

Dealing with Life's Hardships and Uncertainties

(Part 2)

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[0 : 00] Probably never do that to you. If you were here last Sunday, you'd remember that I began the message by talking about there's just so much on the news, word of mouth, so much going on about the uncertainties of life and the hardships of life.

And last week I made reference to the devastation of Hurricane Harvey and all the flooding and as we are meeting right now, Hurricane Irma.

Think about all the uncertainty. The people throughout Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, Alabama, really the Southeast.

There's so much we don't know. About what is heading for us. So much that people are already experiencing hardship over in South Florida and in the Caribbean.

But you know, we don't have to look on the news. We don't have to look far away to find hardship and uncertainty, do we?

[1 : 23] Because right here in this room, we experience it. Some of you right now are going through hard times or some uncertain times.

we need to remember and put into practice what we learned last week about dealing with hardship and uncertainty and the stress, anxiety, and worry that it produces.

What we learned last week about dealing with worry came from Philippians chapter 4, verses 6 through 7. I'll give you three statements. Don't worry about anything, we're told.

Verse 6, do not be anxious about anything. The alternative is to pray. Pray about everything. Look at verse 6. But in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.

And then we looked at one other thing last week. Look to God to replace worry with peace. Verse 7, and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, which is beyond our ability to comprehend, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

[2 : 42] Today, I want to expand on that message. And today, what I want us to do is look at what Jesus said in Matthew chapter 6, the Sermon on the Mount, which is probably, or should be, the most well-known passage in the Bible on dealing with worry or dealing with anxiety.

I do believe that worry is the most popular subject I ever preach on. I always get a lot of positive feedback from a message related to worry, stress, anxiety.

And last week was no different. I appreciate the phone calls and the statements, emails, about how God used that to help some, encourage some, remind some.

Well, because it's such a powerful temptation that we all have to deal with more often than we would like, I want to continue that thought by looking at what Jesus said here in the Sermon on the Mount.

And what I really want to focus on is going to be toward the end of today's message. We, instead of worrying, as we trust God, as we pray, we need to make sure we have the right priorities in life.

[4 : 08] And we're going to look at that in this message. And then next Sunday, I want us to look at a passage of Scripture that shows us why.

We can be absolutely confident that God knows us, He loves us, and is fully able to take care of us no matter what.

And we'll see that in Psalm 139. I hope you'll read that this coming week. And think about all that is said there about God's greatness, God's activity.

But notice as you read and prepare for next week how the psalmist talks about how God is so personally involved in His life and in our lives.

So right now, though, let's look at Matthew chapter 6. And if you would, open your Bible. We're not going to put it on the screen. It's sort of a lengthy passage. And we're going to keep looking back at several things. So Matthew chapter 6, beginning in verse 25, Jesus is teaching.

[5 : 16] Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious or do not worry 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 of his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which day is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, it's used for fuel, build a fire with.

[6 : 22] 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 or pagans or unbelievers, different translations use a different word, for the unbelievers 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.

Jesus begins by addressing the problem of worry. He tells us three things about why worry is unnecessary. Number one, worry is unnecessary because God takes care of his people.

[7 : 28] Look back in verse 26, if you would. Jesus, in talking to people, says, just look at the birds of the air.

They neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns. And yet your heavenly Father feeds them look at verse 28. 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 of his glory was not arrayed like one of those. Now think about this.

Jesus brought up the birds of the air and the lilies of the field. Obviously, he was not enlightening anyone.

They don't get stressed about anything in life. Birds don't sit up in trees and worry about what they're going to eat. Flowers, they have no ability to stress over what they wear or what they look like.

[8 : 43] Jesus understood that he was not talking about a reality here, about birds and lilies of the field. Thinking, the point is this, if God takes care of these lesser creatures, we can trust him to take care of us because we, as human beings, are his highest form of creation.

God made human beings in his image and absolutely nothing else. Nothing else in all the created universe is like us as human beings.

that makes us special. We are created in the image of Almighty God. Plus, while we're created in the image of God, ever since Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden that is recorded in Genesis chapter 3, ever since they sinned, we have not lived like people created in the image of God.

We have blurred that image by our sin and selfishness. But yet, God loves us enough that he sent his son into this world to save us by taking the punishment that our sin deserves when he died on the cross.

God loves us, we who are created in his image, so much God loves us. He sent his son into the world to save us, to change us, and with his spirit living in us as believers to start making us anew in his image, overcoming some of the flaws that will eventually be all overcome in the new heaven and new earth that God's preparing for us with our new bodies.

[10 : 46] But that's another subject. Think for a moment. Our heavenly Father created everything. He continues to work in everything, guiding and directing according to his purpose, which is ultimately good.

He can be trusted with everything in our lives because of who he is, because of what he's already done for us. He can be trusted so we don't have to worry.

God takes care of his people and Jesus is just letting us know God takes care of everything, even things as lowly as a bird and a flower.

How much more will he take care of us? So trust him. Secondly, worry is unnecessary because, or it's useless because it doesn't change one thing. Look at verse 27.

And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to a span of life? I like the way the New Living translation says, it says, can all your worries add a single moment to your life?

[11 : 59] What are you worried about right now? Or, let's be more spiritual, what are you tempted to worry about right now? Hurricane Irma probably is the top of a lot of people's list.

But, in this room, some people are worried about some health issues, some test results, some people are worried about some things going on in their home, family related.

Some people are worried about some things and others in your Sunday school class are sitting next to you. They know it. But, we have some concerns that no one knows about.

It's just us. And we're not going to tell anyone. But whatever your concern or worry is, let me ask you this. What is your getting stressed out, losing sleep, being anxious, not being able to eat, what good is that going to do?

I want you to think with me. Your greatest source of, say, ongoing temptation to worry.

[13 : 21] Not just one isolated thing, but most of us, there are certain things in our life that's sort of an ongoing battle. We're tempted to worry or, just to be honest, we do worry. Most of my adult life, my greatest source of worry has been my children, my boys.

And I've reached the point in life, they've reached the point in life, I can look back and say, there are unique worries at every age. When they're preschoolers, there's certain kind of things you are sort of anxious about.

When they're children, there's some other things. When they're teenagers, it's just a whole new ball game, isn't it? But I used to think if I can just live and they can live to get out of those teenage years, get over, you know, come down off fool's hill, maybe get married, settle down, be adults, I used to think, I won't ever worry about them anymore.

that's not true. I see some of you smile, even nod, who have adult children. There's never a time that you're not concerned about your children, no matter what their age is.

And then when they start having children, you start being concerned, worrying, about those grandchildren. children. Now, how do you deal with it?

[14 : 59] Are you able to deal with it? And if you do, just give in the temptation to do worry. Does it help? You know, there's two ways to do this.

I'm going to use Lisa and me as an example because I'm the bad guy in this. When our boys were teenagers, they'd be out somewhere, and they didn't, you know, it was getting late and they weren't home.

I was the one who was stressed. I believed God's sovereign. I prayed for them, but when it got time, I thought they ought to be home.

I started looking. And when it was past time, I thought they ought to be home. I was looking and I was mad and I was stressed out. And I can remember at times looking out the window, thinking, even praying, Lord, bring them home.

Lord, keep them safe. Get them here so I can kill them. Being that mad and that stressed and both of them can tell you, you can ask them after this service.

[16 : 07] I met them at the door. But you know what Lisa was doing? Sawing logs. And we talked about that lots of times.

She trusted that God was sovereign and she prayed for those boys and she went to bed and went to sleep and she did not worry nine times out of ten.

Nine times out of ten. She got good nights sleep. many nights when I didn't and the reason was she chose to trust God and rest in Him and I didn't.

and I'll be prideful. I knew more about the sovereignty of God than she did but it didn't do a bit of good because I wouldn't just let God take care of them and trust Him.

I wanted to worry and stress and think about all the negative possible scenarios that could happen. Jesus is telling us worry is useless because it changes nothing.

[17 : 32] It helps nothing. It really only hurts. It can't hurt us physically. Make us sick.

Make us have ulcers. It hurts us emotionally. It hurts the spirit spiritually because sooner or later as Christians we realize we're not trusting God.

We're dishonoring Him which comes to the next thing. Worry is unbelief because it indicates our failure to trust God. Look in verse 31 again. Therefore do not be anxious saying what shall we eat or what shall we drink or what shall we wear for the Gentiles.

NIV says the pagans. Some translations say the unbelievers seek after all these things and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.

Let me just throw in from last week. Worry is not the same thing as concern. Nowhere does the Bible say we should be unconcerned. Don't care.

[18 : 44] Be detached. Be unemotionally involved in life and people around you. No. Jesus was fully involved in life. Jesus was very concerned about people.

Jesus wept at times. Jesus parted with his friends at times. Jesus got mad at times and confronted and really went at those hypocritical Pharisees who opposed him.

Worry literally means to be divided, to be pulled apart. Jesus addressed the sin of worry immediately after he had said what you read in verse 24 about no one can serve two masters.

Look at it real quickly. He says 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. Therefore, I tell you, do not be anxious about your life.

Jesus was saying, you cannot be my disciple. You can't live a Christian life unless you have a single-minded devotion to God.

[20 : 03] You've got to seek him and his will above all other things. worry is a sign that we're divided.

Worry in our mind. Worry is a sign that we don't really trust God completely. We trust him some but not a hundred percent. My boys were out.

I had a good theology and intellectually I did trust God, no doubts, but I was divided. I didn't trust him completely.

Jesus is saying when we do that kind of stuff, when we worry like this, we're a living life, acting like an unbeliever. We're not acting like children of God.

If we have God as our heavenly father, if we really know we're his children, we should trust that he can and is able to take care of us and our situations and our family, how do you respond to the stressful situations that you have to deal with?

[21 : 21] Do you trust your heavenly father as Jesus talks about here? Do you pray? As Paul told us, that's the thing we need to do instead of worry, pray.

Do you trust God's will is best? Now that's hard. It's one thing to trust God.

It's one thing to pray and ask God to work in your life. But what if God's will is something that you don't like, that you don't want, that it's the opposite of what you're praying about?

Are you willing to be like Jesus as he prayed in the garden of Gethsemane? As he's looking, looking at the next few hours, he's going to be arrested, he's going to be tortured, he's going to be executed, he's going to be put on that cross?

Jesus says, if it's possible that this cup pass from me, this cup of suffering, nevertheless, not my will, but your will be done. That's what Jesus prayed.

[22 : 31] God's will was hard. I think it's very important as we talk about these kind of things, about don't worry, trust God, don't worry, pray.

Jesus is not saying that if you don't worry and you do trust God and you do pray, he's not saying all will work out the way you want it to. I want to repeat a quote from a guy by the name of Joe Thorne from last week, because I think it's vitally important that we understand this as we think about not worrying, as we think about praying, think about trusting God, we need to understand what that does mean and what it does not mean.

He does a great way, he describes that in a good way. Look at it. God does not promise to rid your life of affliction and difficulty. Some people will say that God will do that. Some people say if you just pray the right prayer, have the right kind of faith, God will do that.

That's a lie. That is something that the devil came up with and put in some, probably well-meaning Christian's mind, that's just designed to hurt us, to hinder us, to weaken our relationship with the Lord.

God does not promise to rid your life of affliction and difficulty. He does, however, often to give you, offer to give you the grace needed to suffer well. It isn't wrong to ask God to relieve you of your pain.

[23 : 57] Certainly it's not wrong. We should. But it is more important that in the midst of the pain, you rely on the promise of God to work such experiences for His glory and your good.

To use these times as a means of perfecting your faith, strengthening your spirit, and transforming your life in such a way that you are becoming more like Jesus.

That's really God's goal for us. And the fact is, the way that we become like Jesus sometimes requires hardship, suffering, pain.

Jesus tells us there's a better way to respond to life's hardships and uncertainties than to worry. Let's look at the next thing. The alternative to worry in verses 33 and 34. Paul last week said it was to pray.

Jesus expands that. He says, first of all, live with the right priorities. Look at verse 33. Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. The kingdom of God is the rule of God.

[25 : 04] In relation to us, it means that God rules or reigns over our lives. What that means, I think one way to think about this is this. We need to seek to know and do the will of God as the first priority of our life.

We need to seek to know and do God's will, His way, under His authority, as the first priority of our life.

That implies we have a relationship with God as our Heavenly Father. See, Jesus is, in the Sermon on the Mount, He's teaching us, talk to God in prayer and call Him your Heavenly Father.

Matthew 6, beginning in verse 9. He's used this phrase, your Heavenly Father, several times in this passage we've read. Jesus is saying, seek first the kingdom of God, but make sure He is your Father.

That only comes through faith in Jesus. If you don't have a relationship with God like this, I encourage you to begin one now. By admitting to God you don't have it, you don't really know Him.

[26 : 15] Turn from your sin. Put your trust in Jesus Christ as your Savior. Trusting that He died on the cross for your sins. If you need to come to Christ, call upon Him to save you this moment.

And the Scripture says, whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. So do that. But as a Christian now, what are the top priorities in your life?

There's a lot of things that will be on the list. And I want you to understand, Jesus is not teaching us in this passage when He says don't worry about what you eat and drink and wear and all this kind of stuff. He's not telling us to never think about or plan how we're going to live in this world.

He is not condemning anyone who's concerned about making a living, taking care of your family, and those kind of practical things.

things. The Bible is filled with examples and Proverbs is filled with all kinds of little sayings. And there's other teachings in the Bible.

[27 : 21] Paul talks about it quite a bit, actually, in some of his letters. There's a lot of things in the Bible that stresses the importance of work. If you don't work, you don't eat. Save, invest, take care of your family.

It's your responsibility to take care of your family. Give to people in need. Recognize truly needy people around you and help them.

It's our responsibility as Christians. God calls us to recognize all these kind of things. They are important. But we need to recognize God gives us these things, gives us these abilities, and we're supposed to wisely manage what God gives us.

But as important as all this kind of stuff is, like working and saving and giving and all this kind of stuff, that's not the ultimate priority. Seeking after all these things should not displace knowing and loving God and doing His will in the details of life.

Seeking first the kingdom of God, His righteousness, His holiness, living a life characterized by love and joy and peace and patience and kindness and goodness and faithfulness and gentleness and self-control, living a life of loving people and meeting people's needs, living a holy life ourselves.

- [28 : 52] This should be a top priority, that as we work and take care of our family and help people and give and serve God, we should do it all in a way that we're seeking to honor God, to do His will, to serve other people in His name, to do what we do for His glory.

We can put it that way. We will never overcome worry unless we make our relationship with God our first priority in life. There's just no other way. Let's look at one more thing Jesus said as an alternative to worry.

Look at verse 34. Live one day at a time. Live one day at a time. That's just something that would help us all if we'd think about it and actually try to do it, wouldn't it? Now when you say, He says verse 34, look at it one more time.

Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. Now when Jesus says things like that, He does not mean don't plan for tomorrow.

He doesn't mean don't ever think about tomorrow, don't ever think about the future, don't ever plan. He's not saying that. The Apostle Paul was a detailed planner. If you have any doubts, read for example his letter to the Romans, the book of Romans chapter 1, if you want to write it down, Romans 1, 8 through 13.

- [30 : 16] In Romans chapter 15, verses 20 through 29. Paul made detailed plans about what he was going to do in the future. About going to Spain, going to Rome, and have those Christians help him become his home church, become his sending church.

But Paul always knew, and he said this in a lot of his letters, that his plans were subject to change if that was not what God planned. Paul would sometimes say things like, if the Lord wills, or if the Lord permits, he's going to do this or do that.

But know what Jesus says about tomorrow. Don't be anxious about it. Don't stress over it. Max Lucado has some helpful comments about what Jesus said.

He says, God will help you to deal with whatever hard things come up when the time comes. And then he goes on to give some advice with an emphasis on this phrase, when the time comes.

Look at it. To the lady who says, I don't know what I'll do if my husband dies. Lucado responds, you will when the time comes.

- [31 : 34] To the parent who says, when my children leave the house, I don't think that I can take it. Lucado responds, it won't be easy, but strength will arrive when the time comes.

Then he makes one more statement. The key is this. Meet today's problems with today's strength. Don't start tackling tomorrow's problems until tomorrow.

You do not have tomorrow's strength yet. You simply have enough for today. We need to learn to live one day at a time.

Plan for the future, but understand you don't really know what's going to happen tomorrow. So we've got to trust God and make all our plans with a phrase, with the understanding, if the Lord wills.

Worry is a temptation for all of us, but it's never a solution to our problems. Never a solution to the things that hurt us that we fear in life.

- [32 : 45] Keep in mind, Jesus did not say, don't care. Don't be concerned. But he did say, do not worry. The solution to our problem and the actual sin of worry is to trust God.

I mean, that sounds simple, but that's true. Trust God. He knows what we need. He knows when we need it. And he is our sovereign God and heavenly Father who can meet that need and will at the right time.

Number two, develop the right priorities. Make God his will, serving his purpose, the first priority of your life, and then live one day at a time.

You know, bottom line is that's all we can do anyway. We just make life more stressful when we don't live one day at a time. This is the way that Jesus teaches us to worry.

It's the only way that will work, but it will only work in the life of a person who has a real relationship with God as their heavenly Father. So as we end, I want to encourage you.

[34 : 00] Make sure that you know God as your heavenly Father. Make sure that you have a right relationship with him if you're a Christian as your heavenly Father.

Let's pray together. Father, thank you for not leaving us in this world and telling us just do the best we can. But thank you for promising always to be with us, to never leave us nor forsake us.

Help us to trust you in that. Help us to learn to bring all of our concerns to you in prayer. Help us, Father, to make you knowing, loving, serving you, and doing your will our first priority above all else.

Help us, Father, to learn to take everything one day at a time. Help us, Father, to not give in to the temptation to worry.

And, Father, as we seek to obey you, we trust that you will give us the peace that is beyond comprehension, that you promise to your people, that you promise to give us in place of worry when we come to you the right way.

[35 : 33] So now, in an attitude of prayer, you listen to the Lord and you obey Him and do what He's telling you to do and leave here better prepared to not worry this week. If I could pray with you, I'll be here at the front, I would be happy to do that.

You come. You're in the next few minutes. What do we do? I O prelude it now. You hold. Let's take care of myself. I thinkable times we take all this week with ■■■■■ into details. You'll be happy to oldu■ Diego and I will remember something about you.

You husband, baby. Take care of yourself. Bur Sü are... I'm going.... Know what We do. Thank you,33. Maybe we read this moment. And I hope that you can all love that, I hope that I'm trying to review. You'll be the right■■■, and we will be the right Young, because maybe when Go ahead, man where the fact is right.

You can see you. We'll follow the answer and save this week with iceberg. The CAP that us.