

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT: POWER OVER PRIDE

In GOD'S NEW HUMANITY

A Seminar on Kingdom Principles

Matthew 5-7

Session Four

The Text:

19. *Stop hoarding (lit. "storing up") treasures for yourselves on earth where moth and rust eat it away and where thieves repeatedly break in and steal. 20. Rather, keep on storing up treasures for yourselves in heaven where neither moth nor rust eat it away and where thieves do not break in nor steal, 21. for where your treasure is, right there is where your heart (affections) will be also.*

22. *The eye is the source of light (lamp) for the body. If, therefore, your eye is good, your whole body will be enlightened; 23. but if your eye is no good (lit. "evil"), then your whole body will be darkened. If, then, the light which is in you is (turned into) darkness, how awful (lit. "how great") the darkness (is)!*

24. *No one can continually serve two masters, for he will either hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot (continually) serve God and the god of goods (possessions) (that is: Mammon, "the god of goods") at the same time.*

25. *For this reason I tell you that you must stop being worried in your soul about what you will eat or what you will drink or with what you will clothe your body. The soul is much more valuable than food, isn't it? and the body (worth more) than the clothing? 26. Consider carefully the birds in the sky because they do not sow nor reap nor gather (food) into barns and yet your heavenly Father cares (provides) for them. Surely you are worth much more than they, aren't you? 27. Who of you can add one span to his growth (lit. "life") by being worried? 28. And why are you always worried about clothing? Take a lesson from the flowers of the field (see) how they keep on growing without toiling or spinning! 29. But I tell you that even Solomon in all his splendor was not adorned like one of these (flowers). 30. If God so dresses up the field-grass which is here today and thrown into the oven tomorrow, (surely) He will much rather (care) for you, won't He, O you with (such) little faith! (lit., little-faithers!)*

31. *Therefore, don't ever be worried saying, 'What shall we eat?' or, 'What shall we drink?' or, 'With what shall we clothe ourselves?' 32. For the heathen (pagans) are always searching for these things. Your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things, 33. but keep on seeking first the kingdom (of God) and His righteousness and all these things will be provided for you.*

34. *So don't ever be worried about tomorrow, for tomorrow will have its own worries; the troubles (worries, lit. "evils") of today are enough (for today).*

IV. Jesus summarizes the priorities and values of God's new humanity. - (6:19-34)

This section may be considered expanded commentary on the phrase in the Model Prayer, *Give us this day our daily/necessary bread*. God's New Humanity values people over things; relationships over material goods and morality over popularity.

One of humanity's greatest causes for concern in daily life is being worried to distraction. In this section of the sermon, Jesus teaches us the necessity of trust in our Heavenly Father to provide for our daily needs.

A. Undivided loyalty to one Master is essential. - (6:19-24).

1. The priority of a single value - heavenly treasure (6:19-21).

The Text:

19. Stop hoarding (lit. "storing up") treasures for yourselves on earth where moth and rust eat it away and where thieves repeatedly break in and steal. 20. Rather, keep on storing up treasures for yourselves in heaven where neither moth nor rust eat it away and where thieves do not break in nor steal, 21. for where your treasure is, right there is where your heart (affections) will be also.



“Stop hoarding.” This is a present tense negative imperative. In the common Greek language of the first century, verb tenses were used as we use them to indicate action in the past or the present or the future in the active voice, but in other modes they indicate *type* of action more than *time* of action. The present tense positive imperative indicates continuous action to be done in the present, but the present tense negative imperative implies a command to stop doing something which is being done continuously or repeatedly. The aorist (simple past tense) indicates a completed action in the past. A negative aorist imperative indicates a command never to start doing a particular action. This distinction is very helpful when translating and interpreting Jesus' use of imperatives (see my Th.D. dissertation, “Jesus' Use of the Imperative” *Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary*, 1962). The verb in verse 19

indicates that they (the disciples of Jesus) are doing this (hoarding their treasures) but Jesus tells them to stop doing it.

Does this mean that we should not have bank accounts or savings accounts? Some interpret it that way, but most interpreters think that Jesus is saying that our emphasis should be on our heavenly treasures even if we do have bank accounts. **Undivided loyalty to one Master** means that He, Himself, is our primary treasure and all the others are secondary. Our dependence must be on Him to supply our needs as we will see later in this chapter. The trouble with earthly bank or investment accounts is that they can so easily disappear. In the first century world that could happen in several ways: moths could ruin expensive clothing, often an indication of wealth; rust (corrosion or impurities) could ruin valuable metals such as copper, brass, or even impure gold and silver; or thieves may break in to wherever you may hide it and steal it. During the civil war in Lebanon banks were often raided and safe deposit boxes were blown open and all the valuables stored there for safe-keeping were stolen. Stock market investments may be safe for awhile, but unexpected events can change their fortunes very quickly.

By contrast to this negative teaching **Jesus commands us positively** to continually *keep on storing up* spiritual treasures in heaven where these negative things cannot destroy anything stored there. Spiritual treasures are not defined here, but we may assume that they include acts of kindness and helpfulness to others based on our love for them as a reflection of God's love for both us and them.

Paul's teaching on this subject adds to this truth. In I Timothy 6:17-19 he says, "Command those who are rich in this present world not be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life." (See also Job 31:24-28 and Proverbs 23:4-5.)

2. **The priority of a single vision** - heavenly enlightenment (6:22-23).

The Text:

22. The eye is the source of light (lamp) for the body. If, therefore, your eye is good, your whole body will be enlightened; 23. but if your eye is no good (lit. "evil"), then your whole body will be darkened. If, then, the light which is in you is (turned into) darkness, how awful (lit. "how great") the darkness (is)!"

The emphasis here is on clear and focused vision as we look at the world around us. Good vision means good eyes and good eyes need to be focused on one Master, one enlightenment. This is the

positive teaching. On the negative side, a bad (“evil”) eye clouds the clarity and the focus of our sight. That is especially true when the means of sight is morally corrupt (“evil” in a moral sense). Evil corrupts the image of the world around us and mars our spiritual sight. If you have bad eyesight you may need corrective lenses. The Word of God is the truth that corrects our vision and gives us clear sight and enlightenment of mind and spirit. However, if our sight is so morally bad that it results in spiritual blindness, how awful is that darkness of spirit! Even today in the entire Middle East, an “evil eye” is to be feared greatly and many words and symbols are used to avoid or to counteract an “evil eye” or an evil spell put on others with a view to harming them.

3. **The priority of a single loyalty** - heavenly service (6:24).

The Text:

No one can continually serve two masters, for he will either hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot (continually) serve God and the god of goods (possessions -- that is: Mammon) at the same time.

This teaching of Jesus is reflected in the words of James 1:5-8:

If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. ⁶ But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. ⁷ That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸ (because) he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.

A double-minded (lit. “two soul”) man is unstable because he doubts or is unsure where his loyalty lies. He wants to hold on to the world and its goods (Mammon) with one hand and to God with the other hand. But God’s New Humanity always clings to God Himself and serves Him with total loyalty because He (God) is His first love. We are only capable of loving others because He loved us so much that He gave His One and Only unique Son to die for us so that we might live eternally (John 3:16-18; I John 4:19).

B. **Undiluted dependence on God’s provision is also essential.** - (6:25-34)

The text:

25a. For this reason I tell you that you must stop being worried in your soul about what you will eat or what you will drink or with what you will clothe your body.

Negatively, you must stop worrying yourself to distraction about the material necessities of life.

Worrying is a pagan trait. Followers of Jesus have learned to relax in the Lord and to trust Him for life needs. God knows that we need food to eat and something to drink and adequate clothing. Jesus had already taught His followers to depend on their heavenly Father in praying for their daily bread (6:11). Their worry about such things showed their lack of faith in the Father to provide.

25b. The soul is much more valuable than food, isn't it? and the body (worth more) than the clothing?

By this question Jesus shows that the immaterial, spiritual part of each of us is far more valuable to Him than the physical part. Then, to illustrate their lack of faith, He points to the birds and the flowers which are much inferior to people in God's created order, but He takes care of them and provides for their needs. If God cares so much for the lower orders of creation, how can we doubt that He will take care of people who are the highest in His order of creation?

26. Consider carefully the birds in the sky because they do not sow nor reap nor gather (food) into barns and yet your heavenly Father cares (provides) for them. Surely you are worth much more than they, aren't you? 27. Who of you can add one span to his growth (lit. "life") by being worried? 28. And why are you always worried about clothing? Take a lesson from the flowers of the field; (see) how they keep on growing without toiling or spinning! 29. But I tell you that even Solomon in all his splendor was not adorned like one of these (flowers). 30. If God so dresses up the field-grass which is here today and thrown into the oven (fire) tomorrow, (surely) He will much rather (care) for you, won't He, O you with (such) little faith! (lit. "little-faithers!")



The whole point of these verses is to encourage faith and trust in a loving Heavenly Father who deeply cares for His children. This is not to say that we don't have to work, but rather that when we are faithful to work in ways that God provides, He meets our needs. Even the birds have to search and scratch for their food.

Verse 25 says that we should stop an activity in progress. You are already worrying about food and drink and clothing. Please stop it. The verb form is changed in verse 31: "Don't ever worry." You are not doing it (worrying) because now you are trusting in the Father to provide for you, so "don't ever start worrying again."

31. Therefore, don't ever be worried saying, 'what shall we eat?' or, 'what shall we drink?' or, 'with what shall we clothe ourselves?' 32. For the heathen (pagans) are always searching for these things. Your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things, (as in 6:8) 33. but keep on seeking first the kingdom (of God) and His righteousness and all these things will be provided for you.

Our priority must always be to "seek God's kingdom and righteousness." If we do this, we can relax because He will provide everything else we need. Give your first great loyalty to the first Great Cause and not to any second cause or need. Worry takes your central focus off of God and onto something He has already promised to provide. Worry leads to spiritual, emotional and mental illness as do guilt, fear and anger, the three major causes for emotional and spiritual tensions in our lives. Each of these has physical implications as well; they may cause or exacerbate high blood pressure, stomach acid, or nervousness and sweating. Knowing Jesus counteracts all three. Forgiveness of sins takes away our feelings of guilt. Knowing that God is with us and is in control of our lives takes away our fear of rejection or anything negative that might happen to us, even death! Anger is defeated when we learn to relax in the Lord and let Him carry our burdens. When we relax in Jesus and trust Him to meet our needs our tensions fade away! Relaxing in Jesus is the antidote (medicine) for all these things.

34. So don't ever be worried about tomorrow, for tomorrow will have its own worries; the troubles (worries, lit. "evils") of today are enough (for today).

Positively, Jesus commands us to trust in Him to supply our needs (above paragraph) and negatively not to be worried about the future ("tomorrow"). This does not mean that we cannot plan for the future. We can and should plan for the future as much as we can. We plan with the guidance of the Spirit of God, because only He knows the future; we do not. The point is that God does not want us to be worried to distraction about the future since He will be right there with us to continue to care for us then as well as now.

This does not mean that we will never suffer. Hurricanes, typhoons, tornadoes, earthquakes, wars and fires continue to plague our earth, but even in the midst of poverty and tragedy, Jesus is with us through His Spirit as He promised many times during His ministry on earth (see John 14:15-18).

Summary: *“Take life (Live) one day at a time” (6:34). (“God will take care of your tomorrow, too. Live one day at a time.” The Living Bible)*

Many, many people live with borrowed trouble! They consider and worry about what they feel is the worst that might happen to them. It is true that we cannot see the future, but we know the One who holds the future, and we can rest in Him one day at a time.