

## Anxiety, The Curse and its Cure, pt.2

This evening we will continue in the series we started two weeks ago on Anxiety

From the onset let me say that this topic has some nuance that we must be careful to acknowledge.

One such nuance that needs to be considered is what could be seen as the difference between anxiety and depression.

The last time we were together I said that depression is a form of anxiety, which is true.

However, I was not saying that **all** forms of depression are a result of being anxious.

The reason why this nuance is important to make is because it could have appeared that I said that all forms of depression are sinful!

That's not what I was saying.

If we had to define depression can be a general and sometimes unexpected state of sadness.

Yes, there may be more clinical and medical definitions of depression, but I think it's safe to define it as a state of sadness. We may even add that depression can be accompanied with melancholy feelings where you are withdrawn and feel low.

And if we see depression as an emotional state of sadness, then we must conclude that it is not sin to be sad (or to have moments when you feel low.)

However, some forms of depression can (and do) come from anxiety.

That is to say, that there are times when you are depressed because you are also anxious.

This would be a situation of looking at the fruit and connecting it to the root.

So, in those cases where depression comes from anxiety, the expression of depression would be sinful. (Does that make sense?)

I want to make it clear that I am not saying that if you ever experience depression you are sinning, but at the same time that could be the case.

In any case, the solution to your depression and anxiety is to look to God and do what our brother Peter tells us, “cast all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.”

You need to deal honestly with what you are feeling and take it to the Lord.

So, are we clear with that nuance with anxiety and depression?

Now, the last time we were together I gave several definitions of anxiety from the three main passages on anxiety (Matt 6:25–34, Philippians 4:4–7 and 1 Peter 5:6–7)

These passages (and their definitions give us several perspectives on anxiety that are helpful to us.)

Here are the definitions:

- 1. Anxiety is a faithless and arrogant state of thinking and feeling that is more preoccupied with a given situation than it is with God! (2x)***
- 2. Anxiety is proactive worry that comes from a heart that does not trust God! (2x)***
- 3. Anxiety is having overwhelming concern without reference to God! (2x)***

4. *Anxiety is the worshipful preoccupation with the things of this world to the exclusion of the worshipful preoccupation of God! (2x)*
5. *Anxiety is becoming so fixated on a particular thing or situation, real or unreal that affects you to the point where you become fearful, troubled, overwhelmed and faithless. (2x)*

And based on these definitions what God makes abundantly clear is that:

1. **Anxiety is sinful!**
2. **You, by the grace of God, can and must control your anxiety!**

What God reveals to us is that anxiety is deeply spiritual.

And that if we are anxious in any way about anything we are sinning!

It's important to state this plainly because anxiety has become one of those sins that has become so medicated that we do even consider it to be something that is evil.

We call it a mental disorder, or we will call it a biological/genetic trait.

Rarely, if ever, will refer to anxiety the way God does!

God sees anxiety as evil! He calls it sin!

*Anxiety is sin the same way that lying, murder and sexually immorality and idolatry are sins!*

Anxiety is wicked!

As we said last time, anxiety is not something that needs to be medicated more so than it needs to be repented of!

And we must see it as such.

Because if we do not see anxiety as sin will not treat it as seriously as God does, nor we will not aim to put this sin to death if it appears in our life!!

So, we must see anxiety as sin!

So, the first truth we must understand is that anxiety is sin!

And the second truth is that **you, by the grace of God, can and must control your anxiety!**

What we will come to see in time is that God has granted us the power to overcome all sin, especially the sin of anxiety.

Because anxiety so affects our minds and emotions, we sometimes conclude that we cannot control how we think or feel!

Firstly, that is not true (you can control you thinking and emotions...and we look at this in Philippians 4.)

But, secondly, **YOU ARE NOT A SLAVE TO ANY SIN!**

You are not a captive to any sin!

You are completely and totally free!

In Christ, there is nothing you are inseparably paired to, expect Him!

Yes, I understand that anxiety can feel like a prison in which you are serving a life sentence!

But if you are in Christ, you are a free man and woman!

You are freed from the bondage of anxiety!

You are free from the clutches and grip of burdensome worry!!

You are free and you are more than a conqueror!

And if this is not true then you are telling me that there is a sin for which Jesus did not conquer!

If you feel like anxiety is something that you cannot defeat then you are saying that there is a sin that the Spirit of the living God cannot enable you to overcome!

And if that is the case, then the word of God is void and God is a liar!

However, because we know that God's word is true and forever will be;

Because we know that there is no sin that Jesus did not conquer;

Because we know that the Spirit of God powerfully enables us to obey His word, we must conclude that you can and must control your anxiety!! (we will look more at this when we study Philippians 4.)

But you must get this: Anxiety is sin and you can and must control your anxiety!

These are the two truths that God makes abundantly clear to us as it relates to anxiety!

Now, what we are going to do this evening is start to examine Matt 6. Here our Lord Jesus teaches on anxiety.

(So, if you have your copy of God's word, turn with me to Matthew 6:24–34. Read)

This teaching on anxiety comes towards the end of what is known as the sermon on the mount.

The sermon on the mount can be looked at as a series of teachings that Jesus gives that characterizes the citizens of the kingdom of God!

Jesus teaches, at length, about what ought to be true about those who are in His kingdom.

You cannot read the sermon on the mount and not see the *moral obligations* that are placed on those who are disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And in the sermon Jesus teaches on:

- Obedience to the Law of God
- Prayer
- Sexual Immorality
- Divorce
- Giving to the needed
- Loving your enemies/neighbor
- Repentance
- Swearing Oaths
- False Prophets
- False Professors

Now, in the midst of all this teaching, Jesus also taught on being anxious!

And what Jesus makes clear is that we are not to be anxious!

We know this from the text because He says it three times!  
(v. 25, 31 and 34.)

And what we noted last time was that if God says something once we should take it *really* seriously!

If God says it twice, we should *really, really*, take it seriously!!

And if God says it three times, we should *really, really, really* take it seriously!

And the fact that your Lord says to you three times, “Do not be anxious,” “Do not be anxious,” “Do not be anxious,” shows you not only the seriousness of this sin, but also how diligent we need to be in not committing this sin!

Now, it is at this point that our nuanced definitions of anxiety come in.

Because as Jesus teaches us on the subject of anxiety, He defines anxiety in a way that helps get to the heart of the matter concerning anxiety.

Jesus teaches us that anxiety:

***is the worshipful preoccupation with the things of this world to the exclusion of the worshipful preoccupation of God!***

***And that Anxiety is proactive worrying that comes from a heart that does not trust God!***

So, to Jesus, anxiety is not just a matter of preoccupation (what you are focused on), but it is a matter of worship!

To Jesus...*anxiety has to deal with who your God is! (or in the word of Jesus, it depends on who your “Master” is!)*

This reality comes from the statement Jesus makes in v. 24 when He says...(read)

And then He says, “Therefore I tell you...”

By Jesus making this statement, “therefore I tell you,” He is making a direct connection between worship and anxiety!

Anxiety is a matter of worship! And we can further see this because Jesus equates having anxiety with a lack of faith v. 30, when He says “O, you of little faith!”

***So, hear this: Who or what you worship will determine whether or not you are anxious! (2x)***

Do you worship God; is He your Master; are you trusting Him? If so, you *will not* be anxious!

Or do you worship things, are they your Master; are you trusting it? If so, you *will* be anxious!

Because the truth of the matter is this: if you worship God then you will not be anxious! Period!

Why? Because you know who He is and trust Him! (You know His character and nature...)

But, conversely, if you worship things, the stuff of this world, or circumstances you will be anxious!

Because all those things have characters too...but you and both know they are not like God!

Things and circumstances change!

The stuff of this world is transient! It is here today and tomorrow!

Not so with your God and Father!

So, if and when you find yourself being anxious or being tempted to be anxious, ask yourself, “At this moment, what or who am I worshipping?” “What or who am I allowing to preoccupy my heart and mind?”

- God or goods?
- Christ or circumstances?
- The Spirit or stuff?

Because at the end of the day anxiety is a matter of worship!



As Jesus continues to teach on the sin of anxiety, He gives profound truth that aids us to fight against anxiety.

And our Lord teaching on this is simple, but profound!!

**The first truth that the Lord give us is this:**

**Truth #1: Do Not be Anxious...Because Life is More than Provision (v. 25)**

Jesus asks a question that puts things into perspective. (read v. 25)

And the answer to this question is yes! Yes, life is more than food and the body more than clothing.

You see, what anxiety does is reduce the grandeur and goodness of the life that has given us and it reduces it so things, stuff...anxiety reduces our lives to transactions and receipts!

When you are anxious you make life all about a material existence!

And that, ironically, robs you of fully enjoying the varied blessings that God has given you!

This speaks profoundly to me, because I sometimes find myself, for example, being anxious about my family.

And what I have discovered is when I am with my family and being anxious about them it actually hinders my enjoyment of them!

And I am sure that you can testify to this reality!

If you are worried about how your rent or mortgage is going to be paid, you will hinder your ability to enjoy your house because you are anxiously worrying about how to pay for it!

What we must do is proactively fight against this so that we may fully enjoy the blessings that God has given us!

And we must fight not reduce life to a mere superficial and material existence.

What Jesus is helping us to see by asking this question is that we were created for more than a meal and clothes!

Food and clothing was created for us and not us for food and clothing!

In other words, the totality of our lives is not to be found in what we eat or wear!

And when you are anxious you substitute the pursuit and enjoyment of God for a plate of food (or whatever material thing you are anxious about!)

So, what Jesus is helping to do with this question is reprioritize the meaning of life!

So, what you must understand is that your life is more meaningful than the food you put in it and the clothes you put on it!

Your life has more meaning and purpose than that!

Now, this does not mean that material things are unimportant.

God created a material world that we benefit from.

But the point that Jesus is making is that the material things of this world must not rise to the level in our hearts and minds where we begin to live and define our lives by material things!

So, in a super simple way to see this is that your life is more than your paycheck! (Jesus elsewhere tell us that one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.” )

And when you are anxious you make all of life about what you have and do not have!

To which Jesus would tell us not to do!

This is the first truth: **Truth #1: Do Not be Anxious...Because Life is More than Provision**

**Truth #2: Do not be Anxious...Because Birds and Flowers Are Not Anxious (v. 26, v. 28, read) (2x)**

Jesus looks at nature and illustrates the point He wants to teach.

And the point He wants to teach is that we should not be anxious because birds and Flowers are not anxious!

But why?

Well, He tells us!

Birds and Flowers aren't anxious because God feeds the birds and cultivates the flowers!

And the real punch is that you are much more valuable than Birds and Flowers that God provides for!

Birds and flowers are just created things...but you...you we are created in His image!

**It is an argument from lesser to greater!**

So, if God gives birds the provision they need or gives the flowers the provision they need (and they are not in God's likeness), **HOW MUCH MORE will God give to you what you need when you are made in His image!**

**In other words, what you should hear Jesus telling us is that God values you more than He does the birds and flowers!**

**You are of more value to God than Birds and Flowers!!!**

So, in a real way nature stands to encourage us or rebuke us!

It encourages us, insofar, as we are reminded of God's goodness and care in that He provides even for the birdies and flowers!

But nature stands to rebuke us when we are anxious and birds are free flying, receiving their provision from God without a care in the world!

Jesus says, look at the birds... "they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns..."

In other words, birds aren't farmers!

They do not have a "side hustle" to get their provisions!

Birds do not have 401k, pension and a portfolio!

Birds simply do what birds do and God feeds them!

(Now, of course, Jesus is not teaching against work, or saving! God created us to work, but what God did not call us to do is worry. And that's the point!)

You have never seen a bird, frantically flapping its wings, and wandering around as if it were anxiously trying to find food!

And if you did see a bird do this...how strange would that sight be?

But catch this: *just as strange as it would be for a bird to be frantic, so should it be strange for you to be anxious and you claim God as your father!*

*Because when you claim God is your Father yet live anxiously, you are declaring that God loves (or has more affection for) birds more than He loves you!*

Jesus says, “Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin,”

In other, Jesus is telling us that the lilies do not have a 9–5!

You have never seen a flower frantically trying to receive water and rays from the sun!

And you did see a flower doing this...how strange would that sight be?

But catch this again: ***just as strange as it would be for a flower to be frantic, so should it be strange for you to be anxious and you claim God as your father!***

*Because when you claim God is your Father yet live anxiously, you are declaring that God loves (or has more affection for) flowers more than He loves you!*

And, beloved, you know this is not true!

- For which of the birds did Jesus go to the cross for!?
- For which of the flowers was Jesus resurrected for!?
- For which of the birds did Jesus pledge, in His faithfulness, that He would never leave or forsake!?
- For which of the flowers did He say He will be with them always to the end of the age!?
- For which bird does He live to make intercession for them!?
- For which flower has God declared is more than a conquer!?
- For which bird did the Lord say, He will provide all their needs according to His riches in glory!?
- For which flower did the Lord say He was their shepherd!?
- For which bird does the Holy Spirit dwell in!?

Beloved, what you must see is that anxiety reveals what you believe about God!

- When you are anxious you are declaring that God is a better Father to birds and flowers than He is to you!
- When you are anxious you are declaring that it is better to be a bird or flower than it is to be an image bearer of God, who has been redeemed by the blood of Christ!

This is what your anxiety is saying! It testifies and proclaims that God is not good to you and that He does not care for you!

Your anxiety says, “Oh sure, God loves, cares and provides for the birds, but who knows if He loves, cares or will provide for me!”

Your anxious thinking says, “Of course, God will sustain and be benevolent to flowers, but it's a toss up if He will sustain and be benevolent to me...”

Do you hear how bizarre and twisted that sounds!

But this is exactly what you are declaring when you are anxious!

And ultimately, when you are anxious you are declaring that you do not trust the Lord!”

This is why Jesus calls a spade a spade in v. 31 and tells you that when you are anxious you do not trust God! (That why He says, “O you of little faith!”)

Remember the definition: ***Anxiety is proactive worry that comes from a heart that does not trust God!***

And this, beloved, is why anxiety is so heinous!

This is why it is sinful to be anxious!

Anxiety comes from a heart of unbelief that paints distorted, grotesque and ugly portraits of the character and conduct of God!

But, because we know and trust God, we of all people, should be free from anxiety!

The two truths that Jesus teaches us so far is:

**Truth #1: Do Not be Anxious...Because Life is More than Provision**

**Truth #2: Do not be Anxious...Because Birds and Flowers Are Not Anxious (v. 26, v. 28, read)**

So, here is what we must do if find ourselves being anxious:

1. Repent...(that's first and foremost!)
2. Remember that your life is more than mere provision!
3. Go and take a nature walk! (Look at the birds and flowers! Observe how the Lord provides and cares for them and be reminded that you are of more value to God than them. And remember that if God cares for them, then He WILL care for you!!)

Let's pray!