

Let us pray: Lord God, heavenly Father, You provide all good things that we need for this life and still we doubt. We worry, we turn our attentions away, we sin. Lord, please, forgive us. For the sake of the bitter sufferings and innocent death of our Lord Jesus Christ, forgive us our sins. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

The portion of Scripture before us today is found in the Gospel according to Saint Matthew, the sixth chapter, beginning at the twenty-fourth verse, and we read in Jesus' name:

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

mammon. ²⁵ "Therefore I say to you, do not worry 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, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷ "Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? ²⁸ "So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; ²⁹ "and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰ "Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? ³¹ "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³² "For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your

heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³ "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. ³⁴ "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

Heavenly Father, these are Your words and therefore they are the truth. We pray, Lord, that You would increase our faith through them. Amen.

Dear Redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb,

What causes you to worry? Don't be shy, we all do it. Every one of us has something that causes us to sit up late at night, not eat, and just causes us to go batty while we think and worry about it. Is it your child who just learned how to drive? Is it your job and the fact that 'pink slips' are coming out again this week? Is it your spouse who is overseas

and fighting for this country? What is it that causes you to worry?

And while we want to have concern for these different things, we want to think about them and even pray for these... we do not want to worry about them, but we do. We, as people, are notorious for worrying about things and especially about those things that are well beyond our control. And it is with this in mind that Jesus has a message for you, "Do not worry..." Instead, Jesus admonishes us and points us to what our true focus should be: ***The Kingdom of God!***

About 5-6 years ago I was afforded the opportunity to preach my first sermon for seminary. All that preparation and practice. The writing and the rewriting. Hours of classwork and work at home and finally it was time. I was finally unleashed on the world to preach my sermon... on this exact same text. Now, I don't know who was more

worried me or the people, but I was now available to preach my first sermon; and as I sat there working tirelessly on it and trying to perfect it I have the message of Jesus... Don't worry! Jesus obviously never went through seminary and He never had my professors. And yet, Jesus was right.

Now six years later and given the opportunity to rework and rewrite this sermon... not much has changed. Sure, I'll use prettier words and maybe even be a little more 'calm' in my delivery but, shockingly, the Word of God and what He wants you to know and hear does not change... Do not worry!

But this is a hard message for us to truly take to heart, isn't it? I mean we hear Jesus, we know this part of Scripture, we love to say this to others, I mean even *Bob Farley* sang a song about not worrying and being

happy... but we don't listen and we don't take it to heart.

Each and every one of us worries. We worry about big things and we worry about silly things. We worry about our child who is away at war... and we worry about ants ruining our picnic. We worry about tornadoes and fires... and we worry about how we will look if we come into worship late. We worry... but why? What is it that drives us to worry?

And if we are being honest with ourselves the one thing that causes us to worry more than any other is our sinful nature. Our sinful nature wants us to worry during this life because when we worry our focus is no longer on God and it is on the things of this world and particularly things we cannot control.

Just as Jesus points out we worry about food, drink, and clothing... but when was the last time you focused solely on God? We worry about the things of this world but when was the last time you cared deeply about your faith life? We are worried about things that are completely out of our control but when was the last time we paid more heed to God's word than to our own words or to another's words? It is very easy to worry and thus to sin but to focus on God is something that we are not very good at.

In fact, as we worry about the things of this life, as we worry about things out of our control, as we worry (at times) for no reason we are ignoring God's command and we are focusing more on the things of this life and not on God. As Gerhard says about this text, ***"How can a man have hope that God will grant him eternal life if he does not trust God to preserve him in this life?"*** And that is a fair question that we all need to

address... how can we believe that God will give us eternal life if we doubt and worry that He cannot care for me in this life? How can I trust in God to be my God, when all I seem to care about are the things that are not God?

We worry often... but we have no need to worry. As Jesus asks us, "What good is worrying?" What do you accomplish? An ulcer? Sleepless nights? Added stress? Is that how you want to live your life?

However, when we focus on our God, when we seek first His kingdom, then we are going for the One thing that is needed and the most important thing in this life. When we seek the kingdom of God, when we put all other things in their proper place and focus on God, then we are being the children of God as He asks us to be.

But how do we do that? How do we not worry in this life? How do we go about our everyday life without worrying about family, friends, jobs, etc? We focus on Jesus Christ, that's how.

For Jesus Christ is the One who came into this world and could have spent His entire life worrying... but He didn't. Jesus came into this life to live the perfect life for you. Jesus came to suffer and die for you. Jesus came to rise from the dead for you. Jesus knew before He took on flesh all that He was going to do and accomplish, and He knew what it would cost Him... but He still came and did everything for you.

And now through faith in our Savior and in all that He has done we have the forgiveness of our sins, of all those times we worry. Through faith in Jesus we have heaven waiting once this life is over. And through faith in Jesus we can stop worrying... for

when we believe that Jesus has won eternity for us, the things of this world become all the more transitory and fleeting.

But let us be honest... we will still worry. And it is at those times, when worrying seems like a great option, that we need to remember Jesus and not worry. When we want to worry about our son who is driving the car alone for the first time, remember that Jesus is watching over him and has redeemed his soul. When we want to worry about our daughter who is fighting the war overseas, remember that God is her refuge and her fortress and God has given the ultimate price, Jesus' blood, for her salvation. When we want to worry about our jobs, natural disasters, etc... we need to remember that God is in control, He is the One who is watching over us and He makes sure that all things work out to our benefit.

Dear friends in Christ, worrying is a huge part of our lives... and we need to try and stop. Christ gives us a message in this text, "Do not worry..." And now through faith in Him we will continue to try. We will do our best, we will focus on Christ, we will keep our faith in Him and allow Him to be our Guide; for when we seek Jesus and the Kingdom of God first, there is nothing that we will lack.

Thanks be to God for providing all that I need in this life. Thanks be to God for sending His Son, my Savior, into this world to redeem me from all my sins. And thanks be to God that when I focus on Him and on all that He has done... well, then I am focusing on the Kingdom of God.

Dear friends, thanks be to God. Amen.