

# “WEALTH AND WORRY”

## Matthew 6:19-34

The modern-day relevance of our text is unquestioned. Jesus addresses two powerful challenges that every Christian has to battle at some point in their lifetime. These temptations threaten to distract us and steal the joy and peace that is ours in Christ Jesus. What are they? **They are *wealth* and *worry*.**

When it comes to wealth (money or materialistic things), maybe you *have it*, *lost it*, *want it*, or *need it*. As a result, worry can set in and literally rip you to shreds. Let me ask you tonight—where’s your treasure? What are your most prized possessions?

Is it a sin to be wealthy? Absolutely not. Keep this in mind. Abraham was a rich man as was Job. New Testament disciples owned land. In fact, Paul wrote . . .

**1 Timothy 6:17**... Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.

Francis Schaeffer wrote. . .

“It is my observation that Americans are driven by two things—affluence and personal peace.”

Jesus understood this tendency, so he spoke about money in 16 of his 38 parables. In the gospels themselves, one out of every ten verses touches on the subject of money in one way or another. Here’s a perfect example. . .

**Matthew 6:19–20**... “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 neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal.”**

Jesus is literally saying, **“Do not treasure up treasures for yourselves.”** It is a picture of hoarding money, clothes, and other possessions for personal use. In the first century riches were defined as clothes, precious metals, and grain. Why would Jesus teach this? Here’s the answer. Moths can ruin clothes. Rust can destroy metals. Thieves can break in and steal. I don’t think your financial planner/broker would share this principle with you.

Jacques Lowe became the official photographer of John F. Kennedy’s presidential campaign, and after Kennedy was elected, Lowe became his personal photographer. He had an estimated 40,000 negatives of images of John F. Kennedy and his family, though only 300-400 photographs were made public.

While he was alive, Lowe watchfully monitored the use of his pictures. When a publication or museum wanted prints, he personally took the negatives to the lab for printing. When the job was done, he retrieved them himself and returned them to the vault at the *JP Morgan Chase Bank Branch* at 5 World Trade Center. Lowe's daughter, Thomasina, said . . .

**"He was being more prudent than most. He really believed they were as safe as they could ever be," she said. "He chose to have them there because he was six blocks away from them and he felt psychologically [as if] they were under his bed."**

*This bank was heavily damaged during the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attack. A team of engineers, a 100-ton crane, forklifts, ironworkers, and dump trucks were brought in as part of a plan to move the vault from the second floor. But workers found major fire damage in the vault area; ashes filled the safe-deposit boxes. The only thing that would have survived was metal or stone.*

[Citation: Aaron Goerner, New Hartford, New York; source: Frank Eltman, "Nation: John F. Kennedy Negatives Feared Lost in Trade Center," *The Nando Times* (12-6-01)]

This serves as an important reminder that earthly treasures are subject to moth, rust, thieves, *and fire*. That's why Jesus said it is perfectly reasonable to "Lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven." Here's the principle—**Invest your treasures in the kingdom of God and they will be eternally secure!**

**Proverbs 3:9–10**... Honor the LORD from your wealth And from the first of all your produce; **10** So your barns will be filled with plenty And your vats will overflow with new wine.

**Luke 6:38**... "Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, *and* running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return."

**Malachi 3:10**... "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this," says the LORD of hosts, "if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows."

Jesus taught that the way you handle your money is a barometer of your spiritual condition. You can look at it like this. The way you use your possessions gives a clear indication of where your heart really is! Hear the words of our Lord . . .

**Matthew 6:21**... **for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**

I challenge you to commit to the principle of generosity. You can't outgive God!

**"He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."**

Jim Elliot, the martyred missionary to the Auca Indians in Ecuador.

In this next set of verses, Jesus expands on His command to invest in eternity. He uses the illustration of the **"eye."**

**Matthew 6:22–23...** “The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. **23** “But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!”

The *good eye* pictures a *good heart* and the *bad eye* pictures a *bad heart*. Cutting to the chase, *your heart is the real issue when it comes to your money/your stuff.*

The word “**clear**” means single. This represents a heart that has single minded devotion to the principle Jesus is teaching here. The warning is clear. We must maintain an eternal focus and not be swayed by this world system that preys upon us like a savage animal feeding on its kill.

James spoke of a wisdom that comes from God and a wisdom that comes from the world.

**James 3:13–17...** Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. **14** But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. **15** This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. **16** For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. **17** But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.

Are you wise and understanding? Choose to line up your priorities with the biblical principle Jesus taught in our text today! All that we have talked about tonight comes down to this. Who’s your master?

**Matthew 6:24...** “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. *You cannot serve God and wealth.*”

In the first century the master exerted total control over his slaves. The slave owned nothing and lived his or her entire life trusting the master to meet his or her needs. In return, the slave owed full-time service to the master. Either Jesus will be your master, or wealth will be your master. You can't have it both ways! You can conquer the temptation to surrender control of your life to a constant quest for more money and more stuff. Make the clear teaching of Jesus your primary concern.

Next, Jesus tackled the challenge of worry. As He preached this great sermon, He was surrounded by people who worried about some of the same things we worry about. If anybody understood the needs of people, it was Jesus. He grew up in a humble home where material possessions were few and far between. In this next section of the sermon, He zeroed in on the problem of worry. In fact, three different times He commanded the people not to worry or be anxious **(25, 31, 34)**. He specifically told them not to worry about food, clothes, and how long they would live.

Do you ever find yourself worrying about things you have absolutely no control over? You walk the floor instead of sitting and resting. You lay in your bed and stare at the ceiling. Listen, these words spoken 2000 years ago are amazingly relevant tonight. Hear the Word of the Lord Jesus...

**Matthew 6:25...** **“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?”**

**“For this reason”** refers back to the previous verse and gives us the proper context. What is He saying? You cannot have two masters. It's impossible to live that way!

**“Do not be anxious for your life”** (one of three times He establishes this rule). Literally, this means *“to be drawn in different directions.”* The word **LIFE** refers to all facets of living, including the physical, mental, emotional,

and spiritual parts of our lives. In particular, Jesus mentions what you drink, what you eat, and what you put on (your clothing).

Because you are a believer, the Lord is your only Master. Therefore, your responsibility is to serve Him and trust Him to meet all of your needs. Worry is a badge of distrust! You can trust God regardless of your circumstances.

Contentment is the opposite of worry. God has all the resources to meet all your needs and He has promised to do so.

**Philippians 4:11–12,19...** Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. **12** I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. **19** And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

**1 Timothy 6:6–8...** But godliness *actually* is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment. **7** For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. **8** If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content.

Worry is like sitting in a rocking chair. It will give you something to do, but it won't get you anywhere. **Jesus knew this, so He not only established a rule for us to live by; He also supplied us with the rationale or logic behind His audacious demand.** The way He built His case that day was amazing. He used common things to make His point...*flowers and birds*.

**First, Jesus deals with our need for food** and He used the birds as an example. God provides abundant resources for them along with an instinct to daily search out and find exactly what they need. God takes care of the birds.

**Matthew 6:26...** “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?”

Then He makes the point that human beings are infinitely more important than the birds. **(Psalm 8)** Worrying about food is unwarranted because our heavenly Father loves us and will provide for us.

**Second, Jesus deals with the subject of the length of our life.** The word “*hour*” can be translated as “*cubit*” which means about 18”. Our culture is obsessed with living longer. The diet industry and the supplement industry are exploding. Yet, God is in total control of life and death!

**Matthew 6:27... “And who of you by being worried can add a *single hour* to his life?”**

**Third, Jesus deals with our need for clothing.** Jesus used the wild flowers that surrounded Him as an example. Again Jesus uses a lesser to greater argument. If God makes the flowers so beautiful, will He not provide the clothes you need? Of course He will!

**Matthew 6:28–30... “And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, 29 yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. 30 “But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is *alive* today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more *clothe* you? You of little faith!**

Again Jesus repeats His rule—worry is absolutely forbidden! This is nothing less than the sin of unbelief! Remember, Jesus could do no great works in His hometown of Nazareth because of their unbelief. What a serious indictment on the life of a person who has put their faith in Jesus Christ.

**Matthew 6:31–32... “Do not worry then, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear for clothing?’ 32 “For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.”**

What worries you masters you and there is only room for one master in your life! Here’s the remedy for this cruel taskmaster...

**Matthew 6:33–34...** “But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. **34** “So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Did you notice the repeated emphasis on God being our heavenly Father? That’s right He loves you and will provide all you need. That’s His promise to you. You can trust your heavenly Father.

**Look at verse 33.** MAKE GOD YOUR FIRST PRIORITY. The word “kingdom” here refers to God’s sovereign dominion and rule. We must set some stringent priorities in our life. We who have committed our lives to Jesus must put His kingdom first! (**Col. 3:1-4**)

The word “righteousness” refers to living holy lives patterned on the life of Jesus. These priorities of seeking first His kingdom and His righteousness are non-negotiables! This is the first step in winning over worry.

**Look at verse 34.** LIVE ONE DAY AT A TIME. Worry is interest paid by those who borrow trouble. Therefore, we must not borrow trouble from tomorrow. Don’t misunderstand Jesus here. He is not saying that we should not make reasonable preparations for tomorrow. He is saying that to worry about tomorrow is foolish. Live one day at a time!



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