

11-24-24 Enough is Enough Practicing Gratitude, Contentment, and Thanksgiving

Week 3

Text: Matthew 6:25–33

Topics: Priorities, Focus, Devotion

Big Idea of the Message: Contentment comes from changed priorities.

Application Point: When it comes to how you spend your day, what are you placing first: God's kingdom or something else?

Thanksgiving: a celebration of divine goodness; the act of giving thanks; a prayer of expressing gratitude. (What are you thankful for?)

Would it be safe to say that it is hard if not impossible to be thankful without gratitude, being grateful?

Gratitude: the state of being grateful. (What are you grateful for?)

Is it possible to have an attitude of thankfulness if we are struggling with contentment? Or grasping at different things seeking contentment in them.

Contentment: in a state of peaceful satisfaction. The state of being mentally or emotionally satisfied with things as they are; satisfied. (What satisfies you? Brings you satisfaction)

- Who or what are you putting your trust in?
- What you feed the most will win.
- Priorities will determine results.

Today we are going to look at something that steals our joy, our contentment, gratitude, and thanksgiving.... anxiety and worry. (along with entitlement, and envy, but those are another message)

Anyone struggle with anxiety? (worry) I think it would be safe to say that many, if not all of us, are struggling with it or have struggled with it at one time or another.

I have struggled with the idol of worry. An idol is something that takes up priority over God.

I've struggled with anxiety for a long time. I would have trouble falling asleep and staying asleep.

Anxiety runs in families. If we are not careful, we can pass anxieties onto our children.

Let's read what God's Word has for us today. Let's see what Jesus says about it. **Matthew 6:25-33.**

Allow me to make two observations.

- The word **“worry”** is used six times in today's passage. The word itself comes from an Old English word that means “to strangle, to choke, or to seize by the throat.” The Greek definition refers to being drawn in different directions to be distracted. Worry will pull us apart and can lead to mental and emotional strangulation.

- When Jesus tells us to “**not worry,**” He does so three times (**verses 25, 31, and 34**). These are commands from Christ Himself, not nice-sounding suggestions. This provides a helpful corrective to what might be the number one sin of Christians today – anxious worry.

According to God’s Word we should **NOT** fret with anxiety, we are to focus on the Almighty. I see four ways that worry will wipe us out in **verses 25-32**.

1. Worry is a waste.

- **Read verses 25-26.**
- Jesus instructs, commands His followers to not worry about life. Do not worry about what you will eat, or drink, or about your body.
- How much do we worry about things in our life? Things we have no control over.
- What are some things we worry about in life?
- To get our eyes off ourselves, Jesus tells us to look at how God’s creation works: “**Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?**” (v26)
- I have never seen a bird shopping in the supermarket or into farming, but God still feeds them. If God does that for the birds, He’ll certainly take care of us, right?
- But here’s the problem for many of us. **Deep inside we seriously question whether we’re worth anything to God. Or we doubt that God will really take care of us.**
- I have spent hours worrying about situations and it did nothing to help in any of the situations. It made things worse!
- I can say that no matter what the situation or circumstances I was facing, worrying **NEVER** helped. How about you?
- I have wasted too much of my life worrying.

2. Worry doesn’t work.

- **Read verse 27. “Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?” NLT**
- I had a physical recently and found out I am almost an inch shorter than I was a couple of years ago. But I was able to add a few pounds in a year’s time.
- Worry can give us a lot of things, like an ulcer or a migraine but it can’t give us a longer life. I don’t know how your body responds to worry but for me, I get worked up. We can literally worry ourselves to death, but we can’t worry ourselves to a longer life.

Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression, But a good word makes it glad. Proverbs 12:25

Charlie Brown once said to Linus: “I worry about school a lot.” He thought a little longer and then said, “I worry about worrying so much about school.” He reflected some more and then concluded, “Even my anxieties have anxieties!”

- Church, **worry is wasting today’s time to clutter up tomorrow’s opportunities with yesterday’s troubles.**
- Like when I am awake at night trying to hold the world, my family, God’s ministries together by worrying. Then I hear the Lord gently say, “You go to sleep now, Cecil; I’ll sit up.”

Back in 2010 a professor at a leading American university studied the things people worry about. His research discovered that:

- 40% never happens
- 30% concerns the past
- 12% are needless worries about health
- 10% are about petty issues
- 8% are legitimate concerns
- That means that 92% of our “worry time” is wasted energy as we exert mental and emotional energy on things outside our control.
- According to the great theologian, Jesus, we’re not to worry even about the 8%. Why is that? Because when we worry, we’re really saying that God can’t take care of us; that our problems are bigger than His promises.

3. Worry causes us to waver.

- **Read verses 28-31.**
- We are not to worry about what we’re going to eat or drink and about what we’re going to wear: **“And why do you worry about clothing?”** Jesus wants us to look at the world He created once again: **“Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil or spin;” (v.28)** The word **“consider”** refers to studying carefully or learning thoroughly by looking and learning.
- Have you ever seen a worried lily or a stressed-out wildflower?
- He then takes His listeners back to the splendor of Solomon, **(v. 29)** who was known for his beautiful garments.
- Then, Jesus asks a question: **“Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?” (v. 30)** The New Living Translation renders this last phrase like this: **“You have so little faith!”**
- Jesus hits us hard here. Our fears have to do with our lack of faith. The word **“more”** means very, very much, exceedingly. God will do even more for us than he does for the birds, the flowers and the grass.
- Jesus doesn’t want us to be saturated with stress.

“Watch out! Don’t let your hearts be dulled by carousing and drunkenness, and by the worries of this life. Don’t let that day catch you unaware, Luke 12:34 NLT

- Worry weighs us down and can cause us to sink spiritually.
- I am often prompted to read **Psalms 55& 56.**

Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You. 4 In God (I will praise His word), In God I have put my trust; I will not fear. What can flesh do to me? Psalms 56:3-4

- The way to deal with anxiety is by battling unbelief. John Piper argues that the most basic battle of our life is the battle to believe the living God because the root of **anxiety is unbelief.**

- When we fret with anxiety, we're to shift our focus to the Almighty.
- I preached a month or so again, when we are overtaken by anxiety, worries and depression, we need to get alone with songs of praise and just jam out, allow the words in the hymn or contemporary song penetrate your soul. Plead with God to speak to you through songs of praise. Then scream or cry out to Him and start talking. Remind yourself of what He says about you, not what you and the world say. Memorize His promises. Begin each day or on those days of high stress and anxiety reciting them.

Sought after (Isa. 62:12) Precious in his sight (Isa. 43:4) A new creation in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17) Not condemned (Rom. 8:1) Forgiven (Col. 1:14) Loved (1 John 3:1) Accepted (Rom. 15:7) A child of God (John 1:12) Jesus' friend (John 15:14) Free (John 8:36) The temple of God (1 Cor. 6:19) God's treasured possession (Deut. 7:6) Complete in Christ (Col. 2:10 NLT) Chosen (Col. 3:12) Called (2 Tim. 1:9) An ambassador of the Most High God (2 Cor. 5:20) God's masterpiece (Eph. 2:10 NLT) Able to do all things through Christ, who gives you strength (Phil. 4:13) More than a conqueror through Jesus, who loves you (Rom. 8:37)

- Finally, remember you are not crazy, you are not alone and run to others to help you battle.

4. Worry can wipe out our witness.

- **Read verses 31-32.**
- We hear the command again to not have anxiety: **“Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear? For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.”**
- The Gentiles in Jesus' day lived for the present and everything revolved around their pleasures. (anything different than today?)
- This phrase is rendered more literally: **“For all these the Gentiles continually seek (run after.”** They **“seek”** (run) after things that they think will satisfy. This means that they crave and diligently seek satisfaction in things that will leave them empty.
- Jesus spends 10 verses analyzing the addiction of anxiety and urges us to not act like the pagans who do not believe in God.
- **Worry is the ultimate act of rebellion against God because when we worry, we're really saying that God is dead; and if He's alive, then He's not able to do anything about our situations.**
- When we worry, we are assuming responsibility for things God never intended us to have. We could say it like this: **Anxiety is atheism in action.** (OUCH!)
- The key is to put our faith in our heavenly father. **“For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.”** Underline heavenly Father knows.
- Take comfort in the fact that God already knows everything you need. He knows all about your marriage problems. He knows about those bills piled up on your desk. He knows about your job situation. He knows what the tests will reveal about your health. He knows your heart is broken over a prodigal loved one, He knows all about your fears.

- If you're sinking with stress today, follow the clear teaching of **1 Peter 5:7**: “**casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.**”
- Many of us feel like we don't have a choice of how to respond to the stressors of life. But we do because we have a Father in heaven who cares for us.

Winning against Worry

➤ **Put God first.**

- **Verse 33** begins with the word “**But**” to show the contrast between how most people live and how the Christ-follower must live:
- **Read verse 33.**
- To “**seek**” means to have an intense, single-minded focus, to go after; to strive; to pursue. It's in the present imperative which means that the antidote to anxiety is to make a daily choice to prioritize God's kingdom.
- We need to stop making material things central and instead make the kingdom our priority. The word “**first**” means one's first and ever dominant concern. One person put it this way: “He who offers God second place offers Him no place.”
- Most of us are as close to God as we want to be and some of us are stressed out because we want to be worried. The reason many of us have so many worries is because we're seeking everything but God first.
- The promise Jesus makes is conditional – if we seek Him first, then all things will be added. If you want to win against worry, then go after God. Don't just think of Him as prominent; He must be preeminent!

➤ **Place your future in God's hands.**

- I imagine Jesus saying **verse 34** with a smile on His face. **Read verse 34.**
- Don't borrow trouble. Too many of us are frozen with fear over what might happen next week or next month or next year. Today has enough trouble to keep you busy. There will be plenty of pleasure and pain tomorrow.
- Let's not get so caught up in what might not even happen in the future that we don't deal with what is happening in the present. When we fret with anxiety, let's focus on the Almighty.

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; 23 they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. Lamentations 3:22-23 ESV

- **Confess worry as sin.** Don't make excuses. Worry is a sin because it displaces God in your life and when you and I worry we're living as though God does not exist. Worry also distracts us from full-fledged devotion to Christ and we end up being strangled. It's time to call it what it is and confess it as sin.
- **Praise God.** For whom He is and what He has done. Get alone with your favorite praise/hymns and just allow them to penetrate your soul.
- **Pray with thanksgiving.**
- **Ponder His words.**

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6-7

Psalms 55 & 56 One thing that I do when I am anxious is pray Scripture back to God. **Psalm 55 & 56** becomes very personal to me when I am anxious. In this Psalm, David speaks to God in such a close and personal way. This helps to remind me that God is my Father, and my Father loves me.

Listen to my prayer, O God. Do not ignore my cry for help! 2 Please listen and answer me, for I am overwhelmed by my troubles Psalms 55:1-2

- **Change your perspective.** We need a profound spiritual awakening. Our perspective needs to change as we look at life in relation to God as our Father and Jesus as our Savior and the Holy Spirit as our Comforter. There's no greater joy than to be used by God in ministry.

Go over the conclusion points giving the gospel.