

**THE KING AND HIS KINGDOM, PART 11: “TRUST AND ANXIETY”  
MATTHEW 6:19-34**

**Personal Introduction**

Hi everyone!

If you don't know me, my name is Eric and I'm a pastor here, and it's my privilege to preach the Word of God for us today.

**Sermon Series Introduction**

We're currently in Part 11 of our sermon series called “The King and His Kingdom,” where we're going through the Gospel of Matthew together.

And today's sermon is titled: “Trust and Anxiety.”

So let's get right into it.

**Sermon Introduction**

John Bunyan's classic *The Pilgrim's Progress* was first published in 1678. It is one of the most beloved books in history. Only the Bible has sold more copies than this book.

More recently, a children's version of the book has come out called *Little Pilgrim's Big Journey*. We have it available in our library. I haven't met a child yet who hasn't loved this book.

And in the children's version, there's a boy named Christian who lives in the City of Destruction, but he's been reading from a book, telling him about a Celestial City and a loving King who invites all to join him there.

One day, he meets a man named Evangelist who gives Christian a note from the King that says, “Flee from the City of Destruction. Come find refuge in my city. I'll keep you safe and secure forever.”

And so, Christian believes and begins his journey to the Celestial City.

And as he runs out of the City of Destruction, some there call him a fool, some laughed at him, some were sad to see him leave.

But Christian doesn't look back; he just keeps running and shouting, “I want life! True life! Eternal life!”

Two boys catch up to him and try to get him to return. But Christian says to them, “I can't come back, because you live in the City of Destruction. But I seek an everlasting city. Please, come along with me.”

One of the boys responds, “I could never leave behind all my friends and all my stuff.”

To that, Christian tells him, “The friends and pleasures you speak of can't compare to the joys I seek. I seek a treasure that can never be lost, or stolen, or broken. Read about it in my book.”<sup>1</sup>

<pause>

In a nutshell, *that* describes the decisive choice every Christian has made and must continue to make.

The world may call you a fool, laugh at you, and pity you. The world may chase after you and try to convince you to return.

Will we trust the King of the Celestial City? Or will we trust the inhabitants of the City of Destruction?

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<sup>1</sup> Tyler Van Halteren, *Little Pilgrim's Big Journey* (Canada: Lithos Kids Press, 2020), 11-26.

Will we trust our Father in heaven? Or will we trust things in this world—all the things we're afraid to leave behind?

That's what we'll look at more today.

### The One Thing

Trust your Father in heaven more than things in this world.

### Scripture Introduction

Turn your Bibles to Matthew 6:19-34.

I'd encourage you to keep your Bibles open and follow along with the verses as they come up throughout the sermon. It will help you follow much more easily.

I'd highly recommend using a physical Bible, but if you don't have one, you can download the ESV Bible app, or just ask someone next to you, and I'm sure they'd be happy to share with you.

<pause>

We're currently in the middle of what's known as Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, which spans from chapters 5-7, where he carefully *clarifies* what it *truly* means to *follow* him—to be his *disciple*, to be a citizen in his *kingdom*.<sup>2</sup>

In chapter 5, Jesus gave...

- *eight* marks of what it means to be his disciple (vv. 3-12),
- *two* metaphors of the effects they'll have on the world (vv. 13-16),
- and *six* examples of how their righteousness must be a genuine heart-obedience to God's law (vv. 17-48).

And so far in chapter 6, he gave *three* examples of how their righteousness must not be to please themselves but to please their Father in heaven, who sees and will reward them (vv. 1-18).

And as we finish chapter 6, he now deals with what it means for his disciples to trust in their Father in heaven in *everyday* life.<sup>3</sup>

And that's where we are as we dive into today's passage.

### Scripture Reading

Let's read Matthew 6:19-34.

<sup>2</sup> R. T. France (*Matthew*, TNTC [Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2008]) writes: "The theme of this, Matthew's longest and most wide-ranging collection of Jesus' teaching, is indicated by the stated audience (see on 5:1-2); it deals with the character, duties, attitudes and dangers of the Christian disciple. It is a manifesto setting out the nature of life in the kingdom of heaven. The Sermon thus makes no claim to present an ethic for all men; indeed much of it would make no sense as a universal code. It is concerned not with ethics in general, but with discipleship, with man in his obedience and devotion to God, not with a pattern for society. To interpret it legalistically as a set of rules is to miss the point; it represents a demand more radical than any legislator could conceive, going far beyond what human nature can meet, a demand for perfection (5:48). And central to it is the person of Jesus himself: for his sake the disciples are to be persecuted (5:11); he sets before them his own interpretation of the will of God (5:17-48: 'I say to you ...'); their eternal destiny depends on their relation to him (7:21-23) and their response to his teaching (7:24-27). The Sermon is thus far from being just a collection of moral precepts. It presents the radical demand of Jesus the Messiah on all who respond to his preaching of God's kingdom. 'The Sermon on the Mount compels us, in the first place, to ask who he is who utters these words.'"

<sup>3</sup> A central theme that permeates this entire chapter is that Christians are to live their whole lives in conscious awareness of their relationship with their heavenly Father. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones (*Studies in the Sermon on the Mount* [London: IVP, 1972], 2:9) writes: "We come now to quite a new section, and it runs right through this sixth chapter. Here we have what we may well call a picture of the Christian living his life in this world in the presence of God, in active submission to God, and in entire dependence upon Him. Read this sixth chapter and you will find that this reference to God the Father keeps on recurring. We have been looking at this Christian man who has been told something of his characteristics, who has been told how he is to behave in society, and who has been reminded of what it is that God expects of him and demands from him. Here we have a picture of him going on to live that life in this world; and the great thing that is ever emphasized is that he does it all in the presence of God. That is something of which he should constantly be reminded. Or, to put it in another way, this section presents a picture of the children in relationship to their Father as they wend their way on this pilgrimage called life."

<sup>19</sup> “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, <sup>20</sup> but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup> For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

<sup>22</sup> “The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, <sup>23</sup> but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

<sup>24</sup> “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.

<sup>25</sup> “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. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? <sup>26</sup> 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? <sup>27</sup> And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? <sup>28</sup> And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, <sup>29</sup> yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. <sup>30</sup> 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? <sup>31</sup> Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ <sup>32</sup> For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. <sup>33</sup> But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

<sup>34</sup> “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

This is God’s Word.

### Overview

We’ll look at this passage in two parts.

- I. The choice we all make (vv. 19-24)
- II. The challenge we all face (vv. 25-34)

### I. The choice we all make (vv. 19-24)

Here, Jesus uses *three* different metaphors—two treasures, two eyes, and two masters—to present the choice between only *two* options.

In the first metaphor, he’s saying, “Be careful what you treasure.”

In the second metaphor, he’s saying, “Be careful what you focus on.”

And in the third metaphor, he’s saying, “Because ultimately, you can only have one master.”

In other words, you may not think that what you treasure or what you focus on really affects you that much, but they reveal who your real master is.

Or to say it the other way, who your master is will *show* in what you focus on and what you treasure.

Look at verses 19-21.

[<sup>19</sup> “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, <sup>20</sup> but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup> For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.]

In verse 19, the command “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth” could also be translated as “*Stop storing up for yourselves treasures on earth.*” It’s a call for Christ’s disciples to make a decisive break with what this world values.<sup>4</sup>

The word “treasure” is a more all-inclusive term to include *anything* that we treasure.

If you’re not sure what that is for you, ask yourself:

- What’s most important to me?
- What do I desire most?
- What am I pursuing after?
- What am I afraid to lose?
- What do I talk about constantly?
- What can’t I stop thinking about?

Whatever your answers are to those questions, *those* are the “treasures on earth” that Jesus is referring to.

“Treasures on earth” aren’t *just* what moths and rust can destroy and what thieves can steal—like clothing, money, and possessions<sup>5</sup>—but they may *also* include marriage and family, status and reputation, work and accomplishments, comfort and security, power and control, being liked and praised.

They can literally be *anything* that relates to our lives in this world.

As Christ’s disciples, our *primary* or *ultimate* satisfaction shouldn’t be found in things that only belong to *this* world—“treasures on earth.”

The issue is *not* the things themselves, but it is our *love* for those things, our heart’s *orientation* towards them—how they have become our *treasures*.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> D. A. Carson (“Matthew,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 8 [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984], 177) writes: “The present tense prohibition *mē thēsaurizete* could well be rendered “Stop storing up treasures” (Turner, *Syntax*, p. 76) rather than “Do not store up”; the time for a decisive break has come (similarly at v. 25).”

<sup>5</sup> R. T. France (*Matthew*, TNTC [Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2008]) writes: “*Treasures on earth* give no permanent security or satisfaction; they can be destroyed by *moths* and other vermin (*brōsis*, a general term for ‘eating’, probably refers to damage by rats, woodworm, etc., rather than to rust [Gk. *ios*]), and removed by *thieves*.” Douglas Sean O’Donnell (*Matthew: All Authority in Heaven and on Earth*, PTW [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013]) writes: “When Jesus said, “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal,” he was speaking in terms that were highly relevant to his hearers. He was speaking of the ultimate futility of supposing that one can somehow amass wealth and keep it safe and referred to three things—one’s clothing, one’s food supply, and one’s gems and precious metals. Garments were considered a part of one’s wealth in the Middle East. That is why Achan found a beautiful Babylonian garment so tempting and sinned against the Lord, resulting in his destruction (Joshua 7:21-26). Jesus reminded his hearers that all garments will succumb to the moth, no matter how fine they are. The word “rust” is an approximate translation of a word that means “eating” and refers better to the spoiling action of worms upon food storage. Jesus is here reminding his listeners that regardless of how vast their grain supplies, those supplies will ultimately succumb to the rats, mice, worms, and vermin. Finally, one’s gold and silver were never safe in the ancient world. There were no such things as banks or savings and loans. Valuables were generally stored or buried in one’s house. But the problem was that thieves regularly dug through the soft clay walls of homes and departed with the family wealth. From the Lord’s point of view, the accumulation of wealth was a very precarious pursuit due to natural laws of deterioration and the fact that we live in a fallen world. His advice still holds today, regardless of FDIC guarantees and guaranteed high-yield investments.” D. A. Carson (“Matthew,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 8 [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984], 177) writes: “The “treasures on earth” might be clothing that could be attacked by moths. Fashions changed little, and garments could be passed on. They could also deteriorate. “Rust” (*brōsis*) refers not only to the corrosion of metals but to the destruction effected by rats, mildew, and the like. Older commentaries often picture a farm being devoured by mice and other vermin. Less corruptible treasures could be stolen: thieves could break in (*diorysousin*, “dig through,” referring to the mud brick walls of most first-century Palestinian homes) and steal.”

<sup>6</sup> D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones (*Studies in the Sermon on the Mount* [London: IVP, 1972], 2:80-81) writes: “‘Treasures’ is a very large term and all-inclusive. It includes money, but it is not money only. It means something much more important. Our Lord is concerned here not so much about our possessions as with our attitude towards our possessions. It is not what a man may have, but what he thinks of his wealth, what his attitude is towards it. There is nothing wrong in having wealth in and of itself; what can be very wrong is a man’s relationship to his wealth. And the same thing is equally true about everything that money can buy. Indeed we go further. It is a question of one’s whole attitude towards life in this world. Our Lord is dealing here with people who get their main, or even total, satisfaction in this life from things that belong to this world only. What He is warning against here, in other words, is that a man should confine his ambition, his interests and his hopes to this life. That is what He is concerned about, and viewed in that way, it becomes a much bigger subject than the mere possession of money. Poor people need this exhortation about not laying up treasures upon earth quite as much as the rich. We all have treasures in some shape or form. It may not be money. It may be husband, wife or children; it may be some gift we have which in actual worth and

So *why* does Jesus warn us against storing up treasures on earth? Because we will eventually lose it all. Over time, *everything* we love and treasure on earth will decay and be stolen from us—and *death* is the greatest thief of all.

There's an *impermanence* and *irreversibility* to everything good in our lives.

- Every delicious meal has its last bite.
- Every vacation must come to an end.
- You can't watch your kids grow up twice.

Everything is lost with the passing of time.<sup>7</sup>

So Jesus lovingly tells his disciples—stop storing up treasures on earth, where they will all decay and perish. They cannot give permanent security or satisfaction. They're a bad investment.

Instead, in verse 20, he says “lay up for yourselves treasures in *heaven*,” where they *cannot* decay or be stolen.

Jesus is essentially *reasoning* with his disciples—if you're looking for the most secure place to store up treasures, there's no better place than in *heaven*, where they are imperishable, undefiled, unfading, and eternal (1 Pet. 1:4; 2 Cor. 4:18).

<pause>

So what does it mean to “lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven”?

In context, from earlier in the chapter, it's everything we do to please our Father in heaven. Whether that's giving, praying, fasting, or anything else, our Father sees and will *reward* us (cf. 1 Tim. 6:17-19).

In the context of the Lord's Prayer earlier...

- It's living in such a way that brings honor rather than dishonor to his name.
- It's participating in the spread of gospel and making disciples of all nations (cf. Luke 16:1-13).
- It's knowing, obeying, and submitting to God's will through his word.

Laying up for ourselves treasures in heaven is consciously aligning ourselves to the principle, “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31; cf. Col. 3:17).

It's “do[ing] anything on *earth* whose effects last for *eternity*.”<sup>8</sup>

It's stewarding all that God has given us on loan—our time, money, skills, relationships, *everything*—to invest in eternal treasure that will never lose value.

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monetary value is very small. To some people their treasure is their house. That whole danger of being house proud, of living for your house and home is dealt with here. No matter what it is, or how small it is, if it is everything to you, that is your treasure, that is the thing for which you are living. This is the danger against which our Lord is warning us at this particular point. That gives us some idea of what He means by ‘treasures upon earth’, and you see it is almost endless. Not only love of money, but love of honour, the love of position, the love of status, the love of one's work in an illegitimate sense, whatever it may be, anything that stops with this life and this world. These are the things of which we must be wary, lest they become our treasure.”

<sup>7</sup> See Matthew McCullough, *Remember Death* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018).

<sup>8</sup> John R. W. Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7): Christian Counter-Culture*, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 156. He continues: “Jesus was certainly not teaching a doctrine of merit or a ‘treasury of merits’ (as the medieval Roman Catholic Church called it), as if we could accumulate by good deeds done on earth a kind of credit account in heaven on which we and others might draw, for such a grotesque notion contradicts the gospel of grace which Jesus and his apostles consistently taught. And in any case Jesus is addressing disciples who have already received the salvation of God. It seems rather to refer to such things as these: the development of Christlike character (since all we can take with us to heaven is ourselves); the increase of faith, hope and charity, all of which (Paul said) ‘abide’ [1 Cor. 13:13]; growth in the knowledge of Christ whom one day we shall see face to face; the active endeavour (by prayer and witness) to introduce others to Christ, so that they too may inherit eternal life; and the use of our money for Christian causes, which is the only investment whose dividends are everlasting. All these are temporal activities with eternal consequences. This then is ‘treasure in heaven’. No burglar can steal this, and no vermin destroy it. For there are neither moths, nor mice, nor marauders in heaven. So treasure in heaven is secure. Precautionary measures to protect it are unnecessary. It needs no insurance cover. It is indestructible. Therefore, Jesus seems to be saying to us, ‘If it's a safe investment you're after, nothing could be safer than this; it's the only gilt-edged security whose gilt will never tarnish.’”

<pause>

And in verse 21, Jesus helps his disciples to see the *seriousness* of this choice—"for where your *treasure* is, there your *heart* will be also."<sup>9</sup>

In Scripture, the heart is the center of the person—the seat of the mind, the emotions, and the will.

All throughout the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus has been emphasizing the *heart*. He doesn't just want external obedience to the Law; he requires a *heart*-obedience. He doesn't just want his disciples to do the right things; he wants them to do them with the right *heart*—to please our Father in heaven.

Our treasures are not neutral, but like gravity, they draw us in, so that the way we *think*, the way we *feel*, and the way we make *decisions* are all based on *getting* or *keeping* those treasures.

Our whole life's direction and values become *oriented* toward those treasures, so that they will either chain us to earth or pull us towards heaven.<sup>10</sup>

So Jesus warns us, "Be careful what you treasure."

<pause>

Look now at verses 22-23.

[<sup>22</sup> "The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, <sup>23</sup> but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!]

This metaphor of the eye builds on the previous one, because behind what we *treasure* is what we *focus* on.

The heart and the eye are so related in Scripture that to "set the heart" and to "fix the eye" on something are often used as synonyms (e.g., Ps. 119:10, 18, 36-37, 148).<sup>11</sup>

So what you fix your eye on is what you set your *heart* on.

The implication, then, is to be *careful* what your eye focuses on.

<pause>

<sup>9</sup> NET footnote on Matthew 6:21: "The pronouns in this verse are singular while the pronouns in vv. 19-20 are plural. The change to singular emphasizes personal responsibility as opposed to corporate responsibility; even if others do not listen, the individual who hears Jesus' commands is responsible to obey."

<sup>10</sup> D. A. Carson ("Matthew," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984], 177) writes: "The point is that the things most highly treasured occupy the "heart," the center of the personality, embracing mind, emotions, and will (cf. DNTT, 2:180-84); and thus the most cherished treasure subtly but infallible controls the whole person's direction and values. "If honour is rated the highest good, then ambition must take complete charge of a man; if money then forthwith greed takes over the kingdom; if pleasure, then men will certainly degenerate into sheer self-indulgence" (Calvin). Conversely, those who set their minds on things above (Col 3:1-2), determining to live under kingdom norms, discover at last that their deeds follow them (Rev 14:13)."

<sup>11</sup> John R. W. Stott (*The Message of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7): Christian Counter-Culture*, The Bible Speaks Today [Leicester; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985], 157) writes: "Not infrequently in Scripture the 'eye' is equivalent to the 'heart'. That is, to 'set the heart' and to 'fix the eye' on something are synonyms. One example may be enough, from Psalm 119. In verse 10 the psalmist writes: 'With my whole heart I seek thee; let me not wander from thy commandments,' and in verse 19, 'I have fixed my eyes on all thy commandments.' Similarly, here in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus passes from the importance of having our *heart* in the right place (21) to the importance of having our eye sound and healthy." D. A. Carson ("Matthew," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984], 178) writes: "The "eye" can be equivalent to the "heart." The heart set on God so as to hold to his commands (Ps 119:10) is equivalent to the eye fastened on God's law (Ps 119:18, 148; cf. 119:36-37). Similarly Jesus moves from "heart" (Mt 6:21) to "eye" (vv. 22-23)."

Almost everything that the body does depends on what the eye sees, so you could say that, just as a lamp lights our path, our eye gives light to our body's actions (cf. Ps. 119:105)<sup>12</sup>—or it is “the lamp of the body.”<sup>13</sup>

The word for “healthy” can also be translated as “single”—as in focused on *one* thing. In contrast, the “bad” eye has a kind of “double vision”—as in trying to focus on *two* different things at the same time.

This isn't a random standalone metaphor, but it's related with the issue of our *treasures*.

The *healthy* eye is the *single* eye that focuses on treasures in *heaven*, and thus “your whole body will be full of *light*,” meaning that you can see life clearly and you can live as God intended you to live.

The *bad* eye sees *double* (so to speak) because it's trying to focus on *both* treasures on earth *and* treasures in heaven, but it cannot really see *either* of them clearly.<sup>14</sup> You're essentially walking throughout life in darkness.<sup>15</sup>

<pause>

For that final line, you should read “light” more in quotation marks—as in, “If then the ‘light’ in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!”

This is describing someone who thinks that they see clearly but who is *actually* blind. They're walking in darkness, but they don't seem to know it.

<sup>12</sup> Daniel M. Doriani (“Matthew” in *Matthew-Luke*, ESVEC, vol. 8 [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021]) writes: “Ancient naturalists thought that light emanated from the eye, so Jesus says that if the eye is good, it sheds light through the whole body, giving direction to all of life.”

<sup>13</sup> John R. W. Stott (*The Message of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7): Christian Counter-Culture*, The Bible Speaks Today [Leicester; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985], 157) writes: “*The eye is the lamp of the body*. This is not literal, of course, as if the eye were a kind of window letting light into the body, but it is a readily intelligible figure of speech. Almost everything the body does depends on our ability to see. We need to see in order to run, jump, drive a car, cross a road, cook, embroider, paint. The eye, as it were, ‘illuminates’ what the body does through its hands and feet. True, blind people often cope wonderfully, learn to do many things without eyes, and develop their other faculties to compensate for their lack of sight. Yet the principle holds good: a sighted person walks in the light, while a blind person is in darkness. And the great difference between the light and the darkness of the body is due to this small but intricate organ, the eye.”

<sup>14</sup> D. A. Carson (“Matthew,” in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 8 [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984], 178) writes: “Moreover the text moves between physical description and metaphor by the words chosen for ‘good’ and ‘bad.’ *Haplous* (‘good,’ v. 22) and its cognates can mean either ‘single’ (vs. *dipulous*, ‘double,’ 1 Tim 5:17) in the sense of ‘single, undivided loyalty’ (cf. 1 Chronicles 29:17) or in cognate forms ‘generous,’ ‘liberal’ (cf. Rom 12:8; James 1:5). Likewise, *ponēros* (‘bad,’ v. 23) can mean ‘evil’ (e.g., Rom 12:9) or in the Jewish idiomatic expression ‘the evil eye’ can refer to miserliness and selfishness (cf. Prov 28:22). Jesus is therefore saying either (1) that the man who ‘divides his interest and tries to focus on both God and possessions ... has no clear vision, and will live without clear orientation or direction’ (Filson)—an interpretation nicely compatible with Mt 6:24; or (2) that the man who is stingy and selfish cannot really see where he is going; he is morally and spiritually blind—an interpretation compatible with vv. 19–21. Either way, the early crossover to metaphor may account for the difficult language of v. 22.” D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones (*Studies in the Sermon on the Mount* [London: IVP, 1972], 2:92-93) writes: “This picture of the eye is just His way of describing, by means of an illustration, the way in which we look at things. And according to our Lord, there are but two ways of looking at everything in this world. There is what He calls the ‘single’ eye, the eye of the spiritual man who sees things really as they are, truly and without any double view. His eye is clear and he sees things normally. But there is the other eye which He calls the ‘evil’ eye, which is a kind of double vision, or, if you like, it is the eye in which the lenses are not clear. There are mists and opacities and we see things in a blurred way. That is the evil eye. It is coloured by certain prejudices, coloured by certain lusts and desires. It is not a clear vision; it is all cloudy, coloured by these various tints and taints. That is what is meant by this statement which has so often confused people, because they do not take it in its context. Our Lord in this picture is still dealing with the laying up of treasures. Having shown that where the treasure is, the heart will be also, He says that it is not only the heart but the mind as well. These are the things that control man.” R. T. France (*Matthew*, TNTC [Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2008]) writes: “*Haplous* is literally ‘single’, but is used in the LXX to translate the root *tm*, ‘complete’, ‘perfect’, which is often used of ‘undivided’ loyalty. So the ‘single eye’ is primarily a metaphor for a life totally devoted to the service of God. But *haplotēs* is also used in the New Testament with a connotation of generosity (Rom. 12:8; 2 Cor. 8:2; 9:11, 13; cf. Jas 1:5) and such a nuance here is suggested by the contrasting ‘evil eye’ (RSV not *sound*), a regular expression not only for jealousy but for niggardliness (e.g. Deut. 15:9; Prov. 22:9; Matt. 20:15, and often in Jewish literature). There seems to be a deliberate *double entendre* here, with *haplous* taking up not only the theme of undivided loyalty but also that of detachment from material concern, hence of generosity. The two themes intertwine throughout this section.”

<sup>15</sup> R. T. France (*Matthew*, TNTC [Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2008]) writes: “The result of such a *sound* eye is a well-illuminated *body*. The body here represents the whole person, and if the idea of the lamp was of that which enables the body to find its way, the thought is of a purposeful life, directed towards its true goal. The alternative is a life in the dark, like a blind man, because the ‘evil eye’ of selfish materialism gives no light to show the way.” Sinclair Ferguson (*The Sermon on the Mount* [Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2015], 138-139) writes: “When our eyes are healthy, our ‘whole body is full of light.’ If our eyes are diseased, then our ‘whole body will be full of darkness’ (6:22-23). When we see clearly, this world is full of light, colour and beauty. But if our eyes are diseased, the world is dim, confusing, and even dark as night.”

How great is that darkness because self-deceived people are the blindest of them all. Better to help a blind person who *knows* they're blind than to try to help a blind person who is *convinced* that they can see.<sup>16</sup>

<pause>

So be careful what you focus on. Have a *single* eye for our Father and the treasures in heaven he has promised us.

Be careful not to allow your eye *shift* towards treasures on earth.

<pause>

Look now at verses 24-25.

[<sup>24</sup> “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.”]

This is the culmination of the three metaphors.

Behind what you treasure is what you focus your eye on, and behind both of those is who your real master is.

In other words, what you treasure and what you focus on *reveal* who your real master is—and this is what the choice ultimately boils down to.

If the other two metaphors were a bit difficult to grasp, Jesus now makes himself crystal clear: “No one can serve two masters.”

The contrast between “love” and “hate” was a common idiom used to describe what you will *always* prefer—what you will always *choose*—if a decision needed to be made (cf. Luke 14:26).<sup>17</sup>

Basically, you cannot play both sides; you cannot treasure things on earth *and* treasures in heaven simultaneously.

“You cannot serve God *and* money.”

The original word translated here as “money” is the word “mammon,” which literally means “trusted thing” or “that which one trusts.” Mammon became connected with money, as people are particularly prone towards trusting in money, but mammon is more general than that.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Douglas Sean O'Donnell (*Matthew: All Authority in Heaven and on Earth*, PTW [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013]) writes: “Sadly, most of those who are in the darkness do not even know it. They are self-deceived. Many Christians are like this. They think their eye is good when it is bad. They think their loyalty to Christ and his values is deep and grounded, when in fact it is shallow and contrived. Greed reigns, not Christ! And “how great is the darkness!” How tragic this is! Thousands of Christians think they have it all together, but their eyes are clouded by materialism and their lives are inauthentic.”

<sup>17</sup> D. A. Carson (*The Sermon on the Mount: An Evangelical Exposition of Matthew 5-7* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1978], 80) writes: “[T]he contrast between love and hate is a common semitic idiom, neither part of which may legitimately be taken absolutely. To hate one of two alternatives and to love the other simply means the latter is strongly preferred, especially if there is any contest between the two.” Douglas Sean O'Donnell (*Matthew: All Authority in Heaven and on Earth*, PTW [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013]) writes: “Love and hate are common Semitic idioms. Jesus’ meaning is clear—you will *always* prefer one master over the other. (Cf. Luke 14:26 where the same language is used concerning one’s family and Christ.) In the case of the opposing masters of God and money (mammon), we will always prefer one over the other.”

<sup>18</sup> Daniel M. Doriani (“Matthew” in *Matthew-Luke*, ESVEC, vol. 8 [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021]) writes: “‘Mammon’ means ‘trusted thing’ or ‘that which one trusts.’ The name fits, for people are prone to trust money. Job 31:24 notes the sin in a man’s calling gold ‘my trust . . . my confidence.’ In Proverbs 30:8–9, Agur prays that he will not grow rich lest he disown the Lord (cf. Ps. 62:10; Jer. 9:23; Ezek. 28:5; Hos. 13:6). Jesus highlights the point by moving from the third person (Matt. 6:22–24a) to the second person (v. 24b): ‘You cannot serve God and money.’” D. A. Carson (“Matthew,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 8 [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984], 178) writes: “‘Money’ renders Greek *mamōna* (‘mammon’), itself a transliteration of Aramaic *māmōnā*’ (in the emphatic state; ‘wealth,’ ‘property’). The root in both Aramaic and Hebrew (*mn*) indicates that in which one has confidence; and the connection with money and wealth, well attested in Jewish literature (e.g., *Peah* 1:1; b *Berakoth* 61b; M *Aboth* 2:7; and not always in a negative sense), is painfully obvious.”

It's perhaps better understood as "treasures on earth," which can be anything confined to *this* world only—anything we trust to find our security and satisfaction other than God himself.

In short, mammon is any *idol* in this world—whether money, marriage, comfort, health, pleasure, praise, or anything we make ultimate in our lives.

Notice, Jesus doesn't say, "You *should* not serve God and mammon" but "You *cannot* serve God and mammon." You can *try* to serve both, but it is an impossibility.

Jesus personifies mammon as a *master* whom we serve.

You *can* have two *employers*, but you *cannot* have two *masters*.<sup>19</sup>

Each master demands exclusive and absolute devotion. You're either a slave or servant of God, or you are enslaved to mammon or "treasures on earth."

God is the only benevolent, worthy master—who gives his life for the sake of servants, who adopts them as his sons, and who provides them an inheritance that does not fade or perish.

Mammon is a cruel, unworthy master—who makes increasing demands on your life with diminishing rewards, who chains you to this world, and who drags you into decay and destruction.

Jesus makes the only two options extremely clear—God or mammon.

This is the most important either-or choice we all make.

So ask yourself:

- What am I treasuring and giving my heart to?
- What am I focusing on?
- What am I serving as my master?

<pause>

So first, the choice we all make; and second...

## II. The challenge we all face (vv. 25-34)

Assuming that his disciples made the right choice—trusting in God over mammon—Jesus now spells out a wonderful *implication*.

Look at verse 25.

[<sup>25</sup> "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. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?"]

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<sup>19</sup> D. A. Carson ("Matthew," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984], 178-179) "Here it is personified. Both God and Money are portrayed, not as employers, but as slave owners. A man may work for two employers; but since "single ownership and full time service are of the essence of slavery" (Tasker), he cannot serve two slave owners. Either God is served with a single-eyed devotion, or he is not served at all. Attempts at divided loyalty betray, not partial commitment to discipleship, but deep-seated commitment to idolatry." John R. W. Stott (*The Message of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7): Christian Counter-Culture*, The Bible Speaks Today [Leicester; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985], 158-159) writes: "It is this popular compromise solution which Jesus declares to be impossible: *No one can serve two masters ... You cannot serve God and mammon* (notice the 'can' and the 'cannot'). Would-be compromisers misunderstand his teaching, for they miss the picture of slave and slave-owner which lies behind his words. As McNeile puts it, 'Men can work for two employers, but no slave can be the property of two owners' [P. 85], for 'single ownership and fulltime service are of the essence of slavery' [Tasker, p. 76]. So anybody who divides his allegiance between God and mammon has already given it to mammon, since God can be served only with an entire and exclusive devotion. This is simply because he is God: 'I am the Lord, that is my name; my glory I give to no other' [Isa. 42:8; 48:11]. To try to share him with other loyalties is to have opted for idolatry. And when the choice is seen for what it is—a choice between Creator and creature, between the glorious personal God and a miserable thing called money, between worship and idolatry—it seems inconceivable that anybody could make the wrong choice. For now it is a question not just of comparative durability and comparative benefit, but of comparative worth: the intrinsic worth of the One and the intrinsic worthlessness of the other."

Jesus repeats this phrase, “Do not be anxious,” *three* times in this section—here in verse 25 and again in verses 31 and 34. Evidently, he wanted to drill this into our minds and hearts.

*If* we trust God over mammon, we ought not to be anxious about our lives. And then he piles on reason after reason for why that’s the case.

Why does he give so many reasons for his disciples not to be anxious?

Because he knows that this is a challenge that we all face—anxiety constantly tries to pull us into its grip.<sup>20</sup>

So *knowing* that this will be a struggle for his disciples, Jesus lovingly gives an abundance of reasons for that we can rehearse to ourselves for why we ought not to be anxious.<sup>21</sup>

<pause>

Jesus begins by asking a rhetorical question: “Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?”

And of course, the answer is, “Yes, life *is* more than those things.”<sup>22</sup>

But do we live like that we truly believe that?

The world is constantly trying to convince us that life is really *just* about eating good food, wearing nice clothes, having a nice family, experiencing nice things, traveling to nice places, being a nice person.

And even if you don’t have those things, the desire for them is often there.

That is the essence of worldliness. It’s living for this world only.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>20</sup> See Jonathan Haidt, *The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness* (New York: Penguin, 2024). Apparently, with the introduction of smartphones, anyone who grew up in the early 2010s, is “the anxious generation.” The mental health of adolescents has sharply declined with increasing rates of anxiety, depression, self-harm, and suicide. But it’s not just *that* generation. Smartphones may have exacerbated (or worsened) our anxiety, but since the Fall in Genesis 3, man has always struggled with anxiety.

<sup>21</sup> D. A. Carson (*The Sermon on the Mount: An Evangelical Exposition of Matthew 5-7* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1978], 84-85) writes: “I shall offer two propositions: (1) There is a sense in which worry is not only good, but its absence is, biblically speaking, irresponsible. (2) There is a sense in which worry is not only evil, but its presence signifies unbelief and disobedience. The first sort of “worry” is simply the concern of the follower of Jesus to be faithful and useful in his master’s service. Even a casual reading of the Pauline corpus makes it clear that Paul lived and ministered with a certain intensity, a throbbing commitment not only to become more Christ-like himself, but also to fight spiritual battles on behalf of an exponentially-increasing number of other believers. His commitment cost him the hardship and sufferings detailed in II Corinthians 11:23ff. “Besides everything else,” Paul adds, “I face the daily pressure of my concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?” (II Cor. 11:28f.). In addition to these concerns the Christian can be greatly exercised concerning sin, as the beatitudes themselves testify (cf. also Ps. 38 and 51). Small wonder the Christian way can be described in terms of wrestling, boxing; or as a fight, a struggle, a race that demands every effort if the goal is to be reached and the prize won. There is little justification in Scripture for picturing the Christian life in terms of constantly effervescent joy, unbounded peace, unbroken serenity; and still less is there warrant for irresponsibility toward the Lord in the use of his gifts. Joy and peace and freedom there are, but only within the matrix of unadulterated commitment to Jesus, along with all the pressures such commitment must inevitably bring. None of these “worries” is purely selfish. Moreover, such concerns (a less emotive term than “worries”) are essentially God-directed. That is, they are a result of looking at things from God’s perspective, and seeking to ensure that his will be done on earth as it is in heaven. The absence of such “worries” is irresponsible.”

<sup>22</sup> Perhaps after hearing what Jesus said about not storing up “treasures on earth,” he anticipates someone objecting, “Well, what about food and clothing? Surely, we ought to be preoccupied with providing these basic physical needs for ourselves. You can’t honestly expect us to think only of heaven when we have real needs here on earth.” And don’t many of our anxieties in life use this kind of justification? No matter how much affluence we may or may not have, we often feel anxious to provide some perceived “need” for ourselves or our families. So Jesus *starts* from the foundation of *true* basic needs—and says that we ought not to be anxious about providing *those*. And the logic goes: if we shouldn’t be anxious about even providing the most basic needs, then surely we ought not to be anxious about non-essentials that are really not *true* needs at all.

<sup>23</sup> Remember, Jesus taught his disciples to pray, “Give us this day our daily bread,” so he acknowledges that we have legitimate *physical* needs, and we ought to daily rely on the Lord to provide them for us. But he also teaches us to pray *two* petitions for our *spiritual* needs and *three* petitions for *God’s* glory. So *one* out of the *six* petitions are related to our *physical* needs. Yes, we need them, but life is far more than just providing daily sustenance and comforts for ourselves. And we ought to be *more* preoccupied with God’s glory and our spiritual needs than *just* our physical needs. That’s the mindset he wants his disciples to have, but again, he doesn’t ignore our physical needs.

D. A. Carson (“Matthew,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984], 179) writes: ““Do not worry” can be falsely absolutized by neglecting the

<pause>

Look at verse 26.

[<sup>26</sup> 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?]

Jesus tells his disciples to learn from the *natural creation*.

First, consider the birds of the air.

They're not sowing seed into the ground, anxiously waiting for a harvest to reap, and then storing food for themselves into barns, but our Father in heaven feeds them.

Of course, God doesn't drop food into birds' mouths, but birds actively go out looking for food each day.

So not being anxious *doesn't* mean that we don't work hard or that we don't plan; other parts of Scripture tell us that we *ought* to work hard and plan for the future to provide for ourselves, our families, and those in need (Eph. 4:28; 2 Thess. 3:10; 1 Tim. 5:8; Prov. 6:6-11; Gen. 41).

Yet God is ultimately *behind* providing for the birds (and all of us) *through* the means of hard work (and in our case, wise planning).

This is highlighting God's *providential care* over his creation.

So this is a lesser-to-greater argument: if God's cares so well to provide for the birds each day, how much more will he provide each day for his own children who are far more valuable to him?<sup>24</sup>

He will not feed the birds and neglect his own children. Your Father in heaven will provide what you need.

<pause>

Second, consider the flowers and the grass of the field.

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limitations the context imposes and the curses on carelessness, apathy, indifference, laziness, and self-indulgence expressed elsewhere (cf. Carson, *Sermon on the Mount*, pp. 82–86; Stott, pp. 165–68). The point here is not to worry about the physical necessities, let alone the luxuries implied in the preceding verses, because such fretting suggests that our entire existence focuses on and is limited to such things." D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones (*Studies in the Sermon on the Mount* [London: IVP, 1972], 2:112-113) writes: "First we shall look at His argument in a very general manner. Let us paraphrase what He actually says. 'Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on.' Here again He starts with a general statement and injunction, as He did in the previous section. There He began by laying down a law and then proceeded to give us reasons for keeping it. It is exactly the same here. There is the general statement; we are not to be anxious or worried about what we shall eat or what we shall drink, nor yet for our body what we shall put on. That of course is as comprehensive as anything can be. He is dealing with our life, our existence, our being in this body in which we live. Here we are, distinct personalities; we have this gift of life, and we live our life, in this world and through our bodies. So that when our Lord considers our life and our bodies He is, as it were, considering our essential personality and our life in this world. He puts it broadly; it is comprehensive and it includes the whole of man. He maintains that we must never be anxious either about our lives as such, or about the clothing of our bodies. It is as fully comprehensive as that, and it is very important that we should realize that, because this is a very thorough-going injunction. It does not apply only to certain aspects of our life; it takes in the whole of life, our, health, our strength, our success, what is going to happen to us—that which is our life in any shape or form. And equally it takes the body as a whole, and tells us that we must not be anxious about our clothing, or any of these things that are part and parcel of our life in this world."

<sup>24</sup> D. A. Carson ("Matthew," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 8 [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984], 180) writes: "To worry about food and drink is to have learned nothing from the natural creation. If the created order testifies to God's 'eternal power and divine nature' (Rom 1:20), it testifies equally to his providence. The point is not that disciples need not work—birds do not simply wait for God to drop food into their beaks—but that they need not fret. Disciples may further strengthen their faith when they remember that God is in a special sense their Father (not the birds' Father), and that they are worth far more than birds ("you" is emphatic). Here the argument is from the lesser to the greater. This argument presupposes a biblical cosmology without which faith makes no sense. God is so sovereign over the universe that even the feeding of a wren falls within his concern. Because he normally does things in regular ways, there are "scientific laws" to be discovered; but the believer with eyes to see simultaneously discovers something about God and his activity (cf. Carson, *Sermon on the Mount*, pp. 87–90)."

Look at verses 28-30.

[<sup>28</sup> And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, <sup>29</sup> yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. <sup>30</sup> 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?]

The lilies of the field are not *productive* (“they neither toil nor spin”), and the grass of the field are not *lasting* (they’re cut down and “thrown into the oven” as fuel to bake bread<sup>25</sup>), and yet, God clothes them with such beauty and detail that even the clothes of the richest and wisest king cannot even compare.<sup>26</sup>

The point isn’t that we shouldn’t be productive, but it’s to show how generous is God’s providential care to clothe such momentary things, which are here today and gone tomorrow, with such beauty and detail.

Again, this is another lesser-to-greater argument: if God cares so well for such temporary things, how much more will he clothe his children who will be with him forever?

Jesus calls his disciples to “consider” or “meditate” on these things.

When you feel anxious, pause and consider God’s providential care over the natural creation—and trust that you are more valuable than all those things in the eyes of your Father in heaven, and he will surely care for your needs.

<pause>

In verse 30, Jesus explicitly connects anxiety with “little faith.”

A couple notes here.

First, anxiety is not *only* about having “little faith.” We are both body and soul, physical and spiritual—and what happens with one inevitably affects the other.

So poor diet, exercise, and sleep; lack of sunlight; bodily ailments—all these can contribute to anxiety. And the responsible use of medication may be helpful in some cases.

Anxiety is not *only* spiritual but also physical.

<pause>

Second, anxiety *is* also *spiritual* in nature. There’s no way around that in Jesus’ statement here.

But notice, Jesus doesn’t say “O you of *no* faith,” but “O you of *little* faith.” Remember, the entire Sermon on the Mount is for *believers*—those who know God as their Father in heaven through faith in Christ.

So what does Jesus mean by “little faith”?

It is faith that only deals with the question and concern of salvation but not with all the other questions and concerns of life.

<sup>25</sup> NET footnote on Matthew 6:30: “The expanded translation “into the fire to heat the oven” has been used to avoid misunderstanding; most items put into modern ovens are put there to be baked, not burned. The *oven* was most likely a rounded clay oven used for baking bread, which was heated by burning wood and dried grass.”

<sup>26</sup> D. A. Carson (“Matthew,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 8 [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984], 180-181) writes: ““Lilies of the field” (v. 28) may be any of the wild flowers so abundant in Galilee, and these “flowers of the field” correspond to “birds of the air.” The point is a little different from the first illustration, where birds work but do not worry. The flowers neither toil nor spin (cf. Notes). The point is not that Jesus’ disciples may opt for laziness but that God’s providence and care are so rich that he clothes the grass with wild flowers that are neither productive nor enduring (v. 30). Even Solomon, the richest and most extravagant of Israel’s monarchs, “in all his splendor” (v. 29) was not arrayed like one of these fields.”

It believes what Jesus *did* to secure our eternity but doesn't seem to believe what he *said* in all the specifics of our everyday lives.

So Jesus is walking his disciples through this right now when dealing with the challenge of anxiety.

If you have been saved through faith in Christ, then God is your heavenly Father.

And if that is so, then you can have the confidence that your heavenly Father will supply your every need (Phil. 4:19).<sup>27</sup>

<pause>

Next, not only are Christ's disciples to learn from the *natural creation*, but we are to learn from *common sense*.

Look at verse 27.

[<sup>27</sup> And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?]

Jesus exposes the uselessness or the futility of anxiety.

What does anxiety really accomplish? Instead of *adding* hours to your life, it *steals* countless hours of your life that could have been for rest, enjoyment, and productivity and replaces it with frenzied activity—and it ultimately *shortens* your life.<sup>28</sup>

This also reveals the fact that we are simply not in control over our lives. It doesn't matter how rich you are or how good the doctors are, you cannot live one hour longer than God deems for you here on earth.

But again, that truth is also the cure for your anxiety. "*I am not in control over my life, but my heavenly Father is. He controls the beginning and the end of my life—and everything in between. And that is good news of comfort. Far better for my life to be in his omnipotent, omniscient, wise, and loving hands than my own flawed and fickle hands.*"

What would it be like if you started each day reminding yourself of this truth? How would it affect the way you responded to things that came up throughout the day?<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones (*Studies in the Sermon on the Mount* [London: IVP, 1972], 2:125-134) expands much more fully on this one concept of "little faith."

<sup>28</sup> D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones (*Studies in the Sermon on the Mount* [London: IVP, 1972], 2:121-122) writes: "These are our Lord's words: 'Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?' This is an argument which we must follow very carefully. To begin with, we must determine what exactly the statement is saying, and here we have two main opinions. When we ask what is the meaning of this term 'stature', we find that there are two possible answers. Half the authorities say that 'stature' means height, and normally when we talk about stature we think of height. But the Greek word used for 'stature' also means length or duration of life. And it is used in both senses in scriptural as well as in classical Greek. So it is no use asking, 'What does the Greek say?' because it does not say; the word may be used in either sense. So we cannot decide it in terms of the Greek. How then do we approach it? The context surely must determine and decide this matter. What is a cubit? It happens to be 18 inches, and bearing that in mind this mention here of 'stature' simply cannot mean height. It is quite impossible, for the reason that our Lord is again working from the lesser to the greater. Can you imagine anybody being anxiously concerned to add 18 inches to his height! The suggestion is ridiculous. It cannot refer to height; it must refer to duration of life. This is what our Lord is saying: 'How many of you by taking all this trouble and care, and by being so worried and anxious, can extend the length of your life even by a moment.' We talk about the span of life, and that is the argument which our Lord is using, for He is still concerned here about our life in this world. The original statement is, 'Take no thought for your life'. He is not considering the body, He is considering existence, the continuance of life in this world. The introduction of the idea of height into the teaching here would be a complete irrelevance. No; our Lord is referring in this verse to the duration and extension of life, and it is because of their obsession with this that so many people become worried about their bodily needs. They desire to extend their life."

<sup>29</sup> D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones (*Studies in the Sermon on the Mount* [London: IVP, 1972], 2:122-123) writes: "With all that you do, with all your tremendous efforts, with all your trouble and anxiety, is there any one of you that can extend the span of life by even a moment? And the answer to that question is that we cannot. That is one of the things which are so obvious, but which we all tend to forget. We do not remind ourselves of it as we should; but it is incontrovertibly true. The fact is that we cannot extend our lives in this world though we may try to do so in various ways. The millionaire can buy all the food and drink he wants, but he cannot extend his life. We are told that 'Money is power!' Perhaps it is in many respects, but not in this. The millionaire has no advantage over the most wretched pauper in

Look now at verse 34.

[<sup>34</sup> “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”]

Here, Jesus continues to show that anxiety lacks common sense.

To be anxious *multiplies* your burdens.

When we are anxious *today* about negative things happening *tomorrow*...

- If those things end up *not* happening, then we bore the weight of our anxiety *once* for nothing;
- And if those things *do* end up happening, then we bore the weight of our anxiety *twice* instead of *once*.

In both scenarios, it does us no good. Anxiety only doubles our troubles.<sup>30</sup>

Anxiety about *tomorrow* only cripples our ability to address to troubles *today*.

It's a kind of catastrophizing about the future. “If this is so hard now, how in the world will I be able to handle a year of this?” And so, we bring a year's worth of anxiety into the present.

But in such thinking, we also forget God as our heavenly Father because what causes us anxiety is that we envision a future where we're left to ourselves. We imagine a possible future scenario where the presence and grace of God is not there with us to strengthen and carry us through it.

There are many days, when by the end, I say to myself, “I don't know how I got through that day.” And then, I thank God for strengthening me to persevere in a way I know I couldn't have myself.

You go through enough days like that, and you begin to realize that the same God who helps you today will be the same God who will help you tomorrow.

Remember, God never meant for us to experience a year's worth of trouble in a single day, but he perfectly portions out our troubles and trials for each day and then provides exactly what we need for that day (cf. 1 Cor. 10:13).

Just as he gives us daily bread, he gives us daily grace. Or as we sang earlier, “God shall supply all that you need; yes, as your days your strength shall be” (“Afflicted Saint, To Christ Draw Near”).

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existence. We can go further. Medical knowledge and skill cannot extend life. We think they can, but that is because we do not know. These things are all determined by God, and thus even medical men are often bewildered and frustrated. Two patients who appear to be in the same condition are given identical treatment. One recovers; the other dies. What is the answer? The answer is that ‘no man can add one cubit to his duration of life’. It is a great mystery, but we cannot escape it. Our times are in the hands of God, and do what we will, with all our food and drink, and our medical profession, and all our learning and science and skill, we cannot add a fraction to the duration of a man's life. In spite of all modern advances in knowledge, our times are still in the hands of God. And so, our Lord argues, why all the fuss and bother, why all the excitement, why all this worry and anxiety? Life is a gift from God. He starts it and He determines the end of it. He sustains it, and we are in His hands. Therefore, when you tend to become worried and anxious, just pull yourself up at once and say, I cannot start, or continue or end life; all this is entirely in His hands. If that greater thing is there in His control, I can leave the lesser also to Him. You cannot extend your life even by one cubit; therefore recognize the utter futility and waste of time and energy involved in worrying about these things. Do your work; sow, reap and gather into barns; but remember that the remainder is in the hands of God. You may have the finest seed you can buy on the market; you may have the best plough and everything necessary in the sowing; but if God withheld the sun and the rain you would not have a crop. God is ultimately behind it all. Man has his place and his work, but it is God that giveth the increase. This is what we must always remember, and it applies always and in all circumstances.”

<sup>30</sup> John R. W. Stott (*The Message of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7): Christian Counter-Culture*, The Bible Speaks Today [Leicester; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985], 168-169) writes: “All worry is about *tomorrow*, whether about food or clothing or anything else; but all worry is experienced *today*. Whenever we are anxious, we are upset in the present about some event which may happen in the future. However, these fears of ours about *tomorrow*, which we feel so acutely *today*, may not be fulfilled. The popular advice ‘Don't worry, it may never happen,’ is doubtless unsympathetic, but perfectly true. People worry that they may not pass an exam, or find a job, or get married, or retain their health, or succeed in some enterprise. But it is all fantasy. ‘Fears may be liars;’ they often are. Many worries, perhaps most, never materialize. So then worry is a waste—a waste of time, thought and nervous energy. We need to learn to live a day at a time. We should plan for the future, of course, but not worry about the future. ‘One day's trouble is enough for one day,’ or, ‘Each day has troubles enough of its own.’ So why anticipate them? If we do, we double them. For if our fear does not materialize, we have worried once for nothing; if it does materialize, we have worried twice instead of once. In both cases it is foolish: worry doubles trouble.”

We should never try to run ahead of God, but he has designed life to be lived one day at a time. You cannot store grace for the future, but God has so designed our lives that we come to him and trust him each day for what we need.<sup>31</sup>

<pause>

Look now at verses 31-33

[<sup>31</sup> Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' <sup>32</sup> For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. <sup>33</sup> But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.]

We've pointed this out already, but *three* times Jesus says, "Do not be anxious." But notice, *three* times, he also says "Therefore." He gives us reasons and then gives us the implication.

Again, he's pressing home the importance *thinking* harder and longer about what we believe in.

And what happens when we *don't* think and just allow anxiety to knock us over?

In verse 32, Jesus says we'll look no different than the Gentiles—those who *don't* know God as their Father in heaven.<sup>32</sup>

If you're not a believer in Jesus Christ, we're glad that you're here today. One of the best ways for us to love you is to help you understand that *none* of us automatically have God as our heavenly Father. *Because* of our sins against him, *all* of us naturally have him as our enemy—and we justly deserve punishment for our sins.

But the gospel (or the good news) is that God came in the person of Jesus Christ to substitute his life for the life of his sinful people. The *sinless* one is punished for *our* sins on the cross, and the *sinful* ones are given *his* righteousness and adopted as God's children.

By turning away from your sins in repentance and turning towards Jesus in faith, you can truly *know* that God is your heavenly Father. I pray that you would respond to him in faith today.

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<sup>31</sup> On the personification of "tomorrow," D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones (*Studies in the Sermon on the Mount* [London: IVP, 1972], 2:147-148) writes: "Here our Lord shows His final understanding of the condition. Worry, after all, is a definite entity; it is a force, a power, and we have not begun to understand it until we realize what a tremendous power it is. We so often tend to think of the condition of worry as one which is negative, a failure on our part to do certain things. It is that; it is a failure to apply our faith. But the thing we must emphasize is that worry is something positive that comes and grips us and takes control of us. It is a mighty power, an active force, and if we do not realize that, we are certain to be defeated by it. If it cannot get us to be anxious and burdened and borne down by the state and condition of things that are actually confronting us, it will take this next step, it will go on into the future. We must have discovered this in ourselves, or perhaps when we have tried to help to deliver other people who are suffering from a condition of worry. The conversation starts with the particular thing that has brought them to you. You then provide the answers and show how unnecessary worry is. You will find, however, that almost invariably they go on and say, 'Yes, but . . . ' That is typical of worry, it always gives the impression that it does not really want to be relieved. The person wants to be relieved, but the worry does not; and we are entitled to draw that distinction. Our Lord does it Himself when He talks about the morrow taking thought for the things of itself. That is personalizing worry; He is regarding it as a power, almost a person, that takes hold of you, and in spite of yourself keeps arguing with you and saying one thing and then another. It leads to that curious perverse condition in which one almost desires not to be relieved and not to be delivered: and it often works in the particular form we are considering together now. When you have brought out all the answers and given a full explanation to such persons, then they say, 'Ah yes, that is all right for now; but what about tomorrow? what about next week? what about next year?' And on and on it goes, into the future. In other words, if it cannot work up its case on the facts it has before it, it does not hesitate to conjure up facts. Worry has an active imagination, and it can envisage all sorts and kinds of possibilities. It can envisage strange eventualities, and with its terrible power and activity it can transport us into the future and into a situation that is yet to come. And there we find ourselves worried and troubled and borne down by something which is purely imaginary. We need not go further into the matter because we all know exactly what it is. But the key to the understanding of how to treat the subject is to realize that we are dealing with a very vital force and power. I do not want to exaggerate it too much. There are cases where this condition is undoubtedly the result of the work of evil spirits; we can see clearly that there is another personality at work. But even short of direct possession we must recognize the fact that our adversary, the devil, does in various ways, through using a lowered physical condition or taking advantage of a natural tendency to over-anxiety, thus exercise a tyranny and power over many. We have to understand that we are fighting for our lives against some tremendous power. We are up against a powerful adversary."

<sup>32</sup> This is not the first time Jesus confronts us with this question. Earlier, he said, "if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?" (Matt. 5:47).

But if you don't have God as your Father in heaven, then everything is up to you, and so anxiety would be the only response because you'll find that you're *not* in control.

Or you'll just stop thinking about all your problems. You'll look to distractions and escapes. You resort to thinking *less* because thinking *more* causes more anxiety than comfort.

Or you'll double-down on trying to craft the life you want for yourself. And you may be able to accomplish a lot. But the anxiety never quite leaves. You become more anxious—never content, never satisfied, but tormented with an incessant “need” for more.

But none of that is how a child of God ought to respond to anxiety because we are *not* left as orphans in this world to fend for ourselves; we have the sovereign God as our heavenly Father and that radically changes how we respond to anxiety.

Ask yourself, “Is my reaction essentially different from what it would be if I were not a Christian?”

Christians are not to be like everybody else. We are to be distinct. We are to *respond* differently because we have *received* differently.

When you have received Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, when you have received the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, when you have received God as your heavenly Father, how can you go on living as if you're all on your own?<sup>33</sup>

Ask yourself, “Do I always place everything in my life, and everything that happens to me, in the context of my Christian faith, and then look at it in the light of that context?”

That is something unbelievers cannot do, but something we ought to do repeatedly throughout the day.<sup>34</sup>

Remember your heavenly Father. Remember who you are to him.

As a church, we gather every Sunday to remind each other of these anxiety-killing, God-exalting truths. And throughout the week, in our conversations with one another, we remind ourselves of these things that draw our hearts towards our Father in heaven and our unfading, imperishable treasures *there*.

The *Gentiles* seek after their physical needs—and our heavenly Father knows that we need them, which is why Jesus taught us to pray, “Give us this day our daily bread” (Matt. 6:11).

And in verse 33, Jesus introduces a contrast of what his *disciples* ought to seek—“But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”

*Because* we know that God is our heavenly Father, we trust that he will care for all our physical needs—that “all these things [our physical needs] will be added to [us].”<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup> The benediction we give at the end of every service ought to remind us of this: May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us now and forevermore.

<sup>34</sup> These two questions to ask ourselves are from D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount* (London: IVP, 1972), 2:140.

<sup>35</sup> D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones (*Studies in the Sermon on the Mount* [London: IVP, 1972], 2:110) writes: “Somebody once said to me, ‘How can that teaching about God's care for men be true? With all the need and poverty that exists in the world, with all the suffering of homeless and displaced men, women and children, how can you assert that?’ The answer is that the promises are only to Christian people. What is the commonest cause of poverty? Why are the children ragged and without food? Is it not usually because of the sins of the parents? The money had been spent on drink or squandered on vain or evil things. Analyse the cases of poverty and you will find the results illuminating. These promises are made only to Christian people; they are not universal promises to everybody. Take that great statement of David, ‘I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.’ Applied to the righteous I think this is literally true; but let us be careful that we recognize the meaning of the word ‘righteous’. He does not say, ‘I have never seen a professing Christian forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.’ He says the ‘righteous’. I suggest if you examine your experience you will have to agree with David that you have never seen the righteous man forsaken nor his seed begging bread. Now the important word there is ‘seed’. How far does it extend? Does it extend to the posterity and the seed of this man for ever and for ever? I do not think so. I think it extends only to his immediate seed, because the grandson may be a profligate and an unrighteous man; therefore the promise does not hold good. God does not say that He is going to bless a man who is living an ungodly life. It is to the righteous and his

To “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness” is already the prayer of all Christ’s disciples—“Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6:10).<sup>36</sup>

The kingdom of God is primarily his reign in the hearts of those redeemed by Jesus.<sup>37</sup>

So to seek the kingdom of God is to “make it [our] ambition to preach the gospel,” especially where Christ has not yet been named and known, so that King Jesus might reign in the hearts of all the peoples of the earth (Rom. 15:20-21).

Through engaging in evangelism, discipling, and missions, we give our lives to intentionally help more people know, trust, and love Christ as their King and Savior.

This is not just pastors and missionaries. If you’re sitting in this room and you identify yourself as a Christian, Jesus is saying that this is what you ought to align your entire life towards.

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seed—that is the promise—and we can challenge anybody to give us an example to the contrary. These promises are only to God’s people. They are always based on full Christian doctrine; if you do not believe the doctrine they do not apply to you.” D. A. Carson (*The Sermon on the Mount: An Evangelical Exposition of Matthew 5-7* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1978], 93) writes: “Three limitations must be observed. (1) This promised is to the children of God, not to all men indiscriminately. This is made clear by the contrast between Jesus’ disciples and pagans in 6:31f., as well as by the condition in 6:33a itself: Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness. (2) Jesus promises that necessities will be provided (in context, food, drink, and clothes are specified), not luxuries. Many Christians in the West would think it very hard indeed if they had to live at subsistence level, for they have long since come to take as necessities things which others would assess as luxuries. God in his lavish mercy often gives much more than the essentials; but he here pledges himself only to the latter. (3) I think the major exception to this pledge occurs when Christians are suffering for righteousness’ sake. Some are martyrs by starvation and by exposure. The overwhelming importance of the kingdom may require self-sacrifice even to this ultimate degree.” C. John Collins (“Psalms” in *Psalms-Song of Solomon*, ESVEC, vol. 5 [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022]) writes: “Psalm 37:25 does not deny there may be temporary setbacks for the “righteous” or his “children”; the focus is on the ultimate outcomes (as in the mention of being “young” and then “old,” giving a long-term perspective). After all, it comes right after verse 24, which addresses the possibility that a faithful person might “fall”! The important point is that, with the Lord’s help, such a person can regain his balance. Further, the observation takes place within Israel, which is under God’s special care; now, as the people of God spread over the world, there is more opportunity for them to suffer under the evil of those who oppose them.”

<sup>36</sup> The word “seek” here helps us to understand that there are *two* kinds of anxiety. One is connected to *fear*, where we are anxious about certain negative things happening. The other is connected to *ambition*, where we are anxious about *making* certain things to happen. Ligon Duncan (“True Religion, Part 6: Anxiety’s Antidote,” August 26, 1997, <https://fpcjackson.org/resource-library/sermons/true-religion-part-6-anxiety-s-antidote>) says: “There is the anxiety kind of worry. We fret over things; we fear things. Someone was telling me that there was an article in the newspaper about what we fear, and it said that people fear being in car wrecks, and people fear cancer, and people fear financial disasters in their lives. We could make lots of lists of what we fear if we wanted to today. That’s one side of worry – becoming paralyzed and fretful over things that might happen, the things that are outside of our control – anxieties controlling our lives. But there’s another side of worry as well. The Lord Jesus says that side of worry is ambition. You see, you may not be worried about financial disaster, but your whole life may be wrapped up in gaining financial security. In that case your worry manifests itself, not in anxiety, but in ambition. You have become preoccupied; you have become fixated on some terrestrial reality and you have lost sight of the greater things – the first things. Either one of those ways are ways that we can fall prey to the sin of worry.” There is a right and healthy level of concern (or you might even say “anxiety”) that we ought to feel, even as followers of Christ. In 1 Corinthians 7, the apostle Paul says that husbands and wives ought to be “anxious” about pleasing their spouse in *some* sense. The married person who is not concerned with the well-being of their spouse is living in disobedience to God. They should *seek* the good of their spouse. In 2 Corinthians 11, he also says, “there is the daily pressure on me of my *anxiety* for all the churches” (2 Cor. 11:28). The Christian who is not concerned with the well-being of their church and other churches does not have the heart of God. We should *seek* the good of every church that bears Christ’s name. In fact, in 1 Corinthians 7, Paul just flat out says that he wants Christians to be “*anxious* about the things of the Lord” (1 Cor. 7:32), which he uses as a synonym for “*undivided* devotion to the Lord” (1 Cor. 7:35). So again, we see the concept of the single eye and having one master. So Jesus is not ruling out *all* anxiety or concerns here, but he’s putting them in proper order. If our *controlling* desire is for God’s glory, then we will be concerned about that beyond anything else.

<sup>37</sup> Greg Gilbert, *What Is the Gospel?* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2010), 88. D. A. Carson (*The Sermon on the Mount: An Evangelical Exposition of Matthew 5-7* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1978], 65) writes: “This cannot be a request that God’s universal sovereignty will be exercised, for that is always in force. The reference is to God’s saving reign, which, as we have seen, is in one sense already present, but which awaits the future for its consummation. To pray, “Your kingdom come,” is to pray that God’s saving reign will be expanded even now, and, much more, that God will usher in the consummated kingdom. When God’s kingdom fully comes, it will do so because it is inaugurated by Jesus’ return. If early Christians were eager for Jesus’ power and authority to be manifested through them in their ongoing witness (see Acts 4:28f.), they were even more eager for Jesus’ return, and prayed “*Marana tha!*”—“Come, O Lord!” (1 Cor. 16:22). They were “looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness” (II Peter 3:13). The last book of the Bible concludes with the prayer, “Come, Lord Jesus” (Rev. 22:20).”

And we long for King Jesus to *return* to fully establish his kingdom reign in the new heavens and new earth.<sup>38</sup> We're just pilgrims on our way to our heavenly home, and we want to bring as many with us as we can.

<pause>

And in the Gospel of Matthew, the word "righteousness" means "a pattern of life in conformity to God's will."<sup>39</sup>

So to seek God's righteousness is to give our lives to intentionally know, obey, and submit to God's will through his word. We do that for ourselves and we do that for those around us.<sup>40</sup>

<pause>

When we understand that *these* ought to be our ambitions, then it makes sense that Christians throughout the New Testament all centered their lives around the local church.

That's where God's word is preached, that's where God's will is made known, and like a hub with many spokes, that's where God *centered* evangelism and discipling and missions to come out of.

The church is where Christians living together is most concentrated and most noticeably distinct from the world.

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<sup>38</sup> Greg Gilbert (*What Is the Gospel?* [Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2010], 92-93, 97) writes: "The fact is that we as human beings are not going to be able to bring about the establishment and consummation of God's kingdom. Despite all our best—and genuinely good—efforts to make the world a better place, the kingdom promised in the Bible will only come about when King Jesus himself returns to make it happen. That's a crucial thing to remember, for at least a couple of reasons. First, it protects us from a wrong and ultimately deceiving optimism about what we will be able to accomplish in this fallen world. Christians will certainly be able to bring about some changes in society... Christians have done and can still do massive good in the world—good that will commend God and Jesus Christ to the world. But I think the biblical story line forces us to recognize that until Christ returns, our social and cultural victories will always be tenuous, never permanent. Christians will never bring about the kingdom of God. Only God himself can do that. The heavenly Jerusalem *comes down from heaven*; it is not built from the ground up. Even more importantly, remembering that the kingdom will only be established when Jesus returns rightly centers out hopes, our affection, and our longing on Jesus himself. Instead of looking to some human power, some human action, some human authority, or even our own effort to set everything right, we look to heaven and cry out with the apostle John, 'Even so, come, Lord Jesus!' Our longing for his return increases, our prayers to him grow more fervent, and our love for him deepens. In short, our desires and hopes center firmly—and rightly—not so much on the kingdom as on the kingdom's King.... Until Christ returns, we his people continue to live in this sinful age, and our King calls us to live a life that is worthy of the kingdom to which he has called us (1 Thess. 2:12), to "shine like stars" in a crooked and depraved generation (Phil. 2:15 NIV). It's not at all that living the life of the kingdom brings us into the kingdom. It's that once we have been brought into the kingdom through faith in the King, we find ourselves with a new master, a new law, a new charter, a new life—and therefore we begin to *want* to live the life of the kingdom." D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones (*Studies in the Sermon on the Mount* [London: IVP, 1972], 2:63-64) writes: "We should have a great longing and desire that the kingdom of God and of Christ may come in the hearts of men. It should be our desire that this kingdom should be extended in our own hearts; for it is to the extent that we worship Him, and surrender our lives to Him, and are led by Him, that His kingdom comes in our hearts. We should also be anxious to see this kingdom extending in the lives and hearts of other men and women. So that when we pray, 'Thy kingdom come', we are praying for the success of the gospel, its sway and power; we are praying for the conversion of men and women; we are praying that the kingdom of God may come today in Britain, in Europe, in America, in Australia, everywhere in the world. 'Thy kingdom come' is an all-inclusive missionary prayer. But it goes even further than that. It is a prayer which indicates that we are 'Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God' (2 Peter iii. 12). It means that we should be anticipating the day when all sin and evil and wrong and everything that is opposed to God shall finally have been routed. It means that we should have longings in our hearts for the time when the Lord will come back again, when all that is opposed to Him shall be cast into the lake of burning, and the kingdoms of this world shall have become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ."

<sup>39</sup> D. A. Carson (*The Sermon on the Mount: An Evangelical Exposition of Matthew 5-7* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1978], 22) writes: "What is this righteousness which we must thus pursue? ... Now, however, those who have studied Matthew's use of the term increasingly recognize that "righteousness" here [Matt. 5:6] (and also in verses 10 and 20) means a pattern of life in conformity to God's will. Righteousness thus includes within its semantic range all the derivative or specialized meanings, but cannot be reduced to any one of them. The person who hungers and thirsts for righteousness, then, hungers and thirsts for conformity to God's will. He is not drifting aimlessly in a sea of empty religiosity; still less is he puttering about distracted by inconsequential trivia. Rather, his whole being echoes the prayer of a certain Scottish saint who cried, "O God, make me just as holy as a pardoned sinner can be!" His delight is the Word of God, for where else is God's will, to which he hungers to be conformed, so clearly set forth? He wants to be righteous, not simply because he fears God, but because righteousness has become for him the most eminently desirable thing in the world."

<sup>40</sup> At the end of the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus will say the same thing again after his resurrection in light of all authority given to him: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:19-20). Whether here, the Lord's Prayer, or the Great Commission, Jesus says that his kingdom and his righteousness ought to be our utmost ambitions.

<pause>

That doesn't mean that we're unconcerned about our family and work and other things in this world, but it's only when our all-consuming ambition is for God's glory that all our lesser ambitions become less threatening.

*Money* doesn't master us, but *we* master money as a tool to bring glory to God.<sup>41</sup> We cannot serve God *and* money, but we can serve God *with* money.

And that's true of everything he's given us here on earth.<sup>42</sup>

## Conclusion

As we close, let's return to Christian in *Little Pilgrim's Big Journey*.

At the end of the book, after what felt like a long, perilous journey, Christian and another boy named Hopeful come into clear view of the Celestial City.

With the help of Hopeful, Christian passes safely through the dark river called Death, and they are met by two Shining Ones at the city's gate, who say to them: "You're going to the Paradise of God, where you shall eat from the Tree of Life. You'll walk and talk with the King, forever and ever. There'll be no more sorrow, sickness, suffering, or death, because the former things have passed away. The King will give you comfort for all your toil and joy for all your sorrow. You've walked in faith, and now you'll see all that you've desired."

Full of joy and with all the difficulties of their journey feeling so small now, the two boys ran into the city, and thousands of people came out to welcome them.

The King also came out to welcome them, saying, "Well done, my faithful pilgrims. Your journey was long, but you've arrived at last. We've been waiting for you, and I've prepared a place here for you. Enter into the joy of my city!"

The two boys jumped into the King's arms. And at last, they knew they were home.<sup>43</sup>

<pause>

For all of us who trust in our Father in heaven more than things in this world, *that* is our home as well.

All the "treasures on earth" we leave behind will pale in comparison to our "treasures in heaven."

When we live in light of *that* day, when we trust our Father in heaven, and we will be less *anxious* about things in this world, and more *ambitious* for the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

Let's pray.

<sup>41</sup> Ligon Duncan ("True Religion, Part 5: Holy Affections," August 19, 1997, <https://fpcjackson.org/resource-library/sermons/true-religion-part-5-holy-affections>) writes: "The Puritans used to say, 'Let us use the world but enjoy the Lord.' Modern professing Christians often say it the other way around. Let us use the Lord but enjoy the world."

<sup>42</sup> John R. W. Stott (*The Message of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7): Christian Counter-Culture, The Bible Speaks Today* [Leicester; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985], 173) writes: "When this is genuinely our dominant ambition, then not only will *all these things ... be yours as well* (*i.e.* our material needs will be provided), but there will be no harm in having secondary ambitions, since these will be subservient to our primary ambition and not in competition with it. Indeed, it is then that secondary ambitions become healthy. Christians should be eager to develop their gifts, widen their opportunities, extend their influence and be given promotion in their work—not now to boost their own ego or build their own empire, but rather through everything they do to bring glory to God. Lesser ambitions are safe and right provided that they are not an end in themselves (namely ourselves) but the means to a greater end (the spread of God's kingdom and righteousness) and therefore to the greatest of all ends, namely God's glory. This is the 'Supreme Good' which we are to *seek* first; there is no other."

<sup>43</sup> Tyler Van Halteren, *Little Pilgrim's Big Journey* (Canada: Lithos Kids Press, 2020), 195-209.