



# TRUTH APPLICATIONS

Sermon Notes

## God's Reign First: Trust

Matthew 6:25-34

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*Worry, Worry, Worry . . .*

One of my favorite television commercials was done a few years ago by Traveler's Insurance. It features a dog named Chopper and the song, "Trouble" as performed by Ray LaMontagne. As summarized on a question-and-answer website:

The mutt tries concealing his bone in a laundry basket, his owner's chair and a hole he digs in the yard. Still worried, he rides a bus to place the bone in a bank safety deposit box. After tossing and turning in his sleep, Chopper retrieves the bone and takes it home. The camera pans to the bone in his food bowl with the iconic Travelers red umbrella over it.

The voice-over says, "When it comes to things you care about, leave nothing to chance. Travelers: insurance for auto, home and business."<sup>1</sup>

Jennifer Wislocki, a spokeswoman for Traveler's Insurance, said, "The message of this ad is a reminder that Traveler's Insurance protects the things you care about." As we saw in our study of Matthew 6:19-24, Jesus called those things our "treasures." That makes the Traveler's ad a perfect illustration for our text, especially when we hear these lyrics from the song playing in the background: "Trouble has been doggin' my soul since the day I was born" (ibid.).

*Cares, Good and Bad*

The repeated command, "do not worry" (6:25, 31, 34)<sup>2</sup> makes it plain that "worry" is the subject of our text. Verse 25's transition word, "therefore" (literally "because of this," διὰ τοῦτο, *dia touto*) shows that Jesus speaks of worry about "mammon" (v. 24). But before we look at what he said, we should look at the various meanings of the word, "worry" or "anxious" (ESV).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> From the question-and-answer website, <http://askville.amazon.com/singer-travelers-insurance-commercial-dog-find-safe-place-bone/AnswerViewer.do?requestId=55952175> accessed January 24, 2014. They reference <http://www.courant.com/business/hc-travelers-commercial-0621.artjun21,0,6648152.story> as their source.

<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, I am using the NET Bible (NET) as my main text in this sermon.

<sup>3</sup> KJV's "take no thought," an acceptable translation, illustrates the word's range of meanings.

Like our “care” and “concern,” the Greek word μεριμνάω (*merimnaō*) has a range of meanings.

- Caring for someone or something.
- Of careful or anxious concern about something.
- To be intent on something, to strive after it, even to the point of ambition.
- To anxiously expect something, or anxiety in the face of something to come.
- The sense of grief about something.
- The sense of the word which involves brooding or speculating.<sup>4</sup>

The LXX used it to translate different Hebrew words referring to anxiety, troubled, merely concerned about, or to think about something.<sup>5</sup> In the NT, (24 times, noun and verb), there is also a range of meanings. For example, our text (= Lk. 12:22-34) and Philippians 4:6 warn against anxiety. But Paul used it to express concern for the churches (2 Cor. 11:28) and told the Corinthians to “have mutual concern for one another” (1 Cor. 12:25). Whether it is good or bad depends on the reason and focus of the concern or worry, as Matthew 6 shows.

### *Worry as an Indicator of Faith*

Verses 25-31, bracketed by the repetition, “do not worry,” declare specific worries, show practical reasons why they are really empty, and point to the real issue.

Specific worries are “life, what you will eat or drink, or about your body, what you will wear” (vv. 25, 31). The practical reasons for not worrying about these things are presented in a series of rhetorical questions.

1. What’s really most important? “Isn’t there more to life than food and more to the body than clothing” (v. 25)?
2. Who’s really most important? “Look at the birds in the sky: They do not sow, or reap, or gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren’t you more valuable than they are” (v. 26)?
3. What good does it do to worry? “And which of you by worrying can add even one hour to his life” (v. 27)?

Jesus then tells us to also think about God as we think about the things we care about.

1. Using a lesser-to-greater argument, he declares that the beauty of flowers, given them by God’s grace, surpasses even the glory of Solomon! Surely, if that is what God does with grass that would ultimately be used for heating and cooking, he will provide for those who seek his reign (vv. 28-30).
2. The problem is one of faith — not “no faith,” but “little faith” (v. 30). Our treasures worry us when we are not single-minded in our devotion to God (6:22-24). We take on more than we need to, either through an incorrect

<sup>4</sup> R. Bultmann, μεριμνάω, προμεριμνάω, μέριμνα, ἀμέριμνος, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 4, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. & ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), 589.

<sup>5</sup> J. Goetzmann, “Care,” *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol. 1, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975), 277.

assessment of what life is all about (earthly treasures) or by taking on too much responsibility for the earthly blessings we have been given to manage.

### *God's Reign First*

What Jesus said about empty prayer — “do not be like them” (6:8) — is what he also said about worry. The stark choice of 6:24 is repeated in vv. 32-33: what do we “pursue” (ζητέω, *zēteō*, a form of which is used in both 32 and 33)?

When we worry about “‘what will we eat’ or ‘what will we drink’ or ‘what we will wear’?” (v. 31), we are just like everyone else (v. 32), distracted from what is supposed to be our priority. A disciple of Jesus pursues something else: “his kingdom [rule] and righteousness” (v. 33). When we do that, we trust God for our “daily bread” (6:11) — including what we will eat, drink, and wear. When you trust him without reservation, “all these things will be given to you as well.”

“So then, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Today has enough trouble of its own” (v. 34).

### *Exhortation*

A Facebook friend posted a quotation from *Storms of Life*, “an easy-reading commentary on the Meaning of Life written by Don Givens.”<sup>6</sup> He said, “There isn’t enough room in our mind for both worry and faith. You must decide which one will live there.”

Jesus’ repeated command, “do not worry” is not a call to ignore the people and things entrusted to our care. It is a call to see those things in light of God’s grace and care, to trust God completely and implicitly, to have great faith that develops from thinking about who he is and what he does.

In Jesus, we see the care and grace of God most clearly. Let us follow him without reservation.

January 24, 2014  
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<sup>6</sup> This is the description of the publication I found when I clicked the link accompanying the posted quote. The note goes on to say that Givens’s reflections are “available online from B & N [Barnes and Noble] or amazon.com - search line ‘storms of life, don givens.’”