

**Sermon Title: Be Content**  
**Biblical Text: Matthew 6:25-34**  
**Teaching Series: Kingdom Being**  
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## **Matthew 6:25-34**

*“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? 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? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 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? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.*

Anxiety haunts all of us. We fear and worry and turn over tomorrow in our heads, over and over again. We're preoccupied with what people think about us ... we're overwhelmed by what we have to accomplish in a coming week ... we're scared about being alone ... we wonder if we'll have what we need or want ... or as Jesus tells us today, we get anxious about what we drink, eat, and wear.

Jesus addresses the most human of experiences. And he simply commands his listeners on an ancient hillside, "***do not be anxious.***" In fact, he says that three times (vv.25,31,34). Of course, his command is really unhelpful. If only a command would silence that voice of discontent, fear, and shame. Fortunately, Jesus knows us best. He knows commands do not transform the heart. That's why he came to earth, not to deliver a message but to be the message, to be the Word of God in the flesh (see John 1:14). *Are you with me?* And so, as he continues to teach his disciples through this sermon, he invites us to consider our anxious hearts. He helps us understand why we're anxious, he comforts us in our anxiety, and points us to a lasting remedy for our anxiety. Through his words, yes. But also through his presence. That's what I'd like to talk about today. I want to talk about anxiety; what it is, and how Jesus meets us in it.

Here's how we'll work through this portion of the Sermon on the Mount ...

- The ***reason*** for anxiety.
- The ***comfort*** in anxiety.
- The ***remedy*** for anxiety.

[Prayer]

## **Movement 1: The Reason for Anxiety (vv.25-30, 24)**

Jesus begins with a transition. Look at v.25. *Read Matthew 6:25a ... “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life... Therefore* tells us, Jesus is shifting his thought. And yet he's basing what he's about to say on what he has just said. So, *what's he just said?* Well, he warned his disciples about something called *Mammon*; a force that divides the hearts. He said, *Read 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 the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.”* If you remember from last week, *Mammon* is a false god that manifests its power through worldly ambition, money, fame, and our stuff. Jesus tells us, we shouldn't love or serve the things of this world. *Why? Well, he answered it a bit in the previous passage but now we see more fully in v.25 ... because Mammon makes you anxious.*

Now, of course, not all anxiety is the same. Mammon makes you anxious not all anxiety is caused by Mammon. No doubt like Jesus' first disciples, many of us may need care beyond biblical teaching and prayer and spiritual formation practices in order to gain the upper hand on our particular anxieties. However, what Jesus' sermon provides is a framework for understanding the common ways human beings have a disordered relationship with this world, and the things of this world.

And so Jesus is saying Mammon makes you really anxious.

This, of course, is deeply ironic. After all, Mammon promises the exact opposite. Mammon promises peace. Mammon promises contentment. Think about why you moved to the city. Think about why you haven't left the city or maybe why you came back. The city likely made you a promise. It promises more and better. It promises the good life. We came because the work and opportunities and culture and architecture and drinks and food and fashion are some of the best in the world. We're promised there's *more* in the city to bring us joy and happiness and fulfillment. And yet when we get here we realize what promised peace brings anxiety. The job we thought would finally fulfill our desires for respect, now keeps us up at night. The money we thought would fulfill our desires for experience and comfort and security, now doesn't seem to be enough. The spouse and family you found and made in the city now face the uncertainty of our educational environment is incredibly stressful to navigate. The drinks and food that were satisfying for awhile are now nothing like what you had in Mexico City or imagine having in L.A. or New York or Grand Rapids or Nashville or Denver ... *that's where the good life is.*

You see ... the life you thought would bring peace is the very life that now causes anxiety. And now another city or house or job or school or spouse makes Mammon's promise seem fresh and new. But it's not.

This is what Jesus is addressing. This is the *reason* for our anxiety. Mammon makes you anxious. And so, *what does our Lord say to us?* Well, he commands us to not be anxious. But he does so through a series of illustrations and rhetorical questions that draw out. Jesus explains we're anxious because our love for Mammon makes us forgot four things ...

- The first thing we forget is our life. Notice, Jesus says, ***Read Matthew 6:25 ... “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?”*** When we are preoccupied with Mammon we belittle life to the merely physical. Even the most dedicated atheist sees a life beyond the material world. Yet, meeting our basic needs becomes a powerful preoccupation. Paying rent. Inflation. Climbing the ladder. It's not that we shouldn't think about these things. Jesus has already told us to pray for our daily bread. Rather, we should remember that life is bigger and more beautiful than meeting our visible needs. Life is better than satisfying our fleshly cravings. We're anxious because we forget our life.
- The second thing we forget is our value. Look at v.26. ***Read Matthew 6:26-30 ... 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? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing?***

***Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 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?"***

Through an illustration about "the birds of the air" and "the lilies of the field" Jesus exposes how worry overshadows our worth (vv.26,28). *Worry overshadows our worth.* Birds don't harvest their own crops yet they have all the nourishment they need. Flowers don't shop for or make their own clothes yet they are adorned with beauty. Notice, Jesus asks, ***"Are you not more valuable than birds who don't bear the divine image?"*** And, ***"if God clothes plants, which are temporal, won't he make sure to cloth you?"*** *You see?* He's taking something smaller, using a "how much more" oratory device (it's called an *a fortiori* argument) ... building from the smaller to the larger to demonstrated the immense value of his disciples in comparison to animals and plants. When we worry, Jesus says, we're disbelieving that we're valued, loved, blessed, seen by God, and made in his image. We're anxious because we forget our value.

- The third thing we forget is our Father. We'll talk more about this in a moment, but in this move it's interesting to note that when using his illustration about the birds of the air Jesus doesn't say "their" heavenly Father or even "the" heavenly Father. *What's he say?* Look again at v.26. ***Read Matthew 6:26 ... "Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them."*** He

says "**your**" heavenly Father. In other words, when we worry we forgetting we're part of a family. We're family members whose needs were never meant to be met in isolation and independence. We have a Father, in heaven. We're anxious because we we forget our Father.

*Are you worried about money?*

*Are you worried about your children's education?*

*Are you worried about food and rent and your home?*

*Are you worried about your work, your reputation, your legacy?*

Jesus is saying in our preoccupations with such things, we're forgetting what life's about ... we're forgetting who we are ... and most importantly, in whose family we belong.

Jesus summarizes this forgetfulness, with a loving yet corrective, "***O you of little faith.***" Mammon makes us anxious because Mammon makes us forget. Because Mammon convinces us to live life without faith.

## **Movement 2: The Comfort in Anxiety (vv.31-32, Isaiah 51:12-13)**

That's the **reason** for anxiety. That's why we're anxious. So, *what comfort does Jesus offer? What's the **comfort** in anxiety?* Well, he transitions again with another "**therefore**" ... See v.31. **Read Matthew 6:31-32 ... *Therefore do not be anxious,***

*saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'*  
*For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.* Mammon makes us anxious. Mammon makes us forget. But Jesus reminds us that our Heavenly Father already knows everything we need. I think this is incredibly comforting. Whether you've got fresh wounds from the unfulfilled promises of the city or you're in the middle of a great and basic need right now ... Jesus points us to the one who sees you ... knows you ... and loves you. Our Heavenly Father. He's our comfort.

The prophet Isaiah quotes God, sharing with Ancient Israel the reality of our forgetfulness and the good news of the comfort of the Father. *Read Isaiah 51:12-13 ... "I, I am he who comforts you; who are you that you are afraid of man who dies, of the son of man who is made like grass, and have forgotten the Lord, your Maker ..."* This is not a new problem. Anxiety is not a modern ailment produced by the hustle of cities and technology and consumerism. Anxiety is a timeless issue of a forgetful heart.

It's about our attention.

You see, ultimately anxiety is about looking at two things ... and only two things ... our needs and our selves. In other words, we worry because we see a gap between what we desire and require and our personal ability to satisfy that need sufficiently. We're preoccupied with our own capacity to meet our own needs. And Jesus' response to this issue is fantastic. Notice ... his comfort is not, *well stop looking at*

*yourself so much. Look at someone else. Serve someone else. Become a minimalist so you don't require as much. Rather, what's Jesus' comfort for anxiety? What's his comfort for someone who only sees needs and self? **Someone else sees you. My sister, my brother ... the Father sees you.** Mammon teaches us to look at ourselves and that leads to anxiety. **The gospel teaches us that someone is looking after us that leads to comfort, that calms our souls and brings us peace.** That's really comforting. This is what I love about Christianity. This is why I'm a Christian. Every other spirituality or way of life addresses anxiety as something we have to heal or fix ourselves by reframing our attention and focus. But the gospel brings healing by pointing to the attention of God—he sees us.*

To put it another way, every other religion or spirituality teaches that the remedy for Mammon and anxiety comes from within. Christianity recognizes that our primary problem is inside. Therefore the comfort must come from outside. Looking at ourselves differently is not comforting. Looking at less or something else does not bring calm but momentarily. In many ways, we're still looking at the same thing. We're still looking at ourselves. Knowing someone else, someone who is outside us, over us, greater than us, who takes care of birds and plants ... knowing *that* someone sees us ... that's comforting. **Mammon makes us anxious. Our Heavenly Father is our *comfort* in anxiety.**

### **Movement 3: The Remedy for Anxiety (vv.33-34)**

Now, being comforted doesn't necessarily mean anxiety ends immediately. It means we're not alone. It means we are loved. So, *what's the remedy for our*

*anxiety? Or we might ask, what's the good life really made of? What's healing really look like? Keeping in mind that some anxiety will not be fully quieted until the age to come, when we have new bodies and whole live, let's look at v.33. **Read Matthew 6:33-34 ... "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."*** Jesus takes an unexpected turn perhaps. Yet, his instruction to "*seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness*" is in direct contrast with something he just said. In v.32 he says, "*the Gentiles seek after these things.*" *What things are they seeking?* Mammon. Gentiles seek Mammon first. And Jesus says his disciples are those who seek God first. That's the remedy. The **remedy** for anxiety is to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Notice, it's then that all that we need will be ours. It's only then that we can release the fears of tomorrow and live within the limits and freedoms and joys of today.

Now, here's the problem. None of us seeks God first. All of us seek Mammon first. This is why we're all anxious. Now, society teaches us to simply adapt. Everyone is after their own interests and their own kingdoms, so be sure to get your slice. Anxiety is actually caused by feeling shame and guilt about worldly pleasure. So, *come to Chicago and find the life you're looking for, the life you want. Bump all this religious and institutionally-informed anxiety.* Religion, on the other hand, teaches us to just obey. To get over your anxiety we need to do the hard work of abstaining from this world and give ourselves to the church and mission and Jesus' command to not be anxious. Just do it. So, *come to our church and find the life*

*you're looking for, the life God wants for you.* Yet, each of these answers rings a bit hollow. After all, there's no real change.

Anxiety persists beyond the utopian society our city promises.

Anxiety persists within the pews of every church.

Remember, Jesus' command is not simply a command. He repeats *do not be anxious* three times, but he does so as the Incarnate Son of God. He knows commands do not transform the heart. That's why he came to earth, not to deliver a message but to be the message, to be the Word of God in the flesh (see John 1:14).

*Are you with me?* Words don't change the heart, but the Word made flesh does.

*Why? Why is the word alone unable to accomplish what the Word made flesh can?*

Well, because before Jesus tells us to seek first the kingdom ... the king sought us.

That's the remedy. The Father does not simply see us. The Father sends his Son after us. In our anxiety, the kingdom comes to us first. The remedy for our anxiety, the remedy for our preoccupation with this world ... is that Jesus Christ the king of this cosmic kingdom came to this world and inaugurated a new one; a world and kingdom where everyone has what they need.

Because the king first sought us, we are empowered to seek first the kingdom. That means we learn to cultivate lives that put Mammon in its proper place. This is critical. It helps us answer a question which we likely have been ponder this entire message. *What about the poor? If the Father cares for us and sees us so well, then why are so many without food and drink and clothes?* Well, Mammon. You see,

like the birds the Father doesn't magically fill every bank account and pantry with everything that everyone needs. Instead he made a world with more than enough for anyone and everyone ... so long as we did not love stuff more than him. John Stott doesn't stutter when he says, "***the most basic cause of hunger is not an inadequate divine provision, but an inequitable human distribution***" (167). You see, that's the fourth thing. Mammon makes us forget other people. And it's only when we realize that the Father sees us and that the kingdom has come to us ... that we will see and go to others.

*Do you need to name your anxiety today? That Mammon is making you forget?*

*Do you need comfort today? That your Father sees and loves you?*

*Do you need healing today? That Jesus seeks you first, so you can seek him first?*

By grace he says to all of us, *do not be anxious.*