

PP The King and His Kingdom-The Commands for a Disciple of Christ
Part 25-Matthew 6:25-34

9/10-11/2017

I grew up in a rural farm town in Central NY, outdoors more than indoors and I love storms! Spring snowmelts or fall rainstorms would overflow our creeks and streams, and to cross, we would pick up large rocks, throw them every couple feet apart in order to cross. We're going to take this approach in our passage that Pastor Matthew began last week as he transitioned us back into our series called, *'The King and the Kingdom'*. The goal of Jesus is, in effect, to help us cross from one creek bank to the other. I'll summarize them for you as we start in verse 24.

"No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money."

Matthew 6:24

On one bank is serving money, and the effect that has in the lives of Christians. The other side is serving God and the life, satisfaction and peace it will bring to us. Jesus meant here very simply, if you are going to live in His kingdom, you will not be able to worship Him if you worship money and the things it can give. The word **'serve'** doesn't mean punching the time clock and doing your day's work. It is anything you submit your life to and becomes the controlling interest in your life. It means loving and adoring Christ to the degree that He is the object of all our labor. We work hard and do excellent work without complaining at our jobs because doing so brings Christ glory as it sets us apart from selfish, complaining, lazy people. We serve God at the sink doing dishes as if we have just served the King of kings a banquet. We mow the lawn as if it belongs to Jesus and He will come home to see it soon. We write papers for college as if Christ's grade is on the line, doing our best for His glory. If we work for money, live for things, allow possessions to provide our happiness and bank accounts our security, then we cannot be consumed with Christ. Jesus didn't preach this just in case His disciples might struggle in this, or some hypothetical person who struggles with worshipping money. This is a struggle of all of us...no one is above the reach of the money god. And if we bow down to it, serving money by expending great time, thought, energy, care to get it and the things it brings, then there will be a very unsettling result in the hearts of God's people...anxiety and worry. There is another way to live that will lead to life, here and for eternity...serving God. The power of the gospel works constantly in our lives to change our desires from serving money, to serving God, and this is precisely what is happening in what Jesus said next.

PP The Command...do not be anxious!

"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." Matthew 6:25

God never gives a command without providing the grace to obey it. He doesn't do what my older brother did to me when I was 13 and my dirt bike needed an engine rebuild...he handed me a screwdriver and said see you later. I ended up selling the bike *'as is'*.

God's commands come with a service manual called the bible, new parts called the new heart, and an Expert mechanic Who has the name Holy Spirit on His shirt
 So Jesus commands His disciples, Do not be anxious about your life, but then gives the reason
 Note with me that in the ESV, the word **'anxiety'** occurs 6 times, so it would be good to at least start with a working definition of what that is and here is one that I would offer:

PP Anxiety is fearing the future because you doubt God's sovereign goodness

PP Tim Keller said it is *'a daily statement to God saying, 'I don't think you have my best interest in mind.'''*

Anxiety is directed toward the future... **'what you will eat', 'what you will drink', 'what you will put on'**

Jesus makes this even clearer in verse 34, **"Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow..."**

The word **'anxiety'** here actually means to take thought, but it is amplified to mean over-thinking, or obsessively thinking about the future

The English word *worry* comes from an old German word meaning to strangle or choke

Anxiety and worry put a mental and emotional chokehold on us

It's considered the most common mental illness in the US-40 million adults, 18% of population

There is anxiety that is produced when there is an imbalance in our bodies

It is important to strive for physical health, eating well, resting right and exercising regularly

And if there is a general anxiety that seems unable to go away, I would recommend seeing both a trained Christian counselor at our counseling center, and possibly a medical practitioner

However, I believe most anxiety is rooted in our hearts, not our bodies, and it is this that Jesus

addresses as He begins to throw the rocks in so we can cross the stream to the other side

And it is primarily a problem rooted in our faith, stemming from doubting our Heavenly Father's love and power to care for all our needs

Jesus said, **"Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?" 6:25**

Focus on living in the Kingdom of God, not obsessing on base needs, but letting God care for us

And the result will be the exact opposite of anxiety, peace...the freedom from worry

But how do we cross from the bank of anxiety to the back of peace and kingdom life?

PP Rock #1-Engage the mind...Look!

We can recognize the rocks by the commands Jesus gives, and there are three of them

"Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?" 6:26

PP It seems trivial, but **'look'** means more than glance, but rather to observe and discern

God has given birds life as well, but they are not created in His image, they are not His children

Yet God cares for them so they will have what they need

Birds work incessantly at gathering food for themselves, their mates and their young

Yet God does not say, 'I've gone My part, now you're on your own'

He cares for them out of love and faithfulness

PP "He gives to the beasts their food, and to the young ravens that cry." Psalm 147:9

'Are you not of more value than they?'

Jesus tells us, the way you cross from the back of anxiety to the back of peace, begins by firmly planting your mind's feet on the rock of God's goodness and love for you

Modern Christianity unfortunately begins and ends on our value to God, unwittingly strengthening our narcissistic tendencies

Life is not first about us, nor does it end with us, it is about God Who gave us life
We have value because of His great love for us, and when we 'Look' at how His love is displayed to the creatures on this planet, and how much greater it is for us who are created in His image, the response is our eyes fix on Him rather than our own anxious lives

The truth Jesus means for us to get is this: God will provide all we need, so stop being anxious

PP Rock #2-Engage your mind: *Realize!*

“And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?” 6:27

God has decreed our life spans, and anxiety over the future, trying to control it, will not make us live even an hour longer

There are elements of life utterly out of our control, and requires our faith instead of fear

We do not know if we will be alive tomorrow, or lose all we have this year, or get a terminal medical diagnosis...we have no power to prevent any of these

That power is all in the hand of God and He is a good God

PP Rock #3-Engage your mind: *Consider!*

“And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?” 6:28-30

‘consider’ means to observe fully, to contemplate, to really pay attention to something
Look closely at flowers, noting their beauty and ability to brighten the moods of people
Yet their beauty does not come from conscious self-effort, but from God

But they live for only a short season, and in biblical days, when they died, they were plucked, dried for fuel to bake bread

In fact, if a woman was in a hurry to bake bread, she would have wood under the square, clay oven, but to get the fire quickly hot, she would throw into it the dried flowers

If God cares for, and makes temporary flowers so beautiful, how much more care does He have for us His children

What Jesus said brings us sobering clarity to the subject of anxiety: **‘O you of little faith’**

Picture anxiety as being one side of a coin, and faith as being the other

Anxiety and faith cannot co-exist, and the gospel’s aim in the hearts of God’s children is to help us live by faith, and not in fear

Trust Him Who cares for us far more than flowers, trusting Him for all our needs

He repeats His command to not be anxious in **verse 31** and where in verse 25 reminded His disciples that life is more than just clamoring after basic needs, here He reminds them of something else

“Therefore do not be anxious...For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.” 6:31-32

‘Gentiles’ is not a racist category, but a category for unbelievers who need salvation
 Those who live in the Kingdom of God must be distinct from those in the kingdom of this world
 Recall from chapter 5 we are to be the salt of the earth and light of the world
 What should mark the Christian is a life of peace, not anxiety, so Jesus throws in the final rock

PP Rock #4-Engage your mind: *Focus!*

“But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” 6:33

Most people focus on the first half of this verse, but that is possible when we truly believe the second half... ***‘and all these things will be added to you’***

These ***‘things’*** are food, drink and clothing, or in other words, our basic needs
 And this is actually a great deal of the problem that many of us Christians have: we have moved wants into the category of needs

I need to accepted by my friends...this is a want and the result is anxiety over rejection

I need a different home...this is a want, and the result is agitation and discontent

I need an effective treatment for this disease...this is a want for God holds the end of your days in His hands, but it results in fear

I need a larger retirement fund...this is a want, and results in withholding generosity to others

We could go on and on...almost always, our anxiety fixates on wants, and not needs

To step foot on the back of peace, we must believe our Heavenly Father will provide our needs

And the way to do that is what Jesus said: ***seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness***

What is the kingdom of God? *It is the invisible realm of God’s loving rule that is made visible through the church, as we live in such a way that exercises faith, obedience and love*

But what does it mean to seek the Kingdom of God?

PP i. It begins by pursuing the King Himself...Jesus...in relationship

It is to love Him as our Savior, bow to Him as our Lord, and walk with Him as our Friend

Is your love for Jesus truly evident in how you pursue Him, obey Him, and talk with Him?

PP ii. To seek the Kingdom of God is to pray for His kingdom to come more fully, that the reign and rule of Christ would be seen in greater ways, in Easton, in America, in this world

PP iii. It is to share the message of the gospel with unbelievers that they might come into the kingdom

The door into the Kingdom of God is Christ, the means of which is trusting in Him alone for the salvation and forgiveness of sins, to have a relationship of peace with God

PP iv. Christian, to seek God’s kingdom is to submit to Him and obey Him in all things

It is to deny yourself and every day, pick up your cross, dying to your own desires and instead fixing yourself in His desires

It is to follow after Jesus, the King and Master Rabbi, becoming like Him more every day

Christian retailers who won’t open on Sundays, forfeiting income, are seeking the Kingdom

Christian politicians who refuse to pass God-less agendas, losing votes are seeking His kingdom

Christians who will not compromise their purity and lose a dating relationship are seeking it

Christians who do not go on the glamorous vacations their friends do, because they are giving away their money to gospel initiatives, or choose to serve on a mission trip, are seeking the kingdom of God

PP v. It means that we are concerned with Christ-centered social reform and justice efforts that bring about the desires of God

It is to work to stop the committing of abortions, the rampant spread of pornography, the slavery of children and women, the destruction of greedy governments

As well as helping bring Christ into our schools by gathering teachers to pray, encouraging our students to start bible studies, even when there will be a personal cost to ourselves

Anxiety is almost always the condition of a self-centered life rather than Christ-centered

Jesus aims to turn our focus from serving money, to serving God

Realizing that life is more than basic needs, which God will be faithful to provide

Observe His care for the animal kingdom, and remember how much more valuable you are

Realize your true powerlessness and trust He Who holds all power

Consider deeply how He provides for even a non-permanent flower, and persuade yourself of the truth of how much more He will provide for you, created to live forever with Him

Prod your soul with the urgency to live distinct from Gentiles who worry about all these needs, discerning whether you have made your wants into your needs

Finally, seek the right thing, the permanency of the Kingdom of God

Friends, having stepped across the stream of anxiety, you've reached the other bank

"Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble." 6:34

Peace is handing to God our tomorrows, and focusing on serving and worshiping Him today

PP *"The beginning of anxiety is the end of faith, and the beginning of true faith is the end of anxiety."* George Muller.

Do you struggle with anxiety?

Step onto the rocks that Jesus puts into the stream, and step across to peace!

Amen?

Pray