

Priorities & Anxiety

<u>Proper Attitude and its Blessings</u>	<u>Improper Attitude and its Curses</u>
Lay up treasures in heaven	DO NOT Lay up treasures on earth
<u>Where your Treasure is There will be Your heart</u>	
Treasure in heaven there your heart will be also	Treasure on earth there your heart will be
A good eye allows whole body to be full of light	A bad eye makes whole body full of darkness
<u>No One Can Serve Two Masters</u>	
Hate earth treasure and love heaven treasure	Hate heaven treasure love earth treasure
Loyal to heaven treasure; despise earth treasure	Loyal to earth treasure; despise heaven treasure
<u>You Cannot serve God and Mammon</u>	

With the above truths revealed by our Lord, there are some absolute truths that follow. They are the consequences of violating or the success and blessings of following them. If we struggle with these “consequences” then we must find the one or move improper attitudes above. If we never have such thoughts then we are maintaining the proper attitudes. All that is above will be set in its proper order if we follow Jesus conclusions about how to regard and live in this present world. Whether action (laying up) attitude (hate/love/loyalty) or an outlook (good/bad eye) we have to locate it and make the necessary changes. All of this is summed up in Jesus words:

Therefore I say unto you... Mt 6:25

Jesus chose a phrase instead of a single word, but our translators often translate it “*therefore*.” The first term is “*dia*” which is “*the ground or reason on account of which anything is or is not done,*” and the second is “*touto*” which sums up all the preceding thoughts. The phrase “*dia touto*” means “*for this cause; for this reason; on this account; since this is so...*” (Thayer p 134; 1223)

First, “*since it is so*” that in the realm of treasure, there are only “*two masters*;” we have to choose which one we will serve for we have no choice but to serve one or the other. We can only “*hate the one and love the other*” or “*hold to one, and despise the other.*” Hence the first “*for this reason*” reveals that our anxieties clearly show what has mastered and controls our heart.

Second, our anxiety reveals “*if your eye be evil,*” and “*your whole body shall be full of darkness*” or “*if your eye be single,*” and “*your whole body shall be full of light.*” Since our worries identify single or double vision, anxiety for food, drink or clothing reveal a lack of faith in God’s care.

Third, since we must choose whether to “*lay up treasures on the earth*” or “*lay up treasures in heaven,*” an important truth is revealed. “*Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*” Therefore the focus of our anxiety reveals where our treasure and heart truly lie. We must choose whether to live in “*seen*” which is temporary or the “*unseen*” which is eternal.

Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. 17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, 18 while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal. 2 Cor 4:16-18

If we are living in the “*seen*” our anxieties are exactly what Jesus warned against here. If we are living for the “*unseen*” then our cares and concerns will focus on God’s kingdom and righteousness.

What Jesus forbids here are key indicators that we have a serious spiritual problem. Anxiety reveals priorities and priorities determine our life. If we are worried and anxious over physical things, then we have the wrong master, the wrong eye, and the wrong treasure. Jesus warned that these anxieties must be removed if we are to fulfill the above.

Be Not Anxious

*25 “Therefore I tell you, 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. ... 27 which of you by being **anxious** can add a single hour to his span of life? 28 And why are you **anxious** about clothing? ... Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, 31 Therefore do not be **anxious**, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’...34 “Therefore do not be **anxious** about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be **anxious** for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. Mt. 6:25,27,28,31,34*

Since Jesus used the word “*anxious*” six times, it is the hub and focus of this section. It’s primary meaning is “*to be anxious; to be troubled with cares.*” (Thayer p. 400; 3309). It is “probably connected with *merizo*, “*to draw in different directions, distract,*” hence signifies “*that which causes this, a care, especially an anxious care,*” . . . “*to be anxious about, to have a distracting care*” (Vines

3309) But the fullest definition offers a clear composite of how this term was used in that day.

merimnao; merimna ... has the same wealth of meaning as the Eng. "to care" ("care"). It means a. "to care for someone or something," e.g., children, ... Then it means b. careful or anxious "concern about something," This concern for or about something may have a future orientation, and it can thus mean either c. "to be intent on something," ... "to strive after something," ... even to the point of "ambition," ... d. "anxious expectation of something," "anxiety in face of something, of what may come," ... in this sense often linked with phobos ... has the sense of e. "solicitude" or "grief" about something, ... or of f. "brooding," "speculating," "enquiring"; Often without any specific object there is ref. to cares as the worrying and tormenting cares which belong to human life ... (Kittel TDWNT; 3309)

Even in the best sense of "care," "concern," and "ambition," a disciple only has so much energy to be directed toward it. So if we are going to have these cares and concerns, they need to be directed in a specific way and we must allocate it properly. If we are giving too much care and concern to the things in this life, then we must take it from the things that are much more important (eternal). But in the negative and more general use of the term, we must not be "brooding, speculating, or enquiring" about the thing in this life. Thus Jesus condemned and prohibited the concerns that focus on areas where these things must never be directed.

For your Life

Therefore I say unto you, be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than the food, and the body than the raiment? Mt 5:25

Just as Jesus forbid laying up treasure on the earth and commanded they be laid up in heaven, this too is in the imperative (command) mode. We must not be anxious for life in the sense of food, drink, or clothing. Jesus forbid it! We must therefore carefully monitor and banish these things from our mind. He did not want His disciples placing too much emphasis on the material side of life. If we find ourselves worrying about food, drink or clothing, we are in violation of this command. Eating and drinking are necessary to sustaining our life and clothing is necessary to sustain the body, but it is to be considered a natural consequence of serving God, not a part of it. This is done when our godliness reaches such a level of importance that we are content simply to have a close relationship with God and the realization that this is all we can take from the world.

Now godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. 8 And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. 9 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. 1Tim 6:6-10

In short, this is what God sought to teach Israel in the wilderness.

And you shall remember the whole way that the Lord your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not. 3 And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. Deut 8:2-4

When we learn that man doesn't live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God then our contentment comes from those words. When our concern for knowing and doing God's word exceeds all other care and concern, we will reach the pinnacle where these things just naturally occur.

Jesus illustrated His point with a simple question. "Is not the life more than the food, and the body than the raiment?" The idea is simple. If God gave us life and a body, will He not supply the food and the clothing to sustain us? He has already done the greatest thing, why should we worry about the food and clothing, when the real issue is our life (soul) and body? It is a serious misconception about our relationship to God if we fall into the trap of thinking that He has left us here to fend for ourselves.

Look at the Birds

To fully illustrate the ideas Jesus sought to convey in His warning against anxiety for life exhibited in concern for our food, drink, and clothing, He chose birds and lilies. The birds to show why we don't need to be anxious about food and drink and the lilies to show why we should not be anxious about clothing.

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? Mt 6:26

No bird sows, reaps, or gathers into barns. God did not create birds with the capability to have such concerns because God knew they did not need such concern since He would make provisions for them and they would never need such an emotion. Think about the implications. He created certain birds to fly south in the winter or migrate 1,000's of miles. He gave them the instinct to build a nest, lay eggs and sit on them until they hatched. But God did not give them the instinct to gather

because they did not need it! God would provide. Since there was no need for them to worry, it would not have been good for them to have such concerns.

The necessary inference here is though each of us does have the choice upon what to bestow our concerns and cares, we are foolish to place them in an area where there is no need for them. Since we are of more value than birds, shouldn't it follow that God has done the same for us? We are all created in the image of God and every emotion can be used for good or evil, productive or unproductive things. When we are tempted to waste valuable emotions and resources on matters of no eternal consequence, Jesus commanded that we to look at the birds. To illustrate the futility of such waste Jesus reminded us of an important truth: What can anxiety add to our quality of life?

The Measure of our Life/Stature

*And which of you by being anxious can add one **cubit** (KJV/NKJV/ASV) **hour** (NASU/ESV/NIV) unto the measure of his **stature**(KJV/NKJV) **life**(ASV/NAS/ESV/NIV)? Mt 6:27*

The mixing here of cubit(*pechus* - forearm) and a word that means life or stature have led the translators to the differences above.

helikia 2244, primarily "an age," as a certain length of life, came to mean (a) "a particular time of life," as when a person is said to be "of age," ... or beyond a certain stage of life, (b) elsewhere only "of stature." ... since it has to do simply with matters relating to an individual, either his time of life or his height. (Vine's NT:2244)

These difference have little impact on the meaning. Worry and anxiety add nothing to the length of our life or the height of our stature. This perfectly illustrates the futility of worry. It can't change, add to or make anything better. To worry or not to worry changes nothing. The fact is most of what we find to worry about never comes to pass.

The Lilies of the Field

"So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; 29 and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 30 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? Mt. 6:28-30

Just as we should look at the birds, we should "*learn thoroughly*" (*katamanthano* (*kata*, intensive, "down," and *manthano*, "to learn" ... "to note accurately, consider well," (Vine's NT:3309) from the lily. When God created lilies (and most other vegetation), He gave them beautiful bodies with an ability to flower. Once again, God created them to do this effortlessly. With God's own wisdom and power this was done once at the creation and never needed anything else. They were not created with a need to toil or spin. It was done through God's creative genius and power. Thus each flower manifests God's care. With this creative power and genius and no effort on the part of the plant, it's glory surpasses that of all the efforts of Solomon with all his wealth and splendor.

Jesus thus made a powerful point. One of the wealthiest men that ever lived could not compete with the natural beauty God gave to this flower. God even clothed the "grass" of the field.

chortos primarily denoted "a feeding enclosure" (whence Latin *hortus*, "a garden"...); then, "food," especially *grass* for feeding cattle; it is translated "grass" ... "blade" ... "hay" ... In Palestine or Syria there are 90 genera and 243 species of grass. (Vine's OT:5528).

With 243 different species, clearly this word is used for all the foliage that covers the ground. From our lawns, to the various "weeds" that flower and grow all around us in the spring, Jesus made another powerful point to prick our thinking. Although wild flowers and foliage covering the ground have great beauty, their value is so insignificant that they would burn them in the oven. If God clothed all the earth in vegetation then can't He clothe us? Then Jesus final punch. To even think about such things is a clear manifestation of a lack of faith. Only a small and insignificant faith could think like this. Hence His rebuke: "O you of little faith."

Conclusion

Jesus summed up His thoughts with a final therefore ("oun... something follows from another necessarily;...then, therefore, accordingly, consequently, these things being so..." -Thayer, NT:3767). After looking at the birds, the lilies and the grass, it "*follows necessarily*," that we should not be anxious or worry about "eating," "drinking," or "wearing."

"Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. Mt. 6:31-32

To talk like this is to imitate the Gentiles who do not know or serve God. Disciples of Jesus have to be different. We know that our Father in Heaven already knows we need these things. Those with genuine faith are more than happy to leave these things in His capable hands. These things are a distraction and an illusion to be avoided in order to follow after our true needs.

Seek Ye First

But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Mt. 6:33-34

The first and foremost priority for a disciple of Jesus Christ is God's kingdom and righteousness. We are commanded to "seek" these two things.

"zeteo... 1. To seek in order to find; ... b. to seek [i.e. in order to find out] by thinking, meditating, reasoning; to inquire into;... c. to seek after, seek for, aim at, strive after... to seek i.e. desire, endeavor;... 2. To seek i.e. require, demand..." (Thayer, p. 272; 2212)

Our thoughts, meditations and reasoning are all designed to gain the kingdom of God and His righteousness. We are to seek for it, aim at it and strive after it. All our desires and interest is to be directed first toward these things.

"protos... first; 1. either in time or place, in any succession of things or of persons... 2. first in rank, influence, honor; chief; principal..." (Thayer, p. 554-555; 4412-4413)

When comparing treasure, food, drink, or clothing) to God's kingdom and righteousness, the latter comes first in time and place and first in rank and honor. These things are chief and the principal thing for life. Notice how Jesus in Luke showed that when seeking, we must choose between material and spiritual.

"And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind. 30 For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these things. 31 But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you. 32 "Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Luke 12:29-32

Jesus promised when we seek the right things first, the other things will come without any thought or effort at all (like the birds/lilies/grass. We don't have to worry about earthly things. God will take care of them all. What we have to seek and place as the highest of all priorities are the kingdom of God and the things He wants us to do to be righteous.

The Morrow

Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. Matt 6:34

Tomorrow is a day we have no control over. There is no point to giving any anxious concern to it. The future is in God's hands not ours. We have to trust him to take care of the things that will happen tomorrow while we give all our thought and effort to today. Our duty and responsibility only takes in today. As long as it is called today we will be working.

but exhort one another day by day, so long as it is called To-day; lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin: Heb 3:13

There is enough to be concerned about on the day we are living. We may not be alive tomorrow. Circumstances may be different tomorrow. Today is the day we have, today we are to seek first His kingdom and righteousness. We do not have tomorrow. James made the right application here.

Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit"; 14 whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. 15 Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that." Jas 4:13-15

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. Phil 4:6-7

- 1 What three things does the therefore refer back to?
- 2 What is the main idea behind being anxious
- 3 How strongly does Jesus demand we not be anxious?
- 4 If God gave body and life what else will he give?
- 5 What do the birds have to do to gain their food?
- 6 Can worry extend our life or our stature?
- 7 What can worry do?
- 8 How did Solomon compare with the Lilies?
- 9 What do the lilies have to do to be so beautiful?
- 10 Who are we imitating if we are overly concerned about food, drink or clothing?
- 11 What are the two most important priorities for the disciple?
- 12 If we seek the God's kingdom and righteousness what does Jesus promise will be added?
- 13 What should the disciples attitude be toward the morrow?
- 14 Is it right for the disciple to be anxious or planning too far ahead?