

The God Who Lives

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[0 : 00] Well, good evening. I'm Flynn. Let's read our passage for tonight. Matthew 6, 25 to 34.

! 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? 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? And which of you, by being anxious, can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? 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, though you of little faith?

[1 : 06] 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, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.

But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself.

Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. Well, we're continuing our Sermon on the Mount series. We've got a passage about anxiety. Last week we heard Simon preach on serving God above serving money.

And this week Jesus transitions to encouraging his disciples not to be anxious. And I wonder, how many sermons have you heard on anxiety already in your life?

And are you still anxious? I know that I still struggle from time to time. But the thing is, is that for as many sermons as we've heard, there are so many more things out there to make us anxious.

[2 : 13] I wonder what you would say if I asked you, what is the most common command in the Old Testament? Maybe you'd say, do not commit adultery, or love one another.

These would be good guesses. But in the Old Testament, over 300 times God says to his people, do not be afraid.

And what does that show? It shows that God is our comforter. He knows our fragile state. We are anxious people, and we have a comforting God. So whether you're hearing a sermon on anxiety for the first time, or the thousandth time, if you live with anxiety, hear God's words to you now.

I think one of the things we can struggle with with this text is reading what Jesus says here as a command. You know, we say, well, of course. Do not be anxious.

I don't want to be like this. But it's not as if I can sort of snap out of it. You know, what are you saying to me? Are you seriously commanding me as if I can just click my fingers and no longer be anxious?

[3 : 25] That would be a fair complaint. But that's not what Jesus is saying. Instead, we have to look here. This saying of Jesus, do not be anxious. Less of a command and more of how a loved one or how someone might speak to their loved one.

Have you ever said or hadn't said to you, be careful, stay safe? It's a concern. It's a concern out of love for that person. You know, Amelia, my wife, she tells me daily, cycle safely.

And it's not like I was planning on cycling dangerously. But she says it because she cares, because she wants the best. She wants the highest welfare for me.

And so when Jesus says, do not be anxious, he's saying, do not be anxious as the shepherd of the sheep. You know, it is an imperative technically, but it's a concern.

It's motivated by deep love. It's motivated by compassion. So hear Jesus, what he's saying to you tonight. I want to look at a few things. I want to understand the reality of anxiety, what Jesus has to say.

[4 : 34] And then we'll just look at some practical points, replacing anxiety with godly concern. I also want to stress that there are a lot of anxiety-related conditions in the world.

What Jesus is speaking primarily about here is routine anxiety. It's something which is a little bit more mainstream. It's what most of us may be struggling with, rather than more extreme forms of medically diagnosable anxiety-related conditions.

But it's still important tonight that if that is you here in the room, that we still don't diminish Jesus' authority to speak into those conditions. Because he does have something to say.

He does want to free everyone, anyone and everyone, from anxiety, great or small. So, anxiety. It's a human condition. If we look at the context, Jesus is speaking to a wide range of people.

His target audience is the first century. And I think what's remarkable here is that anxiety isn't a modern phenomenon. I always kind of think it's just a 21st century daily part of life.

[5 : 41] And what's more remarkable still is what he tells his first century listeners not to worry about. He tells them not to worry about food, drink, and clothing.

Now, we recognize that these are necessities of life. In the 21st century in Scotland, we actually often forget about these. You know, we have clean tap water. We live with a surplus of food from a well-developed agricultural system.

We don't really think about food insecurity as a living reality for people. You know, we're not overly concerned about these things. We take them for granted. And, you know, if I were in Jesus' position with people living in the first century, whose daily worries were food and water and clothing, I think I'd find it really difficult to tell them not to worry about those things.

It's very, I think it's a lot easier to tell people not to worry about the, what is superfluous in life, what is surplus to requirements. Telling people not to worry about designer fashion brands, not to worry about the best, most lucrative job and the most fulfilling career.

You know, worry about the main things. Worry about food and water and clothes. But Jesus is telling them not even, well, he's telling them to not even worry about these things.

[7 : 00] And what is the point here? Is that the point is, no matter if you're in the first century or you're in the 21st century, no matter if food is your daily worry, or whatever else is that's bothering you in the 21st century, is that you will worry about something.

Anxiety is universal. It affects all of us. And it's a product, ultimately, of the fall. So let's have a look now. What is anxiety? We go to verse 26.

We can kind of start to say what anxiety is not. I want to answer this question in the negative. It's not our concern to work hard. It's not our concern to provide, you know, life-giving necessities for our own lives, for our family.

From experience, we can see that the birds do work. Birds are looking for food. If you ever go outside, you can see the seagulls stamping on the ground and the worms coming to the surface. You know, they're working for their food. When Jesus brings up the birds, he's not saying they don't work and still God provides. He's saying that God ultimately provides the food.

[8 : 11] The birds do work. But what they don't do is worry. And further still, we can get a little bit caught up. Because Jesus says, neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns.

And what Jesus is saying here, that in the first century, routine work, this is an agrarian society. They would have been familiar with that just being daily labor.

You know, you collect your harvest. You prepare for winter. There is no food. And for us, it is to say that we take precautions for the future.

We work and we save and we think about our retirement. You know, is Jesus saying not to do these things? Of course not, right? We absolutely should do these things.

The question is the motivation. Is it only wisdom? Is it only prudence which directs our steps in these things? Or are we worrying? Are we anxious?

[9 : 09] Anxiety is also not acting on God-given wise concern. You know, concern allows us to take action when situations are dangerous or destructive.

It motivates us to protect and preempt when people are at risk or there's a risky situation. There are a thousand and one reasons to act on godly concern.

From, you know, checking your oven is off when you leave the house to also identifying when situations might be getting hard for people. When they might be in a state where they're facing dangers in their life.

You take steps to protect yourself and others. But what our concern must not become is our master, right? Concern must not extend into the future and take control of us.

And that leads me to say positively what our definition of anxiety is. Let's go back to verse 25. Right at the beginning, the key word, therefore. You know, you always have to ask what the therefore is there for, right?

[10:17] And if you look back, you will see the passage before it. Jesus is responding to his previous teaching. If you remember, Simon was preaching last Sunday. No one can serve two masters.

Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Therefore, I tell you, do not be anxious. He's continuing his teaching to us not to be motivated by the things of the world, but by the things of heaven.

So what is anxiety? We're finally here. Tim Lane, a Christian expert on anxiety, says, Anxiety is both mental and bodily, but it is also spiritual.

And I quote, Worry is a response to life lived in God's world. Worry, therefore, is a response to God himself. Elsewhere in the New Testament, our word for anxiety is translated as a distracted mind.

And it really gives the sense of a divided loyalty. And now, if we're following on, we've got our therefore, if we're following on from our previous passage, Then, our divided loyalty is a divided loyalty between God's riches and worldly riches.

[11:36] That's last week. And this week, it's our divided loyalty between God's kingdom and our own. It is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing.

There is a reality beyond this material world. Food and clothing are important, but they are not life itself. Because true life is centered around the kingdom of God.

Anxiety, therefore, is to be over-concerned with a future outside the kingdom of God. And it's a profound theological problem. So how do we see anxiety spelled out?

When Jesus doesn't downplay our need for food, But it does say who provides it. Your heavenly Father. Yours, not theirs, not the birds. Are you not of more value than they?

Why are we of more value? Because we have a direct relationship to God. Followers of Christ belong to the Father. We are worth more because we have a personal relationship.

[12:39] A personal relationship with the God who created the universe. Let's keep going. 27.

Which of you, by being anxious, can add a single hour to his life? This literally is translated as add a single cubit to his height.

A cubit's about a foot and a half. It's a strange question to ask. You know, when I read it, I sort of thought, Is anyone in the first century concerned about their height?

And I think we're supposed to think that. I think this is a rhetorical question, But it's also an absurd question, Which ultimately points us away from height, right?

The question is, what is the purpose of worry? You obviously can't grow taller. What is worrying going to do? You're not in control of that, right? And that's the key here, Is that you are not in control of your height.

Why does Jesus ask this question? Well, he uses an obvious question To point to maybe what is not so obvious to us. We are not in control of our height. And Jesus says, well, ultimately, What are you in control of?

[13:45] Verse 28. Why are you anxious about clothing? He moves from the greater need, food, Down to the lesser need, which is clothing. But he doubles down in his illustration.

Does God provide for the birds? Well, fine. But how about something lower down the created order? Something alive today and tomorrow burnt in an oven? How about the lilies of the field? Even King Solomon, One of the most rich, One of the most opulent men To ever walk the face of the earth, Even he was not clothed so beautifully As the lilies of the field.

And why? What does it say in the text about Solomon's clothes? It says, He was clothed in his own glory, Or he was arrayed in his own glory, Or his glory.

That's because the glory is his own. It's a fragile, fleeting, anxious glory Of human hands. If Solomon is unable to Produce clothing as beautiful as God, Then neither can you.

[14 : 52] You're not in control. We're not in control. And so what is the foundation Of this anxiety of ours? Jesus says, Oh you of little faith, This is a collective you, In the KJV it's ye, Use your, It doesn't matter, There's a collective here, It's all of us.

You of little faith, You all of little faith, Do not be anxious saying, What shall we eat? What shall we drink? What shall we wear? For the Gentiles seek after these things. So we see anxiety is tied to faith.

The Gentiles are those outside the Jewish faith, Those with outside a belief in a, All knowing, all powerful, All loving, personal God. It's the, They're those without faith. And so when we lack faith, We turn to ourselves for deliverance.

And we see that root anxiety, Root cause of anxiety is a lack of faith. Our definition of anxiety, Over concerned with the things of, Those outside the kingdom, Is to be over concerned with the things, Outside of the world.

It is ultimately fear, Taken into a new context. When you're afraid, Have you ever heard of the, The fight or flight response? And essentially, I won't bore you with the details, It's our body's reaction, When we see a danger, We enhance our performance, To either fight or run away.

[16 : 15] We bypass the normal mental operations, To overcome danger. You know, Our bodies will optimize themselves, So that our heartbeats increase, And we have more oxygen for our muscles, Things like this.

But the thing is, Is that this response, Carries on into anxieties. It's not just physical, Human threat. It's, It's the common ways, Which we deal with anxiety as well.

You know, Sometimes we will run from anxiety, And one of the ways, Which we do this, Is we become, Laid back, And detached. And I, I want to point out, That this can be, A real stoicism.

Ask yourself the question, Are you laid back? Have you, Really matured beyond anxiety? Or have you instead, Become indifferent, To what makes you anxious, In your life?

Do you recognize, Your tendency to be anxious, And, Catch that worry, And just sort of, Maintain a stiff upper lip? Well, This is, This is stoicism. Stoicism is, Out thinking, And over rationalizing emotions.

[17 : 22] It's, It's getting around, How we feel about things, And just explaining, Explaining them away. In the first century, Epictetus, Just decades after Jesus lived, Said on the problem of anxiety, That what upsets people, Is not things themselves, But, But their judgments, About these things.

And what he essentially meant was, That the cause of anxiety, Is when we don't recognize, The nature of things. A cup is a cup, Human is only human.

If you break a cup, Well, You can console yourself, That it's just a cup, Right? But he takes it, A lot further, He takes it, To, You know, A human, He said, If, If you, Yeah, If you, When you, When they die, You have to, Remind yourself, Of their mortality, And then you will not be, Overcome by grief. And I wonder, If you do feel, Like you're a stoic tonight, Can you accept that? Can, You can accept it, About a cup, Maybe, But can you accept, Reducing a human down, To only a material being, Because that ultimately, Is what you're doing, You start by not caring, And you end ultimately, With complete indifference, Stoicism is not a godly response, But it, Is running away, And there's another way we run, We can distract ourselves, When we think about the good, And forget about the bad, That's what our culture loves to do, It loves to tell us, Just look on the bright side, You've got worries, Forget them, Life's too short, We have, So much goodness in life, Happiness, And fun, Which you can go, And pursue, Louis Armstrong said, Back in the 40s, Or he used to sing this actually, Leave your worries, On the doorstep, Just direct your feet, To the sunny side of the street, And if that's before your time, Which presumably it is, For most of us here, We have Taylor Swift, Everything will be alright, If we just keep dancing, Like we're 22, And obviously I had to get a Taylor Swift reference in, Before I left, But what happens, If you're 44, Or 55, And you're not in the mood for dancing, The answer, I'm getting at really, Is, To anxiety, The solution is not to pretend, You don't have problems, Don't pretend like your problems don't exist, You know, It might, It might just get you through, It might just be enough, In the modern world, But what comfort, Would those, Would those distractions be, If you didn't have food, And water, And clothing, Because these are so much more, Demanding of us, These are so much more, Sustaining to life, This is no remedy to anxiety, Distraction, Is like it says in Ecclesiastes, It's a coping mechanism,

[20 : 26] Eat, drink, and be merry, For tomorrow we die, It's a futile response, To anxiety, We could also choose, To fight anxiety, Do you choose to dominate, And seize control, When you're faced with fears, On the horizon, Do you double down on your work, Do you labor extra hard, Do you

bring your worries before God, Or do you seek to overcome them, On your own, You know, Are you productivity obsessed, Are you anxious, When your schedule is off, Do you need things to be just so, You have to ask yourself the question, What ways, Am I employing, To fight anxiety in my life, These will be specific, These will be contextual to you, They're not always obvious, You know, On reflection, And this is, Only one of many ways, But one thing I do when I'm anxious, Is I tidy my house vigorously, And, I come home, If I'm anxious about something, I'm nervous, I'll clean the lounge, I'll do the dishes,

I'll put a load of washing on, And the point I'm getting at, Is because I'll feel in control, After having done all those things, The question, You know, The thing I want to point out there, Is that I only feel in control, Right, I'm not actually in control, Nothing I do with my house, Has any relevance, To the things I'm actually afraid of, Self-reliance is what we want, Not God-reliance, So what is your motivation, In your work, And what is your motivation, In a clean house, Do you really need to be so productive, And are you working hard, Because that is what God requires of you, In this current season, For some of us, The answer will be yes, It's God-honoring, But for others, We have to ask ourselves, Are we motivated by gaining control, Are we motivated, To do these things, Because we lack faith, This leads us on to our remedies, You know, Without God, We have two options, Fight or flight, Which are basically the same options, It's self-reliance, Because your anxiety, Only gets worse in the long run, The more you seek control, The more you realize,

That you don't have it, Jack London, A famous American writer, Of the 20th century, Said the more money you have, The more you're afraid to lose it, And Shakespeare said, Uneasy lies the head, That wears the crown, Do you seek control, Through money, Power, Status, Pursuing comfort, Or do you only become, You will only become more anxious, About losing them, Or living in their absence, Control and self-reliance, Are no remedy, But we have another option, Jesus says, Seek first the kingdom of God, What's the kingdom of God, We have to compare and contrast it, With the kingdom of our world, You know, We often think of heaven, As a sort of cloudy, Floaty city in the sky, It's a sort of spiritual realm, Which we can't see, And the world is what we see, The world is what we touch, And taste and feel, It's the purely physical, But none of these, These are not good conceptions, Because both kingdoms, Are spiritual and material, God created his kingdom, Way back to Genesis 1, He created Adam and Eve, He created physical beings, He created the world, A physical place, And he also created Adam and Eve, With souls, You know, With the spiritual connection, With God, Temptation came, And two things, I want us to know here, When temptation came, Adam and Eve turned their souls away, And they also turned the physical, Creation away too, And the big lie, Of the kingdom of this world, Is that there is nothing more, Than just the material, In front of us, But this is not true, The kingdom is more, Than just the material, We were created for both realms, The material and the spiritual, Is not life, More than these things, Is not life more than just, The materials, Which we have in front of us, We are missing out, On a very real reality, The kingdom of God, In its fullness, As it was supposed to be, From the dawn of time, Patrick Schreiner,

Biblical commentator, Said, What is the kingdom, The king's power, Over the king's people, In the king's place, The kingdom of God, Is reestablishing, God's reign on earth, God's reign in people's hearts, And it's already here, Jesus brought in the kingdom, When he came, The kingdom of God, Is true life, It's having both the creation, And the creator, And faith, Is, How we deal, With our anxiety, I've done a lot of work, With Thomas Watson, One of the quotes, Which stuck with me, As I was reading through his work, Is, That faith anticipates, Future things, And makes them present, And do we notice, The similarity of anxiety, In that, Anxiety is, Seeing future fears, And worrying about them today, But faith is, Seeing future glory, And living, Like it's here today, Faith looks to the day, When Christ's kingdom, Is fully consummated,

[25 : 30] How then should I live, Today? We have to recognize, Future glory, Not future problems, The kingdom is coming, God has promised, The day will come, The future is set, In stone, And we aren't in control, Of that, So seek the one who is, Seek the king himself, Let's move on to, Practical health swaying, There's a physical intervention, Aspect which we want to consider, We want to really basically, Avoid things which will make it worse, If you're prone to anxiety, And you know yourself, Avoid caffeine, Avoid, Take regular exercise, And monitor sleep, These are all helpful, And I just want to point out, That when we lessen physical temptation, We can also lessen, Spiritual temptation, Seek to recognize, When you are being anxious, And bring it out into the open, We're not always good, At recognizing, When we are being anxious, So seek accountability, Get your

friends to tell you, Get them to pray with you, And for you, And replace anxiety, With the fear of the Lord,

Remind yourself that you live, What the theologians call, Corum Deo, You live before the face of God, Because when you recognize, And you practice the discipline, Of reminding yourself, You live Corum Deo, Then you remember the power, Which belongs to God, His strength, And you give Him glory, So when you're anxious, Don't forget about the power, And the strength of God, Remind yourself, Remember that you live, Corum Deo, You live in the face of God, The more time you spend, Thinking on God, The less time you'll have for worrying, It sounds simplistic, But the more you, You more you remind yourself, Of God's glory, The less, I hope you will, Start to worry, And ask for God's help, If you want anything from anyone, You know you've got to ask for it, But God is the only one, Who definitely wants to give you something, Ask for His help, And He will not, He will not let you down, Ask to see His glory,

His grace, And confess your unbelief, And ask for more belief, Multiple times a day, If you're, If you're in a season, Where you know you're struggling, With anxiety, Maybe set yourself a goal, Maybe a week, A week, Where you pray multiple times a day, Short prayers, Just practice this regular turning to Him, And as you turn, You've got to learn from the experts, Those who are expert at turning to God, In times of struggle, Go to the Psalms, Go to those who wrote the Psalms, You'll see people who are wrestling, With the tension of, Living in anxiety, And God's promises to them, In Psalm 27, You have this beautiful, A beautiful example of that, Of wrestling, He starts off with, Oppression of the enemies, And he ends, With this, Wait for the Lord, Be strong and take heart, Wait for the Lord, And I like the idea of wrestling, As meditation, Because it basically, You're putting your tensions, Your anxieties, In the ring, With God's promises, And you're asking, Which one's going to win? And we know the answer, Is God's, Right? Persevere, This is, One of my last points, On the practical elements, C.S. Lewis said, Only those who try, To resist temptation, Know how strong it is, A man who gives into temptation, After the first five minutes, Simply does not know, What it would be like, An hour later, Have you ever waited, Have you ever waited, On the Lord?

Have you ever, Just given one anxiety, Over to God, And seeing, And waited for him, To act on that? Because if you've never done that, You've never experienced, How he might provide for you, It's hard not to feel discouraged, With all these practical points, And the thing, I really want us to remember, Is that if you go away here, And you're not any less anxious, Than when you came in, That's fine, Pray, And do all these things, In the long term, Do it tomorrow, Don't feel discouraged, That there's no immediate response, Because it's an incremental change, Which we're looking for, You know, We're seeking for a relationship, With the Lord, And relationships, As we know, From any other sphere of life, Are slow, You know, We want to build up trust, With any of our friends, And family, Because what God is really seeking from us, With the whole anxiety question, Is reliance, [30 : 13] Our final verse, Penultimate verse, Do not be anxious about tomorrow, Tomorrow will be anxious for itself, Sufficient for the day, Is its own trouble, Did you pray only once, And expect all your anxiety to be gone, Did you pray, For the next month, And expect all your anxiety to be gone, You may have missed the point, You know, God doesn't want us, To turn into, To turn back towards ourselves, To rely on ourselves, Ticking the box, We prayed, God didn't sort it, So I guess I'll go my own way, When we remember Amarna, In the Old Testament, We remember God feeding his people, He tells them, Store only enough for one day, He's getting them, To rely on him, Every single day, So, We don't want to make, Lifetime requests, In a day, We want to seek change for today, And come again tomorrow, Rely on God, And this is really, Getting back to,

The whole faith, Aspect of anxiety, We need true, Unwithering faith, To do all this, We need the faith of Christ, Let's meditate, Let's think now, On how much he endured, On the cross, How much, Anxiety, He ought to have bear, In the garden of Gethsemane, The torment on the horizon, Not just the pain, And the physical torture of it, But the cosmic agony, The rejection by the Father, Which awaited him, As he approached the cross, At his crucifixion, Jesus endured hell and back, And what he was doing in that, Is enjoying the only thing, Worth truly being anxious about, Divine rejection, Did he fight?

No, Jesus rebuked the disciples, For fighting, With the authorities, Did he flee? His disciples fled, But Jesus stayed, He submitted, Jesus prayed, Not what I will, But yours be done, Father. You know, He knew ahead of time, That he was going to have to do this, He was going to have to, Submit to the cross, And die, But we only see, One prayer given, And it's mere hours, Before his

arrest, His trial, His death, Mere hours before, His troubles, Were enough, For one day, This is what our godly concern looks like, And so, Because we have never been, As reliant on God, As we should be, Let's recognize our unrighteousness, And do what God tells us, Here, Seek first the kingdom of God, And his righteousness, Let's seek Jesus' righteousness, We need, His righteousness, To extend to our own, He had the faith to see, Past the darkest moment, Of human history, To the kingdom of God, It allows us, To seek his righteousness, So I just want to encourage you, Today that, Fight,

To fight anxiety, See how much, Your father loves you, That he gave his only son, For you, If you are a Christian, Renew your faith in him, If you're not yet a believer, Encourage you to consider the claims, That we've made, What would it look like, To live your life free from anxiety, What would it look like, To be in personal relationship, With the God, Who really, Really does care about you, Who cared so much, He died to bring you to him, Let us pray, Heavenly Father, We come in the, Torments of life, We come in the, Fears and anxieties, On the horizon, And we ask, Lord be with us, We ask for your strength, For today, And we know that you'll give it tomorrow, Lord, We, Are so, Bad at, Praying to you on a regular basis, At meditating on your word, At filling ourselves up, With, [34 : 16] Your words of, Of love to us, We ask for your forgiveness, And we know, That our righteousness, That you've covered us, With your righteousness, So we pray now, All these things, Help us, Be with us, Give us today, Our daily bread, Amen.