

DON'T WORRY?

Matthew 6:25-34

Turn to the person next to you and chat about a time when you've been given some bad advice.

I'm sure we all know what that's like to be given some bad advice. My least favourite category of advice is when someone doesn't get the seriousness or significance of the situation. Like you get the advice "you should have started your assignment last week", when it's due the next day. Not helpful advice! Whenever I was sick in any way my mum would always give the advice to have water. Most of the time that was actually pretty good advice to be honest, but sometimes I wonder if I broke my arm whether mum would still advise a glass of water! Less helpful.

And I wonder whether some of us could read this passage from Matthew 6 and wonder if Jesus actually isn't giving us some bad advice. We live in a world where many many people are anxious and worried. It is a serious and significant problem, and all the research says it's getting worse. But you don't need research to tell you that do you?

And what does Jesus say into the situation of stress and anxiety. Don't worry! Just look at the birds, check out the flowers, everything's going to be OK.

Really, Jesus? Is that your advice? What do you think? Is Jesus out of touch with reality? Does he not get the seriousness of the issue? Is this bad advice?

Well, I don't think so. In fact this is one of my favourite verses because it is a classic example of of the surprisingly *brilliant* teaching of Jesus.

Because, Jesus is the most *in touch with reality* person who has ever lived. And not only that, he is the most kind and sensitive person who has ever lived. And in this verse, Jesus is actually *revealing reality* to us, so that we can properly live in the world as it really is.

Here Jesus tells us about
the reality of the world,
about the reality of worry
and about the reality of God himself.

And I hope we will all see that Jesus' teaching is full of compassion and understanding. That he's not giving us bad advice. In fact he's not merely giving us advice. He is actually telling us GOOD NEWS. That's where we're going.

1. The Reality of the World

So firstly, Jesus tells us about the reality of the world. It's there in our verse for today. *Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself.* Jesus says, "Don't worry." And what's the reason? Is it because life isn't actually as bad as you think? Or that things could be worse? No. Jesus says, *Do not worry about tomorrow...for each day has **enough trouble** of its own.*

Jesus gives a very honest assessment about the reality of life in this world. It is full of trouble. Jesus says don't worry about tomorrow because your simply can't afford to. There's just too much trouble, too much difficulty right there in front of you. See, Jesus is not naive and out of touch. Jesus came down and lived his life in the real world. The world of broken relationships. Where those who are meant to protect you can actually hurt you. Where those you trust let you down. Where hearts and homes are broken. The world of sickness and sadness. Where body breaks down and your mind can get out of control. When we can feel out of place in the world and in our selves. The world where there is always so much more to do than we can actually get done. Where we are constantly bumping up to our limits. Where the weight of expectation can be completely exhausting.

Jesus knows what the world is like and he tells it like it is. Because Jesus came into this world of darkness and disconnection and death. Jesus not only knows *about* the troubles of this world. But he experienced them. He gets it. And here he is reminding us about the reality of life in this world: it is full of trouble.

2. The Reality of Worry

And Jesus also tells us about the reality of worry. I think what Jesus tells us in this passage is that the way to worry, is to try to live an *untroubled life* in a *troubled world*. Let me say that again. If you really want to ramp up your worry, then try to live and *untroubled life* in a *troubled world*.

When we think that we can escape the daily difficulties of life we will always end up disappointed, and frustrated and exhausted. That's the picture he gives us in verse 32. The pagans are running around trying to find that something that will give them security and satisfaction, that will deliver them out of troubles and into unbroken happiness.

That is such a good description of the world around us. Just think of the things we run to to find peace. Maybe it's clothes like Jesus is talking about here. If we can just wear the right stuff that will make us fit in with the right people, then life will be OK. Or maybe if I have the latest technology, then life will be OK. If I can just work hard enough, to get the marks I need, to get into the course I want, to do my dream job. Then life will be OK. If I can just have enough money, or enough friends, or enough approval from my parents, or enough fun, or enough experiences. Then I'll be OK.

And the world out there is very happy telling you that whatever it is they are selling is the secret to an untroubled life. But in this view of the world, life becomes like some hellish beep test. You might be a little slow and end up missing out on what you want, but even if you get it, it won't satisfy your heart and so you will have to run off to something else. And back and forth we go, running, running, running, stress and worry and anxiety rising and rising and rising. It doesn't add any extra days to our life, it just drains our life of joy and hope and peace!

In his kindness and compassion Jesus tells us about the reality of this world. And he wants to relieve us of the reality of worry. Don't try to live an untroubled life in a world full of troubles. It doesn't work, it will just lead to worry.

The Reality of God

And so thirdly Jesus lifts our eyes above the troubles of the world, and away from all that unsatisfying stuff, to teach us about the reality of God. Yes, we live in a world of trouble, but there is a God in heaven who is bigger than all the troubles we can face on this earth. But it's not just the bare fact that God exists, but what this God is actually like.

In verse 32 Jesus contrasts the pagans running around on earth with our Father who is in heaven. Their unceasing activity is contrasted with his everlasting kindness. This is what God is like. A Father, who cares for us, who knows our needs, and delights to give us both basic and beautiful things. Jesus wants us to open our eyes to see the extravagant mercy and generosity which God shows to us every day. He shows it to the birds and flowers, and he shows it even more to you and me. Which means that life should be less like a frantic and frustrating beep test. Rather it should be more like sitting at the feet of our Father, waiting on him, trusting him, recognising that though the world is often chaotic and we are not in control — but the God who cares for us, is in control over it all.

Good News

If that's true, If God exists, and if God is like *this*, then that is really Good News. But *is it* true?

Well, we need to look at the birds and flowers. And this is where we're going to finish. For when Jesus counsels us to look at the birds and flowers it's not some vague hippy idea of prancing through the fields. It takes us to the very heart of the gospel.

Because do you notice how Jesus speaks about the birds. Verse 26:

They don't sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly father feeds them.

Jesus speaks about the birds as trusting children of the Father, who wait on his provision and receive all that they need.

And listen to how he speaks of the flowers in verse 28:

See how the flowers of the field grow. They don't labour or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these.

Jesus speaks of the flowers as radiant Kings, arrayed in God-given glory.

Look at a bird, and see a faithful Son of God. Look at a flower and see the glory of God's King. What are we meant to see? Who is THE faithful son of God. Who is God's ONE glorious KING? It's Jesus!

We can look to creation because all of creation points us to Christ. Jesus is the true Son and the true King — and if you want to see reality most clearly then LOOK TO HIM.

For he lived a life full of trouble. And he didn't try to avoid the trouble, but he trusted in his Father. Even as he faced the ultimate trouble on the cross, he remained a faithful Son. And in Jesus we see that on the other side of the cross is always the crown. Even through the trouble of death, God could be trusted to raise Jesus into everlasting life.

And in Jesus, as we trust that he died and rose again *for us*, we become adopted children of the Father — sons and daughters of God. We are made Kings and Queens in the Kingdom of God. We are infinitely more precious than birds, and infinitely more glorious than flowers. So we can stop running and rest. Instead of seeking our own security and satisfaction we can seek God's Kingdom and his righteousness, and find our hearts finally satisfied.

To be a Christian doesn't mean we will avoid all trouble. That would be impossible. It's not going to happen. But with Jesus we can keep going through trouble, trusting he will never let us go, and never let us down.

In our worries we can wait on God's provision and depend on his Fatherly care. We can carry our cross daily, knowing that one day God *will* give us the crown of life.

What we really need in the face of the world's troubles and worries is not just advice. We need Good News. And that's exactly what Jesus gives us here.

So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.