

## The King's Speech: treasure *The treasure* (pt 2)

Matthew 6:25-34

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Hudson Taylor, a long term missionary to China and the founder of what is today known as the Overseas Missionary Fellowship, once urged: "Let us give up our work, our plans, ourselves, our lives, our loved ones, our influence, our all, right into [God's] hand; and then, when we have given all over to Him, there will be nothing left for us to be troubled about."<sup>1</sup>

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Everyone knows stress and anxiety aren't good for your health, but giving everything over to God, that sounds nice, but is it something we can really do? Do we really believe that God can be trusted with our worldly concerns?

[Pray]

Over the last several weeks we have been working our way through the King's Speech and today have arrived at the end of chapter 6. In chapter 5 Jesus described the radical life of love that He calls all His disciples to live in. He says we are **the** salt and **the** light of the world, Christians bring health and increased flavor to the world we live in because we look like Jesus. And Jesus gives us five examples of what that looks like and they are really intense.

Christians cut anger off at the root, we purge adulterous thoughts like lust or divorce from our lives at any cost, we live perfectly honest lives. We do not seek justice for ourselves but love those around us with Jesus' love even when they are our enemies.

And the standard Jesus sets is so high that without His Spirit living within us everything He says is impossible.

But, let's be honest, even with the Holy Spirit within us the life of love Jesus describes isn't easy. And so in chapter 6 Jesus tells the man or woman who wants to follow Him how to live the life He has described.

In the first half of chapter 6 Jesus says the only way to live out the radical life He describes is by seeking God's approval rather than people's.

The fact is everything we do is controlled by motivations. I promise you that no one here got up yesterday and went out and raked their neighbours lawn for no reason – anyone do that?

Even if you did rake their lawn you had a motivation. Maybe their bad lawn was bringing your property value down, or maybe they promised to pay you or maybe

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<sup>1</sup> Cited from <http://www.dailyintheword.org/content/why-worry> (Accessed April 30, 2014)

you are a young man and they have an attractive daughter you are interested in – 15 years ago my mother-in-law really cashed in on that one.

Now the default motivation of good works for all people is to garner the admiration of the people around them. We seek approval. And Jesus knows we have this desire and He is ok with that, in fact He built that right into us. But He wants us to seek approval in the right place because He wants us to get more for our good actions than just the fleeting approval of a mother-in-law (I actually have a great mother-in-law). But Jesus wants us to live in lasting joy, not temporary joy, so He says:

Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.  
(Matthew 6:1)

And to seek the Father's reward, like Jesus talks about, means to live in faith.

You see it takes no faith to seek people's reward because we can see the acceptance on their face as soon as we act. But it takes faith to do good in secret because if no one knows what we have done the only one who can reward us is God.

Now, Jesus is not talking about earning salvation here. A disciple of Jesus has already been justified by His blood. God's totally undeserved gift of grace is the only way we are saved. But Jesus says people who have this gift want to live in a way that pleases God. And Jesus says that means seeking God's reward in faith.

The author of Hebrews tells us:

Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him. (Hebrews 11:6)

So Jesus defines faith as trying to please God and trying to get His reward rather than people's by doing our good in secret. That's the first practical thing we can do to live like Jesus.

The second practical step Jesus gives us in order to be able to joyfully live out the radical life of love He described is to practice treasuring capital "T" Treasure of Heaven rather than the treasures of earth. And that is what Matthew 6:19-34 is about.

Last week we took the first half of this where Jesus established that "A life of lasting joy comes when we seek Christ's Kingdom first by treasuring The Treasure."

While the world we live in constantly pulls us towards treasuring earthly treasure Jesus says His disciples respond by constantly working to fix their eyes on the only Treasure that brings true lasting joy – God.

Now most often Christians slip into thinking well I do want God, but I also want some of what the earth has to offer, and so I'm going to get a bit of both. I'll get heavenly treasure, I'll get God and His kingdom, but I'll also get some earthly treasure too – good strategy right?

But Jesus says not only is this crazy, it's impossible. It's crazy because all earthly treasure is on its way to the trash heap. Moths and vermin are going to eat everything we store up here as long as thieves don't get to it first. So treasuring earthly treasure is crazy.

But it's also impossible to get treasures both here and in heaven. Jesus, the One who made us, says the human heart only has the capacity to treasure one treasure. We can only focus our eye on one thing. Ever try to read two books at the same time? Jesus says we can only serve one master.

So when Jesus says treasure The Treasure of Heaven, He means seek God's kingdom at the expense of an earthly kingdom.

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Here is how you might put this to work practically. Sit down with your spouse and your kids, if you have them, and make a list of three things you would like to do in the next month. That might be going to see a movie or going fishing or going on a date. Pick days together when you are going to do these things.

Then, after you have the list, together choose to give up one of the things you want to do and instead use that time and money to do something that will increase Christ's glory and expand His kingdom.

That might mean donating the \$50 your family would spend on going to the movie to a soup kitchen and then spending two hours there washing dishes together.

Or it might mean finding someone around you who doesn't have much and using the money to buy them some groceries and deliver them to their house.

In this way you and your family will be treasuring the treasures of Heaven instead of treasuring the treasures of earth.

Now here is the catcher. Jesus says when we live like this – when we treasure The Treasure of Heaven – this is where we find joy.

Growing up in the 80's and 90's I really learned to read on Bill Watterson's, Calvin and Hobbes. Here's one of my favorites.

["Go do something you hate Calvin, being miserable builds character"]

And this is sometimes the way we view God. We imagine God sitting up in Heaven thinking up miserable things for us to do in order to build our character. But that isn't the picture we get in the Bible at all. Jesus says God loves us, and so when we obey God by treasuring Him we end up, not with begrudging misery as we trudge through stuff we hate, but actually abundant and lasting joy.

And so I encourage you again, with your family find something this next week or two that you can give up in order to practice treasuring The Treasure.

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So in chapter 6 Jesus says Christians love by seeking our Father's reward instead of people's and treasuring The Treasure, seeking God's kingdom and His righteousness, instead of treasuring the treasures of earth.

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And today Jesus brings chapter 6 to a conclusion with one final word on how to joyfully live out the radical life of love. In verses 25 to 34 Jesus says: Lasting joy comes when we seek Christ's Kingdom first by killing our earth-bound anxiety. And that's our thesis today. Lasting joy comes when we seek Christ's Kingdom first by killing our earth-bound anxiety.

Look at verse 25. Jesus says "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life". "Therefore" or because you are treasuring The Treasure of Heaven 'do not be anxious' or 'do not worry.' And these are interesting words. Commentator Dale Brunner describes these words as a "comforting command" and he translates them "You can quit worrying about your life."<sup>2</sup>

So Jesus doesn't give His followers the option to worry if we want to. He does not permit us the 'luxury' of living a life of worry. It's not allowed. But also these words are comforting because He actually makes it possible for us not to live a life of worry. There is Gospel here, there is good news here, "you can quit worrying about your life." And we are going to look at some of the reason's Jesus says that is so.

But before we get there I want to look briefly at what "worry" or "anxiety" is, and then at the difference between worry and wisdom – because sometimes there is only a thin, but very important line, separating them.

So first, in the Greek "worry" refers to a restless anxiety caused by a fear of the future. So anxiety is what we feel when we think about the future and are uneasy about what might happen. And that is the key, we aren't talking about what is happening, we are talking about what *might* happen.

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<sup>2</sup> Brunner, D. "The Christbook: Matthew 1-12" (Grand Rapids: W.B.Eerdmans Pub Co.), 2004. pg 329.

So you can have financial anxiety. You can live in fear worrying that you might not have enough money to buy food and housing tomorrow. Tomorrow you might lose your job or you might get injured and not be able to work or you might get some new expenses that will put you over the top.

Or you might live in relational anxiety. You can fear what people might think of you or how they might react if you do certain things.

Or you can have church institutional anxiety. You can fear what the church you have been part of might become in the future.

Really people are experts at anxiety, we can worry about anything and end up living in fear of things that might not even happen at all.

Have you been there? Have you found yourself worrying about what might happen?

If you are treasuring The Treasure of Heaven Jesus comfortingly commands "You can quit worrying about your life, I've got it under control.

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Now second I want to clarify the difference between worry and wisdom because North American Christians are experts at worrying and calling it wisdom.

And the way this comes out is when we put our diligent Protestant work ethic into practice to save up for the future saying things like: "Well we need to be good stewards of what we have so that we don't run out tomorrow."

Friends, this is a lie that the devil has used to trick many hard working people like ourselves into serving money instead of God. Now, as with any good lie there is a shred of truth to it.

Here's the truth. The Bible defines laziness as sin. Solomon wrote:

Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise! (Proverbs 6:6)

And Paul wrote:

Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need. (Ephesians 4:28)

So if you are 25 and living in your mom's basement, not paying rent, the Bible says that's probably not good.

But there is a lie that traps here as well and that is that amassing money for our comfort in old age is wisdom but it's not – it's sin.

Did you know that the only story in the whole Bible about someone who built up riches in order to retire in comfort is in Luke 12 where Jesus tells us:

The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.' Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry."' (Luke 12:16-19)

The story ends with God striking him dead and saying "This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God."

So what is the sin here? The sin is self-righteous, self-sufficiency. This man thinks he deserves to live like this because he worked hard and he was smart. And this same sin is rampant within the North American church.

But notice how Jesus started the story. He said "The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest." – The rich man wasn't a genius, he just collected what the ground yielded.

And most of us have done the same. I know I have. My parents were well off and sent me to a good school and trained me how to use money. I had the opportunity to further my education and the finances available to increase that education through world travel. Sure I have worked hard the whole time, but I didn't start at ground zero. I started with an incredible advantage.

I didn't choose my gender, I didn't choose my skin color, I didn't choose what country I was born into. I didn't choose my parents. I didn't choose my upbringing. And so the resources that are at my disposal today aren't there because I'm great, they are there as gifts for me to give away to increase God's glory and expand His kingdom. They aren't my right, they are my responsibility.

Nowhere in the Bible does it say "be stingy with what you have so that you save some for tomorrow." Instead, in dozens of places it says things like:

Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow Me. (Mark 10:21)

It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God (Luke 18:25)

A person's life does not consist in the possessions that he has. (Luke 12:15)

Zacchaeus . . . said to the Lord, 'Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. . . .' And Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house. (Luke 19:8-9)

And there are dozens more references I could site. In fact about 15% of everything Jesus says is about money or using the resources at our disposal to expand God's Kingdom. Jesus actually talks more about money than He does about heaven and hell combined.<sup>3</sup>

So here it is in a nutshell. It is not sin to use the employment God has given you to provide for yourself and your family. But it is sin, and it is playing into anxiety's hand, to think we deserve the money in our bank account because we worked for it. And so instead of using it to increase God's glory and expand His kingdom we squirrel it away to alleviate possible future trouble and guarantee tomorrow's comfort and safety – that's self-righteous, self-sufficiency motivated by anxiety.

What we are doing then is seeking first our kingdom and our righteousness and we are entrusting our future to our bank account's hand instead of our Father's. And Jesus says if we live like that we will not have the lasting joy He wants for us. To get His lasting joy we must seek His kingdom first by entrusting our situations into His hand thereby killing our earth bound anxiety.

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As we come to the end of chapter 6 I want to shift now to focus on 8 assurances Jesus gives those who treasure The Treasure of Heaven for why we can quit worrying about our lives.<sup>4</sup> And these will go really fast.

**1.)** First, don't be anxious because the world can't touch you. Look at the second half of verse 25. There Jesus says you don't have to worry because "life [is] more than food, and the body more than clothes."

While it is true that without food we starve and without clothes we would hurt everyone else's eyes, but the truth is our true life would be harmed by neither. Jesus says don't worry because the worst the world can do to you is take away your food and clothes and maybe kill you, but they can't do anything to your real life. This is why Jesus said:

Do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more.  
(Luke 12:4)

So don't be anxious because there is nothing anyone in the world can really do to you.

**2.)** Second, God is in control and He loves you. Look at verse 26.

[Read Matthew 6:26]

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<sup>3</sup> Alcorn, Randy "The Treasure Principle" (Colorado Springs: Multnomah), 2001. pg 8-9

<sup>4</sup> Adapted from John Piper's "Don't Be Anxious, Lay up Treasure in Heaven pt 2" (Preached March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2003)

God is so absolutely in control of everything in the universe that He is actually taking care of the birds. Every berry they eat, every insect they pick up is ordained by God for their survival. And God cares way more about you than He does about birds. Peter tells us:

Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you. (1 Peter 5:7)

So God is in control, and He loves you, so you can quit worrying.

**3.)** Third, anxiety is useless. Verse 27.

[Read Matthew 6:27]

This is a practical argument – anxiety doesn't help you. It doesn't accomplish anything. In fact anxiety makes your life shorter. So preach this to yourself the next time you are anxious: "I'm accomplishing nothing by being anxious. It's only making this worse. I will listen to Jesus and say "no" to useless anxiety.

**4.)** Fourth, we don't have to be anxious because we are eternal. Let's pick it up in verse 28:

[Read Matthew 6:28-30]

This is pretty close to the section about the birds of the air, but it isn't identical. There Jesus said we are more valuable than the birds, here Jesus says God cares for us because He even cares for grass which is just here for a moment, while we are eternal.

Anxiety is a trust issue, it is a faith issue. But Jesus says "trust Him, trust Him, O you of little faith."

**5.)** Fifth, anxiety is not our problem. Verse 31:

[Read Matthew 6:31-32a]

You don't have to worry about your life because anxiety is a worldly problem. Anxiety is for people who don't treasure The Treasure, so you don't have to be anxious because you know God!

**6.)** Sixth, our Father is aware. Verse 32 ends with the words "and your heavenly Father knows that you need them."

Your Father is heavenly so He is much bigger than any earthly problem, and He is your Father so He loves you deeply. And this Heavenly Father knows what you need. So set your anxiety to rest because your needs are not unknown to the all powerful and all loving Father.

7.) Seventh, God gives us what we need to do His will. The main verse in the second half of chapter 6 is verse 33 where Jesus says “Seek first [God’s] kingdom and His righteousness.” And the verse finishes with the seventh reason why we don’t have to worry about our lives. Jesus says when we treasure The Treasure “all these things will be given to you as well.” Jesus says God will supply everything you need to do His will.

Now He also promises that some of us will be imprisoned doing His will, and some will be beaten, and some will be killed. The beatitudes at the beginning of the King’s Speech finished reminding us that to look like Jesus means being ready to endure the things He endured.

But Paul says:

Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean He no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? (Romans 8:35 NLT)

So this verse isn’t a promise for comfort, but it is a promise that we don’t have to be anxious because no matter what happens God will give us the food and the clothing and the resources we need in order to accomplish what He has purposed for us to do. And that is all a Christian needs.

8.) And finally we don’t have to worry because God’s mercies are always enough for today’s problems. Verse 34.

[Read Matthew 6:34]

Jesus says today has enough going on without bringing the unknowns of tomorrow into it. And the Bible tells us that:

The Lord’s... compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. (Lamentations 3:22-23)

And because God’s mercies are new every morning we can trust Him for the strength to face today’s troubles every day.

Friends, Jesus gives those who treasure The Treasure eight assurances for why we don’t have to give into anxiety. And He gives these because He loves us and wants the best for us. He wants us to live in lasting joy. And He knows that lasting joy comes when we seek Christ’s Kingdom first by killing our earth-bound anxiety.

So, like Hudson Taylor, and more importantly like Jesus, I urge you to entrust everything valuable you have to God. When you have done that you really will have nothing to be troubled about.