

# Teen Lesson

## with sermon to follow

### Intro

Poll Everywhere poll (word cloud)

What are you most anxious about?

What do you do to deal with stress, anxiety, etc?

The Pharisees wanted to be in control of everything. They wanted to be in control of their own destinies. They thought if they did everything a certain way they could manipulate others and even manipulate God to give them what they wanted.

They thought they could make everyone see how religious they were by putting on a show when they fasted (6:16), and they thought they could control their fate by instead of trusting God storing up money for themselves (6:19).

The part I want us to focus on today is the part about worry.

This was so true of the Pharisees. They were Self-Image creators and Curators. They wanted to be perceived by everyone certain ways. I think in many ways we are very much like them.

Don't we try to create a certain image of ourselves we want others to see. We carefully select what we post on social media or what we share with people at school so they will think certain ways about us. This is what the Pharisees were doing and guess what it causes STRESS AND ANXIETY.

Read **Matthew 6:25-34**

**ASK:** If you had to summarize this passage, how would you do it?

*Turn to your neighbor and give a short summary.*

- Verse 25 starts out and says, "Therefore" Whenever you see therefore, you always ask, what is "therefore" there for? It is connecting something previous to something that comes after. Notice what v. 24 says, "You cannot serve two masters...you cannot serve both God and money." The point being made is that we are to serve God, he is to be our master. And right after that Jesus says, So do be worried.

**ASK:** So why would you say "God is your master don't be anxious."?

**ASK:** What does it mean to be anxious?

Many times we think this - **Hakuna Matata song**

In the Bible the word anxious means: Anxious - brood over, cares of life which disturb sleep<sup>1</sup>, worry. that which monopolizes the heart's concerns.<sup>2</sup>

So this is something that controls our hearts. It sits on the throne of our hearts because we think it is outside of God's domain.

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<sup>1</sup> Kittel, G., Friedrich, G., & Bromiley, G. W. (1985). *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (p. 584). Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans.

<sup>2</sup> Balz, H. R., & Schneider, G. (1990–). *Exegetical dictionary of the New Testament* (Vol. 2, p. 409). Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans.

- V. 26 - Notice it does not say God will hand over everything you need. v. 26 says the birds are provided for but how does that saying go? “The early bird... gets the worm” The idea behind the saying is that it is the bird that gets up early in the morning before everyone else that is able to get the food that it needs. If a bird just stays in its nest all day and does nothing, worms are not going to just start flinging themselves into the nest.

What does that mean for us? It means that we work hard, we try, we do everything we can but we don’t worry about it. We know God will take care of us.

**ASK:** What does this passage say about God?

**ASK:** When we worry about things in life, in a sense, it is like we are declaring that we are atheists. How is this the case?

**ASK:** Do people ever take this passage too far?

Philippians 4:19, “My God will meet all your needs.”

1 Cor 10:13, “Not give you any temptation beyond what you can stand.”

Romans 8:35-39 - says we will face horrible things, persecution, distress, nakedness, peril but God will not leave us and help us get through these situations.

**ASK:** How do we live out Matt 6:33?

I think this section is pointing out our upside down nature of how we think. We think God is here to make our life on this earth easier, better, more fulfilling and so that is why we worry and we are so concerned with money and what is going to happen tomorrow. God is saying he is not here to make this life better, you are here to show everyone that God is the most satisfying thing.

## **Don’t Be Anxious - Sermon**

Tonights sermon in many ways reminds me of my grandma. When I think about worry I think about my grandma. “She was a champion worrier. It didn’t matter how much my sister and I tried to reassure her. “Worrying works!” she liked to say. “Look at all the things I’ve worried about that never happened.””

That is how it is for many of us, isn’t it? We worry about a lot of things, many of them we don’t have control over and many that probably won’t come to pass. The American Psychiatric Association did a poll and found that anxiety in Americans has risen 20% in the last year.<sup>3</sup> It also found that Americans are mostly anxious about our safety, our health, and our finances. We are a nation that is stressed, anxious and always looking for ways to manage.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.psychiatry.org/newsroom/apa-public-opinion-poll-annual-meeting-2018>

And the Bible has something to say about that. Isn't it wonderful that we have a book that is not just dealing with pie in the sky ideas? It is not a book that looks at deep theology but has nothing to do with our daily lives. Augustine, an early church father once said about the Bible, "'It is shallow enough for a child not to drown, yet deep enough for an elephant to swim in it.'" This book plumbs the depths of the human heart and explores the mysteries of the universe and at the same time deals with everyday problems that we have. No matter where you are at in your walk with God the Bible has something to say to you. And stress, anxiety, worry these are real problems that we all deal with. And because we deal with them Jesus cares about them and so he speaks into our every day situations. One place he talks about this is in the SOM.

The Sermon on the Mount was Jesus telling his disciples what his kingdom was about. Over and over again Jesus was preaching about the Kingdom of God. Jesus came to set up a new Kingdom, a kingdom different from this world and the SOM was Jesus' constitution if you will. He is setting out the standards by which he wants his disciples to live by. And so he says this about worry: Read **Matthew 6:25-34**

The idea is that you can rest in God. You don't have to worry and be anxious. God takes care of the birds and the lilies of the field and so he will take care of you. Not only that, but I think we could infer that when we try to interfere we only mess up his plans and his purposes and so the best thing we can do is to seek first his kingdom. I think this is the main thrust of the passage. However, if we leave it there we are missing out on a lot! We might misunderstand what it means not to worry, and we might misapply how God will take care of us. So get out your shovel because I want to dig a little deeper in this passage tonight and explore these issues.

I understand that as Jesus talks about not worrying he says that God takes care of the birds so he will take care of you. This is the reason he gives for why we don't need to worry. This is true but there is so much more to it than that. The key is found in the first word of the passage. V. 25 starts out and says, "Therefore." Whenever you see therefore, you always ask, what is "therefore" there for? It is connecting something previous to something that comes after. So what comes before it? Notice what v. 24 says, "You cannot serve two masters...you cannot serve both God and money." The point being made is that we are to serve God, he is to be our master. And right after that Jesus says, So do not be worried. So why would you say "God is your master don't be anxious?" What is the connection between the two?

The problem is the Pharisees had never learned to live by faith. They wanted to trust their money, their planning, their ingenuity instead of trusting in God. Yet God says if you trust yourself, if you trust your money then I am not your master. Make me your master, live by faith that I will protect you. The word used here for master does not just mean a person who is over another but also the person has the power to rule over and effectively manage.

This is so important, it undergirds the truth that follows in the text. Yes we know that God takes care of everything else so God will take care of you. BUT, he is more than just a gardener who can take care of plants. God is a good master, he is in control of and effectively manages it all. He has the power to rule and manage over millions of people all around the world. And he brings that unlimited power to bear upon your situation to take care of you. And it is on this basis and fact that you can know that you are safe and cared for.

So we know we don't have to be anxious, but the question is, what does it mean to be anxious?  
 Many times we think of the famous song - **Hakuna Matata**  
 Hakuna Matata!  
 What a wonderful phrase  
 Hakuna Matata!  
 Ain't no passing craze  
 It means no worries  
 For the rest of your days  
 It's our problem-free philosophy  
 Hakuna Matata!

It is a care free attitude, hey don't worry about anything, just float through life and everything will turn out ok. This sounds nice but is this what the text is saying? I feel like we preach it like this but none of believe this. So many times we say don't worry, God has got your back. But then we leave it at that and don't explain it. Does it mean this Hakuna Matata philosophy? Here is the problem with not understanding a passage like this. When we mis-interpret a passage like this one, one of two things happen:

1) We feel like a bad Christian because we can't measure up to the standard we think it is setting. We don't feel as if we can be completely worry free and so we live in a state of constant guilt because we are not obeying Scripture. This is a bad place to be. Following Jesus was never meant to make us feel a constant state of guilt.

2) We feel as if this is nice language in the Bible but the Bible is not really true. We say to ourselves, "The Bible says don't worry, but we don't have to take that literally because that is so unrealistic." And it is easy to start spiritualizing verses and regulating the Bible to advice that is not very practical. That is a ditch along the road I never want to fall in.

So how do we take this verse seriously, how do we feel the demands of what it is saying but at the same time don't feel as if we can never measure up? We must interpret it correctly. Because if we don't the ditches on both sides of that road are dangerous areas we never want to fall into.

First of all, we can't pluck a verse out of context, and use one verse to base our whole theology of worry on. Here are a few other verses that use the exact same Greek word for worry:

**Philippians 2:20, "For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely anxious for your welfare"** (RSV). The same Greek word (μεριμνάω) is used in both places. This word, translated as "care," is also used in **1 Corinthians 12:25, "that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another."** So at times it is good to worry, be anxious. So how is that the case. The key is found in the actual meaning of the word and what it applies to. So what does this word mean? The word Anxious in Greek means to - brood over, cares of life which disturb sleep.<sup>4</sup> That which monopolizes the heart's concerns.<sup>5</sup>

Knowing the definition puts this passage in a different context. We are not to let worry and concern to monopolize our heart. It does not need to cause us to seize up in fear. It does not

<sup>4</sup> Kittel, G., Friedrich, G., & Bromiley, G. W. (1985). *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (p. 584). Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans.

<sup>5</sup> Balz, H. R., & Schneider, G. (1990-). *Exegetical dictionary of the New Testament* (Vol. 2, p. 409). Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans.

need to keep us up at night. The key is found in verse **26** - Notice it does not say God will hand over everything you need. v. 26 says the birds are provided for but how does that saying go? “The early bird... gets the worm.” The idea behind the saying is that it is the bird that gets up early in the morning before everyone else that is able to get the food that it needs. If a bird just stays in its nest all day and does nothing, worms are not going to just start flinging themselves into the nest.

What does that mean for us? It means that we work hard, we try, we do everything we can but we don’t worry about it. This is good news for me. I am a planner, I am an organizer. I like to know what is coming up and I make huge long lists of things I need to get done for some event coming up. So before a big events like Senior Graduation Sunday that we had 2 months ago, I started planning that in August, I start 9 months out, and I had a to do list with 67 things on it that I had to do. It would be easy to say, don’t worry about it, it’s all ok, God will take care of it, the Bible says don’t worry. But we would be mis-interpreting the passage. Instead, we plan, we prepare, we work hard, we anticipate possible problems **and then** we give it over to God and rest because we know God will take care of us. This is a completely different mindset than ahh just don’t worry about it, it will figure itself out. When I understand the meaning then I know I can follow both **Colossians 3:23** which says, “**Whatever you find your hands to do do with all your heart, as working for the Lord not men.**” And also **Matthew 6:25** which tells us, “**Don’t be anxious about your life.**” We do the first one and then we are able to do the 2<sup>nd</sup> one.

The next question then is what does this passage promise God will provide for us? What does it mean in v. **33** when he says, “**All these things will be added to you?**” Does this mean he will give all the food you need and clothing and shelter? And we have other passages that say very similar things. **Philippians 4:19**, “**My God will meet all your needs.**” Do people ever take this passage too far? So, if you follow God and seek first his kingdom then you never have to worry again about putting food on the table and having clothes to wear? Surely this can’t be right. Let me say very bluntly why this can’t be correct. If this was correct then there must be no Christians in third world countries. But I’ve been to Peru and Mexico and Tessa has been to Mexico, Honduras and South Africa. I have met Christians who have had nothing. We have brothers and sisters in Christ who are literally starving to death. Surely, we don’t tell them they just need more faith and seek the kingdom a little bit harder and then food will come to the table. I’m not trying to be flippant here. This is the truth. How does the truth we see pervasive in the world square with what Scripture teaches? Go to [www.opendoorusa.org](http://www.opendoorusa.org) and it will tell you about the worldwide persecution going on. It tell us that:

- 245 million Christians are experiencing high levels of persecution worldwide
- every month:
  - 345 Christians are killed for faith-related reasons
  - 105 Churches and Christian buildings are burned or attacked
  - 219 Christians are detained without trial, arrested, sentenced and imprisoned.<sup>6</sup>

And I don’t say that just because of antidotal evidence, there are Scriptures that teach this also, but we will get there in a second. So what does it mean when Jesus says “**All these things will**

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/>

**be added to you?”** or in other passages when he says **Philippians 4:19**, **“My God will meet all your needs?”**

I think in the text itself there is a clue. The beginning of the passage in v. 25, **“Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?”** The pagan would say NO. This is what my life consists of. My physical needs are my top priority because there is nothing else. My food, my clothing, my pleasure this is all I have. Jesus says in v. 32 when we act as if our physical needs are all that there is we are acting like the Gentiles, we are acting like atheists! You may say you are a Christian but when you act like the rest of the world, when you have the same worries and concerns you make God look bad. You make the world think that God won’t take care of you. But when Jesus asks the question he is assuming that we all know that life is more than food and clothing. Our physical needs are not our utmost concern. Our utmost concern is to seek the kingdom and his righteousness. That is our goal, our aim our drive.

The argument is that God will give you everything you need to do his will and his righteousness. There is no guarantee for Christians that life will be easy or you will have physical comfort. Instead God will give you all you need to endure to the end and be saved. I think a perfect passage that shows us this truth is **Romans 8:35-39**.

#### **Romans 8:35-39 -**

When we read this passage we see it as an inspirational verse but it is pretty dark when you think about it. This passage is saying we are going to face all type of difficult hardships. “tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, sword.” We are going to be hungry, without clothes, facing persecution, and facing death. No, the Christian life is not easy, we will face incredible challenges. But what is the promise in the passage. There are two: “We are more than conquerors through him who loved us,” “nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesu our Lord.”

The second one is telling us that through everything God will love us, be with us, he will never abandon us. And when God is with us he gives us the strength we need to endure any and every situation. Which leads us to the first promise. “We are more than conquerors through him who loved us.” Those situations we find ourselves in are not good but through Christ and the strength he gives us we can conquer and overcome our situations no matter how bad they are to fulfill our ultimate goal. If our ultimate goal was to be happy that may not work out. But as Christians our ultimate goal is to stay in a relationship with God and to seek first his kingdom. And God will always give us the tools necessary to complete our purpose.

The conclusion of Jesus’ teaching is then found in v. 33. **“But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”** How do we live out Matt 6:33?

I think this section is pointing out our upside down nature of how we think. We think God is here to make our life on this earth easier, better, more fulfilling and so that is why we worry and we are so concerned with money and what is going to happen tomorrow. God is saying he is not here to make this life better, you are here to show everyone that God is the most satisfying thing. He is of the utmost concern to us more than anyone or anything else.