
THE BLESSED LIFE

Part 10 - Don't Worry

Bobby McFerrin – “Don’t Worry, Be Happy”

It turns out that he wrote that song because he saw it on a poster in his friend’s house, with a quote from an Indian mystic (in fact, a guy who thought he was God for the 20th century!). It’s interesting that when it comes to faith, to trying to find out what the creator God, or any other ‘god’, or any sense of transcendence wants for us – everyone comes to a place of not worrying, and being happy.

Worry and happiness are opposites and I think that, as we look at the Sermon on the Mount, and today’s passage, that is borne out in Jesus’ words. It’s a picture of the good life – the kingdom life – God’s best for us. But, as we have seen all along, how we get to that place – to the place of blessing, or living a kingdom life – is different to the ways of the world, of other religious institutions and worldviews.

Fret Not Yourself

Matthew 6:25-34

“Don’t be anxious about your life”: Jesus gets serious here. He uses a command, an instruction. He’s giving clear instructions for kingdom living. So how do we reconcile that to our current world?

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare suggest that 17% of Australians experience an anxiety disorder. That’s almost 3.5 million people (2024 statistics).

But the worst thing you could say to someone with anxiety was ‘don’t worry’, and to someone with depression, ‘cheer up’. So is Jesus just throwing caution to the wind? Is He disregarding any pastoral care awareness and going, “You people who are sick with a mental health disorder? Get over it! Come on – think yourself well! Get better!”? I don’t think so...

He came to heal the sick. He’s not coming to condemn. I don’t believe He’s telling people who suffer clinically diagnosed anxiety to just get over it.

Jesus is doing is putting up some fences for us in life, to guard the way for the 83% that don’t suffer from anxiety, to help us stay strong and well – IN HIM – and be a place of strength for those who need support and wellness.

Meanwhile, Back At The Mount

Jesus starts this section with 'Therefore'... which means we need to ask ourselves a specific question. Anyone? "What's it there for?"

There's two in this passage – the end has a therefore, so let's start there and work back...

Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble." – Matthew 6:34 (ESV)

Everything that precedes this statement will help us understand why Jesus is telling us not to be anxious about tomorrow.

A Sharp Dressed Man (And Woman)

We are instructed not to worry about what we eat, drink, or our body generally, and what we put on it. These are basic provisions for daily living. Jesus draws some interesting parallels to prompt our thinking about this:

- + The birds – they don't worry about it! But they eat! There's food for them!
- + The flowers in the field – they don't try to earn money, or make their own clothes, yet God 'clothes' them in splendour.

Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.

Do we spend time and energy and faith WORRYING about these things, or do we put them in the right order that they deserve – things that God cares about, because He cares about you?

God Sets a Precedent

Matthew's gospel is presenting Jesus as the new and better Moses – the new and better covenant bringer.

"I have led you forty years in the wilderness. Your clothes have not worn out on you, and your sandals have not worn off your feet." – Deuteronomy 29:5

"And the manna ceased the day after they ate of the produce of the land. And there was no longer manna for the people of Israel, but they ate of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year." – Joshua 5:12 (ESV)

He knows what you need – it's not a surprise! But this all sits in a 'therefore' as well – which means we need to ask? "What's it there for?"

See Previous Messages

This 'therefore' actually hits back into two previous sections.

1. Matthew 6:19-21,24. You cannot serve God and Money. THEREFORE... Where is your heart at? What do you desire? We all desire something – we all desire a kingdom to belong to. You may say that you love God and want to serve Him alone, but if our safety and security and our treasure lies on the things of this world – the results of money or the pursuit thereof, then worry is the result.
2. Matthew 6:9-11. Give us our daily bread! We can let him know we have needs – but none of these things are a surprise! He gave the Israelites food and water when they were being punished for disobedience!

Remember Matthew 7:9-11

And so, at the centre of this whole section, like the gem set in the ring, is this simple instruction of Jesus:

But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

And how do we do it? Seek God first – seek His kingdom, His rule and reign, His way of living life, with His goals and His outcomes. Why? Because when we get this in the right order, everything else works itself out.

So how do we seek first His kingdom? How do we fix our attention, our affection, our intention on Him?

We walk and talk daily with Jesus! Couldn't be a better time – we're in a month of prayer in June – prayer is our daily lifeline to connect into seeking His kingdom – His plans, purposes, intentions for how life should be.

Is our prayer life saturated in getting to know Him, or telling Him to fix our mess? Are you taking the opportunity to hear His voice and see His heart toward the people around you?

Are we feeding ourselves daily on His word? Letting His words and His character and nature become our bread? Constantly reminding ourselves of His promises? Are we going to scripture from obligation, or to solve a problem, or are we getting to know Him?

The kingdom we give our attention and love to is the kingdom that will grow in our lives – so are we seeking first His kingdom, or another one?

Discussion Questions

1. What are some practical ways we can shift our focus from material needs to seeking God's kingdom?

Context: Focusing on material needs and possessions leads to worry and suggested daily prayer and immersing oneself in God's Word as ways to seek God's kingdom.

Application: What specific changes could you make in your daily routine to better prioritise seeking God's kingdom?

2. How does the passage from Matthew 6:25-34 help us understand the futility of worry?

Context: Jesus points out that worrying about what to eat, drink, or wear does not add anything positive to one's life and reminds His listeners that God takes care of the birds and flowers, so He will also take care of His followers.

Application: Share a specific time when you worried about a situation and later realised that worry was futile.

3. Why does Jesus stress the importance of seeking God's kingdom and righteousness first rather than pursuing material possessions?

Context: Worry, in this context, is the result of serving two masters: God and money. Seeking God's kingdom first leads to a worry-free life as we place our trust in God's provision.

Application: What can you do to prioritise God's kingdom and righteousness over material possessions in your own life?

4. What lessons can we learn from the examples of God providing for the Israelites in the wilderness and apply in our own lives?

Context: Daily prayer and immersing oneself in God's Word will align one's heart and desires with God's kingdom, helping to overcome worry and anxiety.

Application: Identify one or two tangible actions you can take this week to address any areas of anxiety or worry in your own life.