

Our passage for today was preceded by several powerful messages on why we don't need to worry. One was how we are not to fear man, for we are highly valued by God. Another was on acknowledging Jesus before men and not worry about what to say when we are brought to court. The passage just before this one was of the parable of the rich man who thought he was well off, but God called him a fool for living only for himself. It ended with an encouragement to be rich toward God.

Our passage for today continues in these themes by teaching us to be free of anxiety through knowing and believing in God's care for us. 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.* Luke 12:22,23 Jesus is commanding us to be free of anxiety as to our physical needs. Can we receive that? He tells us, His followers, to not be full of concern about acquiring the necessities of daily life such as food and clothing, because, as necessary as they are, life is so much more than those physical things. "Worry is the emotional reward for material preoccupation." Kent Hughes Our focus needs to be on what this gift of life is about. Like the rich farmer in the previous passage, our life is on loan from our Maker, and we will one day give an account for what we did with it.

Anxiety is the reason financial planners make a good living. We worry about our future. Will we have enough? Last week I gave you some reasons to be anxious, but also reasons to trust God instead. We are His children. Do you think a good Father such as ours would let us go around in rags and allow us to starve before it was our time to die? Worry is doubting God's goodness.

Jesus went on to explain from nature why it is reasonable for us to heed this command. 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!* Luke 12:24 Jesus told us in verse 7 we were more valuable to God than the birds. Notice the farming language, sow and reap, which links us back to the previous parable regarding greed. There seems to be an abundance of ravens and despite the fact they are not employed and have no secret storage facilities, they all have nice shiny black feathers and seem to be well fed. That is because God has so ordered nature that they would have enough. It is true for all creatures when nature is in balance. Since we are made in God's image, and especially since we know the price paid for our redemption (Revelation 5:9ⁱ), aren't we of much more value to God?

This does not mean we don't need to work. Apostle Paul is clear that we work so that we can have to share with those in need (Ephesians 4:28ⁱⁱ). He told the loafers in the church of Thessalonica that if they didn't work, they wouldn't get handouts (2 Thessalonians 3:10ⁱⁱⁱ). The proverbs say to consider the wisdom of ants in storing for winter (Proverbs 6:6-8^{iv}). It is the focus of our concern Jesus is addressing. Spiritual life is a much higher priority and should therefore be our chief concern. We should rest in the fact that God cares for our needs while appreciating the work He gives us to provide for our family and others.

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? Luke 12:25,26 Anxiety shortens life. Since that is the case, how counterproductive it is to be anxious about how long we will live. Why then are we anxious about the rest of life's issues? Remember, the majority of your worries never come to pass. The others aren't changed by worrying about them, so why worry? How much better to trust God!

God has numbered our days (Job 14:5^v). No matter what you do you cannot add to the days allotted you. I've heard people complain that they ate organic foods all their life and exercised daily and still ended up with cancer. Runners who boast about their health sometimes die of heart attacks. We can't understand why life is long or short. I have seen parents who were so consumed with making sure their child's life was perfect, and then lose all hope when he or she died before they did. But God knows why, and He has His timing and purposes we cannot yet see. We may not like it, but if we could see the alternative, we would understand and be grateful.

Jesus is telling us that our concern, our focus, must be on our relationship with God (Colossians 3:1,2^{vi}), not the physical needs or even the length of our own lives. Since we can't change these things God has ordained, why would we focus on them? Focus on the Giver and be grateful for today. Every day is a gift! That is why is called the present ☺. Trust God for all our needs and just do as He directs. It sounds so simple, but we have a difficult time believing it when things don't go as we had planned. That's why He gave us these illustrations from nature, so that we could relate (Romans 1:20^{vii}).

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! Luke 12:27,28 Clothing was a big concern in those days, for the price of a cloak was in that time what buying a car is like for us today. Jesus tells us to consider the flowers in the field. He can dress a flower like that even though they are so short lived and insignificant, so what are you worried about? You are His child. Have a little faith in your Father. He can make your junker of a car keep going or give you someone's trade in or supply the funds to buy what you need. But we can be sure God will supply every need of ours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:19^{viii}). It's a promise to those who trust Him and are generous.

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. Luke 12:29,30 Don't worry about food and drink or be constantly thinking about it. If you think that doesn't apply to you, try fasting for a couple days. The people of this world, fallen men and women, are constantly focused on the next meal. I won't ask you to raise your hand if you are thinking about lunch right now. That should not be the focus of the children of God. We should be trusting God for those things while we focus our daily lives on Him.

Eat healthy to care for the temple of God, your body (1 Corinthians 6:19^{ix}). But trust God to provide from meal to meal. It doesn't hurt us to miss a few (Philippians 4:11,12^x). In fact, it can be healthy for us to fast now and then. Most of us could stand to miss a few meals. Right? God has so blessed us that we have no reason to focus so much on food. Consider how our spiritual walk with the Lord would advance if we thought about the Lord more than we thought about food.

³¹ *Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you.* Luke 12:31 Here is one of the great promises of Jesus to put us at peace about our earthly needs. Rather than dwelling on our next meal or special coffee drink, or even our mortgage or rent, we should be thinking on God, reaching out to Him, communing with Him, and seeking His kingdom. The kingdom consists of the King and His subjects. So, seeking His kingdom includes the living the Great Commands to love God and one another (Mark 12:23^{xi}) and the Great Command of making disciples (Matthew 28:19^{xii}). Then we are assured of God's care and provision for our lives (10:27^{xiii}).

This is a contrast from the rich farmer who said he had plenty of food and stuff stored up so he could kick back and enjoy life. He had a no worry attitude, but it was based on the foolish notion that this world is all there is. **Our worry-free attitude is based on our relationship with our loving Father.** We know if we seek Him and His kingdom first and foremost, He has promised to meet all our needs. He will make our lives just the right length. He will hear our prayers. We rest in His love and faithfulness. That is much more reliable than a big barn. Barns can burn, thieves can steal, and health can fail, but nothing can change our God and His love and care for us. His love is everlasting and His provisions are endless.

Why should we be anxious? If we are anxious, we should examine our hearts to see if we really believe the Word? Our anxiety says we either don't believe it, or that we know His kingdom is not what we are seeking first and foremost. Think on that.

³² *"Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.* Luke 12:32 Fear not! It is uttered hundreds of times in Scripture, by angels, by Jesus, and by God. The crowd had just been told that they would be brought before rulers and authorities but not to worry about what they would say. They were told not to worry about food or clothes - and by extension that means money that would buy those things. If we seek the kingdom of God first, it will all be provided. Here in this verse Jesus tells them again, "Fear not." But then He adds why we need not fear. It is our Father's good pleasure to give us the kingdom. That is His instruction for our lives and the power to live it by the Holy Spirit along with the family of God for support.

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.* Luke 12:33 Since God will provide all we need, we don't need to build a bigger barn (12:18^{xiv}). Most of us have lots of things we no longer use or need. We can sell those things we don't need or use for His kingdom and with the proceeds we can help the needy or missions. Why not have a big garage sale and put out sign saying all the proceeds go to whatever cause you think God wants you support. You may get donations from neighbors to help raise more money. That is investing in heaven. The treasure there can't be stolen. Inflation won't eat away at it. Moths can't devour it. This is some of the best long-term investing advice we will ever hear, because it comes from a man who was practicing what He preached. Jesus left almost no possessions behind. What He left was His words that He invested every day into needy souls who were desperate to hear the reason for living. He invested those words in His disciples and that's why we have these truths. Now we are to invest them in others who desperately need to hear.

Think about the souls you know so weighed down and focused on making more money thinking it will somehow solve all their problems. Our walk-in closets are stuffed with clothes, and some of us may have more shoes than a whole village in Africa, but we worry about the future, our children, health, and million other things they we can't control no matter how hard we try.

Church, sometimes we forget how blessed we are that we have no need to sit around and fret about all those kinds of things. We hear the Word when it declares we are to cast all our cares on Him because He cares for us (1 Peter 5:7^{xv}). Will we act on it? Our yoke is easy, and our burden is light (Matthew 11:28-30^{xvi}). God loves us! We are His children. He is our faithful Father. Why should we ever worry?

³⁴ *For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.* Luke 12:34 If your heart is fixed on Jesus and the kingdom, your life will be investing in heaven. The more you do so, the more your heart is there. The more you invest in things of this world, the more your heart will be here. Where is your heart? When you die will you leave all your treasures behind, or will you go to your reward?

This is the natural break in the passage, but I want to go a bit further as the follow passage tells us how to live this out. ³⁵ *“Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning, ³⁶ and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks.* Luke 12:35-36 “There are 260 chapters in the New Testament, and Christ's return is mentioned no less than 318 times in those chapters. Statistically, one verse in twenty-five mentions the Lord's return. The only books that don't mention the Second Advent are Galatians (which is focused on refuting the Judaizers) and the tiny letters of 2 and 3 John.”^{xvii}

Be constantly mindful that at any moment you may find yourself in the presence of the Lord. We don't know when our day to die will come, but we do know it is coming. We don't know when the Lord will return, but we know He will (Matthew 24:36^{xviii}). Living in a state of expectation for that moment will always affect our present choices. The church has always expected the Lord's return in every stage of history. That is spiritually healthy and Scriptural (Revelation 22:7^{xix}). This continual expectation helps us to obey the previous command to not be anxious about material things.

Brother Lawrence applied this in a different way. Instead of expectation of his last day on earth, he always endeavored to stay aware of God's constant presence with him. His book is called *The Practice of the Presence of God*. It is a tiny book and is quite repetitive, but I consider it a must read. He found that conditioning one's self with the help of the Holy Spirit to always live in an awareness of God with you was the quickest way to spiritual maturity. It is a similar idea to what Jesus is saying here. Servants of the living God should constantly be attentive to their Master (Matthew 25:4-7^{xx}).

Jesus' example is of the master returning at a late hour and knocking on the door of His home. If all the servants are asleep, he will have to pound on the door until someone wakes up. Instead, they are to be dressed for service and have their lamps lit, ready to open the door and greet him. That is simply doing their job as it should be done.

Will you be ready when He comes, or will you be thinking of what was left undone (17:32^{xxi})? What plans did God have for your life that are yet to be fulfilled? Instead of being anxious about passing material things, we should be focused on the good

works He planned in advance for us to do (Ephesians 2:10^{xxii}). When you see Him in the clouds and hear the trumpet sound will your heart be overjoyed to leave the things of this world behind and go to your reward, or will you be saddened that your focus had been on the things that didn't matter?

As God ordains our passages and timing, today is Yom Teruah – the blowing of the trumpets on the Jewish calendar. When the approximate time approached, priests would search for the sighting of the sliver of the new moon. As soon as it was sighted the trumpet would sound and the doors of the temple would remain open for short amount of time. Those in Jerusalem who heard the trumpet would immediately head to the temple before the doors closed. It might be seen in the day or night. No one knew just when, so they would listen carefully as they went about their day. If it was night, they kept their lamps lit and dressed to arrive on time. Jesus used this special day as an illustration in this parable and a several others. We are always to listen for trumpet of the Lord's voice (Revelation 1:10^{xxiii}) but also for that last trumpet that calls us home (1 Corinthians 15:51,52^{xxiv}).

I know every generation thinks that it is the last. That's good. It helps us live this instruction. But I see the decline of our culture and the rise of the tech world and AI where in China the government uses facial recognition to record your every move and gives scores for your citizenship and support of the regime and penalizes you for acting in any way that is deemed anti-social, such as sharing Christ with others. I wonder how long it can be before the anti-christ arises and uses these tools to enforce the mark of the beast. I hope it comes soon, because the sooner it comes, the sooner I see the One I am living for. Maranatha! Come quickly Lord Jesus (Revelation 22:20^{xxv}).

In the meantime, seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Keep your lamps burning. Labor for the things that last (John 6:27^{xxvi}). Don't forsake the assembling of yourselves together but encourage one another and so much the more as you see the day approaching (Hebrews 10:25^{xxvii}). Let us live expecting His return, free from worry because we are seeking His kingdom first and know that He will meet all our need.

Questions

- 1 What was the first command in this passage? What is the reason for it?
- 2 What are the first two examples from nature?
- 3 Who sets food and drink as a priority?
- 4 What are we to seek after?
- 5 What promise is ours if we do?
- 6 What does anxiety reveal about us?
- 7 What do our values reveal?
- 8 How then should we live each day?
- 9 What is the focus of much of the New Testament?
- 10 Are you ready for it?

i Revelation 5:9 (ESV)

⁹ And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation,

ii Ephesians 4:28 (ESV)

²⁸ Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.

iii 2 Thessalonians 3:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat.

iv Proverbs 6:6-8 (ESV)

⁶ Go to the ant, O sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise. ⁷ Without having any chief, officer, or ruler, ⁸ she prepares her bread in summer and gathers her food in harvest.

v Job 14:5 (ESV)

⁵ Since his days are determined, and the number of his months is with you, and you have appointed his limits that he cannot pass,

vi Colossians 3:1-2 (ESV)

¹ 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.

vii Romans 1:20 (ESV)

²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

viii Philippians 4:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

ix 1 Corinthians 6:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own,

x Philippians 4:11-12 (ESV)

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.

xi Mark 12:33 (ESV)

³³ And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices."

xii Matthew 28:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

xiii Luke 10:27 (ESV)

²⁷ And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself."

xiv Luke 12:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ And he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods.

xv 1 Peter 5:7 (ESV)

⁷ casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

xvi Matthew 11:28-30 (ESV)

²⁸ 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. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

^{xvii} Hughes, Kent - Preaching the Word - Luke, Volume II: That You May Know the Truth

xviii Matthew 24:36 (ESV)

³⁶ "But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.

xix Revelation 22:7 (ESV)

⁷ "And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."

xx **Matthew 25:4-7 (ESV)**

4 but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps.

5 As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept.

6 But at midnight there was a cry, 'Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.'

7 Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps.

xxi **Luke 17:32 (ESV)**

32 Remember Lot's wife.

xxii **Ephesians 2:10 (ESV)**

10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

xxiii **Revelation 1:10 (ESV)**

10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet

xxiv **1 Corinthians 15:51-52 (ESV)**

51 Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.

xxv **Revelation 22:20 (ESV)**

20 He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

xxvi **John 6:27 (ESV)**

27 Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal."

xxvii **Hebrews 10:25 (ESV)**

25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.