

Causes of Worry

The Sermon on the Mount as we know it was the summary of Jesus' teaching during His earthly ministry. Augustine of Hippo (354-430) was the first to call it that. In it we have both instruction and application rolled into one.

Jesus proclaimed the Kingdom. His Message was

“Repent for the kingdom of heaven is near” (Matt. 4:17).

The Sermon on the Mount contains this message is,

“This is what it means to repent and to belong to the kingdom of heaven.”

The Sermon is a description of those who belong to that kingdom. This is what people are like who live in His kingdom, under His ‘rule and reign.’

Jesus spoke these words,

¹⁹Do not store up for yourselves **treasures on earth**,

where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.

²⁰But store up for yourselves **treasures in heaven**,

where neither moth nor rust destroys,

and where thieves do not break in or steal;

²¹for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

²²The eye is the lamp of the body;

so then if your **eye is clear**, your whole body will be full of light.

²³But if your **eye is bad**, your whole body will be full of darkness.

If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

²⁴No one can serve two masters;

for either he will **hate** the one and **love** the other,

or he will be **devoted** to one and **despise** the other.

You cannot serve God and wealth” (Matt. 6:19-24).

“But seek first **His kingdom** and **His righteousness**,

And all these things shall be added to you as well.” (Matt. 6:33)

This section is about the relationship between money and our spiritual lives. Here, Jesus specifically warns us of the danger of loving money.

It lies between Jesus' teaching on Hypocrisy and Anxiety.

The theme of Verses 1-18 is ‘Do not be like the hypocrites.

The theme of the following section (verses 25,28, 31) is...

‘Do not be anxious. There is no need to worry.’

The cause of anxiety and hypocrisy are basically the same: Self.

They focus on self rather than on God.

The hypocrites' concern is to be seen by others.

The anxious person is concerned to supply his own needs.

The cure for hypocrisy is the recognition that

the Father knows, sees and understands our lives.

The cure for anxiety is the confidence we can have in our Father
and in his perfect provision for all of our needs.

An anxious person must refocus upon the Lord to gain victory.

The struggle we have is that we live in the world where we need money to live.

'We are to be in the world, but not of the world,' Jesus said.

Secure – *amerimnos* – “freedom from anxiety and care”

Confidence – Heb. *Batach* – “to hasten for refuge and safety,”
-both physically and emotionally.

Are we trusting God for all the things that we need? Or are we anxious?

Anxiety is the result of expecting from people or things what only God can give.

Three factors can be traced as causes of the moral sickness of anxiety.

1. Having your treasure in the wrong place

“¹⁹Do not **store up** for yourselves **treasures on earth,**

...²⁰But **store up** for yourselves **treasures in heaven,**

Lay up – (*thesaurizo*); **Treasures** (*thesaurus*) – same basic Greek term

English *thesaurus, a treasury of words*

Lit. “do not treasure up treasures for yourselves”

Idea of *stockpiling or hoarding, pictures wealth not being used.*

Jesus says, “Bank in heaven, not on earth. Live for heaven not for earth!”

Sinclair Ferguson writes,

“If we would only think seriously about our possessions, we would realize that they belong to a passing world, which offers no security. In fact, seeking security in this world and its' possessions are a recipe for producing anxieties, rather than relieving them! The more we gather possessions in order to feel secure, the more we feel we need them in order to be secure and then the more we need to guard them to maintain our security. Therefore, the less secure we are! It is a familiar saying that wealth does not buy

happiness. Here Jesus explains why. Happiness depends on lasting wealth.”¹

Real spirituality is not seen in the gathering of wealth,
but in being delivered from loving it – whether we have it or not.

The Love of Money

There are many examples from Scripture and history of those who have loved money to the ruin of their lives and spirituality.

Just a few chapters into Joshua we have the story of Achan, whose sin caused the defeat of the army of Israel. After Israel’s victory at Jericho all the spoil was to be dedicated to the Lord.

Achan, however, found a garment, two hundred pieces of silver, and an ingot of gold. At the next battle at Ai the armies of Israel were defeated in battle. The Lord told Joshua that there was sin in the camp which was the cause of their defeat, and pointed them to Achan as the culprit. When confronted Achan answered,

“I have sinned against the Lord the God of Israel, and this is what I did: when I saw among the spoil a beautiful mantle from Shinar and two hundred shekels of silver and a bar of gold then I coveted them and took them; and behold they are concealed in the earth inside my tent with the silver underneath it.” (Josh. 7:20-21)

Solomon allowed the love of money and women to destroy his spiritual walk. At the end of his life he actually sacrificed to idols.

Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Holy Spirit about money. While they said they gave the proceeds of property they sold, they secretly kept some of the money back for themselves. As a result of this they died. (Acts 5:1-10)

Paul wrote about a man named Demas, who had forsaken him and the work of the gospel, “having loved this present world.”

Money isn’t evil, along with property and possessions, but when our possessions possess us, then they take us away from God and destroy us.

Seeing ourselves as owning nothing but managing the blessings of God in order to accomplish His will is a right view of material possessions.

¹ Sinclair B. Ferguson, *The Sermon on the Mount*, (Carlisle: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2015), p. 137.

In Jesus penetrating Parable of the Sower.

The seed is sown among thorns, and begins to grow, but the thorns grow also and begin to choke the good seed.

What are the thorns? Jesus answers, that they are

‘the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for others things’ (Mark 4:18-19)

When we set our hearts on wealth, for whatever reason, it always deceives us.

The heart of the problem: Our hearts follow our treasure.

If we put our treasure in heaven, then our heart will also be in heaven. If our treasure is invested only in earthly investments, then our hearts will be here.

²¹for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Where is your treasure? Wrong priorities breed anxious hearts.

The second cause of the moral sickness of anxiety is

2. Thinking about life in the wrong way.

Jesus gave the illustration of the eye: speaking of the ‘eye of the spirit’

²²The eye is the lamp of the body;

so then if your **eye is clear**, your whole body will be full of light.

²³But if your **eye is bad**, your whole body will be full of darkness.

If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

“The dark spirit of anxiety that grips so many lives is caused by failure to focus spiritually, and by thinking about life with a mistaken – or diseased – perspective... Poor spiritual vision – having wrong spiritual priorities – influences the entire direction of our lives.²

Vision Problems:

The problem of vision is also a reason Jesus warned us about the use of possessions. There is a danger of earthly possessions disrupting our spiritual vision. Jesus warned,

²²The eye is the lamp of the body;

² Ferguson, p. 139.

so then if your **eye is clear**, your whole body will be full of light.
²³But if your **eye is bad**, your whole body will be full of darkness.
 If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

A dirty window doesn't let in much light. Imagine if you were spray painting your house and forgot to tape off the windows. The day could be sunny and bright, but inside the rooms it would still be dark.

One day I was grinding cement in a small room. Not only was my visibility completely cut off from the dust, but it collected on my glasses. The same thing happened on my friend's glasses. We laughed as we tried to see each other.

The eye is regarded as the window by which light gets into the whole body. Jesus is saying that the light which gets into any man's heart and soul depends on the spiritual state of the eye through which it has to pass.

A wrong view of material possessions will affect the way we perceive spiritual things. Jesus warned us against losing our spiritual vision.

The word translated 'clear' or 'single' comes from the Greek, *haplous*, and is translated "liberality" or "generosity" in many other passages.

The clear eye is a generous eye. Jesus is promoting generosity with our money.

A great example is given from the churches in Philippi.

"...in the churches of Macedonia, that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of the liberality. For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability they gave of their own accord, begging us with much entreaty for the favor of participation in the support of the saints." (2 Cor. 8:1-4).

The third cause of anxiety is:

3. Serving a master of the wrong kind.

²⁴No one can serve two masters:

for either he will **hate** the one and **love** the other,
 or he will be **devoted** to one and **despise** the other.

You cannot serve God and wealth" (Matt. 6:19-24).

Wealth/Mammon – is a term used for material possessions.

These verses speak of the mutually exclusive nature of serving God and serving riches. Think of how insulting this is to God.

Just think of what He has done for us:

He redeemed us from the slavery of sin,
 He put us in Christ.
 He provided us with life and all that we have;
 And called us by name.

Then think of what we say back to Him by demonstrating by every action and decision of life that we actually serve money.

“Instead of being the servants of the Lord, whose service is perfect freedom, we become slaves to what God has made, and even to what man has made – possessions.”³

Paul points out, we have

‘exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator - who is forever praised. Amen” (Romans 1:25)

What are our possessions to us?

Either God owns them and we serve Him,
 or our possessions own us and we serve them.

Jesus final warnings speak of the dangers of possessions becoming idols.

Summary and Solution:

“But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness,
 And all these things shall be added to you as well.” (Matt. 6:33)

“Anxiety does not empty tomorrow of its sorrows,
 but only empties today of its strength.”

Charles Spurgeon

Three closing questions:

Where is your treasure?
 On what is your spiritual vision focused?
 Who is your master?

Jesus is all we need, but we will not know it until He is all we have. When our security is in the Lord, our desire will be for the advance of His kingdom and the salvation of others. [The Power of True success]

³ Ferguson, p. 140.