

Ambition and Anxiety

Not So Straight A's: Approval, Allure, Ambition, Anxiety--Matthew 6 (part 4)

Matthew 6:25-34 August 31, 2014

DAY 1: What's the "therefore" there for?

Matthew 6:25 "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?"

1. It's easy to read each of the verses of the Sermon on the Mount in isolation from one another. It's easy to forget that these three chapters were all given at one time!

2. How does this passage start out? What's the first word?

3. Pastors ask, "What's the 'therefore' there for?" It's important to Read the context of our verse!

Matthew 6:19 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.

²⁰ *But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.*

²¹ *For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

²² *"The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light.*

²³ *But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!*

²⁴ *"No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money."*

4. What connections do you think Jesus is making from 6:19-24 to 6:25?

5. In Matt. 6:19-24 Jesus compared three things:

a. Transitory treasure vs. eternal treasure

b. Eyes that are good vs. eyes that are bad. One set leads to life; the other to darkness.

c. Two masters: God vs. Money

6. Jesus tells us to choose (a) the road to eternal treasure, (b) eyes (and minds) that produce light and life, and (c) God as master.

7. On THOSE bases, now, we are ready for Matthew 6:25. Read it again at the top of the page. List all the reasons you can think of from Matt. 6:19-25 of why we don't need to be anxious.

8. Talk to God about what struck you from today's verses.

DAY 2: Secular ambition: material "security"

1. Jesus points out what pagans seek.

*Matthew 6:32 For the pagans **run after all these things**, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.*

2. Let's look at what comes before 6:32...

*Matthew 6:26 Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father **feeds** them. Are you not much more valuable than they?*

*Matthew 6:27 Who of you by **worrying** can add a single hour to his life?*

*Matthew 6:28 "And why do you **worry** about **clothes**? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin.*

Matthew 6:29 Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these.

Matthew 6:30 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

*Matthew 6:31 So do not **worry**, saying, 'What shall we **eat**?' or 'What shall we **drink**?' or 'What shall we **wear**?'*

*Matthew 6:32 For the **pagans run after** all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.*

Matt. 6:33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

3. How many times does Jesus tell us not to worry? _____

4. What four examples of secular ambition did Jesus tell us we should not worry?

5. What other examples of worry could be included?

6. Every human being *seeks* something. Ambition drives human beings forward. Ambition can either be good or bad. Jesus lays out that ultimately we seek only one of two things:

- a. Secular ambition, seeking first our material "security," (a small story and small purpose) or
- b. Spiritual ambition, seeking first His spiritual kingdom (a very large story and grand purpose).

7. What we deem as most important in life determines our felt level of meaning in our lives. If what we deem as most important is just not that important we can expect to struggle with things like wondering why we are here, what's the real meaning and purpose of life, etc.

8. Look back at question 6. How would you assess your ambition in those two categories?

DAY 3: Worry!

Matthew 6:25 "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?"

Matthew 6:26 Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?

Matthew 6:27 Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?

Matthew 6:28 "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin.

Matthew 6:29 Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these.

Matthew 6:30 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

Matthew 6:31 So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'

Matthew 6:32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.

1. Worry is unbecoming for the Christian. Let's look at three examples Jesus gave that encourage us away from worry, to see the frivolity and foolishness of worry.

2. **Example #1.** Re-read Matt. 6:25.

- a. Jesus highlights that God is our Creator, who gave us life, and gave us our body.
- b. If He could do *that*, is it all that inconceivable that He could also give us food, drink and clothes? If He can take care of the greater, can He not take care of the lesser?!
- c. What strikes you from example #1?

3. **Example #2:** Re-read Matt. 6:26.

- a. Jesus highlights God's tender care of simple birds.
- b. If God can take care of even these smallest of things, can He not also take care of you, who are infinitely more valuable than simple birds?
- c. What strikes you from this example?

4. **Example #3:** Re-read Matt. 6:28-30.

- a. If God can "clothe" even non-animals, can He not also clothe you?
- b. Jesus again argues from the lesser (flowers) to the greater (you!).
- c. What strikes you about this example?

5. Talk to God about what struck you today from this passage on worry.

DAY 4: 3 questions

1. This passage usually raises three questions for people.

2. **Question #1:** "Does this passage mean I don't have to work?"

a. One verse should clear up this question:

2 Thessalonians 3:10 For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat."

b. In our Matthew 6 passage, Jesus taught that God fed the birds. The next question should be **how** did He feed the birds? Do birds just sit around waiting for their daily hand-out?

c. At our house we can see how different birds feed.

* Some go for the nectar on our plants and flowers

* Some dig for worms

* Some go flying after insects.

d. Though God sees that they are fed, they bear a responsibility to seek food. So do we.

3. **Question #2:** "If God promises to feed and clothe His children, why is there starvation?"

a. "The most basic cause of hunger is not an inadequate divine provision, but an inequitable human distribution." - Dr. John Stott

b. In Matt. 25, Jesus gives us responsibility to "clothe the naked and feed the hungry."

c. Though God wants to feed the hungry, He has chosen to use both *human responsibility* and *human compassion*.

4. **Question #3:** "Are Christians exempt from 'trouble'?"

Matthew 6:34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

a. Jesus repeatedly told us not to worry. Is that because we would be "freed" from trouble?

b. What does Jesus have to say about "trouble"?

5. Summary: We are *not* promised freedom from (a) work, (b) responsibility, or (c) trouble. We are promised that we can be freed from worry!

6. Talk to God about something that struck you from today's reading.

DAY 5: Seek His kingdom and His righteousness

Matt. 6:33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

1. It's important, again, to remember the context. Here it is...

Matthew 6:31 So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'

*Matthew 6:32 For the **pagans run after** all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.*

2. Here Jesus "connects the dots" between seeking/running after lesser things and thereby creating greater worry!

3. Jesus lifts our eyes to things higher than our own material needs.

4. What do you think He means by seeking first His **kingdom**? (Matt. 6:33)

5. God's kingdom means His rule in the hearts of people. It is a commitment to get outside ourselves and try to help people come to understand their need for God's rule in their lives.

6. You are not to live for trinkets and toys. You are to live for the sake of people, whom Jesus believed worth dying for!

7. What do you think it means to seek His **righteousness**? (Matt. 6:33)

8. Am I living the righteous life in every area of my life?

___ Marriage ___ Parent ___ Personal life ___ Public morality

___ Financial integrity ___ Job performance ___ Business ethics

___ How I treat and relate to people

9. Childhood ambition: I wanted to be a football player. In high school, ambition morphed into wanting to be a doctor. In college I wanted to be a college professor. Though I had ambitions for each of these jobs, Jesus is talking about a more core, fundamental ambition.

10. Ultimately we are ambitious in only one of two directions. Either we are ambitious for ourselves or we are ambitious for God and the purposes of God. The former is too small. The latter is a great quest, a great narrative played out every day.

11. Ask God to awaken you to His great story, and for you to be ambitious to play a role in it!