

GRACE EMPOWERED LIVING: THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT
SESSION 21: GOD'S KINGDOM AND WORRY-FREE LIVING – MATTHEW 6:19-34
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INTRODUCTION:

The section of the Sermon on the Mount that is before us today is one of great comfort, yet one of great challenge, for it speaks to central issues of the heart – our affections and attractions to things of this world that we think provide security for us. Jesus gives us a series of simple statements that have large implications for our lives. These simple statements call us to a place of trust and confidence in God that challenge our way of life, and they only become complicated as we try to find ways to make them say something else. May the Holy Spirit help us today to hear Him as He reveals the Father's heart to us.

I. TREASURE ON EARTH VS. TREASURE IN HEAVEN

- A. Primary principle: God's delight is to give ultimate rewards. Life in Christ is not about negation or self-denial as an end in itself, but is filled with promises of great reward for those who embrace His ways with a whole heart.
- B. He desires our true happiness with maximum joy. Jesus loved the Father's ways (Psalm 45:7), hated the distortion of the Father's plans, and therefore experienced fullness of joy. He gives us these teachings so that His joy may be our full inheritance.

Psalm 45:7 You love righteousness and hate wickedness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of gladness more than Your companions.

John 15:11 "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.

- C. God's Kingdom functions by love; therefore, there must be choices. Jesus plainly tells us that if we resolutely choose the ways of His Father's Kingdom, peace and security and joy will be our experience. If we choose to trust in the alternatives, we place ourselves in the same predicament that has brought trouble to God's people for thousands of years.

II. FOCUSING ON THE TRUE LIGHT

- A. Primary principle: We become like that which we gaze upon. When we fix our gaze upon the person of Jesus, and love Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, we are transformed into His likeness from one level of glory to the next.

2 Corinthians 3:18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

- B. Our physical eyes and our spiritual condition are directly connected. When our gaze is captured by the values and priorities of this world's system, we become conformed to that system and cannot comprehend the reality and simple joy of the Kingdom of God.

- C. If the focus of one's gaze is darkness, how great is the darkness!

III. THE CHOICE BETWEEN TWO MASTERS

- A. Primary principle: when money is the focus of our eyes, or the object of our desire, it ceases to be a tool and becomes personified as a false god

Proverbs 10:15 The rich man's wealth is his strong city; The destruction of the poor is their poverty.

Job 31:24,28 "If I have made gold my hope, Or said to fine gold, 'You are my confidence'; . . . 28 This also would be an iniquity deserving of judgment, For I would have denied God who is above.

- B. In Jesus' language there is no middle ground

1. Love one and hate the other – if our affections are tuned to what money can do for us, we inevitably become lovers of money instead of lovers of God, and open ourselves to much trouble.

1 Timothy 6:6–10 Now godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. 8 And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. 9 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

2. Loyal to one and despise the other. We are created to be addicted to God and His ways, but if we replace Him with the desire for stuff, we will soon despise the values and priorities of His Kingdom.

3. Cannot serve both God and Money

- C. St. John of the Cross refers to God's provision of manna in the wilderness to teach on the importance of putting to death the desires for earthly pleasures as replacement for pleasure and confidence in God.

Of this we have a figure in Exodus, wherein we read that God gave not the children of Israel the food from Heaven, which was manna, until the flour which they had brought from Egypt failed them. By this is signified that first of all it is (good) to renounce all things, for this angels' food is not fitting for the palate that would find delight in the food of men. And not only does the soul become incapable of receiving the Divine Spirit when it stays and pastures on other strange pleasures, but those souls who desire spiritual food and are not content with God alone greatly offend the Divine Majesty, but desire rather to intermingle desire and affection for other things. This can likewise be seen in the same book of Holy Scripture, wherein it is said that, not content with that simplest of food, they desired and craved fleshly food (Numbers 11:4). And that Our Lord was greatly wroth that they should desire to intermingle a food that

was so base and so coarse with one that was so noble and so simple; which, though it was so, had within itself the sweetness and substance of all foods. Wherefore, while they yet had the morsels in their mouths, as David says likewise: The wrath of God came down upon them, sending fire from Heaven and consuming many thousands of them; for God held it an unworthy thing that they should have a desire for other food when He had given them food from Heaven (see Psalm 78:29-31).

D. Money must be seen as a tool in the service of God

1. The ability to gain wealth is a gift from God

Deuteronomy 8:18 “***And you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day.***”

2. God allows inequality among us to develop generosity and trust

Proverbs 19:17 ***He who has pity on the poor lends to the LORD, And He will pay back what he has given.***

2 Corinthians 8:13–15 ***For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened; 14 but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may supply their lack, that their abundance also may supply your lack—that there may be equality. 15 As it is written, “He who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack.”***

1 Timothy 6:17–19 ***Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. 18 Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, 19 storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.***

3. Jesus equates the resource of money with a stewardship for Kingdom investment that has the expectation of a day of accounting

Matthew 25:14-15, 19 “***For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. 15 . . . and immediately he went on a journey. 19 After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them.***”

4. A natural by-product of the life of the Holy Spirit among a people is care-free, generous living.

Acts 4:32–35 ***Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. 33 And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. 34 Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold***

them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, 35 and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.

IV. SEEK GOD'S KINGDOM FOR WORRY-FREE LIVING

- A. Jesus commands us not to worry, but to trust the Father who loves us and cares for us more than for any other part of His creation.
- B. Worry is the realm of unbelief, and those who give in to worry exhibit an unconverted area of the heart.
- C. This is not about being lazy and calling it faith – God's Word is clear about diligence and faithfulness, keeping our loyalty and trust fixed on God, working for the purpose of sharing.

Ephesians 4:28 Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.

Colossians 3:22–24 Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. 23 And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.

- D. We are to embrace the Lord's agenda – the seeking of His Kingdom and His righteousness – and live in confident responsiveness to the Father's voice, knowing that He will provide all we need according to the resources He has in Heaven.

Philippians 4:6–7 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:19 And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

This promise is made to the Philippians in the context of their generous sharing with Paul in his time of financial need.

CONCLUSION: God's desire is that we live free from worry and fear, trusting Him to provide all we need. Times of stress and uncertainty serve to reveal to us the compromised places in our hearts so that we might repent and turn back to Him. May we truly become people of the Kingdom, trusting God and living in the freedom of His ways.