

The Sermon on the Mount
Mastering Materialism, Part 6
Matthew 6:25-34
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I'm not sure who it was who first said something like, "so many books, so little time," but I feel his pain. If you go into my office here in the church, you'll see a stack of books that I'm working through in preparation for a message I'm planning to do this October out in California. You'll go to my home, and there you'll see on my nightstand a stack of books that are tottering something like the Leaning Tower of Pisa, and I'm working my way through those as well.

There's one of those books that I have recently begun that is fascinating. It's a book with a title that intrigued me. The title of the book is *Saving Normal*. But the subtitle -- this is a secular book by the way -- is, *An Insiders Revolt Against Out-of-Control Psychiatric Diagnosis, DSM-5, Big Pharma, and the Medicalization of Ordinary Life*. It's an interesting book. It's a book written by Allen Frances, a psychiatrist, who for 20 years worked on what is really the bible of his profession: the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual*. It's the book that people in his field use to determine the boundary, as they see it, between normalcy and mental illness. And of course it also prescribes the course of treatment for many of those things. The author, an insider in the field, makes the point in this book that psychiatry had begun to call people mentally ill who were basically normal people with normal human problems. Hence the title, *Saving Normal*. One major area where the author argues that psychiatry and the medical profession have seriously overstepped is the prescription of psychotropic drugs. He makes the point that each year three million prescriptions are written for psychiatric drugs in the U.S. alone. Three million. Those three million prescriptions include anti-psychotics, antidepressants, stimulants, anxiety agents, and sleeping pills. Frances writes,

We are becoming a society of pill poppers. One out of every five U.S. adults uses at least one drug for a psychiatric problem. Eleven percent of all adults took an antidepressant in 2010. Nearly 4% of our children are on a stimulant, and 4% of our teenagers are taking an antidepressant. Twenty-five percent of nursing home residents are given anti-psychotics.

Now Frances argues that the growth in the last 20, 30 years or so of this psychiatric drug industry in the U.S. is not for those whom he would identify in his particular occupation as mentally ill. But rather, he says, the growth has come in an area for a group that he calls "the worried well." That is, those who are well, but who worry. They worry about their state of mind; they worry about their health; they worry about the circumstances around them. Now, make sure you understand. I am not saying that there is no place for some of these drugs at certain times. I'm not saying that. But understand this: that those drugs do not fix whatever underlying spiritual

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problems may be present; they are only controlling those problems and masking them. What we learn as believers in Jesus Christ is that the ultimate way, the only way, to really deal with worry at a heart level is by listening to Jesus' diagnosis, and by taking His prescription for worry and anxiety.

In the second half of Matthew 6, we're learning how to recognize and how to overcome materialism. In verses 19 to 24, Jesus identified for us three dangers inherent in materialism. In verses 19 to 21, He identifies the danger of being consumed by materialism. In verse 21 He says, wherever your treasure is, there your heart [your entire inner self] is going to be also. You're going to be consumed by materialism if that's where you invest your treasure. The second danger comes in verses 22 and 23. It's being spiritually blinded by materialism. And He says if materialism blinds your soul, then the darkness that is in your soul [the end of verse 23] is going to be very great indeed. The third danger of materialism is in verse 24. Notice how He ends that verse: you cannot serve [that is, you cannot worship as your god] the true and living God and wealth at the same time. He's saying, eventually, if you allow materialism to grow in your heart, you will become an idolater, and you will worship those material things in the way you should be worshipping God. So those are the dangers.

Now in verses 25 to 34, our Lord helps us overcome those dangers by addressing one of the root causes of materialism: the sin of worry. You see, as we begin to worry about whether or not we're going to have enough for the future [Am I going to have what I need?], it provides a breeding ground for materialism. Materialism grips our souls. And once we have enough, it's never enough. And it consumes us. So Jesus then deals with this issue of worry in order to help us get the root cause that often accompanies materialism out of our souls.

Let me read for you one more time this paragraph, beginning in verse 25 of Matthew 6. This is what our Lord said:

For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life? And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin; yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today, tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith! Do not worry then, saying, "What will we eat?" or "What will we drink?" or "What will we wear for clothing?" For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Now as we have noted, this paragraph begins with just a simple command from Jesus. The first

part of 25, He says, do not be worried about the physical needs of this life. Beginning in the middle of verse 25 and through the end of the chapter, He then presents us with a series of arguments as to why we shouldn't worry about those needs.

The first argument is the argument from God's character. Beginning in the middle of verse 25 down through verse 30 He says look at God, look at God's character, look at how God has given you life itself. Is He not going to care for the life He's given you? Look at how He feeds all of His creation, including the birds. Is He not going to care for you? Because you're worth much more than birds. Look at the fact that God has determined sovereignly the length of your life. You can't by worrying add one hour to your lifespan. Look at the fact that God clothes even the wildflowers of the field more magnificently than the greatest king of Israel clothed himself. Do you think if God clothes the wildflowers that way, which are so temporary, that He's not going to take care of you? He says, look at God's character, and what you will see when you look at God's character is that you can trust your Father.

The second argument we looked at last week comes in verses 31 to 33. It's the argument from kingdom priorities. He says listen, you're now a different person; you have been given a new heart, and with that new heart you have new desires and new priorities. It's inconsistent for you, who now have the life of God in you, to live for the necessities of this life, because you now live for something far more important; you live for kingdom priorities, to see His kingdom expanded. Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and He'll give you the kingdom and His righteousness. And He'll add to you the necessities of this life as well. Your needs will be met.

So, those are the arguments we've seen so far: the argument from God's character, the argument from kingdom priorities.

Today we come to the last verse of this chapter and to Jesus' final argument. It's the argument from simple logic. Reduced to its simplest form it's this: it makes no sense, I should say, to worry about tomorrow, because you can only live in today. It's an argument from simple logic. Look at verse 34: "So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

Now, as I was reading this paragraph to you and you were reading along with me just a moment ago, you probably noticed that the high point of this paragraph appears to be verse 33: "Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." Frankly, that's the verse out of this paragraph that we most frequently memorize as believers. And that just feels like Jesus' final word on this issue of worry and materialism. And so frankly, if we're honest with ourselves here, verse 34 feels a little anticlimactic. It seems patently obvious. But this is really one of those many instances of what happens when we really begin to study the Scripture. We discover in our study that there is far more profound truth in the passage than at first meets the eye.

I want you to look at verse 34 again and realize this verse is not a throwaway verse, just sort of tacked on to an otherwise profound and beautiful treatment of the issue of worry. It's not some sort of weak restatement of what Jesus has already taught us in this paragraph that we've studied. Let it sink into your soul that our Lord never said an unimportant word. And it doesn't start here.

Instead, this verse is more far reaching than any of the verses before it. It is not only filled with deep theology, but also with imminently practical counsel for dealing with the sin of worry. If you struggle with worry, and most of us do [If you're breathing you probably struggle with worry], by the time we're done with this verse, you'll realize that there is great practical help for dealing with this sin in this verse.

Now first of all, as we get started unpacking what's here, I want you to notice the relationship of verse 34 to the rest of the passage. The verse begins with the word “so.” The Greek word that's translated “so” is a very common New Testament word. It is usually translated “therefore.” So understand then, that in verse 34 our Lord is building on everything that He has already taught in the rest of this paragraph. It's wrong to sort of yank this verse out of its context. Jesus is saying, in light of God's character as your generous, gracious Father, who provides for you just like He provides for all of His creation; in light of the new kingdom priorities for which you now live; in light of those things, let me tell you what I want you to do: therefore.

Now, that brings us then to the repetition of the command not to worry. Notice how He begins verse 34: “[Therefore] do not worry.” Now just to remind you, and for those of you who haven't been with us as we've studied this, the Greek word for “worry” that's used in this passage is used in the New Testament to describe both a sin and a virtue. It's the same Greek word. This Greek word is used in places to describe the legitimate care and concern that we ought to have for our duties and responsibilities. You ought to care about the things God has given you the responsibility for. That's how this word is used. For example, Paul describes his *care* for the churches: same Greek word translated “worry” here.

But this word is also used of the sin that we would call worry or anxiety. This word is used for sinful worry and anxiety about anything. Clearly, here in Matthew 6, Jesus is addressing sinful worry, because verse 34 is the third time in this passage Jesus commands us not to do this. Notice back up in verse 25 as He began this paragraph, He says, “For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life.” That is, the physical needs of this life. Literally, the construction in the Greek text could be translated “stop worrying.” Talking to His disciples, He says, listen, I know you, I know this is already happening in your souls, and I'm telling you, stop worrying about the future necessities of life. Look at verse 31. Here's the second time He gives this command, but He does so in a slightly different way. He says, “Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?'" Here the original could be translated “not stop worrying,” but the way the structure of the verb in the negative is, it could be translated as “don't start worrying, don't ever worry, about your physical needs.” Now, in verse 34 the structure is exactly the same as verse 31: don't ever worry.

But notice the change in verse 34. He doesn't simply repeat what He said before. Now He explicitly says don't ever worry about—what? “Tomorrow.” Now let me tell you what that doesn't mean. It doesn't mean that it's OK to worry today about today. Believe it or not, I read some commentaries this week that say that: Jesus saying don't worry about tomorrow, but it's OK to worry about today. Absolutely not. It's never right to worry. He's saying don't ever worry. And you can see this, by the way, in Jesus' censure of Martha in Luke 10. Martha was worried about what? She was worried about her preparations on that day for the meal for Jesus, and Jesus corrects her for her worry. So, it's not OK to worry today. Nor is it OK to worry about

something a week from now or next year. Instead, the word “tomorrow” is a figure of speech. It's a figure of speech called a *synecdoche*. It is when part of something stands for the whole. So the word “tomorrow” isn't all-inclusive, it simply is part of something and stands for the whole. In this case, the entire future, the future in its entirety.

So in the final verse of this paragraph, Jesus expands His prohibition about worry beyond food, beyond drink, beyond clothing, and He makes this all encompassing command: don't ever worry about anything in the future. It's a remarkable command.

You know, our world is filled with people who don't live in today. There are a lot of people who live their lives in yesterday. They spend their lives in sad regret and self pity about the past: sins committed, opportunities squandered, bad decisions made. And they live in that. They wallow in that. You know I love what Paul says in Philippians 3. He's describing the Christian life as a race, as a marathon, and he says, listen, I forget what's behind, and so should you. In other words, don't look back at the course you've already run. Don't spend your life looking at how you've run so far. Maybe you ran poorly and you stumbled and you fell and you made a mess. Or maybe you ran really well in the past. Paul says, forget what's behind. If you have run poorly, get up, get back on the course, get back in the race. If you've run well, don't live in the glory of those former days. Keep running. Forget those things that are behind. Don't let them control you.

But you know, for every person who lives in the past, there are far more who live in the future. They import tomorrow's troubles into today. They live in a state of worry and anxiety about the future. They live under the weight of what might happen, putting themselves under the emotional burden of things that have not yet occurred.

Now let me ask you just to do some honest soul searching for a moment. I want you to stop listening to me just for a moment, and I want you to think in your own mind. What do you worry about? What wakes you up at night? What distracts you during the day? When you worry, when your mind goes to the future, what do you worry about? Financial matters? Having enough? Health issues? Maybe it's family problems and issues? Maybe it's your kids? What is it that you worry about? Now here's a question for you. What's wrong with worrying about those things? It's because worry about the future is a sin. Our Lord absolutely forbids it. Three separate times in this text and here in verse 34, He absolutely forbids all worry about anything connected to the future. Why is that? Why is it sinful? Well, it's sinful for several reasons.

It's sinful because it's self-destructive. Worry creates physical and other spiritual issues in our lives. Proverbs 12:25 says, “Anxiety in a man's heart weighs it down.” Your worry, your anxiety, doesn't add to your life, it takes from it. It's interesting to me, the Westminster Divines, when they were writing the Westminster Larger Catechism, they included the sin of worry under the sins prohibited in the sixth commandment. That's right, the commandment against murder. You say, whoa-whoa, wait a minute, what does worry have to do with murder? Well, they wrote that the sixth commandment forbids all distracting cares, because it, along with the other things they listed, tend to the destruction of the life. It is a violation of the sixth commandment, because it works to destroy the life that God has given us. Worry is self-destructive. It's a sin because it's self-destructive.

It's also a sin because it's unbelief. The cause of worry is a lack of faith in God. Notice the end of verse 30: "You of little faith!" Jesus diagnoses the root sin behind worry as a lack of faith in God. Worry is a sin, because it's a failure to trust God, to have confidence in God.

Worry is also a sin because it's thinking about things that are not true. Philippians 4:8 says, "Finally, brethren, whatever is true... dwell [in your mind] on these things." And the things we worry about simply aren't true. They haven't happened. They may never happen. Most of them will never happen. The Evangelical Dictionary of Theology defines anxiety this way: "Anxiety anticipates nonexistent dangers in the future, and helplessly dwells on how to reduce them." You see, our fears of the future, our worry, our fears, are usually liars, and they steal the joy from today. The Roman poet Horace wrote, "If you spend your life waiting for the storm, you will never enjoy the sunshine." Jesus commands us not to worry about tomorrow.

But He doesn't leave us there. He goes on in the rest of verse 34 to give us the reasons not to worry about tomorrow. He explains to us that worry is incompatible with common sense; it's incompatible with simple logic. And He gives us two reasons here why it doesn't make any sense to worry about tomorrow. The first reason is that you are not responsible for tomorrow. Look at the middle of verse 34. He says, "Don't worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself."

Now, this is one of those occasions in the New Testament when I wish I could have been there to have seen it, because I am confident that this is one of those times when Jesus is using humor. You can see there in the marginal note in your Bible that what Jesus literally said is "Don't you worry, for tomorrow will worry about itself." He uses the exact same word that's translated "care" here. It's the word *worry*. It's a funny picture, because it pictures tomorrow personified, like it's a person, and tomorrow is wringing its hands and biting its nails and can't sleep: it's worried. He says you let tomorrow worry.

Now on the face of it, that's just good advice. Right? But I'm confident there's more here, because it's informed by our Lord's theology. Jesus is saying in this statement that it is wrong for us to worry about tomorrow, because tomorrow is not and has never been our responsibility. It's not one of your legitimate cares and concerns. It's not your duty; it's not your responsibility; it's not something you have any right to have a care about. Whose legitimate concern and care is tomorrow? God's. You see this is really a call to stop trusting ourselves and to trust God's providence for tomorrow. If God worried—and by the way, God doesn't worry. You know, there are well-intentioned Christians who say you don't need to worry, because God worries. God never worries. He always knows what He's doing. He's always in a perfect state of calm. He never worries. But if God worried, we could say Jesus is saying here, you let God worry about tomorrow. Maybe a better way to say it would be this: you let God care for tomorrow. You let God manage tomorrow. It's not your business. It's not your concern. It's God's. You just need to respond rightly to what God in His sovereign providence has chosen to bring you today, and acknowledge His providence over tomorrow. Let me say that again. You need to respond rightly to what He has brought you today, and you need to acknowledge His providence over tomorrow.

This is, I think, what James is saying in James 4. Turn over there with me. I've had you turn to this text before in our study of the end of Matthew 6, but I want you to see it again. In James 4:13, James says, "Come now, you who say." And he's talking here, I'm confident, in the context, to Christians, to those who follow Christ. He says, there are some of "you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, [we will] spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.'" Here's a businessman with a business plan. There is nothing wrong with having a business plan. That's perfectly fine, perfectly legitimate. The issue here is a believer who's making his business plan without reference to God's sovereignty in his life, God's providence in his life.

So he has this business plan. He knows when he's going to start: "today or tomorrow." He knows where he's going to locate this business venture: "We will go to such and such a city." He knows what the time span is before he begins to see a return on his investment: He says, we'll "spend a year there and engage in business," and then we'll begin to turn a profit. So he's got a great business plan. There is nothing wrong with that. But he's not acknowledging God's providence in his life. And so James says, "Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow." You can't plan on a year from now; you don't even know what tomorrow's going to be like. "You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away." In other words, you're like that breath that's visible on a cold, winter morning: here one moment and gone the next. "Instead, you ought to say [and the idea here is, you ought to think], 'If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.'" If this is God's providential plan for tomorrow, then this is what we will do. We're to live in what God has brought us today, acknowledging His providence over tomorrow. God is in control of tomorrow.

So, the first reason you are never to worry about tomorrow is that it's not your responsibility; it's not under your control. You let tomorrow worry about itself. That's Jesus' humorous way of saying tomorrow isn't your business. You let God manage your tomorrow and your next week and your next year and your next decade and the rest of your life. Trust God's daily providence. That's what Jesus is saying.

Isn't this how He taught us to pray in the Lord's Prayer? Go back to Matthew 6:11. What does He teach us to pray? The very first petition for ourselves. It's the fourth petition in the Lord's Prayer. Matthew 6:11: "Give us this day our daily bread." That's trusting God's *daily* provision, His *daily* providence.

This is what Jeremiah urges us to do. Go back to Jeremiah 17. Jeremiah contrasts, in chapter 17, the one who trusts in people versus the one who trusts in God. Jeremiah 17:5:

Thus says the Lord, "Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind[that is, either in himself or in other people] and makes flesh his strength, and whose heart turns away from the Lord. For he will be like a bush [a piece of scrub brush] in the desert [he'll barely exist]. [Verse 7]But blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord and whose trust is the Lord. For he will be like a tree [that has been trans-] planted by the [streams of] water [the irrigation canals], That extends its roots by a stream And he will not fear when the heat comes; But its leaves will be green, [Watch this.] And it will not be anxious in a year of drought."

He's not going to worry about what's coming tomorrow or the next day. Why? Because his trust is in the Lord, in God's daily providence over the affairs of life. If God brings a drought, I'm not worried; He's going to take care of me. It's trust in God's daily providence.

It reminds me of the wilderness wandering. You remember when the children of Israel were wandering through the wilderness and God provided food for them in the form of manna. You remember the story. Every night the manna would appear; with each morning they would go out and gather it. And there was just enough. They could gather only enough for—what? That day. If they tried to gather more, then it went bad. It spoiled. They could only gather enough for that day. What was God teaching them? Trust My daily providence

We have to learn the same thing. We have to learn to trust that in His providence God will bring the circumstances that He sees best into our life each day, and that then He will give us the strength and wisdom and grace to face those circumstances on that day. So stop trying to control tomorrow, it's not your responsibility. In fact, C.S. Lewis writes, “The next moment is as much beyond our grasp, and as much in God's care, as that one hundred years away. Care for the next minute is just as foolish as care for a day in the next thousand years: in neither can we do anything; in both God is doing everything.” Don't worry about tomorrow. Don't worry about the future at all, because it's not your responsibility.

Jesus gives us a second reason not to worry about anything in the future, and that's you can only live in today. Look at the end of verse 34: “Each day has enough trouble of its own.” Or literally, “sufficient unto the day is its evil.” Jesus here absolutely contradicts the false teachers of today's prosperity gospel, because He makes it clear that His disciples will have trouble as part of their daily lives just like everyone else. As Solomon says, man in a fallen world is “born for trouble, as [the] sparks fly upward.” It's just a reality. But Jesus says, don't borrow from tomorrow's trouble by worrying today. You just deal with today.

It's like the old English proverb that we often misquote and take out of context. We've heard that proverb: never cross a bridge till you get to it. You know where that comes from? In the ancient world, travel was perilous in many different ways. But you were always at your most exposed, the most dangerous part in any journey in the ancient world was when you came to a body of water, when you came to a river or a creek particularly in its flood season, because the bridges were not well built, and there was much danger that came with that. And so if you were a traveler, you could easily spend your time as you were traveling thinking ahead to the next body of water and the next bridge, and worrying about what condition you were going to find it in, and how perilous the passage of that body of water was going to be. And so the proverb was, never cross a bridge till you get it. Wait and see what the condition of the bridge is when you get there. Deal with the dangers when you have to deal with them. That's really what Jesus is saying.

What is Jesus' solution for living in fear of the future? When Jesus says, don't ever worry about tomorrow because tomorrow is going to worry for itself and each day has its own troubles, He is in essence saying this: live in today. Live in today. John MacArthur writes, “God gives you the glorious gift of life today. Live in the light and full joy of that day using the resources God supplies. Don't push yourself into the future and forfeit today's joy over some tomorrow that

may never happen.”

Now, don't misunderstand. Jesus is not telling us to live *for* today as if that's all we have. He's not endorsing some sort of cynical or epicurean lifestyle. In fact, in 1 Corinthians 15:32, Paul condemns the attitude of those who say let's “eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.” And in fact here in Matthew 6, what has Jesus just told us? He says, don't live like the pagans; don't live for the daily necessities of life, for food and drink and clothing. Instead, “Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness.” So we are not to live *for* today, but we are to live *in* today. We must learn to live one day at a time.

I love the way Lloyd Jones puts it in his own inimitable way. Listen to what he writes:

As the result of sin, life in this world has become a task. A man has to labor and must meet trials and troubles. The great question is, how are we to face them? According to our Lord, the vital thing is not to spend every day of your life adding up the grand total of everything that is ever likely to happen to you in the whole of your life. If you do that, it will crush you. This is not the way. Rather, you must think of it like this. There is, as it were, a daily quota of problems and difficulties in life. Every day must be lived in and of itself. Live day by day. Live a life of obedience to God every day. Do what God has asked you to do every day.

Now, how do we live in today? If that's what Jesus is saying, how do we do that? Well, let me give you some practical council drawn out of this passage and a couple of others. How do we live in today?

First of all, deal with today's troubles today. That's how He finishes verse 34: “Each day has enough trouble of its own.” Deal with today's problems today. Jesus isn't promising you or me a sort of carefree picnic of a life. There will be troubles, but we're only to deal with today's today.

I like the way John Newton, the author of *Amazing Grace*, put it. Listen to how he describes it. He says,

I compare the troubles which we have to undergo in the course of the year to a great bundle of sticks: far too large for us to lift. But God does not require us to carry the whole at once, He mercifully unties the bundle and gives us first one stick, which we are to carry today, and then another, which we are to carry tomorrow, and so on. This we might easily manage if we would only take the burden appointed for each day, but we choose to increase our troubles by carrying yesterday's stick over again today, and adding tomorrow's burden to the load before we are required to bare it.

Listen, you can live in today by simply dealing with today's troubles today.

You say, well, what about those legitimate concerns of the future? Well, here's a second way you can live in today. Pray about your legitimate, future cares and responsibilities today. That's

what you can do. Pray about those things. There are legitimate things that ought to be a care to us, using the other sense of this Greek word for *worry*. We have duties and responsibilities in the future. But what do you do with those today? Well, you pray about those things. And I could enlarge this actually: you don't just pray about those legitimate, future cares, you pray about anything in your life that causes you to be anxious, that causes you to worry. Scripture's filled with this command, but let me give you a couple of verses just to put this in your mind.

First of all, Philippians 4:6, a very familiar verse: "Be anxious for nothing." It's the same Greek word as "worry" in our text here in Matthew 6. He says, don't worry about anything, "But in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." What do you do about tomorrow's legitimate cares and concerns? You pray, you "let your requests be made known to God" today. Peter says the same thing in 1 Peter 5:7. He says, "Casting all your anxiety on Him [Throw your worries on God in prayer], because He cares for you." Deal with today's troubles today; pray about those legitimate, future responsibilities today.

Thirdly, plan and do what ought to be done today about your future legitimate cares. Jesus is not saying here that we ought to ignore the future. Scripture tells us in many places that it's not only legitimate but it's wise to do today what needs to be done for the future, to prepare for the future. The ant is wise because it sees the harvest time coming and the winter coming and it lays up stores for that future. So ask yourself, what do I need to do today to be reasonably prepared for that future, legitimate concern? And do that today.

Let me give you an example. Let's say for a moment that you're one of those who worry about your financial future. You know that retirement is coming. Not just to play and have a good time, but you know there's coming a time when you're not going to be able to work maybe full time and earn a full living. And you realize that you've got to care for that. That's coming. That is a legitimate concern for the future. You're responsible to plan ahead. So what do you do about that? Maybe a day this week you set aside time to create and begin a savings plan, so that when that time comes you are adequately prepared. Maybe you haven't been a reasonable steward of your health [as all of us come to realize at some point], and maybe you need today to put a plan in place to make that happen. You worry about your future health. Well, do something about it today. Make a plan today. If your current career field is drying up, it's one of those fields that you see is slowly going away, and you're not going to have the way to support yourself, then you need to begin today putting a plan in place to prepare for the inevitable. So living in today does not mean ignoring the future, it means doing what ought to be done today regarding that future.

But here's what I want you to get. Here's the key. But if there is nothing you ought to do today, and you are instead simply turning that future concern over and over in your mind, and you're becoming increasingly anxious about it, you have crossed the line, and that is sinful worry. So, when you find yourself worrying, ask yourself, is there something I need to pray about today? Is there something I need to do today? And if not, then dismiss it from your mind.

Matthew Henry, the great Puritan commentator, is very helpful when he writes this. He says,

This command does not forbid a prudent foresight and preparation accordingly.

But it forbids a perplexing solicitude, a prepossession [I love that] of difficulties which may perhaps never come. The meaning of the verse is this: let us mind present duty and then leave future events to God. Do the work of the day in its day, and then let tomorrow bring its work along with it.

You see, once you're dealing with today's troubles, once you have prayed about the concerns of tomorrow, once you have done what needs to be today for the future, then stop thinking about tomorrow's possible troubles. Recognize that for what it is: it's worry. Once you have prayed and once you have acted, then move on, because God's only going to give you grace for the troubles of today. Isaiah 33:2 speaks of God being our strength "every morning." He doesn't give you strength you need for tomorrow. He doesn't give you today the strength you need for next week. He gives you the strength you need for today. Lamentations 3:22-23: "The Lord's lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, His compassions never fail. They are new [What?] every morning." Just like the manna. God will give you fresh grace one day at a time for that day.

Again Matthew Henry's helpful. He says,

This present day has trouble enough attending it, we need not accumulate burdens by anticipating our trouble, nor borrow perplexities from tomorrow's evils to add to those of this day.... The conclusion of this whole matter then is, that it is the will and command of the Lord Jesus, that His disciples should not be their own tormentors, nor make their passage through this world more dark and unpleasant... than God has made it by the troubles themselves.

Live in today. Live one day at a time.

I think there's a poem that captures the truth in this text beautifully. It's a poem that was written by Henry van Dyke, who also wrote *Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee*, a hymn we sing. It's written on a sundial at a college in Massachusetts. Listen to this, and remember now, this is on a sundial:

The shadow of my finger cast
Divides the future from the past:
Before it stands the unborn hour
In darkness, and beyond thy power.
Behind its unreturning line,
The vanished hour, no longer thine:
One hour alone is in thy hands, --
The NOW on which the shadow stands.

Jesus says, "Do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own." May our Lord help us to follow the very practical advice He's given us about worry in this passage. Let's pray together.

Father, thank You for Your practical love and care for us and the instruction You've given us. Lord, You know our hearts. You know that we struggle, we all struggle, with the temptation to

worry. We all worry, sinfully, in contradiction to our Lord's will. Father, help us to learn what He's taught us here: how to overcome worry. Lord, may we live in today. May we deal with the troubles You bring today, and may we trust You for tomorrow. May we pray about tomorrow's troubles, but leave them with You. And Father, may we do whatever needs to be done today in preparation for tomorrow, but may we do it always trusting You. And then may we leave those things with You and live in today, enjoying Your good gift of life and dealing with whatever You have providentially brought today. Give us the grace we need day by day to live in a way that pleases and honors You. Forgive us for our worry, and set us on the right path as we think about and meditate on this passage. We pray in Jesus name, Amen.