

INNER PEACE SERIES

The cure for material anxiety

Intro: Every person seeks this one thing—inner peace. One of the things that hinders our peace today is worry about our financial security. A young parent may ask, “Will we be able to save enough to educate our children? The older may ask, “Will I have enough money to live when I can no longer work?” All may ask, “What if some financial catastrophe occurs? What will I do? How will I be ready for that?”

Though we are far better off than the people of Jesus' day or the rest of the world, we are not immune to the challenges of material worry. If anything, we may need these words more, because our society has created an unrealistic dream of happiness and unrealistic standards of success toward which most of the people of our generation press. I hope all of us can profit today by being reminded of Jesus' thoughts on how to cope with the challenge of anxiety over the material things of life! Let's read Mt. 6:25-34.

Jesus in this text gives us 4 keys to overcoming the challenges of personal anxiety.

HE URGES US TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN MAKING A LIVING AND MAKING A LIFE

We need to rise above pagan concerns (v. 32).

“For all these things the Gentiles eagerly seek; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. (Matthew 6:32)

To the Jew, the Gentile was the classic infidel. If we are to act as if all that is worth seeking in life is food, clothing, and shelter (and better food, clothing and shelter), then we are no better than unbelievers! The Gentiles could see no realm of life or living beyond the physical.

Jesus warned about that problem:

And He said to them, “Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions.” (Luke 12:15)

Is not life more than food, and the body than clothing? (Matthew 6:25)

What is life? What is the body? What is living?

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. (Romans 8:2)

To have life is to walk by the law of the Spirit who gives life! It is to let the Spirit cultivate in us His fruit! Real life is...love; joy; peace, etc. (Gal. 5:22ff)

That's the reason Jesus closes with the exhortation of v. 33.

“But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you. (Matthew 6:33)

Putting the kingdom first is seeking true life! It doesn't mean putting the "church" first, if we mean by church the people whom

God saves. It means putting the doing of God's will first! That's the only real life that there is!

Which are we doing? Making a living or making a life? How we answer that question will greatly affect our worry quotient!

HE URGES US TO SEE THE UNPRODUCTIVENESS OF ANXIETY.

"Which of you by being anxious can add one cubit to his life's span?"

When someone adds another birthday we say, "He has reached another milestone". But who can add, not a mile, but just 18 inches to his life by worry? The obvious answer is "no one".

Worry is one of the most unproductive things that we can do! It won't add one second to your life; actually, it may take time off of it! It won't make a dollar; it won't pay a bill; it won't teach a child; encourage a weak brother; save a soul; increase your knowledge of the word of God. It is a futile, empty, worthless act that feeds upon itself to produce self-centeredness and its resultant unhappiness!

HE URGES US TO SEE THAT GOD KNOWS AND CAN MEET OUR NEEDS.

He urges us to look for God's care in the lower order of the creation.

"Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? (Matthew 6:26)

Consider the birds. (Jesus uses humor here!) Ever seen a bird driving a tractor and plow? Pulling a wagon to the barn? Yet they do not die of starvation!

"And why are you anxious about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory did not clothe himself like one of these. (Matthew 6:28-29)

Consider the lilies. The beautiful "lilies" were probably the variety called anthemis palestina, or the camomile. This common grass was cut for hay and was used for fuel for the oven. It produces a small white flower at harvest time. One could imagine them growing around the Lord's feet as he spoke. Their beauty was greater than the finery of Solomon.

If God takes care of these, will He not take care of men? To say "no" is to express a true lack of faith in God's love and power and our worth to God.

People of faith know that God has the power!

That God has the concern!

That we have a worth to God beyond unspiritual creatures!

Therefore, God will meet the needs of His people!

HE URGES US TO LIVE ONE DAY AT A TIME.

The real problem with anxiety is that it is typically concerned with what has not yet occurred! We worry about the future. We project ourselves into the future and anxiously imagine the worst scenario.

"Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. (Matthew 6:34)

Jesus says, "Live one day at a time. Let tomorrow worry about tomorrow. Every day has enough trouble to deal with without dragging into it those things that may or may not happen!"

One of the most popular songs ever written was the country hit of several years ago. I remember going to senior citizens places and the older people would sing that song almost every time: "One day at a time sweet Jesus, that's all I'm asking from you; just give me the strength to do every day what I've got to do; Yesterday's gone sweet Jesus and tomorrow may never be mine; So keep me today, show me the way, one day at a time".

Conclusion: Have you allowed worry to strangle your contentment and peace? To make you feel like a rope in an emotional tug-of-war? Jesus shows us how to find real peace in a world of anxiety. Put your life in God's hands with a committed trust. Rest in His love & power. Take it one day at a time. Put His will first and you will live in the confidence that all the needs of your life will be met.

Such assurance belongs only to those who show their faith in obedience to the gospel. Have you?