



Matthew 6:19-34

Heart disease is the number one cause of death in the U.S. claiming the lives of nearly 400,000 per year and diagnostic tests are costly, invasive and potentially dangerous. Spiritual heart disease is the leading cause of problems among Christians but thankfully, diagnostic tests are simple and non-invasive, but I can't guarantee that they won't be painful. In this section of Scripture very early in his ministry, Jesus sought to identify where a person's treasure lay because if you know the location of a person's treasure, you will know the condition of their heart. As Jesus said, *For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

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

22 "The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, 23 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!

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

25 "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? 26 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? 27 And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? 28 And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, 29 yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 30 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? 31 Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall

we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ 32 For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

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

I’ve got twelve principles from this passage that will continue to teach us about contentment.

1. Trouble abounds in this life.

This principle is more implicit than explicit. The difficulties and trials of life are assumed because otherwise, Jesus would not encourage us to let go of our worry and anxiety. This is one great thing about the Bible and our faith. Scripture never treats human suffering casually. Biblical Christianity freely admits that trouble abounds in this life because sin reigns in this life. The Bible never claims that trials are a mere illusion, as the cult of Christian Science teaches. The Bible never teaches that all suffering is due to your weak and puny faith, that if you just had more faith, you would not be sick and poor and miserable, as the prosperity teachers falsely claim.

Therefore, the exhortations in this passage such as “Don’t be anxious,” are an admission that there is plenty to be anxious about. Jesus’ words are meant to be encouragement to us, not condemnation. Life is hard. Apart from God, there is no hope but only anxiety and clamoring for survival. But with Christ, there is joy through the trouble and joy in the midst of pain. If you recall from last week, our main principle was that contentment is not being content in your circumstances but in the God who gave you your circumstances.

2. Earthly treasure does not last.

Jesus reminds us that moth and rust destroy our treasures and that thieves “break in” and steal it away. The word for “steal” literally means to “dig through.” In Bible times, most homes were made of mud, sun baked bricks and rather than pick a lock or break a window as they now do, they would literally dig through the wall and steal the loot.

Thieves are still just as creative as desperate as they were two thousand years ago. Did you happen to see the article in last week’s Broadcaster bearing the title, [The great cheese scam: Multi-state effort finds 21 tons of pilfered muenster](#)? On March 26, \$200,000 worth of cheese was stolen from a cheese factory in Cashton. A truck driver forged papers and simply backed his truck up to the factory and calmly drove away with the pilfered muenster.

Just this past week [thieves made off with 5.5 tons of Nutella](#) from a town in Germany. When Karen and I were on a missions trip to Germany in 1993, we were first introduced to Nutella and fell madly in love. We brought as many jars of this stuff home as we could, long before it was available in the US. As soon as we ran out I began to wonder if the Lord might be calling us to serve as missionaries in Germany!

Cars rust, houses slowly crumble, thieves steal. We know this but we don’t know it which is why we need Jesus to remind us that earthly treasures do not last, however...

3. Heavenly treasure are eternal.

These treasures are not affected by rust and moth and it is not possible for anyone to steal them. They are literally eternal. If you had the choice to either purchase a \$25,000 car that would last for twelve months or a \$25,000 car that would last—in the same condition in which you bought it—for thirty years, which car would you buy? Only an absolute fool would buy the one that would only last for a year. We get this concept when it comes to material goods but we often fail to grasp it when it comes to heavenly treasure.

The big idea here is that earth is not our home. We are just a passin' through so why would we hoard treasure here? Jesus commands us to hoard heavenly treasure. The Greek word literally means “to hoard,” to store up and accumulate. We are to store up heavenly treasures in the same way that people store up earthly treasures—they get larger and large over time. They are stored away for safe keeping.

I find that there are three questions that are commonly asked regarding heavenly treasure. How do I store up heavenly treasure? How do I spend or receive my treasure? and Isn't it selfish to want to store up treasure for myself?

- a. How do I store up heavenly treasure? The Bible talks about heavenly treasure, crowns and rewards quite often and the simplest answer to the question is this: we store up treasures in heaven when we love the Lord with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength; when we walk in obedience to the Word of God; when we do the right thing for the right reason; when the treasures of this world lose their shimmer and value to us; when we give sacrificially to the Lord's work. In short, everything we do as a growing believer can store up treasures in heaven.
- b. How do I spend or receive my heavenly treasure? This question is more difficult to answer because I don't think we are given specific answers. But here is the way I look at it. Jesus tells us to hoard heavenly treasure and in so doing, we know that it does make a difference in eternity. Heaven is still heaven for everyone who goes there but there will be something different for those with more treasure. Jesus said that some people will rule ten cities and others will rule five cities in heaven, according to how they lived their lives on earth. I can't fully explain that other than to say that it will be “better” for the person who has more treasure. It will mean more joy and more satisfaction in Christ for all eternity. What we do in this life continues to have an effect for all of eternity. That is a sobering thought.
- c. Isn't it somehow selfish to hoard heavenly treasure for myself? We know it's wrong and selfish to hoard earthy treasure so how can it be good to hoard treasure in heaven? It might feel like God is dangling a carrot in front of us: if you follow me now, I will reward you in heaven. It seems to fly in the face of a grace based living. If we serve the Lord out of our love for him, isn't our love tainted by striving to hoard heavenly treasure at the same time?

Call me a simpleton, but to me the simple answer is that “because Jesus told us so.” All we need to know is that it is ultimately best for us to do so and it brings more glory to the Lord. It is a win-win scenario. It is right to be intrinsically and internally motive to hoard

heavenly treasure. It is possible to serve the Lord with all our heart and also have the amazing knowledge that my service in this life had a direct impact on my experience of the Lord in the next life. Moreover, God has built discipline and reward into his creation. If we stray from the Lord, as our loving Father, he will use painful discipline to get our attention and bring us back home. If we serve the Lord faithfully, he will use eternal treasures to reward us. It's just the way he works and we would be wise to follow his sovereign plan.

4. You must serve something, so choose wisely.

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. There are only two options in this life. Either we are slaves to money or we are slaves to God. "You cannot serve two masters" is the same thing as saying, "You cannot have two slave owners." It's not like working two part-time jobs that don't conflict with one another. God and money both desire mastery over your heart. Both want to be the vision by which you see and interpret all of life. Both want to own you. One is impersonal and the other is deeply intimate. One is temporary and one is eternal. One wants to destroy and one wants to love you. Therefore, choose the master who loves you with an infinite, eternal love and wants only the best for you.

5. God feeds the birds and you are of greater value.

This is an argument from the lesser to the greater—"look at the birds of the air"/ "are you not of greater value than they?" The birds do not sow, reap or gather into barns and yet God meets all of their needs. If birds could pray, they would say, "Give us this day our daily worm." They live from day to day and moment to moment and all the while the Creator supplies what they need.

Birds don't sow or reap or gather into barns but neither do they sit on a tree branch and wait for God to drop worms and seeds into their mouths. They are busy doing what God created them to do. I love it when Jesus uses illustrations from creation because it again reminds us that God is so sovereign over his created realm that Jesus can say "and yet your heavenly Father feeds them." God is truly active in the feeding of 200-400 billion birds which inhabit our planet. And if he cares so intimately and perfectly about birds—as lovely as they are—are we not of greater value than they? This is one of the great understatements in all of Scripture. Have you seen your first Robin of Spring yet? They are here even though they probably should have stayed away another month! The average lifespan of an American robin is two years. Two years and then they die, shrivel up and are no more. But we will live forever and ever. We are of infinitely more value than the birds of the air, therefore God's care for us is infinitely greater.

6. Worry accomplishes nothing.

And which of you by worrying can add a single hour to his span of life? We falsely think that worry accomplishes something. Most of you have seen the Pixar film, *Monsters, Inc.* In the story, the screams of children are harnessed to run the power for the entire city. I would like to invent a machine that similarly harnesses the power of worry. This would be the holy grail of free energy. It would be clean, free, there would be no concerns over "peak worry" supplies and to boot, I would be a kazillionaire!

But sadly, worry does not accomplish anything. Actually, one could say that it doesn't accomplish anything positive but worry is quite fruitful in a negative way. All other things being equal, worry takes away from your span of life. When you worry, you increase your chance of stroke and heart attacks, you cause inflammation in your body; you change your eating habits; your sleep habits are affected. All of these things cascade together to cause great harm to your overall health and decrease in your life span. A study at Purdue University¹ found that chronic worriers reduce their lifespan by sixteen years! Put another way, the condition of your spiritual heart directly affects the condition of your physical heart. If your spiritual heart is prone to worry, it will cause damage to your physical heart and conversely, a healthy spiritual heart helps to ensure a healthy physical heart. One again living for the Lord has many additional benefits.

7. God clothes the grass but you are eternal.

I love Jesus' word picture of flowers being the clothes for the grass. No one ever wrote a poem about grass. No one in their right mind ever writes a love letter to their wife comparing them to a hay field. Even young children will bring their mom a handful of dandelions before they would bring them a pile of grass. Flowers are the true beauties of the field and rightly serve as clothing for the grass.

Jesus said that birds don't sow, reap or gather into barns and yet are cared for by the Father. Birds work but do not worry but lilies neither worry nor work. They just are. I was talking to Tim Farrell this week about his bees and it suddenly hit me that even though flowers don't work like birds work, bees are the ones who do the work for the flowers. Once again, God has created and ordained all of this to work in a perfect symbiotic relationship.

There are two arguments from lesser to greater here.

Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you.

The lifespan of a robin is two years but the lifespan of a blade of grass is much less than that. It is alive today but tomorrow will be used to fuel your fire. Grass essentially has zero value and yet the Father clothes it with more majesty than the richest of all of the kings of Israel. This kind of divine desire for us is meant to crush all vestiges of worry from our hearts and minds. It is meant to overwhelm our mind with its powerful logic and then calm our hearts with its perfect peace.

8. Worry is a sign of unbelief.

If all of that were not enough, Jesus threw in one word to cut to like a sword, as Hebrews says, "piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Hebrews 4:11). That one word is *oligopistoi*—*O you of little faith*. It takes five words in English to unpack one word in Greek—*O you of little faith*. In other words, the root of all anxiety is unbelief.

Your level of worry is directly proportional to your level of faith. The Great Physician has just sat us down and told us the grim news: “I am sorry, but I have to tell you that you have spiritual heart disease.” This verse serves as one of those diagnostic tools for the heart. Now you can take this as condemnation—you have no faith, you little hopeless worm you OR you can take it as exhortation leading to right action. God intends this to be an exhortation meant for our good.

9. Worry is a worldly pursuit.

After the illustrations of the birds of the air and the grass of the field, Jesus said, *Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things.* Ouch. This is not only diagnostic, it is painful. Gentiles were pagans. The pagan Gentiles worshipped the pantheon of Greek gods and worry was built into their worship. The gods were malicious and capricious, so the job of a pagan was to appease the gods. All they did in life revolved around making sure the gods were not about to strike them down. They crafted idols and constructed temples and offered endless sacrifices but they could never know for sure if they did enough. The gods competed against one another so they lived in fear that they would appease one god only to simultaneously anger several more. Therefore, worry and anxiety were built into their worship.

Is our God really like this? Like complaining, worry attacks the very character of God. Regardless of the faith we confess, when we worry, what we are doing is living out our pagan beliefs. When we worry we are testifying to the world that God does care about us or can’t do anything about our lot in life. It’s like what we said last week regarding contentment. Our anxiety casts doubt upon the goodness and sovereignty of God. Either God is not willing to help us or he is not able to help us, which leads directly to the tenth principle.

10. Your Father knows all that you need.

Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. God has exhaustive knowledge not merely of what we need at any given moment but what we have always needed and what we will need in the future. If God is all powerful and infinitely good—and he is—then it follows that he will meet these needs.

Don’t forget that the main subject of worry throughout this passage have to do with the basic necessities of life—food, water and clothing. He is not talking about whether or not we will get that promotion and raise that goes with it. He is not talking about which college we should attend or any other endless possibilities of questions we face in a land of plenty and prosperity. These are needs which are necessary for life itself and even these are not to be a reason for any worry. Your heavenly father has exhaustive, sovereign knowledge of everything you will ever need and is eager to meet these needs for you and wants us to rest in this divine provision.

11. Pursue the kingdom and get your needs. Pursue your needs and you miss the kingdom.

But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. This principle also overlaps with one from last week. God does not want to eliminate our desires and passions but he does want to change them to something much better. We are not so week after food, and clothing but we are to seek after the kingdom of God. Don’t lose your passion and crawl into a hole and pretend that you don’t have any desires. In the middle ages, the

monks attempted to live a secluded, solitary and desire-less existence. They tried to reduce their desires and seeking. But Jesus said seek! Seek first the kingdom God. Lay up for yourselves heavenly treasures. Hoard heavenly treasures. So what we get is a lack of anxiety and our basic needs met in this life AND eternal rewards in the next life.

12. God will supply tomorrow's grace tomorrow.

Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. As I said before, the Bible freely admits that there will be trouble. There might be trouble tomorrow but why be concerned about it today? God has given you grace for today and he will not give you his grace for tomorrow because tomorrow is also in his hands.

I'll never forget the day that Traci Stalsberg called me to tell me that Lydia has just been diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes. That is a massive, life-changing bit of news to receive, especially given that Lydia was only seven or eight years old at the time. I prayed That God would grant to them "diabetes grace." The day prior, the Stalsberg family did not need "diabetes grace" and the thought probably never occurred to them they would ever need diabetes grace, but they needed it that day. And they have needed it every day since. From before the foundation of the world, God knew the precise moment when they would suddenly need diabetes grace. Tomorrow you may need "my care just broke down grace" or "my three year old won't listen to me grace" or God forbid, "cancer grace." But all of those are tomorrow's trouble, not today's. God knows about them and you don't need to know about them and today has enough trouble of its own.

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ⁱ http://abclocal.go.com/kabc/story?section=news/health/your_health&id=9021106