

The Antidote to Worry

This article is edited from the Ligonier Ministries

Having told us not to store up earthly treasures (Luke 12:13-34), in today's passage Jesus anticipates an objection to His teaching. Sure, some may think, it is easy to tell us not to pursue earthly treasures, but we need money and other goods to meet our needs. Will we not worry if we do not go after such treasures? After all, how will we afford to eat, buy clothes, and so on without money?

Our Savior's answer to this unstated problem is simple: "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" (v. 22). In the examples that follow, Jesus shows us why we need not fret about such things. But before we get into these reasons, note that Christ is not here commending a lackadaisical approach to life in which we expect everything to fall into our laps. Nor does His teaching release us from the duty to feed our families. Scripture is clear that we should be industrious, just like the ants (Prov. 6:6–11), and that anyone who does not provide for his family is worse than the unbeliever who does (1 Tim. 5:8). Even so, toiling away out of fear for the future is not the same thing as God-glorifying labor.

Life's pressures invite us to worry incessantly about tomorrow. Yet Christ says divine providence makes this anxiety foolish. Birds do not worry, they sing, and still they find food each day without sowing or reaping. We as God's image-bearers have more worth than they and can be all the more confident that He will feed us as well (Matt. 6:26; see Gen. 1:26–27). "The lilies of the field" neither toil nor spin. Their life and worth is so limited that they are fuel for our fires, yet their glory is far greater than Solomon's. Since the Father provides for these, He also will provide for us, His beloved people (Matt. 6:28–30).

Far from compounding our anxiety, making God's kingdom the center of our lives frees us from anxiety. If we seek this kingdom first, He will meet all our needs (v. 30). Those who serve Him wholeheartedly and live out the ethics of God's kingdom will share what they have (Matthew 5:42; 6:1–4), and thereby our Father will meet our needs through our efforts and the generosity of others. We need not worry about tomorrow, for God always takes care of His own (Ps. 37:25).

Some of us are more prone to anxiety than others. Yet as we read in today's passage, persistent worry is not our calling as Christians. We need not be anxious about tomorrow if we are serving Jesus, for while we may not get all of our wants, He will certainly give us all of our needs. If you are struggling with anxiety this day, take your eyes off yourself and do a good deed for another person. Then, ask God to help you learn how to trust in Him confidently.