

“No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.

²⁵ *“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?”* ²⁶ *Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?”* ²⁷ *Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?*

²⁸ *“And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin.”* ²⁹ *Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these.* ³⁰ *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, O you of little faith?”* ³¹ *So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’* ³² *For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.* ³³ *But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.* ³⁴ *Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. (Matthew 6:24-34)*

Worry is a False God

What is worry? It’s a little hard to explain, isn’t it? In fact, it’s easier to describe what it feels like than what it is. We all know the feeling, right? You can’t sleep. You can’t eat – or you can’t stop eating. You feel restless and upset and maybe even snap at people over nothing. Worry is a common feeling. Counselors describe it as “a lasting preoccupation with ... future bad events” or becoming “overly concerned with a future event.” You can say it any way you want to, but worry means that you have something on your mind and you’re afraid of what it’s going to mean for you. Jesus talks about worry in the verses we have before us this morning. But he doesn’t give us a definition. Instead he leads us to see worry in a different light: **worry is a false god.**

I.

Now, when Jesus talks about worry today, he’s speaking in the context of our standard of living. He talks about food and clothing and money. He says: **“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?”** What is his point here? You don’t live to eat. You eat to live. You don’t live to buy the nicest clothes you can find. You get dressed to preserve and protect your body. Worry often causes us to lose this focus. We make the eating and the clothing the end all and be all and we forget that those things are just tools to care for our physical bodies. We could say the same thing about our houses and our cars and even our jobs. Why do you work? I know that part of the answer is that we need to feel like we’re doing something worthwhile. And I know that some of us work because we love what we do. But first and foremost, we work to keep ourselves and our families alive. If our job provides what we need to do that, it’s done what it’s supposed to do. Life is more than work or clothes or even food.

Several years ago on vacation we visited Fort Niagara in New York and the tour guide explained the old nursery rhyme, “Peas porridge hot, peas porridge cold, peas porridge in the pot, nine days old.” You see soldiers at that time got a ration of dried peas. Groups of them would make porridge with their rations and keep it simmering for days and throw in whatever meat or even fat they could get. That was their food until the next time they got rations. You and I who eat fresh meat every day, who occasionally clean out our refrigerators and throw out food because we’ve had so much else to eat that we let leftovers go bad – we don’t have a clue what it was like to live in Jesus’ time and to work day and night to bring in enough crops to survive the off season. There was a real reason people in Jesus’ day asked, “What shall we eat? What shall we drink? What shall we wear?” Very few of us here at Peace live as precarious an existence as they did.

And yet, we do worry. We worry about whether we’re going to lose our homes. Some of us do worry about whether we’ll have enough money for groceries until our next check comes. We worry about whether the car is going to make it without some kind of expensive fix. We worry about whether we can afford our medications and whether our taxes and gas and food prices are going to shoot up until we can’t pay for them.

We worry about how much we've already got charged up on our credit cards and what we'd do if our job disappeared. We worry because there are real things to worry about.

Jesus is talking to us. He says, **"Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?"** As real as all those things are that cause us to worry, there is something else that is just as real and far more powerful: God and his love for us. We are much more valuable than the birds to God. Just as he takes the time each day to care for those birds, so he also cares for us. Now it is true that God doesn't often do a miracle and drop food for the birds from heaven. We all see them all summer long in our yards searching for bugs or worms or seeds. But God provides for them through the natural world. And God promises that he will provide for us. It might be through a job that we hate. It might be in an apartment instead of in a big house with a yard. We might have to eat hamburger instead of steak. But God promises that he will provide.

But we worry because we don't completely trust that God will do all that. We all have a sinful nature inside us that just doesn't buy God's promises. That's why Jesus calls us, "You of little faith." So if we don't trust God to provide for us, who do we trust? Isn't it ourselves? We have to work overtime to make sure that our families are cared for. We can't sleep because we're trying to figure out how we're going to pay all those bills. We have to come up with a solution to the house that's underwater and that layoff notice if it comes.

And Jesus says, **"Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?"** It isn't up to us! God clothes grass with flowers. He will clothe you. But it is his doing. Worry makes it our doing. We put ourselves in God's place and we think it's all up to me. Now, by that, I don't mean that you shouldn't be responsible. God says that he who will not work, neither shall he eat. But God expects us to commit all our cares to him and to trust that he will bless our efforts. He will defy the dangers and the difficulties that swamp this life and he will give us all we need and more.

Do we trust God to take care of all that? Or do our lives illustrate that **worry is a false god? That it's worshipping ourselves?** Maybe we haven't carved a statue of ourselves and set it up in our backyard to pray to, but when we think it's all up to us, we're making ourselves our own god. Sometimes, the true God lets us fail in order to teach us that we need to trust in him instead of in ourselves. Sometimes he lets all those things we're worried about intrude into our lives and inflict all kinds of hurt and hardship on us to drive us back to the one person who can take care of us: him.

Today, Jesus is calling us to repent of that sin of worshipping ourselves and to trust in him. Jesus was the only person who ever lived who had every reason to trust in himself. He was God even while he was a real human being. But Jesus put his faith in his Father in heaven. He didn't have a job or a house, but he trusted in the Lord. That faith of Christ is our faith. God has given that perfect trust of Jesus to us. Today, God only sees that life of Jesus when he looks at us. And Jesus died and paid for all our idol worship, even when the idol was ourselves. Jesus died and paid for all the times and all the ways that we put ourselves in God's place. His blood has washed all our sin out of God's record book. Jesus rose to tell us that – to make sure we understand that our sin is gone forever.

You are worth more than all the birds of the field. You are worth more than all the grass that comes in summer and vanishes in the winter. What are you worth to God? God loved you so much, that he sent his Son to pay for you and make you his. If he loved you that much, he will not abandon you here. Even the hard things you face are things he sends because he wants you to grow in your faith. He wants you to have the peace that comes from trusting in him. He wants you to sleep at night secure in his love and protection. He promises that he will provide for you for as long as you live. And then you will go home to heaven with him.

II.

To us who belong to him, Jesus speaks the words of this text. He wants us to understand the way the sin inside us undermines our faith and he wants us to fight against the sin of worry. When it comes to our standard of living, Jesus says, **"No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money."**

Jesus warns us against making money our god. You can serve the Lord or you can serve your standard of living. But you can't serve both. So often, we think that we can. Again and again, we see people who say they believe, who say they're never going to forget what God says, but they haven't been inside his house in months or years. Why not? They have to work. To use the words that Jesus used, they are devoted to their jobs and they are despising the Lord. But that's not what they would say. In fact, they'd probably say that

they'd love to be able to get to church. But they have to work to make their house payment, to feed their kids, to pay for this, that and the other thing. You see where we are? Right back to worry.

Worry is a way of worshipping a false god: money. Now, usually when we think of worshipping God, we think of singing his praises. We think of coming and listening to his Word and taking communion. But there are other ways to worship God, too. The Bible says that when we live for him, we are worshipping him. And when we live for money – when worry about all the things we need dominates our life, we are worshipping an idol. **Worry is a false god. It's worshipping our wealth.**

We live in a society that constantly seeks new and better things, phones that can access the internet no matter where you are, cars that have little cameras in the bumpers and that automatic starters on the key chain. The message we get every day is that you need more – and that's where all that worry begins. The farther we get into debt trying to get more, the more we worship that god money and the more we worry about whether he's going to be there when we need him. Jesus says that pagans – unbelievers – chase all these things. And he says that God knows what we need. So how do we fight against worry and worship of wealth? Jesus says, **“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”**

We seek his kingdom when we seek to preserve our faith, when we hear the good news about Jesus because that's the only way that God strengthens us. We seek his righteousness we commit ourselves to living as Christ calls us to – and that begins with our attitude. We trust in him instead of in ourselves. Jesus calls us to put our faith and the life that comes from faith first. If we put the gospel first in our lives, God will work through that gospel. He will strengthen and mature our faith so that we can seek his righteousness, so that we can change our attitudes, so that we can trust in him when those hard days come. And we are here today when we aren't in the depths of despair or temptation to build up our faith so that tomorrow, we trust in him instead drowning ourselves in worry. And Jesus promises that all these things will be given to you as well. God will provide for you because you are his own dear child. He loves you even more than you love your children. He will always do what's best for you.

Jesus closes with a warning: **“Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”** Most counseling books and websites define worry in terms of a preoccupation with what's going to happen tomorrow. Without a doubt, there are bad things out there. We live in sinful world. We all have to face hard times between here and heaven. But today, God is blessing us. Worry robs us of the peace God wants us to have today. We don't know what tomorrow is going to bring. We don't know which hardships will come or when they will come. But God knows. He carefully chooses what we have to face, so that it always works for our good. So he tells us not to worry, not to poison today with the evils we might have to face tomorrow. Face what is before you today. Rejoice in God's love for you today. And trust that he will take care of tomorrow. Amen.