxious about. Passing exams. Finding a job. Getting married. Not getting married. Losing our health. Paying our bills. Nearly always they are things that haven't actually happened yet. If you look at the things you worry about most, they are often the things that haven't happened yet. You think they might happen. You hope they don't happen. So often our worry is connected to our future. So what does Jesus have to say about that?

1. The Cause Of Our Worry.

Jesus says the reason we worry so much is because we have the wrong motivation and we don't trust God. ***"Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?"(Matthew 6:25 NIV)*** I find this an astonishing thing for Jesus to say, considering that most of the people he was talking to were extremely poor by our standards. Most of the people listening to Jesus were living from day to day. Their major concerns weren't getting their kids into the best universities, or worrying about their pension funds, or whether they could afford to trade in their camel for the latest model. These people were anxious about where their next meal was coming from, and whether they could clothe their kids. He's not talking to people who are anxious about whether they have brought the right Gucci handbag or whether their shares in Fisher and Paykel Healthcare have taken a dive. These people are struggling to survive. And what is the word of the Lord for them? There is something even more important than food and clothes. If God provides for and cares for the birds, don't you think he will provide for your physical needs? God will be your provider. Trust him.

Jesus And The Prosperity Gospel.

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I think there is a bit of humour in the question Jesus asks. ***"Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?" (Matthew 6:27)*** You don't add to your life by worrying. Anxiety subtracts from our lives. The more you worry, the quicker you get to meet your maker. Dr Kenneth Greenspan was Director of The Centre for Stress and Pain Related Disorders at Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Centre. He was quoted as saying "Stress now contributes to 90% of all diseases. Half of all visits to doctors are stress-related". 'Anxiety reduction' is now becoming one of the largest single businesses in the Western world.

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3. The Cure For Worry.

Jesus gives us three practical ways to deal with our anxieties.

- **Go Bird Watching And Go To The Flower Show.**

Take time to look at God's creation. The birds of the air don't suffer from stomach ulcers. The flowers of the fields don't get anxious about looking beautiful. If you ever doubt that God cares for you, take a walk out in the open air, and see the ways that God shows his care for this world that he created. The most valuable thing in God's creation is you. All around you is his advertisement that says 'If I care for all this so much, don't you think I care a whole lot more for you?' The birds and the flowers are God's advertisement to you. They are his constant reminder of how valuable you are to him. Almost everywhere you go in the world, you will see birds and flowers. Let them remind you of how much God cares for you.

- **Live One Day At A Time.**

You and I can't cope with all the worries of yesterday, and we can't do anything about the fears of tomorrow, so just trust God for today. Today is big enough on its own without trying to add yesterday and tomorrow to it. That's why Jesus taught us to pray "Give us this day our daily bread". Today is enough for us to handle. If you focus on what God wants to do in your life today, you will be astounded at how small your anxieties are. Not every headache today is tomorrow's brain tumor. Too many of us are being crucified between two thieves - the regrets of yesterday and the worries about tomorrow. Just live one day at a time, trusting God for today.

- **Hold On To The Promises Of God.**

There is a great promise tucked away in this scripture today. ***"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."*** (Matthew 6:33) When we pursue God's priorities for our lives, all the things we need will be supplied by our loving heavenly Father.

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Jesus On Worry

Worry Is Linked With Our Treasure.

Concern Or Anxiety?

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Jesus says the reason we worry so much is because we have the wrong motivation and we don't trust God. ***"Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?"(Matthew 6:25 NIV)*** I find this an astonishing thing for Jesus to say, considering that most of the people he was talking to were extremely poor by our standards. Most of the people listening to Jesus were living from day to day. Their major concerns weren't getting their kids into the best universities, or worrying about their pension funds, or whether they could afford to trade in their camel for the latest model. These people were anxious about where their next meal was coming from, and whether they could clothe their kids. He's not talking to people who are anxious about whether they have brought the right Gucci handbag or whether their shares in Fisher and Paykel Healthcare have taken a dive. These people are struggling to survive. And what is the word of the Lord for them? There is something even more important than food and clothes. If God provides for and cares for the birds, don't you think he will provide for your physical needs? God will be your provider. Trust him.

Jesus And The Prosperity Gospel.

Jesus didn't just teach this to others. He lived it out himself. He didn't have a house, or land or a whole bunch of material possessions. He lived his life trusting God for his needs, and God provided. During his earthly ministry God provided him with places to sleep, food to eat and clothes to wear. God even arranged for him to have invitations to parties and weddings and meals at the homes of rich people. I believe in prosperity teaching. Not the kind of prosperity teaching that says that if you are faithful to God he will provide you with a nice house, expensive clothes, loads of jewelry and an executive jet. No. I believe in the sort of prosperity Jesus practiced. A life of prosperity from Gods provision. Jesus lived a life of prosperity. It wasn't an abundance of money and possessions and material goods, but a prosperity of rich relationships, and joy and parties and laughter. It was the prosperity that comes from trusting God, and finding that he is a generous provider. Real life comes from a rich relationship with our loving heavenly Father, who provides all that we need. God gives us prosperity. Warm loving relationships. People who pray for us. A sense of security that tells us that nothing can separate us from his love. The prosperity of knowing I'm a child of God. The joy that comes from knowing Christ as my Saviour. Jesus is saying to us that the cause of our anxiety is our lack of faith in God's ability to provide. The next time you find yourself anxious about something, ask yourself if you really believe God can provide.

2. The Effect of Our Worry.

I think there is a bit of humour in the question Jesus asks. ***"Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?" (Matthew 6:27)*** You don't add to your life by worrying. Anxiety subtracts from our lives. The more you worry, the quicker you get to meet your maker. Dr Kenneth Greenspan was Director of The Centre for Stress and Pain Related Disorders at Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Centre. He was quoted as saying "Stress now contributes to 90% of all diseases. Half of all visits to doctors are stress-related". 'Anxiety reduction' is now becoming one of the largest single businesses in the Western world.

Sometimes I have to have a talk to myself, and tell myself the truth. If I worry about all the concerns of yesterday, that takes me about half a day. And if I worry about all the concerns of tomorrow, that takes me another half a day. That means I have no time to enjoy today. I'm crippled by yesterday and tomorrow. I also have to ask myself "Of the things I get anxious about, how many of them do I have control over?" Here's an example. My teenager doesn't come home one night. He doesn't phone to tell me where he is. So instead of talking to myself and talking to the Lord about him, I let my imagination run away. He's lying upside down in his car in a river. He's been arrested by the Police and is in jail. He's been beaten up, robbed and stabbed and is bleeding to death in a dark alley in the city. And all this wild imagination and anxiety is taking years off my life. What I need to do is pray something like this. "Lord, when this boy was a tiny baby, his mother and I dedicated him to you. We said then that we would trust you to care for him and keep him, and that's what we are going to do right now. He's your responsibility Lord. Now I'm going to sleep." If we prayed half as much as we worried, most of us would be giants of faith.

3. The Cure For Worry.

Jesus gives us three practical ways to deal with our anxieties.

- **Go Bird Watching And Go To The Flower Show.**

Take time to look at God's creation. The birds of the air don't suffer from stomach ulcers. The flowers of the fields don't get anxious about looking beautiful. If you ever doubt that God cares for you, take a walk out in the open air, and see the ways that God shows his care for this world that he created. The most valuable thing in God's creation is you. All around you is his advertisement that says 'If I care for all this so much, don't you think I care a whole lot more for you?' The birds and the flowers are God's advertisement to you. They are his constant reminder of how valuable you are to him. Almost everywhere you go in the world, you will see birds and flowers. Let them remind you of how much God cares for you.

- **Live One Day At A Time.**

You and I can't cope with all the worries of yesterday, and we can't do anything about the fears of tomorrow, so just trust God for today. Today is big enough on its own without trying to add yesterday and tomorrow to it. That's why Jesus taught us to pray "Give us this day our daily bread". Today is enough for us to handle. If you focus on what God wants to do in your life today, you will be astounded at how small your anxieties are. Not every headache today is tomorrow's brain tumor. Too many of us are being crucified between two thieves - the regrets of yesterday and the worries about tomorrow. Just live one day at a time, trusting God for today.

- **Hold On To The Promises Of God.**

There is a great promise tucked away in this scripture today. ***"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."*** (Matthew 6:33) When we pursue God's priorities for our lives, all the things we need will be supplied by our loving heavenly Father.

Visuals

Jesus On Worry

Worry Is Linked With Our Treasure.

Concern Or Anxiety?

"Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? 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 than they? Who of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his life? And why do you get anxious about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in

all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So do not get anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not get anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.' (Matthew 6:25-34 NIV)

The Anxiety Syndrome.

1. The Cause Of Our Worry.

"Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?"(Matthew 6:25 NIV)

Jesus And The Prosperity Gospel.

2. The Effect of Our Worry.

Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?" (Matthew 6:27)

3. The Cure For Worry.

- **Go Bird Watching And Go To The Flower Show.**
- **Live One Day At A Time.**
- **Hold On To The Promises Of God.**

"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." (Matthew 6:33)