

“Adding To Your Span”

Scripture: Matthew 6:24-34

Graphic: measuring tape, fitness, territory

Key Verse: 33 But seek first the kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Ask them to: Serve the kingdom and the rest will be taken care of for you by God.

1) Introduction

- a) Jesus asked, “Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?” (that’s in the NIV). The New Rev. Standard asks, “And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?”
- b) The King James poetically asks, “Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?”
- c) This question is as pertinent today as it was 2,000 years ago when Jesus asked this to the crowd gathered to hear his Sermon on the Mount, as recorded in the gospel of Matthew.
- d) *Does* worry do us any good? Does it add to our span...of life...of influence...of money...of time...of material goods...of faith, even?
- e) It’d be really good to know the answer to that question b/c, the Lord knows, we’ve put HUGE amounts of time and energy into worrying about all sorts of things that MIGHT happen, most of which never actually come to pass.
- f) And what’s more, our everyday lives provide us with a great wealth of possible problems in which we can invest our anxiety.
- g) But having burned through all that anxiety, what do we have to show for it? Have we, as Jesus asks, albeit rhetorically, added even a **single hour** to our lives?
- h) Jesus wants us to answer, “No”, of course...but if you’re like me and at all analytical, another possible answer may occur to you, and that is, “Who knows?”
- i) If a person is a worrier and dies at age 73 years, 114 days, and 17 hours, who’s to say that without all that worrying that person wouldn’t have lived to 73 years, 114 days, and 16 hours...and that his worrying gained him an hour. We don’t know.

- j) Well, there are scientific studies that tell us that anxiety and worrying is a factor in shortening our lives. And so, the study found that by getting rid of worry, you might actually live longer.
- k) Now, in our scripture lesson for today, Jesus isn't telling us to get rid of worry because he wants us to live longer, per se. But what he is telling us is that pessimism and worry are related to a shortage of hope and trust...hope and trust in what God's plan is for each of us, for his church, and for the world. And living longer in that hope is beneficial to the kingdom of God...the longer you live, the more chance you have to share the Good News with someone else. We need not worry about the rest...
- l) In our scripture...sermon on the mount...Jesus teaching about the Law, murder, adultery, divorce, oaths, justice, loving our enemies, prayer, fasting, treasures on earth, and WORRY...

2) Scripture – Matthew 6:24-34

- a) v24 – this passage starts off with the connecting passage from the previously section and talks about money and God. In God's economy...money (or property as the Aramaic word suggests) and God on opposite ends of the spectrum
- b) Not that money = bad and God = good. They just are. But as we apply **ourselves** to the spectrum, our SERVICE is either to money (for example) or God. Substitute work, family, gossip, whatever...
- c) What are we serving? Human life is not self-sufficient...we find meaning outside ourselves, by the things we do and say and the relationships we have.
- d) The human life inescapably 'serves' something all the time...the question is not **if** we will serve, but who or what will we serve?
- e) And so Jesus is saying, be aware that we serve things (outside ourselves)...and in our hearts, it's an either or...either we'll primarily serve money or whatever, or we'll serve God...and as this passage goes on, we find that if we choose to serve God, we won't **have** to serve anything else...
- f) v 25. Life = eat/drink...Body = clothes. But isn't our life more than food and our body more than clothes...
- g) v26 - Example of the birds...Birdwatching...many birds...none of them grocery shopping or spending time at the mall...God knows what they need...it's all provided for them...they don't worry about it like we do...
- h) v26 – Jesus plays on our logical senses...Jesus asks if we are more valuable than the birds or the grass...well...are we? Well, the answer is YES. The

birds and grass and all the created things tell of the existence of God...creation shouts to God for joy...but with humans, b/c we are created beings with hearts and brains and logic and made in the image of God, **we can serve the KINGDOM in a way that birds and grass can't.** We can tell people about JESUS – the redeemer of creation...the Savior.

- i) v27 – and b/c of that...b/c God has a special plan for humans in this fallen world...agents of the kingdom of God...and b/c we know God has given the rest of creation everything it needs to thrive...**we need not doubt the fact that God has provided for us in the same ways...**and when we do, does that add anything to our lives or to God's plan?
- j) See when we doubt, we think we can add something to God's plan...as if we somehow have control over the plan...we have control over our decisions in relation to the plan...**but we don't have control of the plan.** Doubt and worry and pessimism is our way of trying to control the God's plan...
- k) v 28-29 – and proof of that is the lilies and grass...they can't doubt...they can't worry...they aren't made to be pessimistic...they only follow the plan. Unfortunately, we think we know better, amen?
- l) But if God does that for plants, how much MORE does he want to provide for **us**...infinitely more!
- m) When we get stuck with worry and doubt and fear and pessimism, we actually trying to cut God off from increasing our span. We try to cut God off from expanding our borders, so to speak. BUT – in those times when we are faithful...God's out in front leading us...
- n) SO...in v 31...don't worry ☺ Jesus makes it sound so simple...just don't worry. Yeah right! We worry b/c we don't think we have what it takes...or b/c we don't think we have what we need to be successful...right?
- o) In verse 32, Jesus acknowledges that we all run after these things...God KNOWS we do...he knows what we need, even those who aren't believers in Christ. We all have the same basic needs. But we have the advantage of the answer to our toil...we are part of God's kingdom...where all things are possible for God...without limit.
- p) And Jesus' answer is to seek the kingdom and its righteousness...and ALL THESE THINGS!!!!!! ALL THESE THINGS!!!!!! will be given to you. Just **given**...free...handed over...**not everything we WANT...but everything he knows we need.** And not just to meet **our** needs primarily, but to meet the needs of others in our church, in our families, in our community. To the glory of God!!!!!!

- q) We seek the kingdom...and we are given the things that meet our needs...so that we can be equipped and prepared to serve in **EVEN GREATER WAYS**.
- r) We must not hold on too tightly to what God has entrusted to us for **USE** in the kingdom...we must **UTILIZE** what God has given us for the kingdom...and we must not be ashamed for our reasons. We could come up with lots of reasons to worry and lots of reasons to release our worry, but if we are truly seeking to add to our span, the only authentic reason can be for **advancing God's kingdom right here...right now...**
- s) Tomorrow will have its own worries...Jesus is asking us to be faithful today...

3) Conclusion

- a) Bottomline: Address each day's problems (opportunities) as they come, confident that your life is in the hands of a loving father, who holds the whole world in his hands and will bring it to a worthy conclusion.
- b) Along the way, remember that the question is not whether food, clothing, and money are important, but rather, **WHO** is the one we are trusting with **PROVIDING** these things and why...
- c) Jesus is not saying to us in his sermon that if we are ever pessimistic or worry that we lack hope and trust...but what he is saying is that as hope and trust increase, because of our invitation for the Holy Spirit to fill us with more of a sense of God's plan, then pessimism and worry decrease.
- d) And this is as relevant to those in troubled times as in good times. In the midst of strife, seek first the kingdom of God...seek Jesus...seek others in the kingdom...begin to shift the primary focus to serving the kingdom and not our predicament, and God will begin to decrease any anxiety that exists. In good times, release your passion to serve God first...and all the other, related needs and details will be given to you as God has planned.
- e) As a community of believers today, are we serving people for the good of the kingdom of God, or are we serving money for our own good?
- f) Because money can't compete with the glory of heaven or the kingdom of God on earth...
- g) Which will you choose to serve this day...I say...choose God...work for the kingdom...look for the opportunities God is giving us...trust in His plan.
- h) In that way...we will add to our span for the kingdom of God and his glory.
- i) Let's pray...