

Matthew 6:25-34

Ain't Nothing to Worry About

One does not need a handful of statistics to know that despite American wealth, influence, and opportunity, we are paralyzed by stress, worry, anxiety, and depression. This isn't a new phenomenon. Life has always been difficult and knowing how to handle it can be mysterious. As chapter 6 of Matthew concludes, Jesus addresses the spiritual issue of anxiety head on. With Jesus's help, let us explore a few practical points of application regarding this issue.

First, consider **The Surprise** regarding anxiety. Throughout the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus has been concerned with the source of things. Previously, he showed us the importance of the heart, the eyes, and the soul (Matthew 6:19-24). The biggest surprise in addressing anxiety is its connection to Pride. CS Lewis is attributed with the quote, "Humility is not less of ourselves but thinking of ourselves less." This is a crucial error in false humility. In an effort to not be prideful we utilize language that is anything but humble.

Notice who is at the center of attention in Jesus's discussion. Read the pronouns in verse 25, "what *you* will eat or what *you* will drink, nor about *your* body, what *you* will put on." Nothing will trigger your anxiety more than pride. Often, we overthink conversations and events throughout the day and from our past. We replay the tone we had, the words we used, or how awkward we felt we were. As we replay the scenario, our anxiety builds up. "Why am I so awkward?" "No wonder no one likes me." "Did I ever get that food out of my teeth?" "If I knew they were going to be there, I would have worn something better." "I'm destined to be a cat person forever." Notice that the center of that conversation is the self.

Anxiety convinces us we are more important than we are. I have noticed an increase in social anxiety among young Americans. Increasingly, they can't order food at a restaurant. Why is that? They overanalyze every part of the situation. To our surprise, the waitress does not care about our "uh's," our indecisiveness, our choices, our hair, or our voice. What they want is for us to order and then to take our money. We are the one thinking about ourselves. They aren't!

If you want to be free from anxiety, choose humility. Notice that Jesus directs our attention elsewhere. In verse 26, he tells us to look at the birds who do not sow, reap, or gather, and yet God takes care of them. Likewise, look at the flowers of the field (vs. 28) who are clothed beautifully without chasing the latest fashion. Jesus is utilizing a classic greater/lesser argument which shows that if God takes care of them, he'll take care of us.

Secondly, consider **The Source** of our anxiety. Anxiety is an attack on two major theological truths. The first is an attack on God as both Creator and Sustainer. The doctrine of Creation is crucial to

our spiritual health. Scripture is clear that God creates without error or mistake. Every brushstroke in the cosmos and every atom on earth is placed exactly where he desired. That is true for you and me. You are not a mistake. To suggest otherwise is a theological statement. Your existence is an intentional act of God's plan. Act like it.

Secondly, God is both Sovereign and Provident. As our Sovereign Lord, he is in absolute control. Nothing escapes his gaze. As our Providential God, all of history is under his authority and is headed toward a climactic end resulting in his eternal glory manifesting throughout his creation. You are part of that sovereign story. Why do we trust God for heavenly provisions but not for our daily ones? We believe that God redeems, prepares heaven for us, and holds us in his hands. And yet, we struggle to trust him in our daily lives. We worry about tomorrow while anxious about today. We're paralyzed by the decisions our kids make, monthly bills, bank accounts, and reputations. Why worry about earthly things and not heavenly ones? We no more control our heavenly destiny than we do our daily needs.

A third point of application from Jesus's discussion regards **The Significance**. Anxiety comes when we elevate the unimportant and demote the important. Jesus asks an interesting question, "Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?" (vs. 25b). On surface, it may sound like Jesus thinks necessities aren't important. Obviously, food, clothing, and shelter are priorities. We can't survive without them. At the same time, giving our full attention to them at the cost of our faith stirs anxiety. Anxiety doesn't feed the hungry, keep us healthy, or clothe the naked. Nor will anxiety secure joy, contentment, peace, or love.

Finally, consider **The Search**. In verses 32-33, Jesus contrasts the Gentiles (that is, non-believers outside the covenant grace of God who do not look to him for all their needs, both physically and spiritually) and believers who seek for peace. The "Gentiles" do not look outside of themselves for help, but inside themselves. No wonder they are so miserable. They seek after things that are not cures for anxiety – fame, fortune, power, influence, intimacy, and honor. Disciples of Christ, on the other hand, *seek* God's Kingdom and his righteousness *first*. In so doing, the Lord takes care of the rest.

Seek Christ. Seek his wisdom. Seek his glory. Seek his Kingdom. And let worry bother someone else.

In an article on *Christianity Today*, the author tells of their experience as a swimming instructor who spent an enormous amount of time trying to teach children to float. She would tell them to put their ears in the water and their belly buttons out of it. "When I count to 2," she would instruct, "you won't feel my hands underneath you, but they're still there." As soon as she'd say, "two," most of the children would frantically jerk their knees toward their chin and then flail their arms causing them to sink.

The key to floating is assuming a posture of rest, but when people panic, they sink. The same is true with worry and anxiety. Assume a posture of humble faith knowing that God has you. Let him worry about the water, the weather, the bills, the kids, the deadlines, and the rest.