

XXIX. Matthew in Biblical Perspective
A Royal Manifesto of the Kingdom from the King
“The Eighth Commandment: Do Not Be a Worrywart”
Matthew 6:25-34
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September 12, 2010 – Morning Sermon

This is our 29th study in the Gospel of Matthew and we are specifically looking at the Sermon on the Mount. This is the Word of God. It's the Truth. Matthew 6:25-34 says **25** *“Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious 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: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? 27 And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? 28 And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, 29 yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 30 But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 31 Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ 32 For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. 34 “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.*

The grass withers and the flower fades. This is God's Word. It abides forever and by His grace and mercy may it be preached for you.

This is an interesting privilege for me. I get to walk with you through a text of Scripture that changed my life which is this passage. After I was converted God worked in my life and began to call me into the ministry which I fought against but the Lord kept pushing me in that direction. I was at East Carolina University. I worked in tobacco fields and went to school. One morning around 1am I was out walking in the tobacco field I was working in with this text in my mind and surrendered to God's call to the ministry. Then this text also became the source of my life verse which is Matthew 6:33 that says *But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.* I desperately needed that because of the constant faithlessness of my life and my frailty. As a new believer I kept coming back to this text to be reminded of not seeking things but letting Jesus get added to my life so I'd see first the Kingdom and the King instead of things as I sought to be faithful to Him. I needed that verse as a reminder and that's why I took it as a life verse.

Here's a little postscript on this. When God called me to the ministry and I surrendered to that call in a tobacco field I came home and woke up my wife. I said to her, “Cindy I think God's call me to the ministry and I know when we got married you didn't sign on to this. What do you think about it?” It was about 1:30am and she looked at me and said with one eye open, “Okay.” I said, “Are you okay with that?” She said, “Oh yeah, I'm alright.” I said, “Alright, good.” She said, “Listen at Ridge Crest Bible Camp I went forward when I was 11 years old and gave my life to be a missionary or

pastor's wife so I've just been waiting on you to catch up anyway." My whole life I have been peddling fast to stay ahead of my wife or at least catch up with her.

I found out that a lot of Christians have life verses. So I decided to get a life verse because I needed one and so I ended up with this one. I said to my wife, "Cindy?" She said, "What?" I said, "I have a life verse, have you?" She said, "Oh yeah, I have one." I said, "Do you want to know what mine is?" She said, "Yeah, what is it?" I said, "Matthew 6:33. I bet my life verse is better than your life verse." She said, "No it's not because that's my life verse." So lo and behold here we had the same life verses. I kind of figured maybe God wanted us to be married.

However this is an interesting text. When you walk away from here today there's one thing this text says that is not allowed in your life. It is inconsistent with the Christian life and that's anxiety. It's not something we can keep around a little and think we can manage it. No, the text says "Be anxious for *nothing*." Our God is banishing anxiety in our life. What does that mean and what does it not mean? I'll try to explain that from God's Word. Secondly, this text is also giving you an incontrovertible truth, an unconquerable fact and that is your relationship as a Christian, if you know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, with Him is that God is your Father. That's why you can banish all anxiety in life because God is your Father and by faith you are connected to Jesus Christ and nothing can separate you from the love of Christ. Be anxious for nothing.

To recap just a little in our Sermon on the Mount, the power of the Gospel in saving and changing a life is in the first section called the beatitudes. The call of the Gospel to our ministry for Christ, salt and light, is in the second section. We are in our third section of the study which is our ten commandments in the Sermon on the Mount. This Jesus who met Moses at Mount Sinai and gave him Ten Commandments, now tells us how the Law of God works with the Gospel and the height, breadth, depth and what it means to love God with all your heart, soul and mind and your neighbor as yourself, by giving us five commandments about the sanctity of life, marriage, sexuality only within marriage, the sanctity of truth and redemptive relationships and says He wants our righteousness to exceed that of the Pharisees. Very quickly this isn't what you do to become a Christian. He is talking to those who have been blessed, been saved that this is the way they live for Me. He says, "I've given you a perfect righteousness that will take you to heaven. Now here's how you live for Me, with an exceeding righteousness that goes way beyond the Pharisaical religionists. There's a height, depth, breadth, and length that you haven't seen yet in this life. Now this life is to glorify My Father so that when people see how you live then they'll be drawn to the Father and therefore to His Son as their Savior."

That means you have to practice this righteousness in a certain way and that's what the second tablet of the five commandments on the Sermon on the Mount deal with. We are on the eighth commandment which is the third in the second tablet. The first one on this second tablet is, do not be a hypocrite. The second one was, do not be an idolater. On the one saying don't be a hypocrite He gave three examples on hypocrisy. One was doing mercy ministry to be noticed by people so that people in need become the props for us to respond to and to draw people's attention to us. Jesus says we don't do mercy ministry like that. The second example was that we don't do our prayers to be seen by people and the third example is we don't do our fasting to be seen by people. So He deals with mercy, prayer and fasting. When He tells us not to be an idolater He uses the issue

of money because it is money that we use to buy our idols and its money itself that becomes an idol in our life. Jesus says “you can’t serve God and mammon.”

Now He goes to the third commandment. I’ve often wondered as a preacher what I would title this message if I ever preached on it and my title is Don’t Be a Worrywart. He says not to be anxious. Can you give me a noun for anxiety? I worked hard on this. For hypocrisy it’s don’t be a hypocrite. For idolatry it’s don’t be an idolater. I can’t say don’t be an anxious-er. I didn’t like worrier and you wouldn’t believe how many thesauruses I went through to find this word. Worrywart is a real word and I didn’t think it was. Don’t be a worrywart. In other words, don’t be someone who the worries of this age have totally paralyzed you in this life. He says to be anxious for nothing. I want to give you three observations from this text and then I’ll give you three takeaways that are very simple but profoundly transforming in our life.

The first takeaway is the ‘therefore.’ The word therefore is the connecting tissue in the eighth commandment back to the seventh and the sixth commandment. In other words, why is it that we become hypocrites, idolaters and money and things become the focus of our life instead of the King and the Kingdom? Instead of seeking first the Kingdom why is it we embrace the lifestyle of unbelieving Gentiles and seek first the idols of this age or even good things from God like marriage, spouse, children, work and things that God has given to us and we put them in place of God or beside God? Why is it our heart is always an incessant idol factory that keeps trying to produce things that don’t deliver us in life and don’t make our life? The avenue that Satan uses to promote idolatry and hypocrisy in our life is anxieties which are rooted in fears. Perfect love casts out all fear so you have to get rid of anxiety.

Remember how it says you can’t serve God and mammon? Notice how Jesus didn’t get excited about how much treasure you have. He didn’t say “Rich people are evil and poor people are good” or “poor people are evil and rich people are good.” Today, we would tell anyone who is poor that they don’t believe in Jesus enough because if they did then you could name it and claim it which is the stupidity of the prosperity Gospel. Or we tell people who have money that they can’t be a good Christian which is the reaction to it. Jesus gives some people five, some ten, some get one talent. He doesn’t consume Himself with the treasure. He says “Your problem is your treasure chest. You are laying up treasures in this world, on this earth when in reality whatever I’ve given you, whether it’s a child, a family, a marriage, a job, money or whatever it is I’ve given you, I have given it to you to lay up treasures in heaven. I haven’t given it to you to put in a treasure chest that’s like a sandcastle on the beach that gets washed away in one tide. I have given it to you to invest in that which lasts forever – worship, evangelism, the love of Christ, the souls of men and women, and the glory of God.”

Many ask me about the tithe and say “Is the tithe the answer to this?” No, the tithe is just the beginning point. Do you know how many times Jesus talked about the tithe? He talked about it once. He didn’t condemn the tithe but He said the Pharisees tithe and you should have done this and more. Jesus has bigger fish to fry than the tithe. He wants you and not just ten percent of you. The tithe is just a gift to get you started. The tithe is just a blessing from God to remind you. The tithe is just a way for you to worship and to tell God “here are the first fruits so You have everything.” One might say “Harry are you getting me under the Law of the tithe?” No, I’m getting you on top of it. Here’s what we do. If you tithe you’re okay and by the way you have to go sell

everything you own. No, I'm not going to get between the Holy Spirit and you and what He calls you to sell and give away but I am going to tell you that what Jesus wants you to understand is that you are a steward of everything and you don't own anything. Everything He has given to you, you are managing for Him.

So God what is it that You want to do in me and through me and what keeps us from doing that? It's anxiety. It talks about laying up treasures in the earth and how do you do that? You buy the idols of this world and you put them in the treasure chest of this world because our perspective is wrong. Remember the perspective? Jesus says it's because your eye isn't clear. So you see things wrong and therefore you have the wrong master. Money has become your master and you can't serve two masters. That's impossible. You can have two employers but you can't have two masters. You'll either hate the one and love the other or cling to one and despise the other. When you get your eye clear you understand where the treasure chest is and so whatever He has given you all belongs to Him and now He can lead you as to how to use that for that which lasts and not that which doesn't last. So you lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven. You invest with what God has given you in that which lasts forever – the souls of men, the glory of God, the praise of His Name, and the proclamation of the Gospel. You make those investments in all that is around you – family, neighborhood, work, life and everything God has given you is available to that. But we don't get there because we're so anxious.

If laying up treasures on earth is buying things to fill our idol box, the treasure chest, what would be the opposite of that? That's simple. You give. How much do I give? You give everything. It's all His and then He begins to lead you where you give it. I mentioned the death tax in the last study and some great minds came up to me to tell me I don't know what I was talking about. I know I don't know what I'm talking about when it comes to the death tax and estate tax but I am going to beat the death tax and here's how. I am not going to have anything when I die. My children will already have what I give them and it won't be much and the rest of my stuff like my library and everything else will be there. We get consumed with how much we have and as a pastor I don't care how much you have, I just want to know how much of it has you. The second thing I want to know is when you get to the end there ought to be nothing left. The Christian life is like a marathon. You come in with nothing and you go out with nothing so whatever He gave you make sure it's in the right place before you leave here.

Why can't we get it in the right places before we leave here? It's because we get anxious and that's why we don't do it. We get anxious and then Satan begins to move us to put our trust in that which is not trustworthy. That's why it is hard for a rich man to get into the Kingdom. It's because he gets insulated in false gods. Money is amoral. It's because we begin to give our idols value that they doesn't have and therefore we begin to put our trust in the wrong places. We put our trust in things where it should not be instead of the Lord.

Here is another observation which is four questions and one answer from this text. To get to this issue of removing anxiety in our life Jesus asks four questions. He said, "Let Me ask you a question, is life food, is life drinking, is life eating, is your body clothing?" He tries to show us the utter ridiculousness to think that our life is just necessities in life. This is tough for us because you and I live in a consumer culture in which we have entire industries called marketing and advertising and their whole job is to make yesterday's luxuries today's necessities. Cindy and I just had a couple of day

vacation down in the low country of South Carolina and I grew up in that area. I was doing a little jog and it was humid and then we rode by the house I lived in when I was in the third grade and it shrunk. I looked at the window where my bedroom was and I saw an air conditioning unit and when I lived there we had no air conditioning yet would you live in a house without air conditioning today? Yesterday's luxuries are today's necessities.

Jesus goes right to the real necessities of food, drink and clothing. He says, "Is that your life?" Where did that food come from? God brought and yes so you planted it and watered it but God gave the increase. Where do those beverages come from? God rained upon the earth. Where do all those things come from? It is God that has brought those. Then He says "Let me teach you. I want you to sit at the desk and here's your teacher, a bird. Here's your teacher, flowers from the field. Look at what I have done for them. Are you not of more value to Me? I gave My Son to save you from your sins. Look at what I do for grass that is going to be burned up. Look at what I do for the birds that are just flying around in the sky that I made for My glory. If I've done that for them in My kind providence, what have I done and will I do for you? I'm your Father. I gave My Son to make you My children on the cross."

So Jesus says in this text, here's all the questions – is life even the necessities of life or is it the One who gave you the life, who made you? Are you not of greater value? The real issue is how do you see yourself – as God who can handle life or as the one who has been given life and the God who gave you value in life is the God whom you're trusting in life? So as you live your life when you go to work you don't work for food you work for the Lord. When you raise your children you don't put your confidence in your parenting you put your confidence in the Lord. Children are a gift from the Lord. When you are taking care of your yard you are not doing it to get the applause of men. You're a caretaker of God's creation for His glory. My confidence isn't in my house so I'm not going to sit here and think "I wonder if a wind is going to take it from me next week?" What if God brings a tornado and takes my house? Well, I can't wait to see what He's got next because He gave me the first one. I'm sure He's got something for me to do as I live responsibly for Him but not with my confidence in myself. My confidence is in Him.

Here are the questions – what about your food, drink, clothing or your health? By being anxious can you add one more hour to your life? The answer is this, who are you whom God made and in whom God saved? Who am I? Am I food, drink or clothing? Am I the things around me or am I the Lord's? There is my value. If I am the Lord's then who is He? Did God know that the birds needed food? Does God know that you need food? This isn't a call to irresponsibility but it's a call to where is my confidence and what am I focused upon? God is omniscient and omnipotent. Look at what He does with birds and flowers. What will He do in and through me? God knows what I need and God has the power to deliver. God has shown His faithfulness. Morning by morning new mercies I see. O God our help in ages past and our hope for years to come. Our confidence is in Him. Four questions with one answer. I'm not God but He is. My trust is in Him who has proved Himself faithful and who is omniscient and omnipotent and He is able.

The third observation is the text then calls us to a contrast. Matthew 6:31-33 says **31** *Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?'*

or 'What shall we wear?' **32** For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. (So what do you do? You live responsibly with priorities.) **33** But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Tomorrow doesn't dictate my life and yesterday doesn't dictate my life. Every day I live my life doing the next right thing with confidence in the Lord so that I seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. Things will be added. I don't seek things and let Jesus get added. I don't go after the things of this world. I'm a Christian so Jesus is my bellhop – Jesus I need this, I need that. Jesus is my waiter, my genie that I rub with prayer to get the things of this world. No, no we are to seek first His Kingdom. It's the King and the reign of the Gospel of grace in my heart, life, family and everywhere I go so that Jesus doesn't exist to be my gopher in life. I have been made and saved by Him and He is my life.

Seek first His Kingdom and as I'm living for Him, working for Him, raising my family for Him, trusting Him, taking care of my house for Him, taking care of my finances for Him, as I do all of those things for Him with my trust in Him, then He will add the things in my life that He wants me to use for Him. So instead of being consumed by the things I can be content and at peace. What if things get difficult? Be anxious for nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication make your requests known to God. Say no to anxiety and yes to prayer with thanksgiving and trust in Him.

I have three takeaways for you. The first one is the one thing hypocrisy, idolatry and anxiety have in common is the supremacy of self. We're on the eighth commandment about not being a hypocrite, idolater or worrywart. What are the things that hypocrisy, idolatry and anxiety all have in common? It is the supreme me that it's in me, for me and about me. That's what they all have in common. What is a hypocrite consumed with? A hypocrite is consumed with self promotion. What is the idolater consumed with? The idolater is consumed with self exaltation. I make the idols and buy the idols so who is really god? It's all about me. Then there is the self reliance in anxiety that I'm the answer to my life. That it is in me and it is all about me – self reliance and self absorption in life. This is the supremacy of self.

So I have an invitation that will free you and me today. I need to hear it so here it is. When you came to Jesus Christ what did you do? You died to yourself and you lived unto Christ, right? Now that you're a Christian how do you live your life for Christ? You die to yourself every day. It's not of me, from me and to me. It is of Him, from Him and to Him. That is my joy and glory forever, if only God will allow me to die daily to myself. So my invitation to life is death. He who will save his life will lose it. He who will lose his life for My sake, shall save it.

The second takeaway is that there is an unmistakable message and that is theology matters. I know that in our Christian life we want to go to church or a small group or a Bible study and hear something inspiring to get us through. I'm all for inspiration, attraction, understanding and everything but the fact is that you and I have to dig into God's Word because theology matters. The whole issue in how we live our life is how do you view God and how do you view your relationship with Him. That's really where it is. Who is God and how do I view Him, will determine ultimately our behavior in life. How do we see God and how do we see our relationship with Him? Is God able? We just sat in the schoolroom of the birds and the flowers so is God able? Does God know and does God love you? Are you of value to Him? Go look at the cross where He died

for you. You have great value, not in and of yourself. Our value has been given to us and this God who gave His Son declaring that you are His treasure, then what will He do if you trust Him as your Father?

Cindy and I were coming back from vacation and we had a chance to do some ministry yesterday. I hate interstates so I used a back road and it was a road we used to take when I was a kid when we'd go down to Charleston. It was getting dark and getting eerie driving through those live oaks with the moss hanging down and I remembered a night when I was ten years old and we were driving down to Charleston to visit my relatives. My dad had just bought a car and he had forgotten that the fuel gage on this car didn't work accurately so we ran out of gas at 1am. We used to travel at night so us kids would sleep most of the way. So we were out on this road with no gas, no people and I could hear crickets and saw bats and everything. I'm looking out the back seat and my dad is out there trying to get somebody to stop. Nobody is going to stop because my dad wasn't the most attractive guy in the world standing out there. He said, "Son come out here and stand with me, maybe they'll stop if you're with me." I went out and stood with him and these three guys stopped who were all inebriated and drunk. My dad gave them five dollars and they said they would bring us some gas back. I said, "Dad, do you think they'll come back." He said, "I don't know but I hope so son." I said, "What do you mean you hope so? If they come back do you think they'll do something bad to us?" My dad put his arm around me and said, "Son don't worry, I'm your father, I'll take care of you." Someone asked me after the first service, "Did they come back?" You missed the point. The point wasn't that they came back.

If you have earthly fathers that do that, what about your Heavenly Father who loved you so much and gave His Son to save you from hell and sin? Will He not take care of you as you seek first the Kingdom, as you go to work for Jesus, as you take care of your house for Jesus? We're just talking about living a life that has confidence in Him. Theology matters therefore Mr. Beck who is calling this country back to a great awakening, I'm with you. People have asked me about Christians participating in that. I had two guys who were asked to be on his program that called me to asked my advice on something and I said I'd go to Mars Hill, the market place, the synagogue as long as I don't have to support Mormonism and as long as I can preach the Gospel I'll go anywhere and preach it. So I told them to go and preach it. If you have to support a cult then don't do it.

Why is this so important to me? It's important to me because it's not faith in God, it's the Triune God through Jesus Christ that saves sinners and that's where the Great Awakening came from in this country. It wasn't a civil religion just to have faith in God. Yes everyone has a right to believe what they want to in this country but what saved us in the Great Awakening in the 1730s that set in motion the things that have blessed this nation was the great Triune God glorified who gave His Son who convicts us of our sin and sends us to Him. It is Jesus Christ the Lord of glory. What your view about God is and your relationship with Him is absolutely crucial.

Here is the last takeaway. We have to have a different life. Don't be like the Gentiles. We keep thinking can we live as much like the world that maybe they'll come to our churches and fill our pews. What attracts people to salvation is how humbly, boldly different you are. You need a prioritized life. Seek first the Kingdom. You need a proportionate life. I don't live for that which is temporary. I live for that which is

eternal and even the temporary is turned into an investment for eternity, the treasure chest of heaven. It is that which takes hold of us. Jesus is not promising a trouble free life. Why would He tell us to be anxious for nothing, if there is not going to be things to be anxious about? Why would He tell us not to be fearful if there is not adversity? He is not promising adversity free or trouble free if you're a believer but He is promising that He is able so put your trust in Him. Be anxious for nothing, banish it, it's incompatible with the Christian life. Incontrovertible is the fact that Jesus has saved you from your sins and made the living God your Father. Therefore 'Our Father' is more than just the opening of the Lord's Prayer. It is the confidence of our life.

You might say "Pastor, I'm like that passage, I have little faith." Listen, you and I may have faith that is as slender as a thread and it's hanging onto us as we swing over the pit of hell and over a country that's in disarray and a culture that's being decimated and God has called me to live responsibly for Him, He hasn't called me to irresponsibility in this text and He's called me to be careful and He's taught me not to be careless but He's taught me to be anxiety less. Paul said, "I've got the cares of all the church upon me. I have cares, concerns and burdens but the answer isn't in me. The answer is in the One true and living God who gave His Son for me." Though my faith seems as slender as a thread and though I'm over the pits and chasms of hell and it seems as if it could snap at any moment, I will not fear. Do not be anxious. Why? It is because it's not the size of the thread of the faith but it's where the faith is anchored. Christ will not let you go. He is your life. Be anxious for nothing. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word this Lord's Day. Would you just ask the Lord to speak to your heart? You may be reading this and you need to be pulled up out of that anxiety because you have never put your trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. This Savior waits for you now. Come to Him just as you are. Put your trust in Him. Dear Christian today, you live in a culture full of troubles and adversity, we will live responsibly but we will live without anxiety. Peace passing all understanding is ours. He cares for you. Father, thank You for these moments together, in Jesus' Name, Amen.