

The Sermon on the Mount

Lesson 11: Trading Anxiety for Trust -- Matthew 6:25-34

It often comes at three in the morning. The house is quiet, everyone else is asleep, and your mind will not stop. The bills, the diagnosis, the child who is struggling, the job that feels uncertain, the future you cannot control. Worry has a way of expanding to fill the dark, magnifying every fear until it seems to tower over you. Most of us know that particular ache intimately. We carry it through our days like a low-grade fever, this constant, gnawing concern about whether things will be all right. And then Jesus, who knew poverty and homelessness and an uncertain future better than any of us, looks us in the eye and says, gently but firmly, "Do not be anxious."

He says it not once but again and again through this passage, like a parent calming a frightened child. "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." And then he points us outside, to the world his Father made. Look at the birds, he says. They do not plant or harvest or store up in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Consider the lilies, how they grow. They do not labor or spin, yet not even Solomon in all his glory was dressed like one of these. The God who clothes the grass of the field will surely care for you.

Notice the question at the center of his argument: "Are you not of more value than they?" This is not a lecture about positive thinking or a command to simply try harder not to worry. It is an invitation to see the world rightly, as the handiwork of a Father who feeds sparrows and dresses wildflowers and counts you as far more precious than either. Worry, Jesus suggests, is finally a failure to know the Father, a forgetting of whose hands hold our lives. The cure for anxiety is not denial; it is trust, grounded in the character of the God who made us and loves us.

Then Jesus gives the great reorientation that turns everything: "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." The anxious heart is a heart that has made the wrong thing first, that has put food and clothing and security at the center where God belongs. Jesus invites us to a wholesale reordering of life around the kingdom, with the promise that a faithful Father can be trusted with the rest. Before you read another line, name the worry that has been sitting on your chest, and let Jesus speak his patient words over it: do not be anxious; your Father knows; seek first his kingdom.

Group Discussion: Jesus repeatedly tells his followers not to be anxious and points them to a Father who feeds the birds and clothes the lilies. Why is worry so deeply rooted in us even when we believe in God, and how does Jesus' remedy go deeper than simply telling us to stop worrying?

Personal Reflection: Name honestly the worry that most often sits on your chest, the thing your mind returns to in anxious moments. What would it mean to entrust that specific worry to the Father Jesus describes here, and what makes that hard for you?

Read Matthew 6:25–34

Study Questions

1. Jesus commands, “Do not be anxious about your life” (v. 25), and repeats it through the passage. What is the difference between sinful, faithless anxiety and legitimate concern or responsible planning, and why does Jesus treat persistent worry as a serious matter and not just an unfortunate habit?
2. Think about how worry actually functions in your life. What does the amount of energy you give to anxious thoughts reveal about where you are placing your trust, and where you may be forgetting the Father’s care?
3. Jesus points to the birds and the lilies as evidence that the Father provides for his creation, then asks, “Are you not of more value than they?” (v. 26–30). How does this argument from God’s care for creation expose the real root of our worry as a failure to know the Father’s heart toward us?
4. Where do you most struggle to believe that you are precious to God and that he will faithfully care for you? What experiences or fears have made it hard to rest in the Father’s love and provision?

5. Jesus asks, "Which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?" (v. 27). What does this reveal about the actual usefulness of worry, and how does anxiety promise control while delivering the opposite?
6. Consider a situation you have been worrying about lately. Honestly, what has the worry accomplished, and what would it look like to replace that anxious rehearsing with prayer and trust this week?
7. Jesus says the Gentiles, those who do not know God, "seek after all these things," but "your heavenly Father knows that you need them all" (v. 31-32). How should knowing that the Father already knows our needs change the way we approach our daily concerns and our praying?
8. Where have you been carrying a need as though it were unknown to God or up to you alone to solve? What would change in your heart if you truly believed the Father already knows exactly what you need?
9. Jesus gives the great reorientation: "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you" (v. 33). What does it mean to seek first the kingdom, and how is the Father's promise of provision different from a prosperity-gospel promise that faith will make us wealthy or that God will give us whatever we want? Connect this to the kind of trust and the kind of treasure God is actually offering.

10. Look back over the whole passage. Jesus has invited you to trade anxiety for trust in a faithful Father and to reorder your life around his kingdom. Where is he putting his finger on your worry most directly, and what is one specific way you will seek first his kingdom and entrust your fears to him this week?

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Reflect on these passages: Philippians 4:6–7, being anxious for nothing but bringing everything to God in prayer, and the peace that guards our hearts; 1 Peter 5:6–7, casting all our anxieties on him because he cares for us; Psalm 23, the Lord as the shepherd who provides and leads; Matthew 10:29–31, the Father's care down to the sparrow and the hairs of our head; Hebrews 13:5–6, contentment grounded in God's promise never to leave us.