

Owning a Faith That Matters

Session 5

February 18, 2024

Confident Faith

The Point: Faith displaces worry.

Session Passage: Luke 12:22-34

Luke 12:22-26

Connection to The Point: Worry is incompatible with faith and trusting God.

He Jesus said unto his disciples (v. 22). Jesus spoke to the disciples, not the crowd at large. *Disciples* derives from a verb meaning “to learn.” Thus a disciple is a learner. In the first-century world of rabbinic Judaism, *disciple* identified an individual committed to Scripture interpretations and religious tradition learned from a rabbi or master. The learning process included methods such as question and answer, discussion, repetition, and memorization. Over time the disciple would become increasingly devoted to the master and the master’s teachings. While Jesus most likely used some traditional teaching methods, He also differed from the rabbis in certain respects. First, while disciples of rabbis selected their teachers, Jesus chose His followers. Second, Jesus often required demanding levels of personal renunciation, including leaving family and property to follow Him.

Do not worry about/ Take no thought for your life (v. 22). Human tendency is to worry. Biblical faith, however, looks to God to get us through whatever concerns or fears we are facing. Jesus gave a similar teaching in Matthew 6:25-34. After providing a negative example of a person’s relationship to possessions (parable of the rich fool, Luke 12:15-21), Jesus taught His disciples how believers should relate to possessions. Worry or anxiety can be defined as a state of mind in which we are concerned about something or someone. This mental attitude may range from genuine concern to obsessions arising from a distorted perspective of life. Jesus did not forbid genuine concern about food and shelter. However, He did teach that His disciples must keep their priorities in proper perspective, with the kingdom of God being their primary focus. While the word translated *life* can mean “soul,” in this context it obviously refers to the whole person.

Life is more than food/ meat, and the body is more than clothing/clothes/raiment (v. 23). One reason not to worry is that there’s more to life than focusing on what we eat and wear. Life’s real meaning involves much more than these concerns. Jesus was not teaching that poverty is a blessing. He demonstrated concern for the materially poor. He preached of good news to poor people (Luke 4:18) and related parables that encouraged generosity to those in poverty (14:12-24). However, the abundant life He came to give consists of far more than enjoying life’s necessities. When after forty days of fasting, He was tempted by Satan to turn stones into bread, Jesus responded, “Man must/shall not live on/by bread alone” (4:4).

Consider the ravens (v. 24). Jesus presented a second reason not to worry: because we can expect God to care for His children, who are worth far more than the birds. The Greek verb translated *consider* can also mean “to observe” or “to fix one’s eyes or mind on.” Ravens, members of the crow family, don’t sow seed, harvest crops, or own a dedicated place to store provisions, yet God provides for them. The Old Testament also cites the raven as an example of God’s care for His creatures (Job 38:41; Ps. 147:9). Not only does God feed ravens, He also has used their resourcefulness to care for humans. Ravens often store surplus food in rocky crevices. God sent ravens to sustain Elijah during a period of drought and famine (1 Kings 17:1-6). They served as symbols of God’s love and concern for His prophet.

Aren’t you worth much more than the birds? And how much more valuable you are than birds! How much more are ye better than the fowls? (v. 24). Here Jesus argued from the lesser to the greater to emphasize God’s care for humans. Since He cares for the birds, how *much more* He will care for people, whom He created in His image (Gen. 1:27-28).

Can any of you add one moment to his life span by worrying? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life? And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? (v. 25). Jesus's third reason for excising worry from our lives is that worry is futile. Jesus's question expects a negative answer. The term rendered *momentsingle hour* literally means "cubit," is the length between the joint of the elbow and the tip of the middle finger, typically about eighteen inches. *Life span* can also mean "stature." *Stature* can also refer to life-span. Thus the expression can relate either to length of life or height—either a measure of time or a measure of physical stature. Bible scholars hold differing opinions about whether the expression should mean adding a *one moment/ single hour* to one's life span or adding to one's stature (see KJV). Because adding a to one's height constitutes more than "a little thing" (v. 26), scholars often opt for the meaning adding time.

Even a /This very little thing /That thing which is least (v. 26). A single Greek word, this expresses the superlative degree. It can indicate that which is the very smallest or the very least in size, amount, importance, rank, or excellence. Worry is pointless or futile. It cannot add anything positive to our lives. It can, however, negatively impact our health, life span, and general well-being.

Why do you worry about/ take ye thought for the rest? (v. 26). If we can't change even the smallest thing by worrying, why worry about the big or great things? Anxiety is not worth the effort. Worry doesn't solve anything.

Luke 12:27-30

Connection to The Point: In faith, we trust God because He knows what we need.

Consider how the wildflowers/ the lilies how they grow (v. 27). While the word translated *wildflowers* is sometimes rendered "lilies," the precise flower is uncertain. The term *lilies* actually designated a wide range of flowers. Numerous species of wildflowers adorned the plains and mountains of biblical Palestine. The warm spring temperatures together with the rains produced these beautiful blooming plants. The flowers sprang up quickly and unassumingly in springtime. Their growth and blossoming appeared effortless on their part.

They do not labor or spin thread /They toil not/ they spin not (v. 27). *LaborToil* indicates wearisome effort. The verb depicts the kind of toil that exhausts the laborer. The term rendered *spin* appears only here and in Matthew 6:28, that parallels Jesus's teachings in Luke 12:27. Both verbs in the original Greek identify ongoing or continuing activity. The God who clothes nature so beautifully without effort on its part can surely be trusted to meet His children's basic needs.

Not even Solomon in all his splendor was adorned /dressed like one of these /Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these (v. 27). Solomon, whose name is connected with the Hebrew word for "peace," served as Israel's third king. Bathsheba gave birth to Solomon after the first son born to David and her died (2 Sam. 12:24). King Solomon is noted for his wisdom, building programs, and wealth. The king received twenty-five tons of gold each year (1 Kings 10:14). Yet even Solomon, displaying all the magnificence of his affluence, including his fine clothing, did not compare with the beauty of the wildflowers.

The grass, which is in the field today and is thrown into the furnace tomorrow/ The grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire/The grass, which is to day in the field, and tomorrow is cast into the oven (v. 28). Here grass parallels the wildflowers mentioned in verse 27. These flowers that dotted the areas open fields often bloomed one day and died the next. Because wood was relatively scarce, dried grasses and wildflowers fueled ovens to bake bread. In the Old Testament grass frequently symbolized the brevity or transitory nature of life (see Ps. 37:1-2; Isa. 40:6-8).

How much more (v. 28). This expression calls to mind the contrast between the giving of imperfect parents and that of our perfect heavenly Father (Luke 11:13). Here, however, the contrast lies between God's caring for transitory grass and

His much greater concern for people whom He created in His image (Gen. 1:27). Jesus's downgrading the wildflowers (Luke 12:27) to grass (v. 28) increases the strength of His argument.

YouYe of little faith (v. 28). This expression, only here in Luke, occurs repeatedly on Jesus's lips in Matthew (Matt. 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8) as a form of tender rebuke to calm the fears and anxieties of His disciples. *Faith* conveys the idea of trust or the firm conviction someone or some claim is true.

Don't strive for what you should eat and . . . drink/Do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink/Seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink (v. 29). The phrase *don't strive for do not set your heart on* literally means "don't seek." This verb can also convey the idea of craving. Verse 29 lists things we should not seek or crave, whereas verse 31 identifies what we need to seek—the kingdom of God. The expression in the original Greek more literally means to stop craving or to stop seeking. It assumes the action is already in progress and needs to cease. Jesus's similar instruction in Matthew 6:31 addresses worry, and that is the basic meaning of Jesus's command here.

Don't be anxious/Do not worry about it/Neither be ye of doubtful mind (v. 29). The verb in this expression, although differing from the one translated "worry" regarding *taking thought* in Luke 12:22,25-26, conveys a similar meaning. This particular verb, however, provides a graphic word picture of what worry can do to us. Its basic meaning is "to put a ship out to sea." From that basic meaning the term derived a word picture taken from ships tossed about by the wind and waves. Thus it came to mean "to harass or agitate with cares" or "to make anxious." The King James translates the phrase "neither be ye of doubtful mind," which carries the image of a person being tossed back and forth amid indecision, unsettled by anxiety.

The Gentile pagan nations of the world (v. 30). This phrase literally reads "the nations of the world" in the original Greek. The Greek word translated "nations" is written in English as *ethnos*, from which our word *ethnic* derives. In the New Testament the term often designates people who were not part of God's chosen family (Jews) at birth. It could be rendered as "pagan." The translation "nations" suggests territory, while "pagans" would suggest religion, thus the unbelieving world (1 Thess. 4:5). Jesus's ministry included being a light for the Gentile nations (Luke 2:32).

Eagerly seeks all these things/Runs after all such things/Seek after (v. 30). The verb conveys the idea of diligently seeking or craving. The verb form indicates continuous action. Many people expend all their efforts to pile up material things that by their very nature cannot last.

Your Father knows that you need them /knoweth that ye have need of these things (v. 30). Jesus reminded His followers that God knows what we need. *Your* is emphasized in this expression, underlining that these words are addressed to Jesus's disciples, those who enjoy a personal relationship with the Father. God who created us knows what we need. Too often we confuse our wants with needs. The bottom line of Jesus's teaching: stop worrying and trust God to meet our needs.

Luke 12:31-34

Connection to The Point: There is no room for worry when our trust is fully in God.

But seek his kingdom /But rather seek ye the kingdom of God (v. 31). Instead of focusing energies on worldly needs and desires, Jesus instructed His followers to seek His kingdom. The verb form conveys continuous action. We sought His kingdom when we trusted Christ as Savior; we are to continue seeking His kingdom. The term *kingdom* in Scripture typically refers to someone's reign or rule rather than controlled territory. Thus to seek God's kingdom means to submit to His rule in our lives. Submitting to His rule includes striving to live by His standards. Jesus's imperative urges us to pursue those things involving the kingdom of God rather than making our passion the accumulation of material possessions.

These things will be provided for you /given to you/All these things shall be added unto you (v. 31). Rather than allowing anxiety to rule our lives, we are to trust our Father to meet our daily needs. We also must trust His wisdom in distinguishing between our wants and needs. From our limited human viewpoint we often think we know what we need in the short term. God, however, takes the long view and knows what is best for us from an eternal perspective.

Do not be afraid/Fear not (v. 32). Luke previously recorded Jesus's speaking these same words to Simon Peter (5:10) and to Jairus the synagogue leader (8:50). The structure of this command in the original language prohibits the continuation of an action or feeling already in progress. Thus, its impact is "Stop being afraid." With these words of assurance, Jesus desired to alleviate worry and to strengthen faith.

Little flock (v. 32). The specific designation *flock* for Christ's disciples or church appears elsewhere (Acts 20:28-29; 1 Pet. 5:2-3). Jesus also used the imagery of a shepherd and his sheep on various occasions to depict His relationship to His disciples (Matt. 26:31; John 10:1-18). This picture also appears in the Old Testament to portray God's relationship to His people (Ps. 23; Jer. 23:1; Ezek. 34:12,22). In Luke 12:32 the designation identifies believers as part of the true people of God. Even in threatening situations they need not fear because God is with them (Luke 10:3). Furthermore, they do not need to be afraid because He has made them part of His kingdom.

Your Father delights/ has been pleased/ It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom (v. 32). The imagery shifts from shepherd and sheep to father and child. God, our loving heavenly Father, delights in giving His children the kingdom. Although they already possess it and experience its blessings, they will receive it in its fullness at the end of the age. The verb rendered *delights pleased good pleasure* could also be translated "takes pleasure." In Luke 3:22 the same verb designates the Father's pleasure with or delighting in His Son following Jesus's baptism.

Sell your possessions and give to the poor/ Sell that ye have and give alms (v. 33). Perhaps more than any other New Testament books, Luke and Acts emphasize how Christians should relate to material possessions. In addition to Jesus's command here, Luke also recorded Jesus's similar words to the rich young ruler in 18:22. This Gospel writer captured Jesus's words to the crowds in 14:33 regarding possessions and being His disciple. Jesus did not intend that every believer give away all material possessions because He expected believers to have the resources to continue practicing generosity. Elsewhere Luke called attention to the importance of benevolence and charitable giving (see 3:11; 6:34-35,38; 14:12-14). Although some believers may be called to sell their belongings as in the case of the rich ruler, this demand is not universal. However, Jesus's teachings warn against the danger possessions can involve (8:14; 16:10-13,19-31). The accumulation of wealth can easily lead to attitudes of self-sufficiency and arrogance. As Jesus admonished His disciples, we must always beware of greed or covetousness (12:15). We are to use our possessions to serve God, rather than attempt to use God to acquire possessions (16:13).

Money-bags/ Purses Bags (v. 33). This Greek term is unique to Luke's Gospel (see also 10:4; 22:35-36). It also can be rendered "purse." That word designates a belt or waistband into which travelers could tuck the ends of their robes to allow for greater freedom of movement. People frequently stored their money in the folds of these waistbands. In sending out His twelve disciples in Matthew 10 and Mark 6, Jesus instructed them neither to take nor to acquire gold, silver, or copper for their money-belts. He encouraged them to trust God as they ministered in His name. Later Jesus gave His disciples different instructions as He prepared them to face opposition and persecution following His resurrection and ascension (Luke 22:35-36).

An inexhaustible treasure in heaven/ A treasure in heaven that will never fail/ A treasure in the heavens that faileth not (v. 33). If we as believers are focused on seeking God's kingdom (v. 31), then we will choose priorities designed to reap heavenly dividends. The term translated *inexhaustible* can also be rendered "unfailing." Unfailing treasure in heaven will outlast our lives on earth. Neither can heavenly treasure succumb to the dangers that earthly treasures face. Treasures of this earth cause us anxiety as we worry about losing them. In contrast heavenly reserves give no cause for worry but rather for rejoicing.

No thief comes near and no moth destroys/ approacheth, neither moth corrupteth (v. 33). Matthew recorded Jesus's teaching in the first part of this expression as: "where thieves do not break in through nor and steal" (Matt. 6:20). In both Gospels the sense of the verb with the negative is that a thief cannot enter and take heavenly treasures. Jesus's expression in Matthew's record presents the picture of thieves being able to dig through the walls of biblical Palestinian houses to acquire loot. The reference to the destructive moth recognizes that in biblical times clothing was a common form of wealth.

Where your treasure is, there will your heart will be also (v. 34). What we treasure determines our loyalty and priorities. In biblical thought the *heart* was associated with the activities of the mind and will. It also was recognized as the center of moral and spiritual life. Not the possession of material things but rather the attitude we hold toward them marks us as either heavenly- or worldly-minded. The lack of earthly possessions does not necessarily make us heavenly-minded. With or without an abundance of this world's goods, we may be consumed by anxiety. Confident faith displaces anxiety as it clings to the expectation that God will take care of us as we seek His kingdom.