

Do Not Be Anxious

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[1 : 0 0] We can turn back to the passage which we read in Luke chapter 12 and we can read again in verse 29 down to verse 34.

And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried. For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them.

Instead seek His kingdom, and these things will be added to you. Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

Sell your possessions and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with money bags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys.

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Now we see in this passage that Jesus deals with the issue of anxiety.

[2 : 1 5] He instructs His disciples with these words. Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on.

For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. And we see how Jesus goes on to speak of the ravens and how God provides for them.

And He speaks of the flowers of the field and how the Lord provides for them also. But this teaching in relation to anxiety and fear is an important one.

It's important for this reason that it is very much connected with our faith and a proper apprehension, a laying hold of who God is and who He is for us.

Now I'm sure we've all been there one time or another, where we're in church, maybe it's through of you today. You're in church, but your mind is distracted.

[3 : 3 4] You can't settle your mind upon what is happening in church because your mind is going off to other things. Your thinking of a family member who isn't well, thinking of bereavement or loss, thinking of ordinary things in life also maybe that fill our thinking.

But distracted no matter what it is. You've experienced this I'm sure, where you have your mind being pulled in two ways. Now the word that's translated here in this passage as anxious, the original word in the Greek actually means to have your mind divided, your mind being pulled in two directions.

Now anxiety and the distraction that we experience, we don't maybe necessarily always connect these two things, but if you think about it, when your mind is being pulled away to something else when you're in the midst of doing something completely different, the reason that that usually happens more often than not is that there's some level of anxiety.

It might not be very intense, it might be pretty low key for instance. You don't have a huge level of anxiety if you're concentrating on what the score of a football game is going to be.

It's not, well maybe it is if you're obsessed with football, but if you're not obsessed with football, but have an interest in it, it's probably not a huge sense of anxiety. But it's this slight worry that maybe your team is going to lose.

[5 : 3 2] It's distracting you. It's not a very intense fear. But then at other times it may be a very intense fear that's there underlying if you're very, very concerned about a loved one and their health or some other kind of situation someone is going through a very hard time and you're really concerned about them.

Now of course in that kind of situation it's not wrong to be concerned about them. That's not what Jesus is talking about. He's not saying you should never think about these things.

He's saying to not have your mind pulled off the most important things to concentrate on these other things. And the reason for this is very, very simple because it doesn't make sense to worry about

these things if we know that God our Father is taking care of them.

It simply doesn't make any sense. If we know that all things are in God's hands, if we know that we can trust every situation into his care, then it doesn't make any sense whatsoever to be anxious about them.

Logically it doesn't make sense if we actually trust God in the matter. But this is the issue. That lack of faith is often at the very root of this issue.

[7 : 05] And Jesus is seeking to bring his disciples, to bring us also back to this place, to recognise that we need to address this issue and to seek his grace and his help and to come to a clearer understanding of how we can actually trust our God.

So I want us to think about these issues today and I want us to think through what we have at the end of this section and from verse 29 onwards in these three ways.

First of all, thinking about trusting our lives to God's Fatherly care. Secondly, seeking to live under God's Lordship and Kingdom.

To recognise how he actually governs our lives. And to live under that, to live with an awareness of that and to allow that truth to impact our lives.

And lastly, to think about reflecting in our lives God's grace and liberality to us.

[8 : 22] Understanding how amazing what God has done for us should have an impact on how we live our lives. If we know God's grace, in other words, it should begin to shape us into gracious people.

So first of all, then I want us to think about trusting our lives to God's Fatherly care. To focus in on this. Now this is a radical teaching because back then and nowadays, no matter who you're thinking about whether it's the poorest person living on the street or someone living in a palace.

We have a tendency to be very, very focused and maybe excessively focused on things that are key to our lives.

Food and drink. The clothing that we wear. These are necessary things. We need them. They are essential for our lives.

If we don't have food and drink, we die. If we don't have suitable clothing, we end up dying also.

Because, well, I mean, if you go out there without any clothes, you're not going to last very long.

[9 : 47] We need these things. These are essential because they are necessary for the preservation of our lives.

But this obsession with these things that Jesus is speaking about is an unhealthy one for the Christian anyway.

Well, I think it's unhealthy for anybody, but it's especially unhealthy for the Christian because it betrays a lack of trust in the one who has told us that he will provide for us.

Now that points us to the key to learning the lesson that Jesus is teaching here.

He is pointing us to God and to God's character. It is the character of our Father in heaven that Jesus is focusing in on here.

[10 : 56] And upon what that means for God's believing people. Now Jesus teaches in the first part of this section, he teaches about how God provides for the ravens and the clothing of the lilies, etc.

And in this way, he's highlighting the care of our Heavenly Father to provide for the birds and the flowers.

And yet there's something incredibly important to note here, and that is that God is not their Father in a special sense.

He's the Creator of all things, but he is the Father of his children in a special sense that he has brought them to himself into a special relationship with himself through faith in Jesus Christ.

And he has given them a special place before him that they will sit at his table, that they will be part of his household.

[12 : 15] But these other things don't have the special relationship. And we might say to ourselves, well, these, God isn't going to bother with these things, but that's not the case.

He does. God cares even for these. And if that's true, Jesus is really arguing from the lesser to the greater here.

And if that is true, then how much more is God the Father going to care for his own children?

How much of how much more value are you than the birds? If God so clothes the grass which is alive in the field today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you, all you of little faith?

Showing in this way, showing these words, that if God does this for the least, how much more is he going to do it for those who may have brought by faith in Jesus Christ into a special relationship with himself to be his adopted children?

[13:31] Jesus is emphasizing God's character as Father. In verse 30, he says this, for all the nations of the world seek after these things and your Father knows that you need them.

Now, that could also be translated, but your Father knows that you need them. And maybe that's a helpful way to think about this, that Jesus is making a contrast here.

The Gentile peoples who were not believers, Jesus is speaking really about the unbelieving world, they seek after these things, they're obsessed with these things.

But your Father knows that you need them. Your Father knows that you need them, and the emphasis really is on Father.

All others may receive from God's hand liberally, yet he is not, they're Father. So how much more liberally is he going to deal with his children?

[14:48] He is a faithful Father who never forsakes his children. He is the loving Father who works all things together for the good of his children.

He is the gracious Father who does not give us as we deserve, but according to the riches of his mercy. And our lack of faith is a failure to grasp and to fully believe the character of God, our Father, as he has revealed himself to us in his word.

God is more gracious, more loving, more caring towards his people than they often dare to believe. And it's as this truth lays hold of us, that we learn contentment in the place of distraction and anxiety.

It's as this truth captivates us, that we're set free to live our lives without the shackle of distracted fear.

[16:05] May the Lord cause this truth to grab us, to grab you and me, and to drag us out of the mire into which our darting and our divided minds often drag us.

May the Lord pull us out of that as this truth lays hold upon our souls. Now that is infinitely more than we deserve, but it is exactly how our gracious God and Father deals with his children.

I want us now to move on and think about seeking to live under God's Lordship and Kingdom. In verses 31 and 32, Jesus says this, instead seek his Kingdom and these things will be added to you. Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom. Now again we see God's character as Father being emphasised here by Jesus, but also connected very strongly and clearly with the concept of the Kingdom of God.

Now Kingdom here speaks significantly though, maybe not exclusively, of the authority and the Lordship of God in the life of the believer.

[17:40] He is King for his people. He is the ultimate authority in the life of the Christian.

Now we've already seen the authority that God has to provide for his own as he sees fit and it's apparent that there's a connection between that thought and this one here of God as King.

Now the connection may not be immediately obvious, but the connection is to be understood through the relationship that a subject has to his or her sovereign.

If the subject of a Kingdom, a subject in a Kingdom displays bravery on the battlefield for instance, this is often rewarded with authority as a recognition of the commitment of that subject to the sovereign's rule and authority.

You see this in the armed forces particularly, but you see it in all kinds of other spheres as well. You see how in the armed forces if someone displays significant bravery they may be rewarded with greater authority within the structure of the armed forces.

[19:06] They may even be given a place in matters of government depending on the kind of level that at or the experience or knowledge that they have.

But there's a recognition there that because they have served the Kingdom, in our case the Queen's, the sovereign's rule and authority, there's a recognition of that.

Now we recognise God's lordship and Kingdom in our lives and we seek that that same lordship and authority be established in our lives by the submission of faith and also through sharing the Gospel so that in other people's lives they may also come to recognise God's authority and bow the knee to him and serve him.

But also in that context we trust that God will provide or we should. For instance the person in the armed forces trusts that they will be provided for.

If they're out on the battlefields there's a whole part of the army committed to supplying their needs. [20 : 36] Bringing food to them, bringing ammunition and whatever else they need, bringing that to them. They trust that that's going to be the case and of course sometimes that doesn't happen as it should.

But they trust that that is going to happen. But of course it can fail sometimes and in that sense the trust that they have isn't absolute.

But there is every reason why we should have absolute trust in our God to meet our needs and to fulfil all that he has promised in relation to us.

Now this doesn't mean that we are to sponge off other people but we don't allow our hearts to be distracted by food and clothing because we recognise God's sovereign rule over our lives and we seek that kingdom would grow.

That his sovereign influence would spread in the lives and in the hearts of people. Now of course in one sense God is sovereign over all things but man's heart, human hearts are in rebellion against God and it is through the Gospel that human hearts are brought back to a place of submission to his authority once again.

[22 : 16] And if we claim to believe that he is our sovereign, that he is ruling on our behalf over all things in our lives then we should trust him and that should be part of our witness and our testimony that we trust him.

That he will meet our needs. Not that he is going to give us necessarily more than we need, although sometimes the Lord allows that but that he will meet our needs.

So we are reassured once again that for the believer God will grant all the blessings of his kingdom. We sit at the king's table and eat of the king's provision but as more than mere subjects we sit at his table rather as his children who greatly loved.

May we seek to live under his lordship, his sovereign rule in that way and to live lives that are characterised by that reality that we actually grasp this truth that he does indeed rule over all things in our lives and that trust is evident in our lives directed towards God as our great king.

Lastly I want us to reflect very briefly on the fact that knowing these truths and these truths with these truths impacting our lives that it should have an impact upon how we live our lives.

[24 : 16] Jesus says in verses 33 and 34, sell your possessions and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with money bags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys.

For where your treasure is there will your heart be also. Sadly many down through the ages have seen the instruction to sell their possessions and give to the needy as a means of finding acceptance with God and a means of earning a place in heaven.

Now what Jesus is saying here is very far from that but sadly many have misinterpreted as that. We cannot earn a place in heaven, only Jesus was able to earn a place in heaven for his people.

This rather is a call to reflect in our lives as those who have understood the great grace of God in Jesus Christ.

To reflect that in our lives. Having received the abundance of blessing that God has poured out in His creation.

[25 : 33] But also the even greater blessing that we have in Jesus. We are encouraged to respond by demonstrating that that reality has actually touched our lives.

That it has changed us. That it has made us a different people. That as God's children we seek to reflect His character in our lives.

Not that we are able to work that out ourselves. That we are able to make ourselves like that. But that God works in His children to make them more like Him.

So as God's children we are called to reflect His grace in our lives.

That we would be willing therefore in line with what Jesus says here to sell our possessions. Not to earn God's favour but to demonstrate that we are gracious and liberal with what we have in the same way that God is or similar to how God is.

[26 : 50] Not exactly the same but following something of the pattern that He has shown us. So that we love because He first loved us.

Not only loving God in response but showing the reality of that by also showing love and care and concern to those around us in a similar way.

Recognising how awesome that reality of God's love towards us is that we also seek to share that love with those around us. And it may well be that our lack of liberality, a lack of generosity of spirit, may be one reason why people think of the church in general.

Of course we know that this is not true of everyone or every congregation. But people see one person showing a lack of liberality of spirit who aren't gracious towards those around them and yet they profess to follow Jesus.

And they say well if that's how these so called Christians are why am I going to follow Jesus? Now of course we recognise, I hope anyway that we recognise that one person whose life is not changed as it should be doesn't undo the truth of the Gospel.

[28 : 26] But we also should recognise and take it to heart that our testimony as believers, as followers in Jesus if that is what we are, that it should be something that we are concerned about, that we pray about, that we seek God's grace for in relation to day by day, that God would enable us to live for Him in a way that would glorify and honour His name and that would point others to Jesus.

We serve a God who saves. We serve a God who has saved us graciously and liberally if we trust in and follow Jesus.

And that should have a profound impact on our lives. We also recognise that He is the one who sustains and He shows us great grace and liberality in that way also.

So may we, each one of us, place out confidence in Him and may we seek to live under His Lordship and to do so in a way that reflects our understanding, our grasp of the utterly undeserved grace that He has lavished upon His people in Jesus.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank You and we praise You for Your Word and we do pray that You would seal Your Word from our hearts, may Your Word be like seed in good ground in our hearts, that it would grow and bring forth much fruit to the glory of Your Name.

[30 : 28] May our lives truly bear testimony to the grace that You have shown us in Jesus. All that we ask then we ask in the precious Name of Jesus and for His praise and glory and honour.

Amen. Let's draw our service to conclusions singing from Psalm 145 and sing Psalms. We're going to sing from the middle of verse 13 on page 190 if you're using the books.

Open to verse 18 so three stanzas from the middle of verse 13. The Lord is faithful to His promises, to all that He has made, His love is shown.

The Lord Himself upholds all those who fall and lifts up everyone who is bowed down. All eyes are raised expectantly to You and in due season You supply their food, You open wide Your hands to all that live and satisfy their needs with what is good.

The Lord is just and good in all His ways. He shows His love to all that He has made. The Lord is near to all who call Him, to all who call in truth to Him for aid.

[31 : 51] And these words at the end of verse 18 are really important because they remind us that the Lord hears the cry of the broken heart of those who recognise their great need of Him.

The proud and the arrogant do not enter into the blessings described here but those who call on Him.

Let's sing His praise. The Lord is faithful to His promises, to all that He has made, His love is shown.

The Lord Himself upholds all those who fall and lifts up everyone who is bowed down.

All eyes are raised expectantly to You and in due season You supply their food, You open wide Your hands to all that live and satisfy their needs with what is good.

[33 : 27] The Lord is just and good in all His ways. He shows His love to all that He has made.

The Lord is near to all who call on Him, to all who call in truth to Him for aid.

Amen.