

Questions Addressed

One of the things I love about being a pastor, as opposed to an itinerant preacher, as when I was helping churches throughout the world with their missions ministry, is that I get to come back week after week and clarify and correct the things that I have said poorly or incompletely or that have been misunderstood. My prayer is that over time the message of the Bible will be heard in its fullness and balance, even if from week to week things may sometimes be a little confused. So let me try to answer two very thoughtful questions that were raised in response to last week's message.

You recall the main point was from Matthew 6:20 that we should lay up treasures in heaven and not on the earth. I presented that the way you lay up treasures in heaven, the way you increase your reward and joy in the presence of God is by giving your money away in the name of Christ rather than storing up more and more for yourself.

I used two scriptures to support this. One was the word of Christ recorded in Luke, ³³ "Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. ³⁴ For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." (Luke 12:33-34) The second, the teaching of Christ, also found in Luke, ¹³ "But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, ¹⁴ and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just." (Luke 14:13-14)

In both of these passages giving freely with no thought of getting money back is seen as a way to increase your reward and your joy in heaven. Something happens in the heart that gives freely; God increases its capacity for joy in one's life here and in the age to come.

As part of this call to lay up treasure in heaven I called for a simplified, exile-like, wartime lifestyle. A lifestyle and state of mind that enables us to give more, rather than treating this world as our home and treating this age as though it were a time of peace. The fact is we live in a time of conflict between God and Satan and between righteousness and unrighteousness and between belief and unbelief and between light and darkness. I desired that you see the stakes in this conflict are nothing less than eternal.

I concluded, we need to simplify our lifestyles and not be trapped in the world's environment of creating one's need for more and more material wealth. If we do not develop a kingdom attitude towards money as a tool for the advancement of God's kingdom, then our expenses will always expand to fill our income and for some their expenses will even exceed their income. A kingdom attitude towards money will allow us to give more than we ever dreamed. My beloved, let's be hazardous in our risk-taking for the glory of Christ. This kind of freedom and this kind of love, I argued, will make us the happiest people on planet earth. Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts 20:35) Loving and giving like Jesus will probably involve suffering, but the joy in giving and the increased joy in heaven, which is the joy set before us will be worth it all.

As I said, two thoughtful questions came out of last weeks message. One was, "Does having a well paying job and nice things mean you are disobedient to

Christ?" The other question was this, "Pastor when you stressed the imagery of wartime living, do you leave any room for aspects of life that don't fit well in the wartime imagery, like fun or leisure? Are there not other images of the Christian life other than spiritual war?"

In response to the question on lifestyle and use of one's money. Let me ask, "Is it a sin to own a car that costs \$80 to \$100,000 dollars?" The answer is a yes and no answer. If one is earning \$40,000 a year and sacrifices by not meeting the needs of one's family nor giving back to the Lord just so they can have a image of material success, well then, yes, this would be sinful. On-the-other-hand, if one is earning \$200,000 and managing money well, meeting their family's needs and they are giving generously to the church, well then, no, this is not necessarily sinful. It is a matter of priorities and what one places first in their life. Is money a tool or an idol? Is our first love Christ or this world?

In addition, doing well in one's career is proper for a Christian. It is part of our testimony to the unsaved. We live life with excellence. Further, doing well in school to create the opportunity for well paying careers that are fulfilling also witnesses to the world. Having a good paying job enables one to give even more than a tithe of 10% to the church, to give beyond, to give generously. Jesus said, "Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required." (Luke 12:48) As Americans we are wealthy compared to most of the world. God has given us much. Is not much required?

To answer to the second question, if a Christian life is spiritual war does this mean there is not also fun, rest and peace. In partial answer the Psalmist wrote, "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. ² He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside still waters. ³ He restores my soul.” (Psalm 23:1-3) This is a different life and image than we observe in the world of bombs, blood, starvation and the evil of pitting nation against nation and people against people. Jesus told believers, “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” (Matthew 11:28-29) God wants His people to rest, refresh and restore their souls in Him.

Paul instructed Timothy that, “As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.” (1 Timothy 6:17) God means for us to enjoy life, enjoy first and foremost life in Him, enjoy family, church, fishing, art, a good joke, to laugh and a picnic with a nap under the shade of the tree He gave. If we live with Christ as our first love we will find joy in giving and living.

We will experience joy and peace even during battle. It is when, as some churches and some who call themselves Christian, take their heart’s eye off of Christ, change the scriptures and work to please men that they, in truth, belong to the world and know no peace or joy in Christ. The label is not as important as what is in one’s heart. We can observe the desires of one’s heart by how one lives and the treasures they seek.

My hope and prayer is that you will be motivated to give generously and sacrificially. May God give you the grace to give back to Him at least ten percent of your income and may you taste the preciousness of Christ who gave everything for you. In other words, I am asking you to ponder seriously whether you believe, what I believe, namely, that there is a correlation between tithing and living with

a passion for Christ and the spreading of the gospel message of the supremacy of God through Jesus Christ. Living freely and boldly for Christ gives one joy and peace. Living this lifestyle will free you from anxiety.

Do Not Be Anxious

This morning we will look at the reasons Jesus gives in our Matthew passage for us not to be anxious. Three times in Matthew chapter 6 in verses 25-34 Jesus says, “do not be anxious.” Jesus instructs us in verse 25, “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?” Saying in verse 31, “Therefore **do not be anxious**, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’” He concludes in verse 34, “Therefore **do not be anxious** about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself.”

Clearly, Jesus wants His disciples and through His message in the scriptures, you and me to be free from enslaving anxiety. That’s why He gives eight reasons to bolster our faith and diminish our anxiety. Jesus fully knows this life is a battle for us. Jesus knows you are going to wake up from time to time with anxiety attacks. He knows that “you will hear of wars and rumors of wars” and this is troubling. (Matthew 24:6) Jesus is aware that He is “sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves” for the world is influenced by the evil one. (Luke 10:3) He knows “the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God.” (John 16:2) In spite of all these things and indeed because of these things Jesus wants His people to have peace, not anxiety. Jesus wants us to experience so much peace in the midst of the turmoil of this world we keep our focus on Him,

our first love and share the gospel without fear and give freely for ministry without anxiety. To quote, once again, Randy Alcorn, the author of *The Treasure Principle*, "God prospers me not to raise my standard of living but to raise my standard of giving." This is one reason why believers have peace in the midst of a world of evil and turmoil. Living the principles in the scriptures, keeping our focus on our first love enables one to live without anxiety.

Reasons Not Be Anxious

Let's explore the reasons Jesus says we are not to be anxious. Returning to Matthew chapter 6 beginning in verse 25, "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." Jesus tells us not to be anxious about life and now He gives us the reason, "Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?"

I take this to mean, since life can't be sustained without food and the body will freeze, sunburn or be shamed without clothes, Jesus must mean; life and body or soul and physical body are more than the physical life that is sustained by food and adorned by clothing. In other words, don't be anxious about your soul and your body because those who might take your food and your clothing, and even cause your death, cannot take your real life, your soul is the real you and your physical body is just the "tent" that houses the soul. The world certainly cannot rob you of your resurrection body. The bottom line defense against anxiety is found in Christ: your life lived in Christ and your soul at peace because of Christ. In Christ you are immortal. This is why Paul knew in his soul, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." (Philippians 1:21) That is why Jesus says in Luke 12:4, "I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have

nothing more that they can do.” If they kill your body you are released and in heaven. What more could they do to you? They can never take your life in heaven with Christ, so “do not be anxious about your life.”

Moving on to verse 26, “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?” Jesus says do not be anxious and He gives two reasons. First, God is so completely in control of the universe that He provides the very food for the “birds of the air.” Every piece of fruit they enjoy, every bug they snatch from the air and every worm they pull from the ground is provided by God. He is a God that provides for the least of His creation. Second, “Are you not of more value than they?” God values His children, those created in His image and those who glorify Him above all others. Animals are the creation of God and are amazing in their diversity, purpose and beauty, but they are unable to worship their Creator. As the Apostle Peter wrote, “Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, ⁷ casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.” (1 Peter 5:6-7) God cares for you more than all of His creations in the vast universe and He holds the universe in the span of His hand. So you have nothing to be anxious about, “Are you not of more value than they?” Yes, you are more valuable than all the creations in the universe!

Continuing on to verse 27 of Matthew chapter 6, “And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?” Jesus puts forth a simple argument that anxiety does absolutely no good. Anxiety accomplishes nothing of value; it only makes you more anxious. Anxiety makes a situation worst not

better. Jesus is saying this is a useless emotion that produces bad results. When you feel anxious, pray, Jesus help me master this useless emotion though Your power. Jesus let me rest in you and be free of anxiety for You alone are in control of my life.

Christ spoke of the birds and of time and now He speaks of His creation; plants. Read along with me starting in verse 28, “And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin,²⁹ yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.³⁰ 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?” This argument is close to the one concerning the birds of the air, but not exactly. The first is that you, as the child of God, chosen by Him are more valuable than the birds He feeds. The point here with the lilies and the grass of the field is that they last but a short time while you are eternal. God has spent His energy to make sure that even lilies and grass are arrayed in color and clothed them even more beautifully than Solomon. What Jesus is saying, if God is so intimately and lavishly involved with grass and flowers, which last for a short time for they are like a vapor, then how shall He not care for His children who He created in His image and who are eternal? Jesus is saying, knowing these things to be true, then - trust God! Trust him, “O you of little faith!” The issue is trust. Anxiety is a trust issue. Anxiety is the result of a lack of trust. Learn to trust your Father, reading verse 30, 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.” Come what may, a world in turmoil, God will take care of you.

Anxiety is worldly and a trait nurtured by the evil one. Satan wants you to worry and ask, “‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’” This is the reason Jesus makes it clear that these questions and concerns are what “the Gentiles seek after.” in verse 32. Jesus is saying if you are anxious, then you are like the world. These are the questions asked and the worries of people who do not know God. Anxiety is worldly and distracts people from knowing God. It is difficult to imagine my life without anxiety; after all there is so much to be anxious about. But I understand that Jesus is saying the more I trust God, the more I surrender to Him the less my anxiety will be. Jesus knows I am His soldier in the greatest of all battles and that anxiety is a weapon of the enemy. He asks me to gird myself by His power and in His armor. “Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,¹⁵ and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.¹⁶ In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one;¹⁷ and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” (Ephesians 6:14-17) We are in the battle, but Christ who rose from the dead has already won the war. We need not be anxious for our enemy and the enemy of God is defeated. It just is playing out in our time and space called history. Trust in God who is victorious! Satan has anxiety because he knows what is coming. Unbelievers have anxiety because they do not have God. We on the other hand have peace because we have Christ.

As we work our way through Jesus’ teaching we see two things in verse 32, “For the Gentiles seek after all these things” because they are anxious and because they belong to the god of this world “and (*for believers*) your heavenly Father

knows that you need them all.” Jesus is saying do not be anxious for God is your Father, not your earthly father, but your heavenly Father and because He is your heavenly Father He knows what you need even before you do. God your Father loves you as His child and will care for you. Jesus says God the Father is heavenly and this means He has sovereign reign and power over the earth and nothing can stand in His way and survive. Do not be anxious “your heavenly Father knows” what you need and He will provide all of your needs. Needs are different from wants, your needs, which God will provide are what will carry you to heaven.

We see this thought carried forward in what Jesus says in verse 33, “But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” God will supply everything you need to do His will and live His righteousness. It is true that Jesus also says, some of us will be imprisoned, some will be beaten and some will be killed because of our faith in Him. Paul the Beloved wrote, “Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ³⁶ As it is written, ‘For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.’ Now listen to Paul’s answer as he continues, ³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:34-39) We will have all the clothing and food and drink that we need to do the will of God. We will have everything we need for when it is His will for us to die.

There is no guaranteed physical comfort in this world, no guaranteed long life on earth, but no trial will befall you for which Christ will not give you all you need to endure to the end – for He has saved you.

Now we have arrived at the last verse of our study passage. Jesus has given us a number of reasons not to be anxious. So He ends with, ³⁴ “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself.” God does not overload any day with trouble. He will give you what you need to remain faithful. But, my beloved, do not reach into tomorrow and bring its troubles into today for this will burden you. Jesus may not have said it here Matthew 6, but God gave these words to the prophet Jeremiah after the destruction and fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC, “The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; ²³ they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. ²⁴ ‘The LORD is my portion,’ says my soul, ‘therefore I will hope in him.’” (Lamentations 3:22-24) The lesson we take from this is each day has its own appointed troubles, however, there are new mercies appointed for us every day so that you can bear the troubles. Trust Him and even though troubles will be in our life, so too will Christ be there. He is more powerful than all the troubles of the world.

These arguments given by Christ are a gift to you to free you from anxiety and to make you a generous giver. If you will receive Him as Savior and Lord and Treasure of your life, you will have His promises because you will have Him. Time grows neigh, if you have not received Christ do not wait – give your life to Him this morning. When you believe in Christ you will receive His promises. Then His promises will be the means by which you fight the good fight of faith every day.

My beloved, we are walking into grave days. One group of people, more than all others, should be free from anxiety, the people of Christ.

God through the scriptures is saying, "Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. As we live giving freely, then ⁸ ~~And~~ "God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work." (2 Corinthians 9:7-8) Let us live freely in Christ! Let us give freely to Christ's ministry! Let us live in Christ without anxiety and worry! Amen!