



UNDERSTANDING THE CONDITION OF ANXIETY

" 22 And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. 23 The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment. 24 Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls? 25 And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? 26 If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest? 27 Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 28 If then God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and to morrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith? 29 And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. 30 For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. 31 But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. 32 Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. 33 Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. 34 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

- Luke 12:22-34

Understanding the Condition of Anxiety

We're going to discuss Luke 12:22-34. This portion of Scripture contains some things that you're going to find familiar to you and that's because much of what Jesus says here in Judea, months before His death, He said also in Galilee long before this in what we know as the Sermon on the Mount. In fact, the passage in Luke 12:22 to 34 is a direct parallel to Matthew 6 verses...well, about verse 19 on down to the end of the chapter, verse 34, so you'll find a very, very close parallel to that text in Matthew chapter 6 which you can compare on your own. We're not going to bounce back and forth. This then is sort of at the heart of Jesus' familiar teaching which He no doubt not only had already recorded in two places in the Scripture, but no doubt preached on many occasions in many different places.

The key to understanding the passage before us which you will find familiar to you, things like be not anxious for your life, consider the ravens, consider the lilies, seek the kingdom and these things will be added to you, where your treasure is your heart will be also, those are familiar things. But as we pull the passage together, the thing that ties it all up is a statement that Jesus makes three times essentially. Verse 22, "Do not be anxious," and then verse 29, "Do not keep worrying," and then verse 32, "Do not be afraid," and so I've entitled this passage "Worry-Free Living," or "Anxiety-Free Living," or "Stress-Free Living." The Lord Jesus in Scripture at least twelve times is recorded to have said, "Don't worry, don't be anxious," and He explained why on the occasions in which He said that. He said, "Don't be afraid," and explained why. Anxiety-free living is part of what the Lord offers. It's part of the gospel message. It is what we have who are in the kingdom if we want to take it.

I understand while the...why the world is stressed out. I understand why people are anxious. I understand why they worry. I understand why they have panic attacks. It's frightening to be dangling in this inexplicable universe and feeling all alone and not being able to figure out why you're even here and where you're going. I understand there's a certain cosmic fear. I understand why people take drugs and drink and go on eating binges and shopping binges and wild adventures and all kinds of things to fill their minds with other thoughts. We are living in an anxiety-ridden culture. And the amazing thing about it is this is the most indulged, the most lavish society ever, this is the most comfortable society ever, this is the society that has the most, but it seems to be the most angst-ridden, anxious, stressed out,

panicked culture ever. We have a massive medical world that exists to do nothing but help people with stress. No worry goes unnamed. No worry goes undefined. No worry goes uncatalogued. No worry goes undiagnosed. And no worry goes unmedicated. They just go unrelieved. People live with anxiety. They live with worry. They live with stress. But it's so common that we don't even talk about eliminating it. The term is "to manage it." You take a course, go to a seminar, listen to a lecture, buy a tape on stress management like it was a baseball team, need a manager, or a production line. Then Jesus comes along and says, "I'm not going to teach you how to manage your stress, I'll eliminate it."

The goal in the society we live in is managed anxiety, how to somehow get rid of the panic, the stress, the anxiousness that you feel because you are dangling in the midst of a cosmic universe that's inexplicable to you and there are inordinate and underlying subliminal fears and anxieties that rise to the surface very often. And it gets to be pretty serious with many people. About twenty million in America, twenty million adults are annual subjects of the mental illness world, about forty-two billion dollars a year in government costs. They come with anxiety disorders that are given names, even though they are often engaged in what's called co-morbidity which means they overlap and intermingle. It's not as if you just have sort of one area of anxiety. There are several categories. There's what's called General AD, which is General Anxiety Disorder, and I suppose you could throw almost everything in there. And then there's Obsessive Compulsive Anxiety Disorder which means you do really weird things like wash your hands 100 times a day, or pull your hair out, or rub your nose away, or some other inexplicable compulsive kind of behavior. And then there is Panic Disorder in which you go into a high level of panic, rapid-heart palpitation, extreme fear, and there's no real circumstantial reason for it. There is post-traumatic stress AD which is some level of panic which you feel after something that you just went through. There is what's called Social Anxiety Disorder which I guess means you wouldn't have it if you didn't hang around people. And then there is Specific AD, specific phobias about...some people are...go into anxiety if they see a rat or some with a snake or some have anxiety over a storm, some people literally have a phobia with closets, agoraphobia, claustrophobia, acrophobia, heights, etc., etc. And about 50 percent of the United States population experiences some kind of psychiatric anxiety disorder, about half the people in America in their life. A hundred million are estimated worldwide to have panic attacks, just out of nowhere to feel a terrible, terrifying panic. This is huge. And, of course, the medical business is huge to deal with it or to attempt to manage it, and the drug companies, of course, are the main player in how that is managed.

According to Ohio State University, they have a website on which they deal with some of these things, and one of the statements on their website is, "The goal of any treatment is to make anxiety a manageable part of daily existence." The best the world can offer you is to manage your anxiety. Jesus offers you to eliminate it. Does that sound like a good deal? Get rid of it all together? Stop it? In fact, you can...you could basically translate verse 22, "Stop being anxious," verse 29, "Stop worrying," and verse 32, "Stop being afraid." The world will offer you cognitive behavior therapy, or a long list of drugs. But our compassionate God offers a far better solution, and that's the elimination of your anxiety altogether. Stop being anxious! Stop worrying. Stop being afraid! Worrying is a pretty deadly thing. Roche said, "Worry is a thin stream of fear trickling through the mind. If encouraged, it cuts a channel into which all other thoughts are drained." You may start with just a little worry, and it can engulf your whole life. I read this some time ago. I don't know why I read some of the things I read, I am just curious, I guess. But I was reading about the Bureau of Standards in Washington D.C. and they set all kinds of standards, and there was one little paragraph in there that said this, "A dense fog covering seven city blocks." Are you with me? "A dense fog covering seven city blocks, a hundred feet deep, is composed of less than one glass of water divided into sixty thousand million drops." Not much there, the paragraph said, but it cripples the whole community. Well, that's what can happen in worry. You can have something the size of one glass of water cripple a whole community. The word "worry" actually comes from an old German word, the English word "worry." The old German word is wuergen. It means to choke or strangle. It's talking about mental strangulation through fear and anxiety and stress and worry.

Now there are only two realms in which you can worry. You can worry about the physical world, or you can worry about the spiritual world. You can worry about what is immaterial, or what is material. You can worry about what is earthly and what is heavenly. And so that is precisely what Jesus says you don't need to worry about. In verse 22 He says, "Don't be anxious for your life," and by that He means what you eat, and your body, what you wear. Stop worrying about that, the basics of life. And then down in verse 32, "Don't be afraid on the spiritual level for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom." You're left with nothing to worry about, nothing to be anxious about, nothing to be stressed about, nothing to panic over. So, we conclude that if you do worry as a Christian, worry is a sin. But it's a sin that rises from a failure to understand God, a failure to understand His sovereign

love, a failure to understand His sovereign care, a failure to understand His sovereign resources. So that's what Jesus unfolds here. Jesus does offer anxiety-free living. When you come into His kingdom, God takes care of you and your worries really are ended so that what defined your life, worrying about everything, is eliminated.

Now you have to understand the promises of God and you have to understand the purposes of God to come to this worry-free, anxiety-free living. So let me help you with that. In these verses as they unfold, down all the way to verse 34, there are several points that I want to unpack for you, six of them, and they show that worry rises from a failure to understand something about God. First of all, let's look at the first one, worry is a failure to understand divine priority. Worry is a failure to understand divine priority. Let's go back to verse 22.

"And He said to His disciples, 'For this reason I say to you, do not be anxious for your life as to what you shall eat, nor for your body as to what you shall put on, for life is more than food and the body than clothing.'" That's not hard to understand and yet there are some things below the surface there that I think are going to open up a deeper understanding of this.

First of all, He said to His disciples. Remember now, He's talking to the disciples which would include the apostles, as we note in verse 41 when Peter says, "Are You addressing this parable to us or everyone else as well?" I mean, the apostles were learners. But not just the apostles, there were others who had believed in Him and there were other learners which is the word "disciple," *mathētēs*, who were still trying to decide. He's talking to those who have decided or are trying to decide and He's explaining to them what life in the kingdom is. The crowd is in the tens of thousands and mingled in that crowd are those who are still open to His teaching while the majority of the crowd are hostile toward Him. But to those who are still interested, He defines the kingdom.

And He says to His disciples, picking up after the interruption... You remember in verse 13 a man interrupted Him by telling Him He ought to say to his brother, "Give me my share of the inheritance," and Jesus gave the wonderful parable of the rich man who built bigger barns to keep everything for himself and the Lord said, "Tonight, your life will be required of you," and then Jesus said, you know, "You should lay up treasure in heaven," you should be rich toward God and not selfish, and that's how that story ended in verse 21. And after answering that young man's plea with that parable, He resumes His teaching, but He connects the two

together, as verse 22 says. "For this reason I say to you...." What reason? The reason that I've just stated, verse 21, you make a choice in life as to whether you lay up treasure for yourself or are rich toward God, which is just another way to say lay up treasure in heaven, and that's how He said it in Matthew 6:19 to 21. So, you make a choice. Either you are selfish and materialistic and keep everything, or you lay up treasure in heaven. That's the choice you have to make. In Matthew 6:24 Jesus said you can't serve two masters. You'll love one and hate the other. You'll hold to one and despise the other. You can't serve God and money.

And the picture of slavery made that pretty clear. Being a slave was not like being an employee, you didn't go to work at 8 and finish at 5. You can do that in our society and then you can go to work somewhere else at 7 and finish at 2 in the morning. You can serve two masters in our culture. You can have two jobs. But you couldn't in a slave environment because you were owned by the master and there was no way a slave could serve two masters, impossible. He would hate someone giving him to.... someone else giving him orders than the one that he belonged to. He would despise an effort on the part of someone who didn't own him and support him and feed him commanding him to do things. It was impossible. And so, in the spiritual realm, you either serve God or money, you're either rich toward God, or you indulge yourself and that's the point He makes. Now He says, "For this reason I have something to say to you." That's the transition because here's what they would be thinking. The question would come to their minds, they're sitting there thinking, "Well, Jesus is saying we ought to be rich toward God and not save money and build bigger barns and store up money and make ourselves wealthy and all of that, and ignore the poor, and ignore the needy and ignore the purposes of God. But, if we give it all to God what about us? What's going to happen to us? Who's going to take care of us? I mean, we live in a dog-eat-dog world, right? Who's going to take care of us if we don't care about ourselves? If I don't build bigger barns, if I don't take care of myself, if I don't stockpile, who is going to take care of me? I don't want to depend on somebody else. I don't want to depend on somebody's perhaps transient compassion.

Well, the answer, of course, that the Lord gives here is this, that God's going to take care of you. God's going to take care of you. God is the one who feeds the birds. God is the one who will raise the grass in the field. God is the one who knows what you need. God is the one who will give you the kingdom. You just came under the care of God. First Peter 5:7,

"Casting all your care on Him, He cares for you." So if He asks you to give up everything like He did the rich young ruler, sell everything you have, give your money to the poor. Not on your life, he said. Turned around and walked away for he was very rich. And he wanted his money, and he didn't want to give it away and depend on God. But on the other hand, Jesus said if you want to come after Me, Luke 9:23, you have to deny yourself. You have to lose your life. Or in the words of Matthew 13:44 to 46, you sell all to buy the pearl, you sell all to buy the treasure in the field, you abandon everything. Or in chapter 9 verses 57 and following of Luke's gospel, Jesus said, "Follow Me," and the man said, "I'll follow You wherever You go." Jesus said, "The foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head." If you follow Me it may cost you everything. It cost the apostles everything. They dropped their nets, dropped everything and followed Him. He said to another, "Follow Me." He said, "Wait a minute, I want to go bury my father." Remember, his father wasn't dead, he wanted to go home and get his inheritance. He wanted to follow but not until he had all the money he needed. And He said to another, "Follow Me." And he said, "I want to go home and say goodbye," I want to collect some money from my relatives. And He said, "If you put your hand to the plow and look back, you're not fit for My kingdom."

What Jesus is saying is how desperate are you? How much do you want to be in this kingdom? If you're still holding on to money, then according to the parable of the soil, what will happen is the seed will go in, and there will be a little bit of a reaction and response, but the love of riches, the deceitfulness of riches will choke out that seed, choke out that life. In other words, salvation is for people who are desperate enough to say, "Look, I don't...I don't care what it costs me, if You want everything I have, I'll give it. If You want nothing, that's fine, too. Whatever it is, I'll give it." And even if You don't ask, like Zacchaeus in chapter 19. The Lord gives the gospel to Zacchaeus and Zacchaeus says, "I'm going to pay back everybody I ever extorted anything from in multiples." It just came out of his heart. If you respond to the truth and you come into the kingdom, then you become His to care for. And in the words of the apostle Paul, he said this, chapter 4 of Philippians, verse 11, "I learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means. I also know how to live in prosperity. In any and every circumstance I've learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, of having abundance and suffering." What's the secret? Trusting God. Sometimes you have a lot, sometimes you have a little, but you always have enough.

Why? Verse 19, "My God shall supply all your (what?) needs." Do you trust God to that point? You come into His kingdom, and you can trust Him to meet your needs. Now this is an issue of divine priority. Let's go back to the text and I'll show you how this works. "Do not be anxious for your life." Now what do you mean by "life"? Your physical life, He explains it, meaning what you eat. Don't be worried about your body, what you're going to wear.

Now this deeply concerned people in Jesus' day. I mean, they basically lived to survive. There were no fast-food places, no stores to go buy the endless elements of clothing that are available to us. If you wanted to eat, you had to...you had to grind it out yourself and cook it yourself and do all the preparation. And if you wanted clothing you went somewhere and you bought thread and you...you made it on a loom and you made the fabric or you bought the fabric and you made the garment and if you were poor you had a real struggle for your food and struggle for your clothing and, I mean, 1 Timothy 6:8 says, "With food and covering be content." And that was what life was about. It was about getting enough meals each day to survive and the clothes you needed to stay warm and to be protected from the blazing heat of the Middle Eastern sun. But He says, "Look, don't worry about your life. Don't worry about what you're going to eat to support your life. Don't worry about your body, what you're going to put on." Verse 23, "For life is more than food and the body than clothing."

Here's another way to say that. You exist for a higher reason, OK? You exist for a higher reason. Life is more than food and you have a body for more reasons than just clothing. In other words, God didn't make you so that you could be like an animal. You're not just an eating machine. You're not just the ultimate end of the food chain. You're not the final product of evolution. And your body is not designed as something that's just supposed to be clothed for its environmental protection. It's really not about that at all. You're not an eating machine and a mannequin. You know, it's hard to convince our culture of that. Food and fashion, food and fashion, OD'd on restaurants and clothes. But without God, you are an eating machine and a mannequin. But God didn't give His people life for that reason. I'm not here just to exist. It's in God that I live and move and have my being. But God has a purpose for my life. I'm under divine priority. The simple idea is this, folks, get it. For those who are in the kingdom, if God gave you life, and He did, if He wants you to live, and He does if

you're alive, if He brought you into His kingdom, and He has, then He has a purpose for you to fulfill in His kingdom to His glory and so He will sustain you to that fulfillment. OK?

I mean, it wouldn't make any sense for God to say, "I will save you and I will give you eternal life, I'll give you spiritual life, and I have a purpose for your life and a destiny and a plan and a purpose and I gifted you and I've called you, and I've laid out circumstances and, man, if you can just keep yourself alive to fill this deal out, this will be really good." No. In all honesty, the people who are not in God's family come and go and live and die with no contribution to the divine kingdom. But those of us who are His are fulfilling divine purpose and that's why you can say with the psalmist, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not (what?) want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me through the valley of the shadow of death" and out the other side. The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the psalmist says.

So, if God gave you life, and He did, if God redeemed you and He did, if God has a purpose for your life and He does, then He will provide what you need to survive. So be rich toward God and you will have the promise that as you're rich toward God, He'll be lavishly rich toward you. As long as He has that unfolding plan in your life, He will sustain it. We have a life, we have a body for the purposes of God to live to His glory, to fulfill His will, to fulfill His plan and as long as that plan is operating, He will sustain us. You don't have to build bigger, bigger, bigger, bigger, bigger barns to take care of yourself, to protect yourself. Be wise, be faithful, don't be foolish, be a good steward, do some planning for the future, but you're not the one who has obligated himself to your care, God has. No need to hoard so that you can survive in the future. You will be sustained by the Creator until His purpose for your life ends. He'll feed you till the very, very end. You could divest yourself of everything, everything you have, that wouldn't change God's commitment to sustain you until it's your time to enter into His heaven. So, you have to understand the priority, right? And the priority is spiritual purpose. If you understand that, if you understand God's gifted you, He's called you, He's regenerated you, He's put you into His family, He's put you into a place of witness and ministry and service, and all He wants you to do is live to His glory, and He will take care of your life. Your life is not about food. Your life is not about clothing. It's not about making sure you can survive. That's God's commitment. That's the priority. And if you understand the divine priority, that is that you live and exist for the purpose of God, and

God will sustain your life until that purpose is fulfilled, then you don't have to worry about it. Worry then fails to understand divine priority.

Secondly, worry fails to understand divine provision. It fails to understand divine provision. Look at verse 24, "Consider the ravens (or crows) for they neither sow nor reap, and they have no storeroom nor barn and yet God feeds them. How much more valuable you are than the birds?" Now I think He picks birds because they're sort of, I guess, the most fragile. They just are here and kind of gone, but they are a great illustration of divine provision. Do you know that every crow that's ever lived, every raven that's ever-lived God wanted to live? And for however long God wanted that bird to live, He provided its food. And if God feeds birds that only in a very modest way, in a very limited way give Him glory, as any of His creation does, don't you think He's going to take care of making sure you can eat, who have the highest and noblest capacity to give Him glory? This, by the way, is also in Matthew 6:26. It's an analogy from the lesser to the greater, common in Jewish teaching. Consider the ravens...and I just think this is probably true. Anyway, Jesus is teaching in the outdoors typically and wherever there was an agricultural society, wherever there was a field, there were crows. That's why we have such a thing as a scarecrow. And that was certainly a problem over there. By the way, there were more birds in Israel, probably still true, than any place on the planet. That is because the birds that migrate out of Northern Europe, out of all of Europe and even stretching into the Middle East and the East, if they want to migrate south in the cold winter, they have to go through Israel. It's the largest area of bird migration on the planet because east is the desert, barren with little or nothing, and west is the Mediterranean. That little land is the most fertile soil in the world. And it's always been a dense place for bird migration. The Israeli Air Force has lost more pilots and more planes to birds, decapitating pilots by going through the cockpit because they're flying so fast into a flock, than they have in military combat. And all the planes that go in and out of Ben Gurion and Tel Aviv where I've gone many times are having to deal with these birds, so they've done migration studies to determine what flocks come at what period of the year and how they come and where they come and where they land and they've relocated pools of water, etc., etc., to protect the jets because the birds get in the engines, and that's obviously a problem. Massive place of bird migration which fits the biblical scene in Ezekiel and Revelation where the...after Armageddon the carnage of the dead bodies in that part of the world is so great, it says the birds come and eat them. It may indicate that during that migration season is when that event might happen. But anyway, birds were everywhere. And Jesus probably said, you

know, "Look at them. They don't sow and reap. You do. You're out here slaving away, plowing, putting the seed in, watering the seed, coming along to the back-breaking work of harvest, they don't do that, and they don't have a storeroom and they don't have a barn. They're incapable, He's saying, of generating their own food supply. They are totally dependent on God. What is provided them by the Creator is all they have. They don't have the ingenuity or the capability. They only have the capability and the instinct to pick up what's been provided for them. That doesn't mean they don't work. Did you ever see a bird lying on its side taking a nap? I... Birds are in constant motion.

Misti and I love birds. I mean, Misti really loves birds, so we have bird feeders in the backyard so when you go out the back door you have to sort of duck because, I mean, they're everywhere. It's like an aviary in our yard, which is wonderful. We enjoy that part of God's creation. They are absolutely relentless. They fight each other at those little bird feeders and when they knock seed onto the ground, they fight each other on the ground. They chase each other around. They yak at each other to get those seeds. And when those things are empty, they're gone, aren't they, honey? They're gone and we don't see them. And then she fills them all up, or I fill them all up, and I don't know how the word gets out, but somebody goes, "sssssss" and they're all back, dozens and dozens of them.

And we're not talking about the fact that you don't work, and it's not to say because God provides for us we don't work. He's provided the resources for us, He's provided the capability for us to work and to gain those things and if we're in a situation where even at our best efforts we can't provide enough, God will find a way to take care of us to sustain us, right? They work and we work, but it's God who providentially provides. Job 38:41 says, "Who prepares for the raven its nourishment when its young cry to God and wander about without food?" The answer is the Almighty does. The Almighty does. And the psalmist emphasizes this, Psalm 104 is...There's two verses there, verse 25, "There is the sea great and broad in which are swarms without number animals both small and great," verse 27, "They all wait for Thee to give them their food in due season." If God didn't provide, if God hadn't designed that food chain, they wouldn't survive. Well God wants them to survive. God made them for His own glory. And I often think about that when it comes to the sea. Most of what goes on in the sea nobody ever sees. It's just for the sheer pleasure of God. In Psalm 145 verse 15, "The eyes of all look to Thee and Thou dost give them their food in due time. Thou dost open Thy hand that Thou dost satisfy the desire of every living thing." Psalm 147:9

says, "He gives to the beast its food and to the young ravens which cry." Rabbi Simeon said, "In my life I've never seen a stag as a drier of figs. I've never seen a lion as a porter. I've never seen a fox as a merchant. Yet they're all nourished without worry. If they who are created to serve me are nourished, how much more ought I who am created to serve my Maker to be nourished?" And that's really the point, isn't it? God feeds them, verse 24. God feeds them. God has a purpose for their existence. There is a manifest honor that comes to Him. There is glory that comes to Him. There is a delight that comes to Him. And so God feeds them. It is the same provision that He makes for them that He makes for us. And look at the end of verse 24, "How much more valuable you are than the birds." If He sees to it that the birds have food, don't you think He'll see to it that you do? You don't need to spend your life worrying about whether you're going to have enough, whether you're going to have enough now, whether you're going to have enough when you retire, whether you're going to have enough in the future. Your God promises to sustain you to the end of His purpose. And by the way, when that comes, you want to leave anyway, right? Thomas Watson said, "This life is like an inn. You spend a couple of nights there, but you never forget where your home is." Paul said, "It's nice to be here, but I would rather depart and be with Christ, but I have to be here for your sake." But he also knew when it was over and he said, "I've finished the course. I've kept the faith. I've run the race." I'm ready to go. The time of my departure is at hand. And until that day, He knew how to be in abundance and how to be in little and God supplied all his needs because He always does that for His own.

These are powerful arguments in these first two points. Life is from God. He gives it. He sustains it. He makes provision for it. I want to show you something by way of contrast that's really interesting. Back to Haggai, Haggai, it's three books into the Old Testament from the backside: Malachi, Zechariah, Haggai. The first chapter of Haggai says, verse 5, the Lord says, "Consider your ways, consider your ways. You have sown much but harvest little, you eat but there's not enough to be satisfied, you drink but there's not enough to become drunk, you put on clothing, but no one is warm enough, and he who earns, earns wages to put into a purse with holes." This doesn't sound like provision. It's not. "Thus says the Lord of hosts, 'Consider your ways.'" Take a look at yourself and ask why it is like this? Why do you not have enough food? Why do you not have enough drink? Why are you not able to have clothes to keep yourself warm? Why is it that when you earn wages they disappear? Verse 8, He says, "Go to the mountains, bring some wood and rebuild the temple." There's the answer. They had forgotten whom? God. "That I may be pleased with it and glorified," says

the Lord. "You look for much. You hold it comes to little. And when you bring it home, I blow it away." There's the issue.

Why do I do that? "Because of My house which lies desolate while each of you runs to his own house." Wow. You're not taking care of My house, but you all take care of your house. Back in verse 4 He says, "Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses while this house lies desolate?" In verse 10 He says, "Because of you the sky has withheld its dew and the earth has withheld its produce." I called for a drought on the land, on the mountains, on the grain, on the new wine, on the oil, on what the ground produces, on men, on cattle, and all the labor of your hands. God made it all go bad. Wow.

If He gave you life, He will sustain that life and He will provide all you need if you continue to honor Him, right? The Lord's providence in the food supply is staggering, isn't it really? It's just staggering. The variety is just beyond belief, abundant, boundless, self-perpetuating, renewable food supply. There's more than enough potential for this planet to provide food for the whole world. You say, "What about famine?" Famine has nothing to do with the capability of this planet to produce. It has to do with false religion, such as in India where they feed grain to rats and cows. It has to do with war and social politics in Africa. It has to do with communism where they tell people not to work as a way to protest against the people who rule over them and consequently they turn verdant fields into dust bowls. It has to do with laziness. It doesn't have to do with potential. The earth is still filled with food. God has created a boundless, boundless supply and He provides it for His faithful people. That's why David said, "I've never seen the Lord's people begging bread." If you belong to Him, He takes care of you until His work for you is finished. In Psalm 34:10, "They who seek the Lord shall not be in want of any good thing. Young lions lack and suffer hunger, but not those who seek the Lord."

In Isaiah 33:15, "He who walks righteously, speaks with sincerity, rejects unjust gain," and so forth. "His bread will be given him, his water will be sure." God's going to take care of His own children. So why worry about life's necessities? Worrying is a failure to understand divine priority, and that is this: The priority is that you're here as God's child to fulfill a divine purpose. And He will sustain you until that end. And it's a failure to understand divine provision. If He takes care of the animals who only in a nominal way give Him glory, how much more is He going to take care of you?

Third point, just introduce this, worry is a failure to understand divine privilege. Worry is a failure to understand divine privilege. Look at verse 25. I'm just going to introduce this. This is very interesting. "Which of you by being anxious can add a single cubit to his life span?" You know what a cubit is? It's a measurement from the tip of your elbow to the tip of your fingers. It turns out to be about 18 inches. That's how they measured things, in cubits. So, is it saying which of you by being anxious can add 18 inches to your height? I mean, who wants to go from 5'10" to 7'6"? There's no point in that. And whoever thought you could do it by worrying? No, He's not talking about that, he's using cubit simply as a metaphor for length and He's talking about the length of your life, not your height. And He's simply saying, "Do you think by worrying you're going to add to your life span?" This is a matter of divine privilege.

Let me tell you what this is. You do not have the privilege to determine your life span. Who does? God. The Lord gives. The Lord takes. Blessed be the name of the Lord. People say, "Oh, you know, if you...you've got to do this and you've got to do that to...to live longer, live..." Look, this society is berserk about lengthening life, mega billion-dollar industries in food supplements and vitamins and exercise and medications, on and on and on. You can't add one day to your life. I don't want to be here any longer than He wants me here. That's kind of liberating, isn't it? Takes the panic out. People are consumed with their health. I'm not saying you shouldn't be disciplined, you should. I'm not saying you shouldn't be moderate in the way you eat and I'm not saying you shouldn't stay in some reasonable condition so that you can serve the Lord with all your energy and all your power. That's important. Now there's no virtue in the sin of gluttony or laziness or overindulgence. But I am telling you, worry isn't going to lengthen your life because the one who has the privilege to determine when you are born and when you die is the sovereign God.

So, what do you want to do? Don't worry. You belong to Him. He knows the priority is for you to serve Him. He makes provision so that that priority can be fulfilled, and He determines just exactly how long He wants that to go on. What's to worry about?