

“DO NOT BE ANXIOUS ABOUT ANYTHING”

LUKE 12:22-34

22 Then Jesus said to his disciples: “Therefore I tell you, **do not worry about your life**, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. 23 For life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. 24 **Consider the ravens**: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds!

25 Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life^[b]?

26 Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?

27 “Consider how **the wild flowers** grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 28 If that is how God clothes **the grass of the field**, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you—you of little faith! 29 And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. 30 For **the pagan world** runs after all such things, and **your Father** knows that you need them. 31 But **seek his kingdom**, and these things will be given to you as well.

32 “Do not be afraid, little flock, for **your Father** has been pleased to give you the kingdom.

33 Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, **a treasure in heaven** that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.

34 **For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**

Like never before, the world is consumed by worry, anxiety, concern.

Once more, the pandemic is in the news, occupying our thoughts, fueling controversy, demanding our attention.

Like never before, we need the antidote of God's Word to focus us on what really matters.

Once again, we hear the voice of the Lord: "Do not worry about your life and your body."

Before that, there are a number of passages that tell us about focusing too much on secondary things. There is an invitation to focus on what truly matters, the spiritual and the eternal.

There is a teaching against greed and the love of money. There is an invitation to understand who we must truly fear. Also, the Lord invites us to remember that the important thing is to have our eternal destiny taken care of, confessing him as the Lord of our lives.

It all starts with the incident of a man asking Jesus to intervene in the dispute over a family inheritance. This shows greed and the wrong approach to money, at the expense of other more important things, such as family harmony and love between siblings.

The Lord turns to the disciples and develops the lesson. It is important that they, as future teachers of the church, know that they must guard against toil, and excessive love for material things.

The verb merimnao: Worrying about, paying too much attention to something like being anxious about something, concentrating too much on one thing.

The Lord warns them that worry and anxiety are not convenient attitudes to those who know God and follow Jesus Christ

However, we know that it is very difficult to obey this warning. Paul himself, who warned us against anxiety, experienced anxiety regarding those who suffer and turn away from the gospel. 2 Corinthians 11:28, 29.

The disciples experienced tremendous anxiety when they were in the boat and the storm raged around them. The Lord taught them the alternative by resting in the boat, and trusting in God's protection.

That doesn't mean that we have to bow down to anxiety and accept it as an unavoidable condition. What the word is telling us is that we have alternatives against worry.

Much has to do with what we do in our mind, the attitudes we adopt, how we battle in the field of the mind.

First, the Lord invites us to **observe nature around us**. God cares and attends to the needs of the simplest things in his creation.

The Lord invites us to observe the birds of the field as well as the flowers, the grass. These things, which are so simple and do not contribute much to the maintenance of creation, yet God makes sure they have what they need for their existence.

The idea here is that we are worth much more than these things. If God created us, He will see to it that we have enough for our maintenance and our lives.

When God creates, he also establishes systems for the **maintenance** of the things that he creates.

See the Krock Center in Roxbury. The lady who gave the money for its construction also provided money for its maintenance and long-term care.

When God creates, he also provides for the maintenance of his creation. If God created us, he cares that we have what is necessary for our survival.

Verse 30 reminds us that God is very aware of what we need for our lives.

Martha tells Jesus: Lord, if you had come earlier, my brother would not have died. She did not know that the Lord had a whole plan already forged for the resurrection of Lazarus. And that he was aware of the situation. she didn't know that and therefore was full of anxiety.

Second, the Lord invites us through his words to **remember who we are**: we are **children of the creator, children of the king**. **Our father** is the one who rules the universe. We are important to him.

The almost logical consequence of this is that **we are not inevitably forced to live in anxiety**. Our condition as children has freed us from that slavery

There is an alternative to anxiety. Many people who have fallen into anxiety and tried to fight it go to the point of believing that they are doomed to anxiety for the rest of their lives.

That is not like that.

There is an alternative to anxiety. **Knowing this is a start towards the solution.** Knowing that **anxiety is a relative condition like any other** and that it has solutions allows us to seek those solutions and trust that there is an alternative for it.

By understanding that we are children of God, that he loves us, that he cares about us, he must give us a little peace of mind. We must focus on this truth when we are anxious. This will have a calming effect.

Over and over again the word tells us, **focus on God, his loving and faithful character.** The word says, you will keep in perfect peace the one whose thought remains with you. If we focus on God and that we are his children this will help us to be calmer In the midst of the storm.

As we see, a lot of this tells us about **what we are focusing on,** whether it is the storm around us, or the storm god, who loves us and is powerful to guide us through the storm

When **I battle anxiety it helps a lot to divert my attention from the problem and its threats to God,** his promises, his character, and his love for me. This makes all the difference.

This brings me to another thought: **we must keep our minds preemptively occupied with positive thoughts, with the promises of God,** with the principles of the kingdom of God, with

things that strengthen us spiritually, and that prepare us emotionally to counteract the harmful effects of life. .

Philippians 4: 8

8 For the rest, brothers, everything that is true, everything honest, everything just, everything pure, everything lovable, everything that is of good name; if there is any virtue, if anything worthy of praise, think of this.

9 What you learned and received and heard and saw in me, this do; and the God of peace will be with you.

We must be in continuous meditation on the word and affairs of God. Our main focus should be the kingdom of God. By doing this we experience peace.

When we are focused on the cares of the world, this causes the world to become our god, and to control us. We are at the mercy of circumstances. By the ups and downs of life. If everything goes well we are happy. If not, we get into anxiety and depression.

To be free from anxiety, **we must first die to the world.** We have to entrust our destiny and our experience in life to the goodness of God, not to what the world can give or take from us.

God has to become the one in control of everything. We have to abandon control, and throw ourselves exclusively into the hands of God. We have to know that we are not in control, AND the power to affect the important things in our life.

We have to get to that point where we know that our only hope is Him.

This idea that God is our everything, that the world ultimately doesn't matter, is key to the peace we need. You have to fight to reach that conviction.

Another thing we see here has to do with **the love of and obsession with, material things.**

The lord refers to the birds, flowers, and grass of the field. One of the things these beings have in common is that they don't accumulate too much. **They live a simple life.** They are content with little.

To combat anxiety **we have to learn to separate the essential from the secondary.** We first have to get to that point where we settle for the basics. If God gives us much more, we enjoy it and appreciate it, but it is not essential for our happiness.

Philippians 6: 6ff

6 But great gain is godliness accompanied by contentment;
7 because we have brought nothing into this world, and certainly nothing we will be able to take out.

8 So, having sustenance and shelter, let's be content with this.

9 For those who want to get rich fall into temptation and snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts, which plunge men into destruction and perdition;

10 because the root of all evil is the love of money, which, coveting some, strayed from the faith, and were pierced with many pains.

How much do we need to be happy? How much beauty, how much money, how much health, how many friends, how much comfort?

When we learn to **be content with the essentials**, then we can be truly happy. The birds do not accumulate, but what they learn to be content with what they receive every day, and sometimes many times a day.

When God **gave manna to the Jews** he gave it to them every day. They couldn't store it, because if they did it would smell bad the next day. There was a spiritual lesson in this.

Now with this new virus I see a lot of people again anxious. Once again we are obsessing over the news and the opinions of the experts. Again we see the division in our nation between conservatives and liberals.

And **liberals obsess over the implications of the virus and the opinions of scientists and experts. Conservatives are obsessed with the conspiracies of the liberals and their efforts to manipulate the virus.** Each one obsessively consults the news.

All of this leads to anxiety and takes away our peace.

I prefer to focus on and trust the god who created the universe, who has traversed humanity through terrible things for thousands of years, wars, plagues, cataclysms of all kinds. And here we are still the human race. And here we will be until God wants.

This virus may be with us for a long time. We have to look away from him, and focus on God. The devil wants to obsess us with different things, always bringing something to distract us and rob us of peace and energy.

Let us set our gaze on God, not the beginning of his kingdom, on his infinite love for us, in our condition of preferred and cared children, and look away from everything that threatens our peace.

And the Lord tells us not to worry about what can kill our body but not our soul. Let us obey it, and worry about the things of eternity. Herein lies true peace.

Luke 12: 4-6