

Series Title: What's New?

Week 2: *Living free of worry in a stressed out world*

Date: 01-08-23

- **Last week- in the theme of NY resolutions, we explored the amazing NT message of what is ALREADY NEW for us IN CHRIST. If you missed..**
- **Today we are looking at one of Jesus' most practical commands. This is a command, that IF YOU OBEY IT will bring you peace. PROBLEM is that while this may be one of Jesus' most FREEING commands, it is also...**

✠ The NT's... hardest command

- o **Forgive as God forgives us- Colossians 3**
- o **Love as I love you- John 13**
- o **Rejoice always. Give thanks in all... Philippians**
- o **Take up cross and follow me... Mark 8, others**
- o **Be perfect as God is perfect- Matthew 5**

- **THESE ALL have contexts! But as crazy as they sound- in the REALITY OF LIFE, what Jesus commands in Matthew six may be even harder... DON'T WORRY!**

- **IT'S BEEN SAID... if not worrying, not paying attention. BUT both a promise and a command in scripture is that as followers of Christ... NEW CREATIONS IN CHRIST, LIVING IN THE HOPE OF CHRIST... WE DO NOT HAVE TO BE HELD BONDAGE BY WORRY. IN CHRIST, it is possible to live free of worry in the midst of a stressed out world.**

- **HOW? What does that look like? What does Jesus say? SCRIPTURE is in Matthew Six- well known passage that follows Jesus' teaching of the 'Lord's Prayer.'**

- **Starting in verse 25, FOUR times, Jesus says "do not worry." The focus of HOW we are not to worry really includes the entire chapter, including the HEART PERSPECTIVE we see in the Lord's Prayer- and we are going to start with Jesus' VERY practical teaching beginning in verse 19.**

- **BUT FIRST, JUST WHAT are we talking about when we hear Jesus say the word 'worry'? What does it mean?**

- **FIRST: "Worry" in terms of just caring (or NOT caring) about something. We might say "Don't worry about it!"... meaning, don't pay something any heed, don't give it any thought. Have no concern. This is a popular concept in our culture... THREE SONGS come to mind..**
 - o **Three little birds, Bob Marley. "Don't worry about a thing, cause every little things gonna be alright"**
 - o **Bobby McFerrin.. Don't worry, be happy**
 - o **HAKUNA MATATA- Timone and Pumba "It means now worries... it's our problem free philosophy"**

- **"Honey, did you pay the rent?" "Don't worry about it! Hakuna Matata!" This is NOT what Jesus teaches!**

- **College print room "Lack of planning on your part does not constitute an emergency on our part".... "Bad decisions on your part do not constitute divine will on God's part"**

- **IN CONTRAST, scripture teaches us to work, provide, be responsible, pay heed to things ahead of us, be wise. Wise planning is time well spent, worrying is time wasted.**

- **Likewise, healthy concern and awareness leads to good judgement. It's been said "Healthy concern gives way to planning- worry gives way to fear"**

- **SO, when Jesus said ‘don’t worry about your life’, he didn’t mean- don’t have a healthy and responsible perspective on the details of your life. Personal responsibility is a very biblical thing!**
- **SO WHAT IS JESUS GETTING AT?... It is worry the way we most often think about it. Worry and fear that flows from our desire to CONTROL what is going to happen. BIG RANGE... On ONE HAND, irrational worry about things totally beyond our control - often coupled with need to always be in control.**
- **Also, worrying about things that really aren’t that important. Worrying about things that probably won’t happen. Borrowing trouble from the future...**
- **Then there’s the very real worry we experience when we see very possible negative outcomes of a situation, ESPECIALLY when it’s beyond our control. Feeling of helplessness. We worry.**
- **From here, small step to other extreme... full blown anxiety and fear, almost always of things beyond our control. Shut us down.**
- **WHAT DOES SCRIPTURE HAVE TO SAY? As we go through this passage, we can hear Jesus asking us important questions- questions that reveal the source of our worry and stress, OR, the source of our peace.**

✠ Where is my treasure?

Matthew 6:19-21 *“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

- **Important! Jesus doesn’t say we can’t have nice things. He says “Don’t store up treasures on earth”- meaning, “don’t vest your life, identity, hope, contentment, and wellness, in temporary things.” RATHER, in our TRUE needs in life, look to GOD.**
 - **NOW, when I say look to GOD, this isn’t some simplistic cliché. This means- through a conscious, purposeful faith in Christ, to KNOW who God is, his nature, his presence, to how what is TRUE about God, TRUE about Jesus, TRUE ABOUT YOU as a disciple- and choose to live as if these things ARE TRUE- because they ARE, and THEY ARE GOOD.**
 - **But it’s even more than this. Jesus says “store up treasures in heaven”- this is a picture of investing our lives, our hopes, our identity, in things the Spirit and nature of Christ will lead us to DO. Not just believe- not just doctrine- but how we actually live.**
 - **This is what Larry Crabb (Pressures off) describes as FIRST PLACE PASSION... we can have many passions, but only one first place passion- and our FPP is what reveals our source of life- and if it is ourself- temporary things- then the pressure is ON, because it’s up to us to maintain these things- and this leads to worry.**
 - **In 1 Timothy 6 Paul sums this up:**
- 1 Timothy 6:17-18** *Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. ¹⁸ Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.*
- **SO, as we move into 2023, what is your treasure?**

✠ How is my vision?

Matthew 6:22-23 *“The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. ²³ But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!*

- **Few important things here. In Jesus’ time people regarded the eye as the ‘window into the soul’- it was HOW YOU SEE that led to who you were, your character, your expression of what was really going on in your heart. In fact, Jesus has just moved from talking about ‘where your heart is’, to ‘how your eyes see’, and these metaphors are parallel.**
- **SO, Jesus’ hearers knew exactly what he meant. SECONDLY, the word the NIV translates ‘Healthy’ with “If your eyes are healthy”, actually is the word “SINGLE,” also sometimes translated ‘clear.’ This is the picture of a clear vision, perceptive vision, and a SINGLE, versus DOUBLE, Vision.**
- **Jesus has just talked about dangers of vesting our life in temporary and materialistic things. Here, he says ‘If you see the world around you with a healthy perspective where God is your center, God is your hope and trust, then your life will be full of light- hope, goodness, and peace.’ BUT, if you have unhealthy vision (AND WORD HERE FOR UNHEALTHY is evil- corrupt- selfish)... if you see your life and the world around you through the lens of PRIDE, of selfishness, of thinking that temporary things are your hope, then not only will your life be dark- fully of fear and worry- but that darkness will distort everything- it will consume you.**
- **SO... NEW YEAR- as you look at the things in your life, consider how you see and relate to the world around you, how is your vision? Clouded vision misses the goodness of God, misses the peace of trust, and leads to fear and worry.**

✠ **Who do I serve?**

Matthew 6:24 *“No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.*

- **Jesus reiterates his point here in a way that is simple and penetrating. What do we really serve? What do we say “THIS I HAVE TO HAVE” in order to be content, have peace, wholeness. What, or who, do we look to for our hope and identity? If we have bound ourselves to temporary things, we will be defined by worry, because we know these can be taken away.**
- **But Jesus takes it a step further- not only will temporary things NOT bring us life, but if we are mastered by these, if these become our first place passion, they will actively push us away from God. We will come to resent God when these lesser Gods- because really, that’s what they are- when they fail us.**
- **THINK! IF WE ARE TRULY HONEST, SELF AWARE- has there been a time when we have prayed for our circumstantial needs, and said something like... GOD! This thing, this need- THIS IS MY SOURCE OF HOPE! I NEED THIS FOR MY IDENTITY, MY SECURITY, MY PEACE- so please help me keep this so I don’t have to fully place my trust in YOU. OOF.**
- **OR, by the SPIRIT, do we learn to pray... LORD- You know how much this situation means to me- you know my heart, how I desire for you to take action here- but Jesus, as much as I am able, and as much as I desire for this outcome, draw my eyes to you. May my hope, trust, source, be in YOU. LORD, help me to trust you with this outcome, whatever it may be.**
- **IN Christ, we have received the GIFT THAT our HOPE, identity, acceptance, goodness... These are things we have already received by our faith in God, and even when that faith is one step at a time, this hope- this PEACE- cannot be taken away**

- **SO- 2023, who do you serve?**
- **Jesus continues with the question that points us to one of the most beautiful and life-giving promises we have in scripture...**

✠ **What is my value?**

Matthew 6:25-27 “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear.

- **Pause. KEY- what Jesus just described- Food, health, clothing... THESE ARE ESSENTIAL THINGS! THEY ARE IMPORTANT. JESUS isn't being flippant! He points to some of our most basic human needs, WHICH he fully understands, and says DO NOT BE CONSUMED BY THIS! Don't attached your treasure, your vision, what masters you- to these things. YES THEY ARE IMPORTANT, but there is something far more valuable....**

Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. **(BY THE WAY- this isn't about passivity- Birds work hard!)** Are you not much more valuable than they? ²⁷ Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?

- **JESUS HERE cuts to the heart of the matter. In a world of temporary things, WHAT IS BASIS OF YOUR SELF WORTH? DON'T YOU KNOW, BELIEVE, THAT YOU ARE VALUABLE TO GOD? THAT YOU MATTER?**
- **God declares this throughout scripture- EVERY HUMAN LIFE- EVERYONE- is precious. YOU MATTER. Christ proved this once and for all upon the cross.**
- **I HAVE TO ADD HERE- One of the greatest ways- if not THE greatest way Jesus demonstrates how much He values people- is by how WE as his disciples VALUE PEOPLE- by how we love them, care for them, listen to them, are kind to them, patient with them, and accept them.**
- **INTERESTING NOTE.. “add an hour to your life”, also can be translated “add a cubit to your height... increase your stature”. WORRY WILL NOT ENHANCE YOUR LIFE! IT STEALS!**
- **And so Jesus implores us to stop trying to define ourselves (or others)- stop trying to validate our value as humans- based upon what we have, how well we can perform, or what others say about us.**
- **NEW YEAR- what do you believe is YOUR VALUE. What is the basis of how you think of the value of your life, and the lives of others?**
- **THIS LEADS US to the central point of Jesus' entire teaching in this passage. What may be the most important question we can ask ourselves this year, or in any given situation...**

✠ **What (who) do I seek? What am I seeking?**

Matthew 6:28-33 “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. ²⁹ Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ³⁰ If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? ³¹ So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³² For the pagans run after **(stress out, source)** all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³ But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

- **WOW.** We could spend months, if not years, plumbing the depths of what Jesus just said. What does it mean to seek God's kingdom? To seek God's righteousness? You could probably give some answers there.
- **BUT WHAT ABOUT** what seems to be Jesus' promise "and all these things- what we eat, drink, wear, our temporary needs- will be given to us" What does that mean, held honestly against reality of human experience? It is just a demonstrable fact that many sincere believers, who have devoted their lives to God's kingdom and righteousness, have experienced chronic need, poverty, hardship, even death.
- If you are wrestling with that question, this is very real, very important, and there is a discussion to be had there. **BUT RIGHT NOW**, focus on one essential thought.
- **IN THE MIDST OF LIFE AS IT REALLY IS...** OUR HOPE of living with a prevailing peace, mental and emotional rest- with self-awareness, humility, security, and inner health- OUR HOPE FOR THIS WELLNESS OF OUR SOUL is for our greatest treasure, and first place passion, to be the PRESENCE and GOODNESS of God, through our faith relationship with Jesus Christ.
- In the midst of a stressed out world, Jesus calls us into the moment by moment peace of our relationship with him. THIS IS intentional, and it takes on many different forms... but right now one more question as Jesus concludes this teaching...

✠ When am I?

Matthew 6:34 *Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*

- **Bottom line, God calls us to live in the present.** As people of faith we often are tempted to live either in the guilt of our past or our desire for the future- **BUT GOD IS THE GOD OF RIGHT NOW.**
- **YES-** The Christian hope has a destination! But rather than diminishing the importance of the present, the New Testament is a picture of us bringing our hope of the future **BACK INTO** the present. As we discussed last week, the call to bring the **NOT YET** of Revelation 21 into the **RIGHT NOW** of everyday life.
- It's no accident that Jesus' invitation into a life free from the bondage of fear and worry is preceded in Matthew six by Jesus teaching us how to pray. **OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN, HALLOWED BE YOUR NAME...** may your **KINGDOM COME** (YOUR presence, your rule), and **YOUR WILL-** you nature and character- **BE DONE ON EARTH** as it is in heaven! **Emphasis of this prayer is RIGHT NOW.**
- **SO,** when Jesus says 'DON'T WORRY ABOUT YOUR LIFE', he is saying **MAY THE PEACE OF YOUR FATHER IN HEAVEN** be **YOUR PEACE** in your life **TODAY**, through your faith and trust in **ME.**
- **LAST THOUGHT.** Why did Jesus teach us not to worry? In **Philippians 4**, why does Paul say "**DO NOT BE ANXIOUS IN ANYTHING?**"
- **Because JESUS KNOWS** that we worry! **GOD KNOWS** we struggle with fear and anxiety! **If your child, parent, or loved one is struggling, or even in danger, WE WORRY! THIS IS HUMAN. GOD KNOWS THIS. SO...**

✠ When we worry...

- **KNOW that God does not condemn you. He does not cover you with guilt or shame. Rather, like a loving parent or a compassionate friend, he calls us into his embrace.**
- **WHEN WE WORRY, may we hear what God says to us:**

1 Peter 5:6-7 *Humble yourselves (let go, be honest, stop fighting, trust), therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. ⁷ Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.*

- **In this new year, you will be tempted to worry. You will have legitimate reason to worry! Some of you may be carrying great anxiety right now. When you find yourself there, go read Matthew 6- honestly before God, ask yourself...**
 - **What is my greatest treasure?**
 - **How is my spiritual and emotional vision?**
 - **Who am I serving?**
 - **What is my value? My source of my value?**
 - **What, who do I seek?**
 - **Do I trust God to truly live in the present**
 - **Perhaps most importantly, in the core of my heart, do I believe that God cares for me? For people I love? When I am afraid, will I take that fear, anxiety... my worry.. and surrender it to Him?**
- **In the midst of a stressed out world, Jesus invites us to be set free from the bondage of fear and worry. How will we respond?**