



Luke 12:22-31
"Anxiety Free Living - Part 1"
By Mike Clark

Luke 12:22-31

²² And he said to his disciples, "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on. ²³ For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. ²⁴ Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! ²⁵ And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? ²⁶ If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest? ²⁷ Consider the lilies, 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. ²⁸ But if God so clothes the grass, which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! ²⁹ And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried. ³⁰ For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them. ³¹ Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you.

Introduction: We live in a day and age where our society is perhaps the most affluent, indulged, and comfortable society ever and it is also the most stressed out, worried, and anxiety-ridden one. And isn't that ironic?

Anxiety takes many forms which humanistic psychology gives labels such as obsessive-compulsive disorder, social anxiety disorder, general anxiety disorder, post-traumatic stress syndrome, panic disorder, as well as phobias such as fear of heights, enclosed places, and critters.

Anxiety affects millions of people and treating it, usually with drugs or psychology, is big business.

Worry really stems from two things: ignorance and unbelief.

Many people, including Christians, needlessly worry. I myself have struggled with anxiety both before I was a Christian and after I became a Christian.

Often times we don't understand the depth of revelation on God's gracious love and care.



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But other times we understand God's nature and promises, and yet fall into worrying anyway.

The best the world can hope for in superficially dealing with anxiety is to manage it and mask its impact.

But the Bible and specifically the Lord Jesus has a radically different solution to anxiety. Instead of managing it or masking it, he promises to eliminate it.

In this passage, Jesus forbids worry concerning the material world.

Point 1 – Trust in the Lord who cares for you and rules over you.

Luke 12:22-23 – ²² And he said to his disciples, "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on. ²³ For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing.

In this entire discourse that began in chapter 12, Jesus was teaching his disciples about life in the kingdom of God.

In the previous passage, Jesus was interrupted by a man who demanded that He order his brother to divide the family inheritance with him.

Jesus refused and then told a parable that illustrates the folly of greed and covetousness that Pastor Jody talked about last week.

He said that coveting is not satisfied by what you desire, it produces work that is meaningless, and it produces a dead-end wealth.

Now the word "therefore" connects what Jesus was about to say with what He had just said. He had confronted His hearers with a choice. They could, like the foolish man store up treasure on earth or they could be rich toward God and store up treasure in heaven.

The word translated 'anxious' or 'worry' here is a present imperative verb. An imperative is a command and the fact that it is present indicates that absence of anxiety or worry is to continually characterize believers.



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The things that Jesus says not to worry about such as food and clothes are really representative of everything that we need in life.

Jesus says don't be anxious 3 times in the Matthew 6 comparative passage. And the KJV in that passage says "take no thought."

Which is a good indicator of telling us where our worry springs from - our thoughts.

Jesus is saying don't be anxious about your physical necessities, let alone your wants or luxuries.

Here's why. Because fretting about those things suggest something deeply disordered about us.

It suggests that our entire existence is focused on and limited to those things.

If God has given us life and a body, then won't he also give us the food that goes in it and the clothes that go on it?

So fretting about those things shows a lack of trust in our sovereign father's care.

Our worry reveals the object of our trust. What we worry about tells us what our confidence is in.

In verse 23 Jesus said that life is more than food and the body more than clothing. It's like what Jesus said to Satan that man does not live by bread alone but by what? - Every word that comes from the mouth of God.

Luke 12:24 "Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds!"

Jesus then turns to an illustration from creation and specifically ravens. Ravens are birds of prey and were despised and unclean. Listen to **Leviticus 11:13-15**.



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"¹³ "And these you shall detest among the birds; they shall not be eaten; they are detestable: the eagle, the bearded vulture, the black vulture, ¹⁴ the kite, the falcon of any kind, ¹⁵ every raven of any kind."

Jesus is saying ravens don't sow or reap. They are incapable of generating their own food supply and they don't have storehouses or barns to keep their food which points back to the foolish man who did build barns to store his food.

Birds are diligent and persist in foraging for food. They don't worry about where their next meal is going to come from.

You know the idea that the world's food supply is rapidly diminishing is not true.

Did you know that we only need 10% of the agricultural land in the world to produce enough food to feed every human being on the planet?

So despite the fact that Ravens don't sow or reap and don't have storehouses or barns, God nonetheless feeds them.

**Job 38:41 asks "Who provides for the raven its prey,
when its young ones cry to God for help,
and wander about for lack of food?"**

**Psalm 145:15 says "The eyes of all look to you,
and you give them their food in due season."**

Jesus says if God cares for ravens and provides for them, will he not care for you who are more valuable than the birds?

Our society has the complete opposite value system does it not? Birds have more value than human beings according to our society. People face steep fines or jail time for killing an eagle but there is no fine or jail time for the murder of innocent babies!

The Psalms echo what Jesus is saying about God's faithful provision to us.

**Psalm 34:10 – "¹⁰ The young lions suffer want and hunger;
but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing."**



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Psalm 37:25 – “I have been young, and now am old,
yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken
or his children begging for bread.”

Jesus is saying to worry about food is to have learned nothing about creation and observing the way the world works.

Nature shows us how trustworthy God is to provide for his creatures.

It should strengthen your faith when you look in the backyard and consider how God feeds the birds, the squirrels, and the deer.

And it should further strengthen your faith to realize that as a Christian, you have a Father in heaven who sees you as more valuable than animals.

So we don't need to worry about these things as God will provide them to us. The Lord will sustain His children until their call to glory. In the meantime we can say with David “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.”

Paul in **Philippians 4:19** says **“¹⁹ And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.**

Now that doesn't mean that God's providential provision is an excuse for laziness. We are to work hard and fulfill the responsibilities the Lord gives to us.

Luke 12:25-26 - ²⁵ And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? ²⁶ If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest?

You know people have always been concerned about their health.

It is certainly good to be disciplined and moderate in eating and to take care of our physical bodies. You follow the old adage of eating right, getting exercise, and getting enough sleep.

But many people, including Christians, go beyond that and can become obsessed with physical well-being.



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Paul agreed that there are benefits of bodily discipline but emphasized the greater benefit of spiritual discipline.

1 Timothy 4:8 ⁸ "For while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come."

Worrying about our bodies is foolish and useless. Not only does it take believers' focus off God's priority in their lives and deny His providential care, worry also ignores His privilege of sovereignly determining their lifespan.

No amount of anxiety can add to one's lifetime nor the lifespan that God has determined.

Our heavenly father will sustain the lives of His children until the end of their God-determined time.

On the other hand, anxiety and worry may shorten one's lifespan.

1 John 5:16 - ¹⁶ "If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask, and God will give him life—to those who commit sins that do not lead to death. There is sin that leads to death."

It's almost humorous that Jesus describes trying to add 1 hour to our lifespan in verse 26 as a very small or little thing. As if adding to our lifespan was something simple!

Luke 12:27-29 – ²⁷ "Consider the lilies, 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. ²⁸ "But if God so clothes the grass, which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! ²⁹ "And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried."

Jesus turns now from the issue of food to that of clothing. Jesus used plants to illustrate His provision of clothing.



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Lilies is a generic term for flowering plants that consisted of the variety of wild flowers that grew in the fields and hillsides of Galilee.

We can see amazing detail in flowers, but they are even more amazing when we look at them under a microscope. And their delicate beauty is unsurpassed by any man-made garment.

But lilies don't toil or work. And they don't spin, which is an old fashioned way of making thread for making clothes. It's the idea of spinning fibers into thread.

Yet even Solomon, the most lavishly dressed man in Israel's history, was not clothed like these.

Our worries today are rarely for the clothes we need. If Jesus told those who had few and simple garments not to worry about their clothes, what would he say to us?

The question in verse 28 reflects the common use of dried grass to fuel the clay ovens used for cooking.

Klibanos (furnace) is translated "oven" in the Greek. These ovens were made of hardened clay and used primarily for baking bread.

People would build a fire inside the oven as well as under it. Fuel for the inside heating was usually composed of dried grass and flowers gathered from nearby fields. Once the flower's beauty was gone it had little use except to be burned up as fuel for baking.

The point of the Lord's illustration is that God prefers His people over the birds and plants that He cares for.

If God so majestically clothes the perishable grass that is alive one day and thrown into the fire the next, He will certainly clothe His children.

Therefore, to be consumed with fear, doubt, and worry is to be guilty of having little faith, which is a common rebuke by Jesus.



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Lack of faith expresses a lack of trust in God's knowledge of His children's needs, wisdom to know how to meet them, desire to meet them, or power to meet them.

That kind of view dishonors God, produces worry, and restricts the flow of God's blessings.

How often do we have little faith?

A person who worries about those things may have saving faith, but he does not have faith that relies on God to finish what He has begun.

It's as if Jesus were to say "You believe that God can redeem you, save you from sin, break the shackles of Satan, take you to heaven where he has prepared a place for you, and keep you for all eternity, and yet you don't trust Him to supply your daily needs?"

We freely put our eternal destiny in His hands, but at times refuse to believe He will provide what we need to eat, drink, and wear.

Worry declares our heavenly Father to be untrustworthy in His Word and His promises.

Worry shows that we are mastered by our circumstances and by our own finite perspectives and understanding rather than God's Word. Worry is therefore not only debilitating and destructive but maligns and impugns God.

Worry is characteristic of unbelief.

Those who have no hope in God naturally put their hope and expectations in things they can enjoy now. They have nothing to live for but the present.

Point 2 – Make seeking God's kingdom and His righteousness your first priority in life.

Luke 12:30-31 - ³⁰ For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them. ³¹ Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you.



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The Gentiles (nations) act in a way that Paul describes those who don't believe in the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:32: "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."

The nations of the world seek after the things of this world. Epizeteo, from the Greek, means to eagerly seek, and is a strengthened form of the verb zeteo and means to search intensely for, to seek diligently, or to strongly desire.

Unbelievers focus only on material things. They have no hope and are without God in the world as Ephesians 2:12 says and they are "darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, Ephesians 4:18.

The nations of the world create false gods in a vain attempt to help them in their quest. But those gods are only a reflection of evil men and demons. They are wicked, devious, selfish, violent, untrustworthy, indifferent, and merciless.

Far from expecting help from such gods, the best people can hope for is to placate them.

Those outside of God's kingdom have no claim on Him, no promises, pledges, or guarantees. The only good in their lives comes from common grace.

In striking contrast to the lifeless gods of the pagans, our heavenly Father knows that we need these material things.

He sympathizes with us and has unlimited resources and power to meet every need of His children.

Understanding God's fatherhood removes any legitimate cause for worry, fear, or anxiety.

Paradoxically, believers do not receive the things they need by directly pursuing them. Instead they come indirectly; when they seek God's kingdom.

The cause of worry is seeking the things of this world, and the cause of contentment is seeking the things of God's kingdom and His righteousness.



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Philippians 4:11-13 - ¹¹ Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. ¹² I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. ¹³ I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Finally in verse 31 Jesus tell us to instead seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

In this passage we see the put off and put theology that is so prevalent in the NT.

We are to put off anxiety and worry and to put on seeking God's kingdom and His righteousness.

What is the kingdom of God? - Basileia (kingdom) does not refer to a geographical territory but to a dominion or rule. God's kingdom is God's sovereign rule.

What does it mean to seek the kingdom of God?- To seek first His kingdom is to seek first His rule, and His will and His authority. It means to desire above everything else to enter the kingdom of God; to turn from this world and to submit to his kingship and to live in such a way that we eagerly wait for his return and consummation of his kingdom.

So it means to seek salvation and forgiveness and be right with God and to then pursue the righteousness of God and bring your life into full submission to the will of God.

Seeking God's kingdom is to seek to win people into the kingdom, that they might be saved and God might be glorified.

If there is anything we should be anxious about it is seeking God's kingdom. We should seek that with all our care and energy.

Paul said in 2 Corinthians 11:28 – ²⁸ And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches."



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Charles Spurgeon said "throw your whole soul into the love and service of the Lord."

We are also to seek His righteousness. Instead of longing after the things of this world, we are to hunger and thirst for the things of the world to come, which are characterized above all else by God's perfect righteousness and holiness.

Making reasonable provisions for tomorrow is sensible, but to be anxious for tomorrow is foolish and unfaithful.

Our focus is not to be on food, clothes, money, houses, cares, or other material possessions, but rather on worshipping, serving, and proclaiming Christ, living obediently to the Word, and pursuing truth, holiness, and love.

And while we are doing that Jesus assures us that all our necessities of this life will be met.

And that's why the Lord is worthy of our whole hearted devotion and trust.

Col. 3:1-2 – "If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth."

In the comparative passage, Matthew adds: ³⁴ "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."

That each day has enough trouble of its own is not a call to worry about that trouble, but to concentrate on meeting the temptations, trials, opportunities, and struggles we have today.

There is enough trouble in each day without adding the distress of worry to it.

Paul again echoes Jesus discussion here when he says in Philippians 4:4-8 - ⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. ⁵ Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; ⁶ do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your



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requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

God promises His grace for tomorrow and for every day thereafter and through eternity. But He does not give us grace for tomorrow now. He only gives His grace a day at a time as it is needed, not as it may be anticipated.

And next week, Pastor Jody will continue to show us how this whole section of Scripture revolves around verse 32 that says ³² "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

Now with those things in mind, let me close with a few final thoughts.

For those who have placed faith in Christ, they have a heavenly father who will provide for their material needs. But our father in heaven has gone even farther.

He has provided not only our material needs, but he has provided our greatest spiritual need, by sending his Son to die on the cross for all our sins...all our anxieties, all our worries, all our fears. All those things were nailed to the cross.

There is no need for believers to be anxious about material or spiritual things. Christ alone satisfies and He is all we need!

But for those who have not placed faith in Christ, you do have something to be anxious about, you do have something to worry about, you do have something to fear.

Hebrews 10:31 – "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

It is a beneficial worry to have to be concerned about the state of one's soul. Tragically, most people do not care about their soul.

People throw their soul away without a care in the world. I have done street preaching and evangelism at major sporting events and festivals and it amazes me to see people, young people especially, rejoice that they are going to hell!

Would that the wicked would cry out to God for mercy, that God would grant them repentance and faith.



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That's the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. If you will repent of your sins and put your trust in what Jesus Christ did on the cross for you, he will forgive you and give you eternal life, where one day all anxiety, fear, and worry will be forever removed.

1 Peter 5:6-7 - ⁶Humble 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.

Prayer – Father we thank you for these helpful and yet convicting words of Jesus. We confess to you our sin of worry and materialism and greed and covetousness. Forgive us for these sins Lord and deliver us from the worry that goes with having our hearts set on the wrong things. Help us to trust you with the basic needs of our lives and to set our minds on the things above and to seek your kingdom and your righteousness first.