

# Treasuring your Father

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Preacher: Brian King

[ 0 : 00 ] Before we begin, let's ask God for his help. Heavenly Father, as we come to your words again this morning, these words of Jesus, we pray that you'll be at work in us, reshaping and rewiring our hearts so that we might be more and more conformed to the image of your Son, Jesus.

Be at work this morning. All this we pray for the sake of your glory. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Today, Will You Believe It? is our 10th sermon looking at the Sermon on the Mount. And ever since Matthew 5 verse 17, Jesus has been painting for us a vivid picture of Jesus' culture. He's taught us that as his disciples, we are to exhibit a different kind of righteousness to the Pharisees.

He reveals the heartbeat of the law, showing how it works itself in the heartfelt way we treat others, whether that's in controlling unrighteous anger and seeking reconciliation, in the way we take seriously our promises to our spouses and all those around us, and in the way we go the extra mile and even love our enemies.

That's all in Matthew chapter 5. And in Matthew chapter 6, Jesus has been teaching us how disciples are to live, not just in relation to others, but in relation to our God.

[ 1 : 33 ] We live in such a way that seeks approval, first and foremost from our Father, not from our peers. And you could say this culminates in the petition we heard last week from the Lord's Prayer, Your kingdom come, Your will be done.

Jesus' culture is about devotion to God. That just sounds good. But at this point in the sermon, maybe we're also thinking, oh, that just sounds unrealistic.

You see, how can I devote myself to God when I have all these worldly worries to deal with? How can I live for God when the pressures of life always seem to get in the way?

After all, we live in a world filled with worry. One journalist even describes our 21st century as an epidemic of anxiety. And the Bible itself affirms this, does it not?

Job 14 verse 1 tells us, Ecclesiastes 2 verse 23 says of us, We live outside of Eden, in a post-Genesis 3 world, one under the curse of sin, full of evil, and where troubles abound.

[ 3 : 01 ] The world is a worrying place. Sometimes that truth comes at us in a big way. For a long time, I never worried about jumping on a plane.

In fact, in my uni days, I looked forward to boarding the Malaysian Airlines Boeing 747, still my favourite plane. Qantas and British Airways have just retired their last 747s this week.

But I used to love to board that plane from Heathrow Airport in London to make the 12-hour trip to KLIA. But in 2014, in quick succession, MH370 and MH17 happened.

And to be truthful, ever since those two incidents, I no longer enjoy flying in the same way. What happened? The illusion that I could never be in a plane that would have something bad happen to it was broken for me.

Ever since that day, I've become a little more worried about flying. And basically, the whole of 2020 so far has been a giant reminder, hasn't it, that the world we live in has many causes of worry.

[ 4 : 13 ] After all, plane crashes don't happen every day, but right now, I'm sure all of us are dealing with one worry or another. A family member coughs and you worry, does he have COVID-19?

The schools were going to reopen in Sarawak but now it's delayed. What's going to happen to my education? And is it safe? Work is slow. Does that mean my job is in danger?

And my kids are so moody. Are they going astray? Everyone's socially distancing nowadays. Will I even have friends in a year's time?

And the list goes on. It's hard not to worry. And how do we typically deal with our worry? Well, let me suggest two ways.

Firstly, we might be driven by our worries. We let our worries set the agenda. If the kids are not doing well at school, well, we shout at them, do better, work harder, stop playing computer games, and then we send them to two different tuition centers.

[ 5 : 18 ] If our job is a worry, well, maybe we'll spend time 24-7 on it. Never mind the family, whether that's immediate family or church family.

We are driven by our worries and we tackle it head on, maybe even successfully for a time. But often it comes at a cost.

Secondly, we might bury our heads from our worries. So we just ignore them. Learn some techniques. Maybe mindfulness.

Breathe in, breathe out. Escape from it by drinking more coffee, buying more chocolate, avoiding that particular person, disengaging from a Bible study.

Or we escape by turning to an alternative. Perhaps we might turn to certain speakers, including those who call themselves Christians, in the hope that they'll just give us a dose of motivational energy just to keep going on.

[ 6 : 26 ] At the deeper end, we might do so by turning to medicine, alcohol, or pornography. But Jesus says, that's not going to work over the long run.

Go that way, and burnout, and addiction, and disillusionment are not far away. And that's not what God wants for you.

And so Jesus says, let me show you a better way. You see, the kind of worry Jesus is addressing here isn't just a biological or psychological issue.

Although it might have biological or psychological components. At its heart, it's a spiritual issue. You see, for our purposes today, we are going to distinguish worry from concern.

What is concern? If you live in a neighborhood where there have been many armed robberies recently, you're right to be concerned. If your car has not been serviced for a long time, and now the engine is making funny noises while you're on the road, you're right to be concerned.

[ 7 : 35 ] An appropriate concern leads to responsible action. You will lock your doors at night. You will call up your mechanic. But worry in this case is when that concern becomes excessive.

It's when it becomes disproportionate to the matter being considered. And it's when it causes you to forget God or distrust him. And that's why Jesus regards it as a spiritual issue.

Worry is when concern gets out of control because we've forgotten God is always in control. And the big danger is that worry can drag us away from living fully for Jesus.

It can cause us to make decisions that show that it's no longer about your kingdom come, your will be done. And it's worse.

It can lead to unbelief. And so today, Jesus wants to prescribe the antidote to anxiety. And he does so by once again describing reality.

[ 8 : 44 ] He tells us truth with forgotten. And what is that truth? It's simply this. God is your heavenly Father.

Remember, that's what we saw last week. Actually, in Matthew 6, verse 1 to 18 itself, God is described as Father no less than 10 times. And in Christ, we are his beloved children.

And it is only in the rich soil of this truth that the fruit of a life not ruled by worry or anxiety can begin to emerge.

And that's why Jesus wants to press this truth home to us again today. And so he prescribes these two specific remedies. Treasure your Father above everything else and trust your Father to meet all your needs.

So, first remedy. Treasure your Father above everything else. Verse 19. Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth where moths and vermin destroy and where thieves break in and steal.

[ 9 : 56 ] Now, what you treasure is what you think is significant. It's what you value most highly. It's what you think will bring you contentment and happiness. It's what you live for.

And so you will work hard to gain whatever it is. And if you have it, you will do what you can to hold on to it. That's what it means to treasure something.

Whatever you treasure, you will invest in. And Jesus now holds before us two investments. On one side, you have earthly treasures.

He doesn't define it for us exactly, but verse 24 suggests to us that Jesus has primarily money and possessions in mind. Now, when I mention that, you might have in your mind's eye a big car or a

big house or a bottomless bank account because of the word treasure.

But Jesus could be referring to any kind of possession, even just simple food, drink, and clothing, which incidentally are the only ones he names in the entire passage.

[ 11 : 07 ] And he singles out one defining characteristic about them. They can be destroyed or stolen. The finest clothes can be destroyed by little insects or rodents smaller than the palm of your hand.

The word vermin in verse 19 could also refer to rust. I know some of you probably have an older NIV with you, and it translates that word as rust.

And if that's right, well, Jesus is reminding you that even precious metals can deteriorate. Now, whether it's vermin or rust, the big point is clear.

Earthly treasures don't last. If the moths and rust don't get at them, thieves will. They will look secure now, but one day they will be revealed to be like mists.

Here for a few seconds, and then gone. And so Jesus is telling us don't get too attached to them. They're not good investments. Think of Jeff Bezos, the CEO of Amazon.com.

[ 12 : 15 ] His net worth as of this year is \$189.2 billion US. But his net worth in the grave will be the same as all of us.

Zero. Or as Bob Dylan, the legendary singer, once sang, I think you will find when death takes its toll, all the money you made will never buy back your soul.

Now, Jesus of course is not saying that you shouldn't work hard, or that you can't own any possessions. In 1 Thessalonians 4 verse 11, Paul tells us to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life.

You should mind your own business and work with your hands. And then down in verse 12, it's so that you will not be dependent. In other words, earning some money, honestly, is a good thing.

And some believers in the early church were clearly well to do, and they are not condemned. And neither is Jesus saying that you shouldn't save at all. Proverbs 6 verse 6 to 8 tells us this.

[ 13 : 24 ] And so there is a place for planning and saving.

And of course there is space even for enjoying your possessions. 1 Timothy 4 verse 3 to 5 suggests that we can receive whatever God has given to us with thanksgiving and enjoy it.

But Jesus' point is this. Do you end up treasuring those things above your father? Does your financial planning cross the line into obsessing?

Have you begun holding onto them too tightly and depending on them? This is where anxiety begins to grow. Because you think those things, rather than your heavenly father, will anchor your life, you begin to think about how you can hold onto them.

And the moment that anchor looks like loosening, the moment they look like they'll slip out of your hands, you get worried. And then when you find it harder and harder to control circumstances, well the worry gets magnified.

[ 14 : 43 ] And yet Jesus says those things are not dependable anyway. They don't last. They're a bad investment. Well, it's a good investment then.

Well, Jesus tells us verse 20, But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.

Now, what does it mean to store up heavenly treasure? Well, we might think that it's mansions in heaven or something like that, as if it's just about collecting material possessions for the afterlife.

But looking within the passage itself, it appears to be just another way of saying verse 33. It's about seeking first God's kingdom and his righteousness.

It's about letting God's kingdom determine your priorities, such that you would be generous in the way you use your resources. You are storing up heavenly treasure whenever you act in line with Jesus' culture.

[ 15 : 49 ] for you are concerned with being righteous to do God's will. If you're being salt and light, whether that's showing the light of the gospel to an unbeliever or encouraging spiritual progress in another believer, while you're storing up what will last, you're investing in things that moths and thieves can't touch.

You never need worry that you're making a lost. the returns will far outweigh the cost. And so concretely, what does that look like?

Well, let's say you have a pretty decent house in a good location. And if all you're concerned about is making sure that the house looks nice enough and has enough resale value in the future, you're

storing up earthly treasure.

You can't take that house or its profits with you when you die. But if you look at that house and think about how you can use it to be hospitable to people, to welcome that single person into your household, to share a meal with the lonely international student, to make it a friendly place for Bible studies or seekers attending Christianity Explored, all for the sake of Jesus' name, what are you doing?

You are storing up heavenly treasure. And now I realise that in our new age of social distancing, you probably can't quite do it in this way anymore and you have to get more creative.

[ 17 : 24 ] But I just wanted to illustrate the basic principle. You have God's kingdom at heart. Because that's what Jesus is ultimately concerned about, your heart.

Verse 21, for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Now, this verse could be saying, what you treasure exposes your heart.

And that's certainly true, generally speaking. Our wallets and our budgets will tell us what we think is important. But I think this verse is saying more than that.

What you treasure exposes your heart, but what you treasure also shapes your heart. Now, what is the heart, biblically speaking? It's the core of our being.

expressed in our minds, emotions, and will. And our hearts are never neutral. They are always inclined to something. They are aimed in a certain direction.

[ 18 : 25 ] And so the question is, where, or what, or who, is your heart inclined to? And what you treasure will have a bearing on that. Let me draw an analogy.

Recent brain research reveals that our brains are not static. They can rewire themselves. So the habits you develop could impact your brain. The more you read long books, for example, the more your brain will get used to it.

You'll increase your concentration. But the more you just jump from website to website on your phone, staying on them for only a minute or so, the more your brain will learn not to focus on one thing for a long time.

And so shorten your attention span. And so your actions and decisions shape your brain. And Jesus is saying our hearts kind of work the same way.

If you are investing a lot of time and energy into a big project, like opening a new business, for example, your heart will naturally get into it too.

[ 19 : 31 ] And so the question is, what kind of investment are you currently making? Well, if you keep making godly decisions, whether you are sacrificially giving to ensure authentic gospel work is happening somewhere, or going the extra mile to help another depressed believer, well, God will do some spiritual rewiring work in your heart too.

As you invest in spiritual treasure, your heart is being molded into a kingdom shape. But, if you keep making decisions that are not aligned with God's kingdom, the truth is, you're going to get more and more comfortable with that.

Your heart will follow your actions. And so, if, for example, you deliberately decide to stop meeting with fellow believers, you don't even want to meet with them online during this time, to be encouraged, and to encourage, well, your heart is going to be molded into a different shape.

And whatever shape that is, it is not the shape of Jesus. Your heart is not being conformed to him. And that's what Jesus is warning us against.

The New Testament scholar, Jonathan Pennington, puts it rather soberly. What one values is who one really is as a person.

[ 20 : 56 ] What one values is who one really is as a person. And that's why Jesus gives us this rather obscure image in verses 22 to 23.

The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness.

If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness? Now let me try to explain this.

The eye, Jesus says, is like a lamp that shines a light on a person's inner life.

Now that sounds a bit strange to us, but that kind of thinking was around in Jesus' day. So think of it a bit like the eyes of the heart. And Jesus is now drawing a picture of two eyes for us.

A good or healthy eye is focus. And it will fix itself or focus itself on the right thing. And when that happens, it will fill your body with light.

[ 22 : 00 ] In other words, if your eyes are fixed on heavenly treasure, you'll be spiritually healthy. But on the other hand, if your eye is fixed only on worldly treasure, you'll be spiritually unhealthy. You'll be filled with darkness. That's the basic point Jesus is making. What we focus on will have an impact on our spiritual lives. We are fooling ourselves if we think that what we choose to treasure doesn't do anything to our hearts.

You see, in the end, we can't be double visioned. You're either looking up or down. You can't look both ways at the same time. And you can't serve two masters.

Verse 24. It's either God or money. And they demand different things of you. But what money as a God will do is increase your worry.

He will tell you, you need just a little bit more to be really secure. You need to be my slave to earn my reward. You need to chase me so your future is guaranteed and I love to make you run really hard.

[ 23 : 08 ] It's a game to me. Money is a bad master. And how do we know if we're serving him? Well, here are a few signs.

Number one, you think about him a lot. I remember the distinction I drew at the beginning between concern and worry. Well, when the amount of time money is on your mind is disproportionate, perhaps you belong to him more than you realize.

Number two, you feel good when he rewards you. So, one thing I realized about myself recently is how happy I felt when I said to myself, oh, good thing I locked in that substantial amount in fixed deposits before Bank Nagara kept cutting all the rates.

Now, being happy in itself is not wrong, but the question is, why? Why was I happy? Is it because I'm ultimately depending on my savings for reassurance? And that leads to number three, you think he'll answer all your problems.

I think, oh, that stash is going to secure me for life. And so when my investment goes southwards, I get anxious when Bank Nagara keeps cutting all those rates. That's when I know I'm not serving God as my master.

[ 24 : 21 ] That's when I know I'm not treasuring my father above all else. But Jesus says, remember who your master is? I know you've forgotten, so that brings us to our second remedy.

Trust your father to meet all your needs. Trust your father to meet all your needs. Jesus knows that the big reason we struggle to treasure our father above all else is the great big unknown, the future. That's a big reason we hesitate to make the heavenly investment, because we think we need to first take care of the present. But Jesus says to us three times in verses 25 to 34, don't worry.

not because he wants to offer us a method in positive thinking, or to make us feel guilty if we're currently worrying, but to remind us your heavenly father is trustworthy.

He loves you. He cares for you. He will meet your needs. How do I know that? We might ask Jesus. Well, Jesus says, let creation be your teacher.

[ 25 : 40 ] Let's first of all look to the skies, verse 26. Look at the birds of the air. They do not sow or reap or stall away in barns, and yet your heavenly father feeds them.

Are you not much more valuable than they? Jesus reminds us of the two things we saw about our father last week. First of all, God oversees all of creation so completely that he is able to feed even the birds.

He is the one in charge. His divine hand governs everything to the smallest details. Perhaps Jesus was meditating on something like Psalm 145 verses 15 to 16, which says, the eyes of all look to you and you give them your food at the proper time.

You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing. God bless God. But second of all, Jesus reminds us that our father values us.

After all, if he values even the birds, will he not value even more you and I, made in the image of our creator?

[ 26 : 52 ] If he looks after his pets with care, will he not look after his children even more? And then Jesus says, look at the ground.

Verse 28. And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin.

And yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, you of little faith?

Jesus is not referring to the carefully cultivated orchids you see at award winning flower shows. These are ordinary, wild flowers, not used to beautify your living room, but as fuel for cooking food in the oven.

Today, this might be the flowers you see in the open car parks, you know, just simple plants that no one cultivates or even notices much. And yet Jesus says, God does.

[ 28 : 06 ] In fact, he cares for them so much that he tenderly clothes them with extravagant beauty. He treats them even better than a king, even though they only last for a short while.

Imagine if an Oscar winning costume designer for Lord of the Rings or Black Panther showed up at your five-year-old's birthday party to make a superhero costume for him that cost hundreds of thousands of dollars to make, even though your child will only wear it only once.

Well, that's the idea here. And if God clothes even things that are not eternal, what will he do for us who were created for eternity?

And so Jesus says, this is why you shouldn't worry, because your heavenly Father cares this much for you. But Jesus also shows the other side of the coin.

He asks, well, what happens if you do worry? It's actually futile. After all, for one thing, worry is pointless. Verse 27, can any one of you by worrying at a single hour to your life?

[ 29 : 22 ] Worry is certainly no longevity potion. Funnily enough, it might even shorten your life by increasing your blood pressure and so on. It certainly wouldn't resolve whatever challenge you're facing.

It's pointless. And more than that, Jesus says, worry can be a sign of faithlessness. That's what Jesus implies at the end of verse 30, when he calls the worrier, you of little, faith.

Worry assumes a particular view of God, that he is ignorant of our needs, or lacks the power to meet our needs, or does not care enough about our needs.

One pastor I heard once gave this striking illustration. And with this illustration, if you're a parent, imagine that this is your child. And if you're not a parent, imagine that this is you. So, and imagine that this person is still living in the household with his parents.

And just imagine that this person keeps going around, feeling absolutely and super worried, because he's constantly thinking, oh man, what am I going to do if mom and dad doesn't feed me? What am I going to do if I wake up and I discover that mom and dad have thrown away all my clothes?

[ 30 : 39 ] Now, if you're a parent, you'll be horrified that your kid taught that, wouldn't you? And if you're the child, your parents will probably be horrified that you taught that about them if they knew.

Well, the one who feeds the birds and clothes the flowers is your father. If you have a little faith in your human father to take care of you, have a little more faith in your heavenly father.

Verse 31. So do not worry saying, what shall we eat or what shall we drink or what shall we wear? And how can you show a little more faith?

Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness. Don't let worries drag you away from that. After all, Jesus says, verse 25, is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?

We say, of course. But how often do we live as if life is just about the accumulation of possessions and experiences? But Jesus says life is more than that.

[ 31 : 53 ] It's about his kingdom and his righteousness. That's the more he's referring to here. And you're free to pursue that because, verse 32, your heavenly father already knows what you need to live.

life. Your God isn't like a pagan God who is deaf, dumb, and blind, such that you need to be entirely self-sufficient to survive. Your God isn't like a pagan God who has to be bribed and manipulated into supplying what you need.

Your God is your heavenly father. And that's certainly how Jesus lived. Don't forget, in places like Matthew 8, verse 20, we are told that foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.

Jesus had reason to worry, but he trusted in his Father who loves him. And so in the midst of all the worries of life, can we live for God with all our being?

The answer is yes. Because you can trust your Father to meet all your needs. You can treasure your Father above all else. Because God can take care of your tomorrow.

[ 33 : 14 ] He frees you to live for him in the present. And it also works the other way. You'll truly treasure your Father above all else when you trust him to meet all your needs.

That's what the Bible calls faith. And you can treasure your Father above all else by storing up heavenly treasure, not earthly treasure.

You can seek his kingdom and his righteousness first, including in your use of money and possessions. Because you know now that life is actually about relationship with God, not about how much you earn and own.

And if you forget that, well, come back and meditate on today's passage. Remember what lasts. Look to the skies. Look at the ground.

And look to the cross. Money never made sacrifices for you. But Jesus did. Which God then is worth serving.

[ 34 : 21 ] Here is the great but joyful paradox of the Christian life. You'll become less anxious about your day-to-day worries when you become more concerned about glorifying God in all that you do.

You become less anxious about your day-to-day worries when you become more concerned about glorifying God in all that you do. If there is one thing that you should obsess about, obsess about the kingdom of God.

There is no better investment. So do not worry, but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven where moths do not destroy and thieves do not break in and steal.

Let's pray. our father in heaven, we come to you this morning and we are probably still pondering on your words.

Lord, you know what our minds and hearts are like, you know, filled with so many worries and anxieties. things. And so father, please help us to take to heart the words you say to us this morning.

[ 35 : 41 ] Help us to turn our worries into partitions and to cast all our anxieties on you and to trust you to meet all our needs. Thank you that you are our creator, a creator who takes care of his creation, but more than that, you are our father who loves his children.

And so father, as your children, help us to have a little more faith that you will take care of us. And in the meantime, Lord, help us to store up treasures in heaven.

Help us to seek first your kingdom and your righteousness, to live in line with Jesus' culture and give you glory in all that we do.

all this we pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.