

Remember Your Purpose

When panic strikes, the way to find purpose is by seeking Jesus and His Kingdom and living in the moment.



Matthew 6:25-34; Ephesians 5:15-17

May 24, 2020

(Matthew 6:25-34) ²⁵ "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? ²⁶ 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? ²⁷ Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? ²⁸ "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. ²⁹ Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ³⁰ 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—you of little faith? ³¹ So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³² For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³ But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. ³⁴ Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

(Ephesians 5:15-17) ¹⁵ Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶ making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. ¹⁷ Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.

COMMUNITY – CONNECTING WITH ONE ANOTHER

- What is your go-to coping mechanism for dealing with stress and/or worry?
- Do you consider worry a sin? Explain your answer.
- Specifically, why is worry a problem in the life of Christ-followers?

The presence or absence of worry measures our trust in God. As believers, we aspire to a single focus on God and a loyalty toward Him. In this passage, Jesus taught that worry is unproductive. Worry keeps us from fulfilling the kingdom purposes to which He has called us. God uses all situations to accomplish His purposes, and He wants us to trust Him and join Him in that.

CONTENT – EXPLORING GOD'S STORY

Have a volunteer read Matthew 6:25-34

- How might Jesus desire for His people in 2020 to apply His words from this passage to the coronavirus pandemic?
- What truths in this passage remind you to trust God in moments when panic strikes?

Jesus established the fact that worry is illogical for the child of God. If God is the Creator of everything in the world, including us, then He will also provide for our needs. Faith calls for trust in a loving and personal God at work in the world. Worry shows a lack of trust. Jesus' teaching by no means ignores the reality of sickness and struggle among the people of the earth. However, Jesus' clear teaching for believers is to trust God above all. If the Lord faithfully provides for the needs of mere creatures, how much more will He provide for us as His children?

- How does knowing that "your Heavenly Father already knows all your needs," help you face the future?

We often think our fears are perfectly valid, but Jesus said otherwise. Jesus could not be clearer in this passage. He doesn't want us to fear the future. Jesus said anxiety is paralyzing and draining and called us to focus on what we can confidently know about the will of God. As we have studied God's Story, we

have seen evidence of His sovereign plan and His faithfulness to fulfill all of His promises. As we look at Ruth next week, she will lose her husband and leave her homeland, but this is all part of God's plan to bring her into the family of Boaz and lineage of Jesus. Even in a pandemic, we can continue to trust Him.

- **What is God's will for you today (v. 33)?**
- **What would it look like for believers to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness when the world is changing or even shutting down around us?**

God is in control and doesn't need our frantic worrying to sustain the universe. We don't have to be in charge because we serve a God who controls everything. Romans 8:28 assures us that God is working all things together for our good as those called according to His purpose, which means seeking Him and His righteousness above all else. We can be confident that He will carry His kingdom purposes on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus (Philippians 1:6). We demonstrate that confidence when we choose to make the most of the opportunities we are given, focusing on Him rather than the worries of the world.

Have a volunteer read Ephesians 5:15-17

- **Give some practical examples of what it looks like to live as wise people in the middle of the coronavirus pandemic. Why do you think the first sign of wisdom that Paul gave was the careful use of time?**

Living in wisdom means taking every opportunity to glorify God and reflect the gospel to those around us. When we resolve to live in the light, we choose to pursue Christ above all worldly pursuits. Part of the reason we do this is so our lives will testify to others about God's grace, mercy, and love.

- **What's the difference between living carefully and living fearfully?**

The verb rendered "making the most of" is literally, "redeem" or "buy back." Once gone, wasted opportunities can never be recovered. In other words, we will never have the same exact opportunity we have today to advance God's kingdom in the world around us. Thus, we are called to take advantage of moments as we are given them. We are to take care to use opportunities to the full because the days are evil. Paul noted two contrasting ways to live. One is the way of the unwise; the other is the way of the wise (sensible or prudent). God's wisdom has already been lavished on believers (Ephesians 1:8; see also 1:17; 3:10). Thus, to live wisely is simply to live in accordance with the principles God has made clear through His Word.

- **How can we know if we're being "foolish" with our time (v. 17)?**
- **Do you think our problem with God's will is understanding it or obeying it? How can we be intentionally careful when it comes to the Lord's will?**

COMMISSION – ENGAGING IN GOD'S STORY

- **What do we risk missing spiritually if we give way to panic and anxiety during the coronavirus pandemic?**
- **What unique opportunities might God have for His people during this time? How might the situation look different if all believers first sought the kingdom of God together?**
- **What steps can we take to make the most of the opportunity in this time that believers and unbelievers alike recognize as evil?**

PRAYER: Thank God for His constant love, care, and provision. Ask Him to help you focus on what you know about His will rather than what you don't. Invite Him to help you recognize the brevity of life and the urgency to seek His kingdom first above all things, turning your focus from your worries to the advancement of His kingdom.

Matthew 5:25-34

6:25. Jesus' point could be translated as "stop worrying." The questions in 6:25b imply, "If God is the provider of life and body, He will also provide for their sustenance."

6:26. In this verse Jesus came to the first of two illustrations, supporting His main theme in verse 25. Note the use again of the phrase heavenly Father, especially in this context of God's loving care. Jesus was not advocating waiting lazily for God's provision but avoiding anxiety as we take responsibility for obtaining it.

6:27. This verse moves away from the specific example of food to the broader picture of anxiety in general, showing its utter futility. Jesus was saying, "If you try to take your basic provision into your own hands, you will find you do not have the power over life and death. Only God has this power, and He will sustain you as long as His plan intends."

6:28-30. Here we are given a more fully developed picture of the second illustration supporting Jesus' main point in verse 25. Verse 30 is a conditional statement, assuming the truth of the condition. So it could just as easily be translated, "Since that is how God clothes the grass of the field." The qualifying phrase, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, emphasizes the transience and worthlessness of the grass. If God cares so much for something of little value, He will certainly care even more for us who are of much greater value to Him. This passage is not only an exhortation to trust the Father, but it is also an affirmation of our great worth in His eyes.

The words you of little faith in 6:30 should be translated literally "little faith ones" (and is used elsewhere in the New Testament only in Matt. 8:26; 14:31; 16:8; 17:20; Luke 12:28). While it can be a confrontational term, it may also be endearing. In this context, Jesus' tone was not scolding, but coaxing and reasoning. He was asking, "Do you trust your Father or not?"—not with a slap in our face, but with an arm around our shoulder. Jesus was not belittling His disciples; He was encouraging them upward.

6:31-33. With these three verses, having illustrated and supported His theme, Jesus built His case. In verse 32, He made two more points about anxiety. First, it was downright pagan; anxiety was the attitude of those who were not a part of God's kingdom. Second, it was totally unnecessary to worry about what to eat or drink or wear, because your heavenly Father knows that you need them.

Three times in verses 32 and 33, we find the phrase all these things. We might imagine Jesus using it somewhat disparagingly. This was not to belittle the importance of basic necessities, but to place them at the back of the mind of His disciples, far behind His kingdom and righteousness in importance. "All these things" are what pagans (and the Pharisees) scrambled after. "All these things" are thoroughly known by the Father. "All these things" will fall into place when we put God's kingdom and righteousness in its proper place and serve the kingdom's interests.

6:34. Jesus restated for the third time His command, Do not worry. This time He broadened it to include any possible anxieties we may have for tomorrow. As an expression of trust in his heavenly Father, the kingdom servant is to live in the present, trusting the Father for the grace to cover the needs of the present. "When tomorrow comes, the Father will provide the grace to cover its needs also," is the implied assurance.

Ephesians 5:15-17

5:15-17. The world in which we live is filled with dangers and deceptions. It is not always easy to live an enlightened life even when we want to. We can get tripped up or ambushed by events and people without even being aware of the danger. We must be very careful to live our life rooted in wisdom, using our time wisely. Not to do so would be foolish. The will of the Lord is that we live carefully, cautiously, always matching our lifestyle with the teachings of Scripture.