

Feb 28, 71 P.M.

THE ANSWER TO ANXIETY

Matthew 23:25-34

Did you ever observe a bitch digger — man ask, how do you like your job — "I don't like it. The harder I work, the lower down in the world I get" — Jesus

INTRODUCTION

We closed last Sunday's study with the matter of servicing only

Talking about living in this world —

one master and treasuring up treasures upon this earth, and of the great

darkness that existed in a man's body when his eye was not single. This

evening we come to another special temptation. It is a temptation of the

poor as well as the rich which is anxious care. The common ordinary things

in life.

Now all along we have tried to emphasize what the Christians

does in private and what he does in private. I live in a world and am

engaged in business in the affairs of the world, and I have these multitudes

of problems pressing upon me. But above everything else our Lord reminds us

that the big problem that confronts us is that of worldliness. The danger of

treasuring up treasures. And in this final analysis he is going to talk about

the danger of the worrying about these problems which we have in the world.

Ours could be called the nervous generation. We have made a status

symbol of the stomach ulcer, and the staff of life of the tranquilizer. We call

work the rat race. We call fun the social whirl. We are just incapable of

being still. The music, the folk dances, tell us a great deal about our society.

Swiss music is exuberant; Spanish music fiery; Polynesian music is seductive.

African music is ~~is~~ called hypnotic. And what about ours? There is the evidence

of tensions and anxiety under which men live. I read some years ago about a

hotel chain that advertised "Rooms for Executives - a Place to unwind." And

that was the selling point.

We think about this in three ideas. The functions of life, V. 25.

The facts of life, V. 26 - 30. The faith of life, V. 32 - 34.

#### I. The functions of life, V. 25

Our Lord takes nothing for granted. He knows how frail we are, and

he gives us some reasons and some common sense information here as he faces the

problem of living. Man is concerned in his mind about things that should not

contain all of his attention. His mind is not upon God, and before he is aware

of what has happened to him, he is anxious and concerned about even the functions

of life.

Jesus said, "Take no thought of -" This means, Don't be anxious.

Be not anxious. Have no anxiety. Or if you prefer it, Do not worry about your

life. And he talks about the functions: what you shall eat, what you shall

drink. These are the functions in our society in which we live. These cares,

and also as to what we shall put on.

Now, an illustration of this would be the story of Martha and Mary when our Lord was in their house. He turned to Martha and he rebuked her. He said, "Thou art troubled and careful about many things." Poor Martha was distracted about the functions of life. That is the real meaning of the expression. She did not know where she was or really what she really wanted. But Mary on the other hand had a single purpose, a single aim. And this is the thing that we will discover in this passage.

In the mad rush for wealth, most men will insist that they are just out to make a living. It is so difficult to do this - they simply must shoot high and drive hard. Stop being anxious. God will not let you go without life's basic necessities. Was Jesus different? And the way of life in his day different from ours? We have the matters of food, of clothing, of shelter in the functions of life. And yet he says don't be diverted in your mind. Be not anxious. Do not let your mind be broken up, he says. Meat means literally "food" in general. The daily food.

Life is more than food. God gave life and he is able to sustain life with the substance of the field and the orchard, you are to live day by day, and we will never find joy thinking always of the future. But to live with confidence in God as this is an earnest appeal to man to cultivate his faith in

God in temporal providence. Fretfulness brings about unpleasantness and makes life intolerable. Now this is a special temptation concerning the functions of life. Take no thought - Now, this society causes us to want things and want them immediately. Dr. Voss tells the story about being in South Carolina riding on a street car. He said there was a boy who opened a window. Someone asked the boy to put the window down, but the boy would not listen. He said, "I want the window up." Dr. Voss said, the boy knew what he wanted, but he said the man making the request knew what the boy needed. And quite often people have wants and worries about the functions of life. They are caught up in the pressures to get things and to acquire things, and some of these things are real needs - homes, somewhere to live, someplace to work, education - and Jesus is going to deal with these.

I read somewhere that taxes during the days of our Lord in Palestine were about 40 ¢ on every dollar. And there was unbearable care and anxiety. Anxious means that you are filled with fears and you are filled with dreads. We always like to have it in the barns. We want it according to the day. We want it right now. And I don't think Jesus is going to tell us to be careless in regard to these functions of life - food, clothes and shelter.

Relative to the facts of life he speaks of the fowl, the measurement of a man, the lilies of the field, and the grass.

26  
 First, the fowl, V. 26. Perhaps a flock of birds were passing over, or swallows were darting in the air, or sparrows were hopping from stone to stone in search of food, and Jesus looked upon these birds commenting that they do not provide their food. They do not have barns to store up their goods, and yet the Heavenly Father feedeth them. Now are you no better than the sparrows or the fowl of the air? A bird does not perch on a tree or a post and wait for some mechanical device to bring him food. He searches for it. Jesus never condemns a farmer for plowing the ground, sowing the seed, and reaping it. Paul said, "Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, ~~xxx~~ with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." Do not be full of care. A warning against care and anxiety or the tendency to worry is so constant in its affliction of life, and Jesus uses this fact of life. Nothing seems to be more natural with mankind in the world to become burdened, anxious, and worry about this. He is dealing with life and its existence. We are distinct personalities. We have the gift of life. We have bodies, and these bodies must be maintained. We must be clothed and we must be fed. And God decided it and willed it. Where has it come from? Your life - how did you get it? Man does not

create life, but God created it. And life itself is a gift. Do you think that  
 he now suddenly is going to deny himself and his own methods and not see to it  
that life is sustained and ~~was~~ enabled to continue on? God has his own way of  
doing that. Of course, I am to plow, to sow, to reap, to gather into barns. I  
must go to work, I must earn money, and so on. But I need never be concerned  
or worried or anxious that suddenly there will not be a sufficient amount to keep  
 life going - that it is impossible for the Christian, and the argument here is  
the birds of the air, the ~~fish~~ fowl. That God provides and that he does not leave  
any unfinished work. God had a plan and a purpose for our lives. It will be  
 carried out, so we need not be anxious ~~at~~ about the sustenance and the support  
 of it. We know that these birds do not sow. Now, are ye not much better than  
 they? When you think about the question of food and drink. This is a general  
 observation. You can see this before your eyes. There is a great deal of  
 difference in the way of life with the birds and that of man. Man has a certain  
process he goes through sowing his grain and later he reaps it, and then he puts  
 it aside in the barn. By the sweat of his face he does this. Now man is never to  
 be worried about these things. That is, the farmer who spends his time looking at  
 the sky and wondering what the weather is going to be all the time, and whether he  
 will have anything to put in his barn or not. Man's business is to sow. That's

a command of God, and God is going to give the increase.

There is nothing more obvious than that there will be worms and insects and all these things which the birds will feed upon. Where do they come from? The simple fact ~~that~~ is that God has so provided that they will be sustained. Of course, if this be true, what about myself? I am a child of God. And things just do not happen in nature, but this is the way God has ordained it and worked it out.

Are you not better than they? Man in the own image of God, is precious in God's sight. Birds have value, but man is more valuable.

✓ 27 Second, one cubit, V. 27. Can you add one cubit unto your stature?

This next argument about the facts of life is which of you? - that is who is there among us or among this group that can do this? Can he add one cubit to his stature? Now, in the Greek this word may mean the length or the duration of life as well, as height, and perhaps this is a better interpretation of this in the context, that is, a man may not be able to add 18 inches to his height, now that's ridiculous, but to suggest that there is someone who can add to the duration of his life is even more ridiculous. Now, you can take all the care and all the trouble in all the world. Now, do you think you can add one moment to the span of your life? He is still talking about the matter of existence, and

the continuance of life in this world. The bodily needs that become our worries. With all that, you have ~~axs~~ your anxieties and your troubles, and that cannot extend the span of life even a moment. Money is power. The millionaire has no advantage over the poor man in the matter of existence. The bird does not seem to work, no planting, no tilling, no thrashing. And here's a Christian, like the Hebrews in the wilderness eating manna sent daily from above. The birds seldom store anything away for advance or for the future. There is no hoarding, no anxiety, no coveteousness on their part. Now, we can have all of the knowledge. A doctor may treat two patients with identical treatment. One may recover. The other may not. What is the answer? No man can add one cubit to his duration of life. We cannot escape this.

You must face the facts of life objectively. He gave life to you. He holds life together. He has designed your life. Psalm 38:8. Can we not trust him for the ordinary things, even an inch of time in the span of life, we can be gone in a moment.

This is a most unheard of thing. You cannot stop the path between the cradle and the grave. God has measured it out, and it is before you.

Independently of God, you cannot add one moment, so why the anxiety? Third, the lilies, V. 28 and 29.

24-29



24  
 About the matter of clothing. Don't be anxious about clothing.

In V. 28, Take no thought of raiment. Consider the lilies. Think about the

animals, think about the little lamb in its wool, and the kitten in its fur.

But here is man born without clothes. And he is put here in a material world

and then he says look again at nature, at the growth of flowers. And when

Jesus spoke these words, perhaps the wild flowers were plentiful and growing

and flourishing. And they do not spin, neither do they toil. And yet how

beautiful and how magnificent they are. We cannot add length to our lives by

being anxious or taking thought. Somebody said, I wish I knew the very spot

in which I am going to die. And then added, I'd make sure never to be found

in it. People worry. Some people worry about their husbands. They growl all

over the house whether it has a den or not. Some fretting wives instead of

being given a bouquet and called "rose" - they need to be given a bouquet of

snapdragons. Now the example of the lilies is indeed a lesson. They grow,

they toil not, they spin not.

The people who read many books on how to stop worry would do well

to save their money and read Matt. 6:25 - 34, because here is the great recipe

for handling the normal worry. The real person is more important than the thing

we are worrying about. It does not good to worry. Which of you worrying can add

one cubit to his stature? Is not the life more than the meat? Now most  
 people do not worry about big things. They worry about little things. <sup>young</sup> What  
 if I don't get a date? What if I don't make a good impression? What if I  
 am late? These are the kind of things we worry about. We don't worry about  
 getting an education, being successful in our careers, raising our families,  
 or making a contribution with our lives. We expect to do these big things.  
 They don't worry us. It is the little crises of daily life that tie us into  
 knots and really chop us down. Now, Jesus said there is a futility in this.  
 Think about these lilies, so beautiful. They grow and are beautiful, and even  
 the fowl are fed. Now, last winter I put out some bird seed and feed, and  
 usually you can have a pretty good group of birds in your yard. But now these  
 birds didn't need my little welfare program, because God has abundantly provided  
 for them. And this is exactly what Jesus is talking about when he discusses the  
 birds and the flowers. This beautiful lily. How did the lilies get that way?  
 By struggling, by effort, by trying hard? No. Simply, it expressed the life  
 within it and became what God created it to be.

Tennyson was nearer the spirit of this passage when he wrote, the  
 passage, "Flower in the Crannied Wall."

Flower in the crannied wall,

I pluck you out of the crannies.

I hold you here, root and all

in my hand.

Little flower, but if I could understand

What you are, root and all,

And all in all,

I should know what God and man is.

Tennyson must have felt something as Jesus was expressing it here that the Christian is like a lily. He grows naturally, unfolding the life that is within him. The Christian, mind you, not the unsaved person, he has the sun, and he has life in him.

✓ 30  
Fourth, grass, V. 30. Wherefore God so clothed the grass of the field. Today it is, tomorrow it is cut down. Jesus said, O ye of little faith. In other words, it is not the absence of faith on their part that concerns Jesus, but it is an inadequacy that disturbs him, that they do not have a sufficient faith. We need to remind ourselves that these are Christian people and only Christian people that our Lord is talking to. He is not speaking to those who are out in the world. They have faith. The others have no faith at all. But these people have faith,

and I think that tonight if I were to describe perhaps some that may fit into this category, it would be the Christian who has been saved and has accepted this faith, but he has stopped there. His desire is that they should be led on into a larger and deeper faith. They have robbed themselves of so much in having and lacking faith. They were prone to worry and they were prone to anxiety because they lacked this faith. Hence, the thing they must aim at is that they should have greater faith. And this brings us to our third and final division.

### III. The faith of life, V. 32 - 34

First, the heathen, V. 32. Jesus knew that these disciples were worried, and the Christian who has believed in Jesus Christ should be able to look to God for his food, his drink, his clothing, and these modest provisions which God makes for them. And so in this verse of scripture here, he says, After all, these things do the Gentiles seek, for the Heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of all these things. Now, our Lord is giving here a general warning against the tendency of worry, and he goes further. You must not even say these things. You must not even think these things. After all, the Heavenly Father knows what you need.

And he makes a contrast between the Christian and the Gentile here. Now the word Gentile of course really means heathen in this passage. The Jews were God's chosen people, and we realize what he means. That if I am guilty of worry, anxiety about the matters of food, drink, clothes and life, it shows that I lack. This is the thing that dominates me and my life. And heathen people were dominated by this. And they had no revelation from God, and they had no knowledge of God. That is the great point ~~in this~~ that is made in the Old Testament. God made a ~~special~~ special revelation of himself to the Jews. Now the heathen knew nothing about this. The revelation of God through Jesus Christ, the way of salvation.

Now, some of these Gentiles believe that things in life happen accidentally. That they happen without  ~~rhyme~~ (rhyme and without reason). You never know what is going to happen next. There is (no purpose) in life whatsoever. There is no design, no order, and this is a very old view. There is nothing new about it. And it is pathetic when people hold this view.

2 — Second, they held perhaps to fatalism. Some people talk - What is to be will be, and it is going to happen, and it's utter folly to strive to make any effort on your part. You can do nothing about life. There is no purpose in thought, still less in worry.

Quite often Christian people hold one or the other of these. And they seem to feel that they are controlled by blind necessity of certain things and circumstances. But a Christian must know his life is in the ~~his~~ hands of the Living God, and this controls the whole behaviour. As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he. This is his philosophy, it ought to be. Now, the pagan man has a different view of life and this is the thing Jesus makes a contrast here. After all these things the Gentiles seek. The question is, Are we like that? If these things are first in our lives, says our Lord, if we are monopolized by this kind of thing, then we are no better than the heathen. There are so many people who can be described as spiritual ~~worshippers~~ worldlings. If you talk to them about salvation, they have the correct view. Now, if you talk to them about life in general, they are worldly. If you listen to their ordinary conversations about life, you will soon discover that they have a heathen philosophy. Their main worry is food or drink. They are always talking about wealth, talking about position, or talking about clothes, or various possessions or things, or just plain gossip. Now these things really control them. They are made happy or ~~unhappy~~ unhappy by them.

God's people, God's children, are in this world. Now, are they to face things that happen to them in this way as the Gentiles do? When there

seems to be some difficulty about food or drink or clothes, how do you react? When there is illness, how do you react? When there is a loss, how do you react? Do I always face everything in my life that happens to me in the context of the Christian faith? The heathen cannot do that because they do not believe in God. Something happens and you are so upset. This is the natural man. Now, the Christian man stops and says, Wait a minute. I know and I believe in God, and I know whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth. Because I am a Christian, I know this. And he says, My Heavenly Father knows what I have need of. He already knows this before I tell him. Now we prone to ~~ing~~ forget this, and we ought to have such implicit faith and reliance in God that nothing can happen to us apart from God. He knows all about it. You will never be anything or be anywhere that he does not see you, that he does not know your heart and all about you. If we were but to grasp this, it would surely cause worry and strain and anxiety to vanish.

30 — Second, Christians, show little faith, V. 30. We have already commented on this verse in which he described the grass as compared to the raiment, and the little faith ~~a~~ that we have.

33 Third, the priority, V. 33. What ~~was~~ does our Lord mean by saying, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God." Now you have heard this scripture quoted.

You probably have quoted it yourself. You probably have it memorized.

He is telling them how to behave as Christians. He is not telling them how to make themselves Christians, but he is telling them how to behave. Too many Christian people miss many blessings in life because they do not seek ~~God~~ diligently. They do not spend much time speaking to his face. In other words, they are not on their knees very much. They ~~have~~ set their affections ~~on~~ on other things in this world. And so Jesus says, Put your priorities in the right position. Be interested not in things, in clothes, but in the kingdom kingdom of God. This is a profitable pursuit. This is your first attention, your first objective, and this is higher than all the rest. Be not anxious, don't be distracted, don't divide yourself. You are trying to serve God, you can't organize yourself around the world and try to serve God also. Your divided personality is one that worries about clothes, and eating and these things Jesus said, "Take a look at the birds. They do not plow, they do not have barns to store their food. Take a look at the lilies. Solomon dressed in fine garments, but the lilies are more beautiful. You can't divide yourself. In other words, a man can't divide himself. He must be putting the Kingdom of God first. This ~~is~~ is the thing Jesus is saying here.

"And his righteousness" - now this is an important addition. Now this



means holiness in your life. The holiness of life in righteousness. He started the sermon off, "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." The more holy we are, the nearer we shall be to God.

Suddenly, something goes wrong in your life. You turn to God in prayer. Now, the moment you do so, you are reminded of what? of your slackness in the past weeks and months. You are reminded of something that you had said or done to hurt somebody, and you are reminded about the days and the weeks and the months that have passed by when you have not sought the face of God. And you are reminded that even your prayers are mechanical. And now you are seeking God, but you have not done this regularly. Beloved, the nearer we live to God, the less we are aware of the things of this world and this life, and the greater sense of assurance we have. If you want to seek anything, if you want to be anxious about anything, then become anxious about your spiritual condition, your nearness to God, your relationship to him. If you put that first, then these other worries will take care of themselves.

Now, Jesus uses the illustration of Solomon here. You remember when Solomon was praying, he did not pray for riches or long days upon this earth, but he prayed for wisdom, and God always gives the spiritual things. And so God added

to him not only the wisdom, but he added ~~riches~~, and he lengthened his days in the bargain. Put God and his glory in the right place. Remember, God knows what you need before you even come to him. Now, the greatest interest which you have at stake is your spiritual interest. Therefore, seek first the kingdom and all these things shall be added. Get your priorities straight.

34 Fourth, an (act of complete dependence), V. 34. Your faith should be a complete act of dependence. Therefore, take no thought of tomorrow. Don't worry about tomorrow. You will over-press the strength of today which is just enough for today's burden, but not enough for today's and tomorrow's also. If you try to carry today's burdens by actual endurance and tomorrow's by anticipation, then you will break down. You cannot do it.

Take therefore, Jesus says, no thought. Every tomorrow will have some kind of anxiety of itself. Every sky will have some kind of a cloud floating around in it. However much we worry today about what might come tomorrow, we cannot succeed in carrying tomorrow's worry.

✓ A man planted two rose bushes. One on either side of his house. One rose bush lived and prospered, and the other rose bush died. He discovered it was because it was planted on the shady side, and due to undue depression from the shadows and the shade, it died. The same thing is true with life. You live in

the depression and in the shadows and shady, damp part of life, it will kill you.

The Christian lives today. This is his time, and the place to begin is right now. We come to church, we hear a sermon, we are convinced, God speaks to us. We make a decision in our hearts that we are ~~going~~ going to change. But we say, I am going to do that tomorrow. And tomorrow never comes. All spiritual decisions should be made immediately. How do you deal with the things that worry you?

✓ Dr. Carroll said that one day the boys wanted to go fishing and they were fussing ~~xxx~~ because it was raining. He said his father said, "Never worry about things you ~~xxxxxx~~ can't help. If you can help it, do so. If you can't, forget it." Live today, no matter how much worry about tomorrow, it can cancel all the joys of today.

✓ Someone showed a common housefly under a powerful magnifying glass to a child. It looked like a fearful monster. Now the point is, that is not the way to look at a fly. It is an unfair perspective. People worry and look at their troubles and needs, and really become frustrated because we put a premium on the secondary things in life or else we over-activate our imagination, and we worry about things that have no foundation at all.

✓ A woman knitting produces a garment with her energy and her work.

But now if she performs the same action with no yarn between the needles, she will be just wearing herself out completely and not producing a garment.  
 The same thing is true of worry. You worry about it. You never accomplish anything.

✓ John Newton says, "I compare my troubles with a large bundle of sticks tied together. They represent my troubles for an entire year. I cannot carry the whole bundle at once. God does not require me to do this either. He is merciful. He gives me one day at a time. I might increase my load by ~~xxxx~~ carrying yesterday's stick, or either I might pick up tomorrow's in advance."  
 Now this is a good illustration as to what Jesus is talking about here. He shows us the folly and the foolishness of ~~xxx~~ looking ahead and worrying about the future.

Now, if God helped us today, will the same God not help us tomorrow in the same way?

Do that which is right and that which is reasonable, and that which is legitimate, and know this, that God will take care of those anxieties which you have. Anxiety has plagued us, and it plagues us in this modern age.

✓ I remember reading some time ago about Dr. Charles Allen who had a lady who came to him who was disturbed, and he said, "I have a prescription"

for you for anxiety. The first thing in the morning, read the 23rd Psalm aloud, slowly, quietly, thoughtfully, prayerfully. After breakfast, read it again before going to work, and then read it after lunch, and then read it before supper, and then read it before going to bed. Do this for one week and see if this will not help your anxiety."

To be sure, there are people who are carrying the burden of sin, and that is not a good thing to worry about your sins either because in Jesus Christ you will find forgiveness. He will remove your sin. *John Wannonaker - Phil-merchant* *al give you a motto*

✓ For life 1.33 'It is workable -' *(end of tape)* seek ye first the kingdom of God & his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you.