

Matthew 19-08-25b

Let's resume our study now in Matthew chapter 6. We have come down to verse 31 and 32. After giving these examples and pointing out that the key is faith, the problem is not subject matter for thought in the sense of food, drink, and clothing. It is being oligopistoi.

Stop worrying you of little faith. Concentrate on your faith. Make your stature bigger.

You're not going to grow in stature in faith by worrying. You can't add a foot and a half to your stature. Look at the lilies, how they grow.

They stay plugged into the source of their nourishment. Their life is determined by God. Where they get their water, where they get their sunshine, what their location is, how long they last, what type of flower grows in, among, or on that grass, and then the conclusion where at the end of their life the stalks are gathered and tossed into the oven.

All of this is inherent. Life is short. Why ruin it by worrying? All of these concepts covered very succinctly, very beautifully by the Lord Jesus, and in verse 31 he says, therefore stop worrying.

Present imperative. Stop worrying, saying, and you notice up in verse 25 he says, do not worry about what you will eat or what you will drink or about your body what you will put on. What person is that? That's second person.

He's talking to you and he says, you stop. How is it here in verse 31? Do not worry, saying, and now it's first person. He's quoting them.

Do not worry, saying, what shall we eat? What shall we drink? Or what shall we wear? And this really strikes close to home. It's one thing to have somebody tell you a thing. It's something else to have them impersonate you, and notice also that it is in the plural here.

What shall we eat? This often becomes infectious. One worrying person can unsettle the stability of people in the periphery, and it becomes a group think. You want to be the person who keeps their head while all others are losing theirs, right? You want to be the thermostat, not the thermometer.

You don't want to be reflecting or absorbing or repeating the worry around you. I just got a little device. I'm having trouble getting internet wi-fi up in the upstairs of our garage, and I've got wires up there, but I haven't connected them yet, so I wanted to work up there, and I couldn't get a signal.

Have you ever done that? You get outside your wi-fi bubble, and you can't get a connection? Well, they have a thing that's called a repeater, and this is really nice. It's

just a little thing that looks like a nightlight. It plugs into a nearby plug, and you program it with a little USB interface, and you tell it, here's my wi-fi bubble name, and here's the password.

Log yourself in and repeat, and so it becomes another bubble that just repeats the first one. It's a wi-fi repeater, and you extend your range of your wi-fi by having this repeater. Well, what if you do that with worry? Somebody's broadcasting worry, and you're just a repeater.

You absorb it and reflect it, and you extend it and make it go to people that it didn't even reach before. So what shall we eat? And if you underscore eat, drink, and wear, they're the exact same things in the exact same order as we had in verse 25, but they've gone from the second person to the first person. Eat, drink, and wear.

This is sort of the food and clothing basics that you think of. Even Maslow's hierarchy of needs includes this at a very foundational level. It's one of those foundational things you want to get satisfied before you can move on to more fruitful and esoteric thoughts.

So Jesus says stop worrying. He doesn't say stop planning. He doesn't say stop taking care of business.

He doesn't say stop working. Stop worrying. Obviously, it is such a blessing.

There is not a day that goes by that I don't look at the person who does the shopping and stocks things and plans and prepares and serves and cleans up after our meals. I wouldn't have anything to eat and have anything to drink if it weren't for my wife, and she does a beautiful job, and she thinks about it. She plans ahead.

I have literally given no thought to what I'm going to have for supper, but she's thought about it yesterday. There's already something in the freezer. She's already got something thought out.

She's already figured out what we're going to have and is it balanced. She figures out vegetables and all the rest of it, but she doesn't worry. It's a concern.

It's a wonderful task and a contribution and a blessing, but it's not a worry. Nothing wrong with having riches. They can't be your god.

Nothing wrong with having concerns and making sure provision is in line, but not worry. There is balance. There's balance.

You don't utterly neglect and just sit there in the dark come 7 30 or 8 o'clock in the evening saying, well, gosh, I feel hungry. It's not a complete lack of attention. Attention is paid, but it doesn't go into worry.

You can have material things. You can have whatever it is that is satisfying in terms of

possessions, but it can't become Mamona. It can't turn into the family idol or the personal god in the place of the Lord God.

So stop worrying. Why? Verse 32, because after all these things, the Gentiles seek. This is their occupation.

That's their focus. Why? They're living in the material world. Years ago, one of these singers, Madonna or somebody had a song about being a material girl and this was celebrated.

I'm a material girl and nothing wrong with that. I'm out to get what I can get. Well, this is what the ethne, the ethnoi, the ethnica, these are the people.

These are the godless. It's a sort of a euphemism for those who have no relationship with God. They are not his children.

The nations are not God's children. At this stage, God only has one group of people and they're in Israel. So anybody outside Israel is, as Paul puts it later, aliens, strangers from the covenant, without hope, without God in the world.

So all you're left with is pursuing these things. But remember, it's like the lilies. If you can get yourself beautiful and boy, there's nothing like photography that we've had over the last hundred years or so.

You didn't used to really know. You'd grow up as a kid and you'd see grandpa. You never saw what grandpa looked like when he was young or what grandma looked like when she was young.

You just thought, well, there's old people, there's middle-aged people, and there's young people. And it wasn't until you yourself got old and watched all your peers grow old. And by the time you realize that, well, you're scrolling off the map and there's another generation of people who don't really know the extent of the ravage of time.

But now we've got film and all kinds of records to see what time does and how brief our life is. You look at an episode of Perry Mason, everybody in it is dead. Perry was young and thin, then he became Ironside and he was old and overweight.

You look at Charles Bronson, he made so many westerns back in the 1950s. He's young, he plays an Indian chief, and he's muscular and virile. And we saw Charles Bronson when he was old and making Death Wish 9 or whatever it was, and he was staggering around just for a paycheck.

And you don't realize until our age how brief and ephemeral life is in that graphic way. You can think about it and acknowledge it, but we see it as it's never been seen before. The young and the beautiful quickly become the old and on their way out.

And that's putting it nicely. I saw Neil Diamond last night, and same thing. He was young, hot August night.

Well, this is hot August night three, and it's in 2012. And Neil is doing good for a guy that's older than me, but he's not the young buck that he was when he made all of his hit records, can still sing. But the point here is the Gentiles.

If you're a celebrity, they're nipping and tucking and injecting and botulizing and all the rest of it, trying to get you to look at like some semblance of yourself, and it just becomes a grotesque mask. As long as your face doesn't move, you sort of look like an old picture of yourself. But if your face moves, watch Marlo Thomas in *The Very Worthy Cause of St. Jude's*, talking about her father's dream and how they help these children that have cancer and so on.

But when they show Marlo, and if you saw that girl back in the 70s, and Marlo's had a lot of work done, and as long as her face doesn't move, she kind of looks like Marlo Thomas. But as soon as she starts talking, and this is a flower that is fading. Have you ever put chapstick on a rose petal? There's certain things you can do, Noxzema, or some of these, Dove cleansing cream and such.

They say, look how this stuff preserves your skin, and they'll put it on a flower, and it'll preserve the flower. Or you can hang a rose upside down, and it'll keep its shape, and it just kind of petrifies. You ever done that? I think that's the strangest bouquet, is when you dry flowers and then stick them back up in the thing.

To me, it's like mummifying your pets. Just take your dog, mummify him, set him in the corner, and he kind of looks like he did, he just doesn't move. But it's the temporality is the idea.

So why worry about these temporary things? God has built in, notice that the examples that he used are all really short-lived. Birds, very short-lived. Flowers of the field, very short-lived.

And his examples, he could have said, look at the rocks, how they persist through rain and storm, and they're eternal practically. And God is like a rock and takes shelter. He's not using that.

He says, look, everything in life is fleeting, and ephemeral, and temporary. During the time that you need it, God is going to take care of you. But flowers are not always flowers.

Birds are not always feeding. You think about all the birds that freeze in the winter, and you could extend these examples a little bit and say, wait a minute, I know his point is that the birds just happily flip from, but what about when it's not summer? What about when there's not food? And everybody's throwing grain out to try to keep the birds alive

in the winter. What about that? Well, Jesus is not ignorant of that fact.

In fact, we're supposed to be thinking about that. Remember your brief span. How many generations of people have been on this planet, have come and gone? One of the astonishments to me is that cemeteries are so small.

When you think about how many people have been around for lo these many generations and the hockey stick population growth, there seems to be just scads and scads of people and relatively few cemeteries and a few thousand graves in a cemetery. I think, where did all the people go that have lived over the last hundred years? There ought to just be graves everywhere. But I think what they do is after the last living person that knows who's under the tombstone, I think there's like a cleanup crew and the ones from 1850 and 1860, with rare exceptions, I think they just kind of quietly tip those over, slide them out of the way and reuse the ground.

They have to be. There ought to be a lot more dead people than there are living people. Just saying.

But the idea of temporality and ephemerality, why are you worrying about things that are so transient? Look to the eternal things. We're back to put your treasure in heaven. That's where your heart ought to be.

Don't try to please people, please your father in heaven. Look to the eternal. And these should not be worries.

They can be concerns. You can work for them. They are legitimate issues to pay attention to, but it can't get into worry, because worry is all the same as elevating it to the standard of the things that are important, which is God and his word.

So he moves into that. Your heavenly father knows that you need all these things. He knows you need them.

What is the second to the last word in that verse? Your heavenly father knows you need all these things, not want all these things, crave all these things, desire all these things, idolize these things, worship these things, covet these things. He knows your needs. And even the rolling stones know the difference between what you want and what you need.

And your father knows your needs and he will take care of them. Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. We're all the way back to the example prayer, thy kingdom come, thy will be done.

Righteousness. So seek first the kingdom. Now this is the basis for a lot of kingdom now and kingdom people.

And we're doing kingdom work and kingdom this and kingdom that in current day

Christianity. He's not talking about that. He's talking about verse 20, lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.

It's the kingdom of heaven. It's not the kingdom on earth. It's not creating the kingdom, populating the kingdom, working for the kingdom.

Seek the kingdom. He doesn't say build the kingdom. He doesn't say populate the kingdom.

He doesn't say recruit for the kingdom. He says seek it. What was the verb in verse 32? After these things, material things, provisions, the Gentiles, the heathens seek.

You seek the kingdom and you seek righteousness. It's the difference between the tangible and the intangible, between the temporal and the eternal, between the material and the immaterial, between the sukkah and the numah, the life and the spirit. Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added to you.

Once again, there is a turning. This is a form of repentance because he says, stop worrying, stop seeking, start concerning yourself with, start looking to those things that are in the arena of faith. So seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

So here's the bottom line. If we are not going to commit the sin of worry, we can't be sitting there like Jerry Reed saying, don't smoke, don't smoke, don't smoke, don't smoke. Don't worry, don't worry.

We need to concentrate on faith, on righteousness. How does righteousness come into our lives? What is the means of acquiring righteousness? The means of obtaining righteousness? How was Abraham credited with righteousness? Faith. Abraham aimed his faith at God and it was credited to him for righteousness.

If you are seeking righteousness, you have to know how to get it. It's not by doing, it is by believing, right? So if you are seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, the kingdom is future. What tangible evidence do you have for the kingdom of God? Can you point to a material king? Can you point to a material capital? Can you point to a material throne? Can you point to any royal accouterments? Where is this kingdom? Are you going to seek the kingdom on earth, cover the earth, see if the apostle John is actually still alive? Ask him, where is it? It's in heaven.

So if you're seeking the kingdom of God, you are in fact laying up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor eating destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. And you're seeking his righteousness. It's the kingdom and his righteousness.

It's the realm and it's the place where righteousness is at home. When we lay hold of righteousness, we are at home in God's kingdom. And all these things, these mundane

things will be added to you.

Now, again, they're not going to land on parachutes. Drones are not going to fly into your yard and bring you groceries. These things will be added to you.

How? What is the pattern in scripture for God adding provision? There are cases where food has come in on wings. Elijah by the brook Cherith. Jesus after the 40 days of testing, the angels came and ministered to him, gave him food and drink.

Seems to be the implication there. After fasting for 40 days, angels came and ministered to his needs. At the right time and in the right way, the opportunity will come.

Jesus did not turn stones into bread, even though he was hungry. And we're talking about what you will eat. Well, Lord, I've got the power.

Why don't I just fulfill that need this way? Jesus didn't succumb to that temptation and misuse of power. Why? Because he was operating in faith. He wasn't just looking for a way to, if he had been looking for a way to meet his needs, he would have used his prerogatives and created himself some food.

Why was he fasting in the first place? What is the purpose of fasting? We've talked about this. We did it back in feasts and sacrifices. What is the purpose of fasting? Is it just like the hair shirt or the self-flagellation? They used to make little whips and go around and whip themselves because to show what awful sinners they felt themselves to be in the middle ages and such.

What is fasting designed to do? It is concentration. I am setting all other things aside so that I can focus. Have you ever had a work requirement or an academic requirement of some kind and you can't take time to eat or you're caring for somebody? They're in a bad way and you can't say, well, I'll be back in an hour and a half.

I got to go to Burger King or I got to go to Arby's and get myself a sandwich. You set those things aside because this is a higher priority. When is it such a high priority to immerse ourselves in the kingdom of God and his righteousness that we even set our meal aside? I can't take time for a meal.

I don't want to do the preparation, the ingestion or the cleanup afterward because I need to be focused on this. And it's not necessarily intake. It's not, well, let me set all those aside and I'm just going to listen to tapes or I'm going to read my Bible.

This is operational faith. This is using what we know and using what we have and processing it into our circumstances and into our thinking and into our planning. Why did Jesus go 40 days in the wilderness fasting? Is it in the middle of his ministry? Is it at the end of his ministry? It's at the beginning.

Jesus has to get his mind right in his humanity about what he is going to do and what he is going to go through to get it done from now until the ascension, right? He's reviewing the scripture that is in his mind. He is thinking about the need for followers who will be trained and what the criteria would be to select them and to nurture them spiritually. And where is he going to go? Is he going to start in Galilee? Is he going to start in Judea? Is he going to go to the Transjordan? Is he going to go straight to Jerusalem and try to minister at the temple? He is taking the freight of all of that Old Testament knowledge that he learned in the first 30 years of his life and he is investing it and applying it and planning ahead, I think, for the next three years.

40 days for a three and a half year plan? Can't think about anything else? And in the midst of it, Satan is going to try to divert him and say, why don't you fulfill the plan this way? Here's a shortcut. Here's a different way to use the power God gave you. Here's a different way to use the perspective God gave you.

Here's a different way to use the opportunity while you're here. If you need the kingdoms of the world, here they are. If you need provision, do it this way.

If you want to impress the population, let's go to the temple. Jump down. You'll startle and impress everybody all at once.

Shortcut, shortcut, shortcut. And each of them is in the material realm. Bread, demonstration jumping off the temple, make an idol, set somebody in God's place, and mission accomplished.

Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore, verse 34, do not marimnao. Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things.

Now, this is an odd statement. Don't worry about tomorrow. Remember in the prayer, give us today tomorrow's bread.

Are these in conflict? Can you ask today for tomorrow's bread as an act of faith, and then not worry about it? You can plan for tomorrow. You can ask for provision of tomorrow's bread. You don't worry about tomorrow.

He says, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. The thing about tomorrow is it's never here. So if the worry is being done by tomorrow, who's doing the worrying today? Worry, it's like gone with the wind.

I'll worry about that tomorrow, and let's see how things look tomorrow. I'm not going to let the future crowd into the present. I used to do this on leave.

I didn't like thinking about when I had to go back to wherever I was stationed. Let me enjoy this day, and if I'm leaving day after tomorrow, well, don't put a cloud in front of

the sun with, oh, I'm going to soon be going back, and oh, when I get back, it's the dark ages, all of these bad things are going to be happening. Why cloud today with tomorrow's problems? Tomorrow will take care of itself would be a colloquial translation.

Don't worry about tomorrow. Tomorrow will take care of itself is the idea. Live in the present.

You can plan for tomorrow. You can work and put away for tomorrow. Go to the ant, thou sluggard.

You know, the whole thing with the grasshopper fiddling in the summertime and coming to the ants trying to get some food in the winter. We work, we plan, we concern ourselves. It doesn't go to worry.

Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. We've got our hands full negotiating the present without adding baggage from the future. How many times has it happened that you have a big concern about what's going to happen, and one phone call, one email, one letter in the mail, and suddenly that huge concern, we were so worried, we were so wrapped around the axle about something, and come to find out it wasn't even there.

Well, what if you ruined a whole day over it yesterday, and today you find out, well, it wasn't even an issue. I thought this bad thing was going to happen, thought the check didn't clear, thought the money wasn't there, thought all Hades was going to break loose in this situation, but come to find out it's resolved. It's okay.

The test had the wrong name on it. It's not me after all. Sufficient for the day.

Live in the present. We plan, we work, we save, but do not worry. If there's anything that needs undue concern, it's what we're handling right now.

That concludes the chapter and reminds us that the theme all the way through this chapter has been being heavenly-minded, keeping the Father in mind, keeping our relationship with Him in mind. If He's our Heavenly Father and we are His child, certain things are true, and that abnegates worry. It abnegates fear.

It abnegates trying to please people or lay up treasure on earth or be conditioned and controlled by earthly perspectives. We have light in our eye, and it's the light of heaven. We have a goal in mind, and it's the kingdom.

We have a pursuit around which our life centers, and it is righteousness. And by seeking that first, God is going to make provision for us, make it available, make it obtainable in the same way that He does for His creation, which is not nearly so closely related to Him as we are. So that is the encouragement, and the application is anytime we find ourselves diverted by undue care and worry, the key is not to stop worrying.

The key is to start trusting, to look at those things that are true. Look at those things that are honest and pure and lovely and of good report, and think on these things, and the peace of God that passes all understanding will keep our hearts and minds, guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. These are the truths.

Look around at what God has done. Look around at who God is. Look around at who we are with reference to God.

Do you seriously think that God would send the Lord Jesus to die for you and then let you starve? It just doesn't make any sense. Faith will quell worry. Put it back into the normal concern, caution, planning.

Nothing wrong with thinking about these things, but it can't dominate. It can't become the master. You can't serve two masters, and you can't serve the master of fear or worry or undue care about the things of this life and be pleasing in God's sight.

Well, this brings us to chapter 7. Judge not that you be not judged. Oh boy, are we going to have fun when we get to this. The Bible has a lot to say about judging.

It seems to me there's a lot of people, places and things on this earth that need judging. So if he says judge not, what can it possibly mean? We'll delve into it in detail and find out about specks and beams and such next time, but let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, we thank you for the grace that separates us from the godless and from those who do not know you and are not related to you through the Lord Jesus Christ.

And because of the wonderful blessings that we have in him and through him, we have peace with you. We have peace in our circumstances. We have the opportunities for faith, for growth, and for a bright future hope, all because of your love for us in sending the Lord Jesus and equipping us with your spirit and the word of truth.

We pray that as we reflect on these things that God the Holy Spirit will help us see their pertinence and applicability in our individual situations and collectively as we seek to prepare ourselves for service and function both in this life and in the ages to come. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.