
Worrying over Money

Matthew 6:19-34

Russ Kennedy

Introduction Money, money, money – how we worry over our money!

So many people are consumed with worry and anxiety. It has become such a problem that we can even speak of having a panic attack. Here is worry and anxiety at a painful and paralyzing level. Is it real? O yes, it is real. Is it a syndrome or disease rooted in our bodies? No, it is a heart issue. It is about what we believe and want. Jesus locates worry, not in the greatness of what threatens but rather in the smallness of our faith.

Why is this so? Listen to what one well known preacher and writer has said in regards to the connection between worry and faith. "Belief is not merely an *agreement* with facts in the head; it is also an *appetite* for God in the heart that fastens onto Jesus for satisfaction." (*Future Grace*, John Piper, p.86. Emphasis his) Sin is what happens when we do not believe God and are not satisfied with God and seek pleasure in lesser or forbidden things. When we are struggling or overwhelmed with an issue of sin, we must begin to diligently explore the heart and map out the terrain of unbelief that has led to sin.

In the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus is laying out the core principles for life in His Kingdom, he deals with issue after issue. Here the transition from living under law in the flesh to living under grace in the spirit is begun. Among all our troubles is our trouble with worry. We struggle with anger, hate, lust, prayerlessness, stinginess and a host of other sins. And we struggle with worry.

Let's listen to our Lord.

Foundational Heart Truths**(v. 19-24)**

Jesus, through three common illustrations, teaches us why we worry. These foundational life truths help us understand why we struggle with money.

About our Values**(v.19-21)**

Jesus begins by talking about our values. He commands us not to be primarily concerned about getting and keeping and banking up what will rust, rot or be robbed. Rather, we ought to store up our treasures in heaven. We ought to be giving, sharing and storing up in God's kingdom where our treasures are eternal and unchanging.

Why should we do this? Because our hearts will pant after and pursue what we treasure. Now this does not say or mean what we commonly think. This is not an exhortation to put our treasure where our heart is. He is telling us that your heart will define and then desire its treasures. Your heart will be pulled towards your treasures. If you value your car you will be concerned about people hitting it with their doors in the parking lot. So, here is a cycle in our lives – we believe something to be true, wants and desires are oriented by that belief, we act and feel because of it. This investment is now a magnet for our heart.

But there is also a problem here: we tend to treasure what we can touch, taste and hold here. So we hanker after and acquire stuff. But it is vulnerable to rust, rot and robbery. So we are anxious over it. We worry that we will not have it, may lose it or it will be taken from us.

Our heart focuses on what we value.

About our Vision**(v.22-23)**

This interesting word play here is about stinginess and generosity. The words for good and bad eyes here were idioms somewhat like the way we talk about a person being tight-fisted. But it also teaches us that how we see is connected to how our heart functions. If our hearts are depraved and dark, we will not see the needs of others and will not be fully devoted to God. Therefore we will be stingy and self-focused with our money.

So here is another contributing problem to worry. When you are not a generous person, a person whose eyes are on the kingdom of God and the needs of His people, you will be anxious and worried over your money. When you hold your money with a loose hand and your wallet is often opened to give, then you will see the money you have as a stewardship to be spent for God not an ownership to be spent for self.

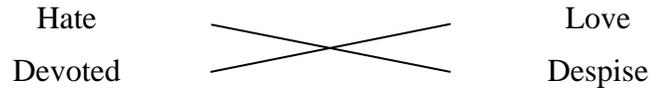
Our eyes will focus on what we give to.

About our Masters**(v.24)**

The final exhortation comes with a sense of both strangeness and familiarity. We as Christians are often familiar with what this verse says, but it seems so strange to us. You cannot serve two masters. Now, note: Jesus does not say that it is not desirable. He says it is impossible; it cannot be done.

It is evident that many try. Many try to have God as the Lord of their lives while still trying to serve money. This will not work. God demands to be exclusively lord of our lives. He will have us serve Him gladly as sons and slaves or He will turn us over to the hard taskmasters of our worldly lords.

This will become a very thorny problem for us. For the technically inclined, here is Greek chiasm. Notice how this is written:



Or, you can think of it this way:

Hate
Love
Devoted
Despise

So here it is: when two masters are striving to control our hearts, we will love one and hate the other. We will come to be devoted to one and despise the other. The great danger to our souls is that when we allow money to rule our lives, when we our hearts are more organized and oriented by money, the effect is that we will come to despise and hate God. Now this seems radical and sharp to us. But that is because we do not like this kind of “either-or”. But it is simply a fact: Jesus is Lord over all in your heart or He is not lord at all, and a despised one at that. In other words, if you are ruled by money, you are not loving God and cannot be neutral either. God tells you what to do with your money – either you do it or you despise Him for it.

You cannot serve God and money.

So, how do we know that we are valuing earthly things, are holding our money too tightly and are ruled by materialism? We worry. The therefore here that starts verse 25 connects these principles and their problems with some stunning, heart exposing questions.

Heart Exposing Questions**(v. 25-30)**

Jesus, in the light of what He has said, asks a startling series of questions. Now these questions are not about worrying over the luxuries and prosperities of life. These questions are about worrying over the essentials. It is the, “If you are not supposed to worry over these things, then how much less the rest.” Jesus penetrates our hard hearts with powerful questions. These questions are designed to lead us to the basic charge He will level in verse 30.

Isn't life more than food?**(v.25-26a)**

Frankly, this is a bit hard for us in our western world. We are rarely concerned about where our next meal will come from. We have trouble identifying with a concern or worry over food. In fact, if we worry about anything it is that we are eating too much of it and are becoming fat. But whether you worry about not having enough or eating too much, this anxiety is rooted in a misplaced concern about what it means to live.

Do you worry over food? Let me shift this to where we tend to fret and see if we can't point this into your own hearts. Do you sit down at meals and wish for something different than you have? Do you go to restaurants and complain about it no matter what? Are you constantly comparing your meal to something else, to something better, to something different?

Brothers and sisters, life is more than food. It is more than what you have too much of or too little of. If you obsess over food, then I bet you are full of worries and anxieties about all sorts of life issues. Say this truth with me:

Life in God's kingdom is more than food.

Aren't you worth more than animals?**(v.26b)**

So, look at the animal kingdom. They do not have a functioning economy, yet they are taken care of. What about you. For all your running to and fro to earn, save and spend, are you anxiously trying to take care of yourself and secure your future? Do you think that God will do less for you than He does for all His animal kingdom? Are you less than the beasts and birds?

Now, this is not psychology's self-worth and value questions. To derive some doctrine of value and worth from this is to read into what is not there. I am humored by one segment of our culture who say we are no more than intelligent apes. Yet we also have another segment of our society trying to insist that the root of our troubles is that we have lost our sense of self-worth and self-esteem. Do you see the built in contradiction.

Yes, the Bible tells us that humans are lower than angels and higher than beasts and birds in order of being. We are also higher in the concern and care of God. He obviously ensures the well being of creatures – why do we race about as though he cared less or even little for the highest of His creation? Say this with me:

We are higher than the beasts and birds in God's esteem.

Does worry change anything? (v.27)

What does worry get you? Can being anxious bring you food, make you taller, live longer? I am reminded of the bumper sticker: If I can't change it, I will worry about it- at least I am doing something about it. But Jesus shows you the futility and folly of worry. No, worry is a thief. It will rob you of your peace, your sleep, your contentment, your health and for some, even their life. Yes, it is possible to worry yourself to death. Many physical pains and health troubles are rooted in worry and anxiety. So, say this with me:

Worry never changed anything for the good.

Doesn't God take care of you? (v.28-29)

What about the fragile flowers and passing harvests – do you ever consider that God dresses them better than all of Solomon's finery. Yet they are merely flowers whose beauty is here today and gone tomorrow. If God flaunts His glory and puts his care and concern on such public display, who are you to challenge that with your worry? Say this with me:

God cares for you more than you can imagine.

So, the exclamation of verse 30 is at the heart of your problems with money and with worry. You have little faith. You do not believe God. You doubt Him and these truths He assures you with. Your worry is an attack on the character and care of God!

God Focused Faith (v.31-33)

So, how do we repent of our worry and turn in our hearts to a faith that pursues God first and thus pleases God?

Hearing the Word of God (v.31)

Change begins by hearing and heeding the Word of God. Jesus tells us again not to be anxious. He points again to the outer symptoms of our inner worries. We will say these kinds of things. We say them out loud because we are saying them in our hearts, not in depending on God but in doubting Him. So, we need the faith giving power of God's words: His commands, counsels, questions, exhortations and encouragements.

Turning from the World (v.32a)

We also repent by recognizing what the world, what unbelievers are mostly concerned over. Jesus represents what is outside the kingdom here as being what the Gentiles prize and pursue. Repentance recognizes our tendency to be poured into the world's mold and our need to be transformed by the renewing of our minds so that we will not worry but rather take God at His Word.

Trusting in God's Care (v.32b)

Do you really believe that God knows your needs? Repentance means turning from self-dependence to God-trust. God knows that you need these things and will provide them as is pleasing to Him. But we have to trust Him. Yes, we need

to trust in Him. But I am talking about the kind of trust that bows with glad submission to what God is pleased to provide.

Pursuing after God's Priorities

(v.33a)

Here is the grand aim of the repentant heart. You must seek the Kingdom of God first. You must make God's priorities your own. He prizes and pursues His own reputation and rule. He seeks to promote His rule and provide His righteousness. These must be what our heart declares to be true and what it desires above all things. May God, His rule and righteousness organize and orient your hearts.

Receiving God's Provisions

(v.33b)

When we seek the Kingdom of God as our life's priority instead of all the things unbelievers do, then God's adds them to us. In other words, what unbelievers are pursuing often is illusive and illusionary. But when we pursue God for who He is and what He desires, then we will gain, in His time and in His way all that greatest and grandest of heavenly pleasures at His right hand.

Lessons

Let us close by affirming together these great truths that will destroy worry and focus faith on God, motivating us to pursue God's kingdom first.

Our heart focuses on what we value.

Our eyes will focus on what we give to.

You cannot serve God and money.

Life in God's kingdom is more than food.

We are higher than the beasts and birds in God's esteem..

Worry never changed anything for the good.

God cares for you more than you can imagine.

Do not worry about your money and all it brings. Prize and pursue God and He will add to your life all you need.

Not Loving Money

Hebrews 13

Russ Kennedy

Introduction