

Title: What are you worrying about?

Text: Matthew 6.25-34

Theme: Live for the Kingdom, let God worry about the rest.

Series: Living for Eternity – pt.4 2006

Prop Stmt. Kingdom living is more than food and clothes.

In recent years since my oldest has added guitar to his instrumental repertoire, I have been getting an education in this area. The other night, we were at a Guitar Center store, where after looking at some Ibanez, Epiphones, ESP and Gibsons, I was reminded of a story that I read on the last page of this month's Smithsonian magazine.

Patrick Dacey tells the following story:¹ “For my 8th birthday I wanted a guitar. My father had played a little back in his day. ...He said Grandpa could never afford a nice guitar for him, but he wasn't going to let that happen to me. He had an idea. “Let's get lucky,” he said. I hopped into his old Wagoneer, and we drove to the auction house on Main Street, where they were selling off instruments that day. “So, what kind of a guitar do you want?” he asked me. “A wooden one,” I said. “It's called an acoustic, You sure you don't want electric?” “Mom said wood ones make less noise.” Inside the big echoing room, about 60 people sat in rows, and a man stood at a podium holding a ukulele. “We got one-twenty of this here fine piece of craftsmanship do I hear one-thirty?” Someone shouted, “One-thirty.” “Sold for one-thirty!” “Next up,” the auctioneer said, “a classic Gibson with custom sunburst finish, no dents, no scratches and the most magnificent sound you've ever heard. This is why you started playing. This baby goes for over a grand in the stores. The bid's open!” My father's eyes grew wide. “I can't believe it,” he said. “That's the guitar Grandpa told me was too expensive.” He looked in his wallet, then at me. “Pat,” he said. “You want a guitar?” “Yes.” “You want the greatest guitar ever?” “Yes,” I said growing excited with his excitement. “OK. Find a seat up there and shout out “Sixty.” “Sixty?” “And if someone says ‘Sixty-five,’ you say ‘Seventy.’” “Seventy?” “Yes, go, go.” I pushed up to the front. “Forty!” someone called out. “Come on,” the auctioneer said. “Fifty!” another bidder yelled. “Fifty? Are you kidding?” the auctioneer said. Then in my timid voice, I said, “Sixty.” “What?” the auctioneer growled. With the pressure on, I shouted, “Sixty!” “Sixty from the little guy,” the auctioneer said with a chuckle. “Sixty-five! Someone yelled. “Hey, who's bidding against a kid?” someone called out. “You shouldn't outbid a child!” It was my father. “Seventy!” I shouted. The auctioneer answered, “Seventy! Let's go a hundred!” “Let the kid have it!” my father called out. Some of the spectators followed his lead: “Yeah, give it to the kid!” The auctioneer grew nervous. “This thing here has been played by some of the finest musicians of our time,” he said. “Seventy dollars would be an insult to this guitar, to those musicians! Now, do I hear seventy-five?” “Give the guitar to the kid!” my father yelled. He turned and left the hall. The auctioneer tapped his gavel, and there was an eruption of applause....We put the case in the back seat and gingerly opened it up. “It's not wooden,” I said. “This is the greatest guitar ever,” my father said, rubbing his hand down the neck. “But it's not wooden.” I repeated. “I want a wooden one.” “Look, this is your guitar for your birthday. There's no other one. I started to cry.”

¹ Smithsonian (magazine) Nov. 2006, p. 112.

8 year olds are not expected to know the difference between what is a classic guitar and plain wood – acoustic. But, followers of Christ are expected to know the difference between what is eternal, and what is temporal; that which has true value, and that which is fleeting. When you discover true value, you will be willing to give all that you have for it.

The passage before us is marked by a series of questions that are designed to get you to think beneath the surface. This is the part of life where many of us are not very comfortable facing, much less discussing. I love the fact that Christ is not willing to let us live shallow lives of fluff. He probes and asks, he investigates and questions. It's not that Christ needs the information, but He certainly wants you to face the truth about yourself.

What are you worrying about? Seriously, what are you worrying about? What occupies your thoughts of concern? This will tell you a lot about what you place your security in? In this part (vs. 25-34) of the Sermon on the Mount, Christ mentions worry – six times. Worry is a huge issue! “I am not worried, just concerned.” Frankly, worry is big, business. That is why news programs almost always lead with bad news because it feeds our tendency to worry and entices us to watch the news and become even more freaked out. The big idea of this entire sermon that Christ is preaching is explaining what life is to be like, living under His reign, or Kingdom Living. Kingdom living simply means living for the King – King Jesus. Living like this is evidenced by eternal values. So, instead of living for the moment and living for stuff, we live for things that really matter. But, that is why the issue of money is so important for us to understand. The way we use our time and our money is very, very clear indication of where our priorities truly lie. The entire issue comes down to this: Do you trust in the true God, or do you trust in your gods? If you do not trust in the true God, then you have to take matters into your own hands and you have to attempt to create a safe world. That is why some people seek to accumulate things and money. They want to have a secure world. There is nothing wrong with planning ahead and providing for future needs. Jesus is not addressing that. He is taking aim at being worried about things that only God can control.

The premise is this: God is Sovereign and God is good, therefore, God takes good care of his children. (period) Good care is defined as this: God gives his children exactly what they need, when they need it, for as long as they need it. The ultimate need of his children is to think like and live like Christ. Therefore, His goal is not short-term comfort, but eternal conformity to the character of Christ.

What makes you different than your world? If the things that you worry about are the same things that everyone else worries about, your heart is no different. This entire passage is building to v.33. We have to live for the Kingdom! We have to live right now in such a way that we put on display what life is going to be like living under the literal reign of Jesus Christ. We are called to live the kingdom now. The church is the present expression of the kingdom of God on the earth. The church is not the final expression,

just as Israel was not the final expression. But, we are the means that God has chosen to reveal his gospel and his values to this world.

The Questions:

1. Is life more important than food and the body more important than clothes?

Notice at the end of v.25 how Christ asks that question. He is assuming a positive response. Life, as Christ defines is more than food and clothing. Those are practical aspects of our living, but they are not the ultimate. Life is not football, food, clothes, cars, etc. You were made for more than that. Here Christ is saying don't place your affections on these things because there is something that is deeper. He then illustrates this by saying – "Look at the birds of the air." Birds do not build storage lockers. Birds do not have garages, sheds, or grain towers, and yet, birds live. How can birds live without stuff? This is addressed at those of you who get nervous when your money gets a little low. So, is life more important than food and the body more important than clothes? – NO! This brings us to the next question.

2. Are you not more valuable than birds?

Look, if God feeds the birds, which are not made in His image and for whom Christ did not die, will He not take care of you? So, what are you worrying about? Christ is not discouraging hard work. That is obvious from the point of how diligent the birds are. He is saying that even though birds are so limited in their creatureliness and yet manage to survive, we who have so many other resources, and are not subject to the whims of nature to the degree that birds are, we have even less reason to worry. So, are you not more valuable than birds? – YES! Besides...

3. Can worry add a single hour to your life?

NO! Excessive worry can certainly harm your life, but it cannot add time to your life.

4. Why do you worry about clothes?

"See how" – take a lesson from the lilies of the field. Lilies do not work in the fields, spin thread and sew clothes, but they have beautiful apparel. In fact, fashion-king Solomon did not look as good as they do. So...

5. If God takes care of fields, will He not clothe you?

Lilies, grass, are short-term, soul-less, temporal things that God cares for. They don't last as long as birds, in fact the grasses were some of the things that people gathered, dried and used as fire fuel. If God is that good to those things, will He not be good to you? Do you believe that God is good and that He will take care of his children?

The way you answer these questions reveals what you really believe about the promises of God. They are convicting – aren't they? Robert Mounce said, "Worry is practical atheism."

The Commands:

1. Do not Worry about your life! (v.25)

- Reason #1 – You cannot serve God and worry.

If you serve God, you will trust Him and if you trust Him you will not worry. If you serve God, you will obey what He says about how you are to use your resources and it won't make you nervous to be generous.

- Reason #2 – You cannot ignore the creation.

Everything around you is an ongoing reminder of the providences, care and control of God. The earth rotates around the sun, even as it spins on its axis. It hangs in space on nothing and does not fall into oblivion.

2. Do not worry (eat, drink, wear) (v.31)

People without God have nothing better to live for. Their lives are characterized by earthly things. Eating and drinking and wearing clothes are not bad topics. There is nothing wrong with eating and drinking and wearing clothes, in fact there is a lot that is right with it. The point is – it isn't the goal of life. Neither should it be the major focus of life and relationships – especially parenting.

3. Seek first his kingdom. (v.33)

Instead of using up your brain capacity by being consumed with things that do not really matter, live for what is eternal. Seek first his kingdom. Make the priorities of Jesus Christ your priorities – right now.

That means that the way you work – needs to be in order to reflect the kingdom. If you are a manager – manager like Christ. If you are a worker – work like your manager is Christ.

In your home, parent your kids for the kingdom. Train them to be kingdom citizens; to have the values of, concerns of, priorities of, relationships of kingdom people. Are you concerned that your children get a good education, job, etc. Ok, that is not a bad thing, but that is not THE thing. Seek first His kingdom. What do you get excited about in your home? Do you celebrate grades, goals and awards? Ok, but does anybody celebrate godliness, humility, purity, stewardship and sacrifice?

In your money and time, use it for the kingdom. Set goals for your giving. We have ministry needs that would be met if we all did this. We have on average 1,100 people here throughout this past year. This fall it has been a little more, but the running average is 1,100. If on average we all made about \$350 a week and we gave a tithe of that, we would meet and exceed our budgeted needs. Obviously, not too many of our kids are pulling in that, but obviously others are doing much more than that. If we really embraced v.33 with our money, and our time, I would never stand up here and say, “hey we really need some help in this area, or we are running a little short in this fund.” It would not be an issue. The only reason why you would not seek first his kingdom, is because you really don’t believe it.

I want you to think specifically about how you can make some needed changes that reflect kingdom living.

- What can you do to be a better steward of your mind?
 - o Entertainment time? (keep track of how much TV, games, net surfing)
 - o Daily bible reading/prayer
 - o Good books – 2007 must read list – coming next week

- What can you do to invest in a ministry?
 - o Get training, investigate, set goals, find out the needs and opportunities
 - o There is always something

- What can you do to invest your money?
 - o Set goals for yourself
 - o Cultivate a giving and generous spirit
 - o Challenge others.

The Conclusion:

1. If important things are covered, the rest falls into place.
2. Don’t borrow tomorrow’s problems.

Living for Eternity is a mark of a follower of Christ. Living for Eternity is based on recognizing that God has taken care of the big stuff. He knows what is truly valuable and what is tomorrow’s garage sale filler. We can be like 8 yr old Pat who was not wise enough to know what he really wanted, or we can trust our Father, and accept his ability to truly define worth.