

Text: Mt 6.25-34

Proposition: Worry about the things of this life is a form of worldliness counteracted by the pursuit of holiness.

Today we are returning to our occasional series on the preaching of Jesus. We last were in this at the end of May, so it is time to pick up where we left off.

The overall subject of the latter part of Matthew 6 is worldliness. David Martyn Lloyd-Jones said this about worldliness:

“But worldliness is all-pervasive, and is not confined to certain things. It does not just mean going to theatres or cinemas, or doing a few things of that nature. No, worldliness is an attitude towards life.”¹

In the passages we already covered, the idea of worldliness had to do with the kinds of things in the world that we love. The things we treasure, as Jesus said in this passage.

The section we are in today looks at worldliness from an entirely different perspective, one that reveals suppressed affections.

What do I mean by suppressed affections?

- You may not be in love with the flash and glitz of the movie world, the entertainment world, the wealthy world – but you may still love the world in ways you aren't obviously aware.

Today I want to direct your thinking to consider your attitudes towards the world from this perspective, the perspective of anxiety and worry about things in the world, even those things you directly need.

I've paraphrased a former popular song for my title:

Don't Worry, Be Holy

I am certainly not endorsing the song, which as I remember was a shallow little bit of rhythm and not much else.

I think you will at least see where the first part of the title comes from as we read the passage:

Read Mt 6.25-34

¹ David Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, One-Volume Edition, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971), 87.

Did you notice how many times our passage says, “Don’t Worry”?

- do not be worried about your life (v. 25)
- who of you by being worried can add a *single* hour to his life? (v.27)
- why are you worried about clothing? (v. 28)
- Do not worry then (v. 31)
- do not worry about tomorrow (v. 34)

I don’t know about you, but that would seem to me to be a theme!

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I. Worry as a form of worldliness (25-32)

My outline is a little unbalanced... point 1 is vv. 25-32, point 2 is v. 33, point 3 is v. 34. Nevertheless, I think that the outline reflects the Lord’s emphasis. He has to convince us about the danger of worry as worldliness before he can propose the alternative.

A. At issue are needs, not wants

1. Do not be worried about your life
2. Do not be worried about what you will eat
3. Do not be worried about clothing

We are not talking here about the worldliness of wanting a thirty room house with multiple bedrooms each having its own bathroom, having a ten car garage with each stall filled with a Lamborghini (or equivalent)...

We are talking here about your daily life, what you will eat, what you will wear.

B. At issue is *worry* about necessities

1. The word “worry”
 - a. μεριμνάω: “to worry” – same root as μερίζω, “to cut apart, to divide”

- b. "The verb, connected with μερίζω and μερμηρίζω, denotes 'distraction' of mind."²
- c. In the parallel in Lk, the KJV translates the verb there, "neither be ye of doubtful mind." (Different verb)

My definition: *Worry* is a distraction of mind caused by high concern about something, such that thought or action about other things is significantly impaired.

"It is immaterial to [Satan] whether you are laying up treasures on earth or worrying about earthly things; all he is concerned about is that your mind should be on them and not on God."³

2. The KJV "take no thought"

- a. An older English idiom – doesn't mean "don't ever think about it"
- b. Rather, "don't worry"
- c. Obviously, you should take thought about providing for the necessities of life
 - 1) God ordained that man should earn his living by the "sweat of his brow"
 - 2) That means not only labour, but prudence and foresight (see "they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns" v. 26)
 - 3) Sowing, reaping, gathering into barns is the normal means by which God provides for human needs (in other words, *work* [four letter word])
- d. The admonition against worry is not an admonition to "Just sit back and wait for God to feed you!"
- e. The admonition against worry is an admonition against worry

² J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan, *Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1930), 398.

³ Ibid.

C. Identifying the worldliness of worry about necessities

1. Principle: life is more than food and clothing (25)

- a. An argument from the greater to the lesser
- b. We don't exist just to exist
- c. We are called to live for something else

2. Principle: God provides in abundance for the birds and flowers (26, 28-30)

- a. Birds are given food by our heavenly Father
- b. Flowers are brightly arrayed by our heavenly Father
- c. Both birds and flowers are transient creatures, much lower than us (an argument from the lesser to the greater)
- d. If God provides for the lesser, he will provide for the greater

3. Key truths:

- a. Your worry is a demonstration of little faith (30)
- b. Jesus is preaching to believers:
 - 1) Your heavenly Father (26, 32)
 - 2) Contrast with the Gentiles (32)
- c. Your worry is an imitation of Gentile striving (32)

Lack of faith and "Gentile-ness" = worldliness, this is the way the world is.

II. God's alternative to worldliness (33)

A. The pursuit of the believer:

1. The kingdom of God
2. The righteousness of God

B. Paraphrasing the admonition

1. We aren't "doing religion" to show how pious we are (6.1-18)
2. We aren't "doing life" in imitation of the Gentiles (6.19-24, 32)

3. We are occupied (or ought to be) with pursuing and promoting the will and ways of God
 - a. Evangelizing (proclaiming the gospel)
 - b. Discipling (applying the gospel)
- C. Trusting God: all these things will be added

God's alternative to worldliness is a life preoccupied with the things of faith. You need to busy yourself with ministry in some way or other.

III. Christian outlook on the future (34)

- A. Here the admonition against worry is not about needs, but about tomorrow, the future
- B. The admonition calls us to faith for today, not fear for tomorrow

The future can paralyze, or the future can be the future, with the focus on today.

Conclusion:

Proposition: Worry about the things of this life is a form of worldliness counteracted by the pursuit of holiness.

Pursuing God's kingdom and righteousness is the antidote to the worldliness of worry. You will find the joy of discipleship in making the furtherance of God's kingdom and the betterment of God's people your ambition.