

The Gospel According to Matthew

By

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CHAPTER FIFTEEN

MATTHEW 6:25-34

IN this section of our Lord's Manifesto; continuing His revelation of the principles which are to govern His people in their relation to the things of this life, He enjoins on them the necessity for a super-earthly consciousness in touching earthly things. Towards super-abundance, as we have seen, they are to be without covetousness. We will now consider their attitude towards necessary things, which is, that they are to be without care.

In this connection one injunction is thrice repeated. "**Take no thought.**" "**Therefore I say unto you, take no thought**" (ver. 25). "**Therefore take no thought**" (ver. 31). "**Take therefore no thought**" (ver. 34).

This is the all-inclusive word. It is illustrated, emphasized, argued, with inimitable skill by the great Master and Teacher Himself. It accurately defines the whole attitude of mind which His disciples should maintain toward necessary things. All His argument as to our attitude being characterized by anxiety, is based upon the fact of our ability to take thought. He does not hint for a single moment that we are to be careless or improvident. That against which He charged His disciples, and still charges us, is taking care, the care which means fretting, worry, restlessness, feverishness; or perhaps, better than all, in the most simple terms, "Anxiety;" "Be not anxious."

There are things of this life which are necessary, which, so far as we know, have no place in the larger life toward which we go. Food, drink, raiment, are necessary things, but are not provided for us by God apart from our own thought, our own endeavor, our own activity. But none of these things is to produce anxiety in the hearts of the subjects of the King.

"**Take no thought.**" The Lord argues for this injunction by three positions. "**Therefore I say unto you, take no thought;**" the first proposition occupying verses 25-30. "**Therefore take no thought;**" the second proposition found in verses 31-33. "**Take therefore no thought;**" the third proposition of illustration and enforcement found in verse 34.

There are three movements and one message; three methods of emphasis and illustration and enforcement; and one matter of importance. Our Lord not only says, "**Take no thought;**" but "**Take therefore no thought.**" Thus, in each new movement of emphasis and illustration He drives us back to something preceding. This is the word of the King.

Let us see how He enforces it:

- First, He declares anxiety to be unnecessary in the children of such a Father.
- In the second movement He declares anxiety to be unworthy in the subjects of such a Kingdom.
- In the third movement He declares anxiety to be unfruitful.

First, then, our Lord teaches us that anxiety is unnecessary.

Look at the “**therefore.**” “**Therefore I say unto you.**” We are compelled to ask wherefore? On what is Jesus basing this appeal? You will remember two truths brought before us in the previous section.

In showing what our attitude ought to be toward superabundance, He first made the truth about values perfectly clear. He insisted on the necessity for the single eye which sees things properly focused; sharp, clear, true; in proportion and perspective. The point of view is everything.

- The evil eye is that which sees things obliquely; its vision is distorted, nothing is sharp, nothing is true, everything is out of proportion and perspective.
- Christ emphasized the necessity for the single eye, truly focused.

He told His disciples in effect that they had that single eye when they lived for the glory of God, and that the true view-point of life is that of seeing things in their relation to the Infinite, to the Divine, to God Himself. The eye, single for God’s glory, admits true light into the life.

Further, we noticed how Jesus declared the unification of life in worship to be necessary. We cannot serve God and Mammon. Whomsoever we worship will demand the whole of our service. Life is unified by the principle of worship which governs it. He takes it for granted that these men have found the unifying principle in the service of God; that because they are serving God they cannot serve Mammon.

Now, He says, “**Therefore,**” upon the basis of the true vision of values, upon the basis of the fact that your life has become unified in the service of God; “**Therefore . . . Take no thought.**”

Thus He defends the word; charging His own to be free from fret and friction and feverishness; upon the fact that, being in His Kingdom, they have found the true viewpoint, they have found the true principle, unifying and making life consistent.

From that He proceeds to work out in detail the truth of the love and the care of God.

“Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?”

Declaring the care of the Father for the birds, He asks, “**And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow.**”

The lilies to which Jesus pointed were not, of course, our lilies of the valley, but the great huleh lilies of Palestine, the most gorgeous and beautiful of all the flowers growing there. They grow in cultivated districts, or amongst the rankest verdure.

**“As a lily among thorns,
So is my love among the daughters.”**

Of this gorgeous flower the Master said, **“Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow.”** Mark this again: **“they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet”** even though they do not toil or spin **“yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.”**

The King comes where the children can accompany Him, and among the birds and flowers, in sweetest and tenderest of illustrations, He teaches the sublimest truths for the comfort of the heart of His people.

Let us ponder His teaching, first about the birds.

He says in effect: These birds of the air neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, but your Father feedeth them; you can sow and reap and gather, therefore much more does your Father care for you. *The Lord’s argument here is not that we are to cease our sowing and reaping and gathering, but that if He takes care of those who cannot do such things, much more will He take care of those who can.* These birds of the air are without rational forethought. By comparison with men there can be no toiling, no sowing, no reaping, no gathering. But Jesus says, God has given you the power of rational forethought, and much more will He take care of you.

It is not that we are to neglect the use of reason, or forethought, or preparation. It is not that we are to worry - but that we are to take thought for the morrow without anxiety, knowing that, as God cares for the birds, He will more perfectly take care of us.

So also with the flowers.

“They toil not, neither do they spin; yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.”

Did you imagine that was figurative, an overstrained metaphor? Take that flower, that huleh lily, gorgeous and beautiful in its coloring, and put it by the side of Solomon in his magnificence, in his robes of gold and silver and jewels and splendor the lily is more beautifully clothed than Solomon.

- Take the finest fabric that monarch ever wore, and submit it to microscopic examination, and it is sackcloth.
- Take the lily and submit its garment of delicate velvet to microscopic examination and investigation, and the more perfect your lens the more exquisite the weaving of the robe of the lily will be seen to be.

Christ is not indulging in hyperbole. He is stating cold fact No garment loomed to the finest and softest texture is anything but rough sackcloth when placed by the side of the drapery with which He clothes the lily. Christ says: Open your eyes, My children, and look at the lilies lying scattered over the valleys and mountains, growing among thorns, and know that when God makes the lily, kings desire and cannot obtain such a robing. Looking at the flower, and seeing all its decking, know this:

“He Who clothes the lilies,
Will clothe His children too.”

There is not a flower and not a petal which, in exquisite finish and delicate perfection, would not put all the robes of a king to shame. But all this is true not only of those flowers of Palestine. Consider the daisy of the English fields, the sweet and simplest flower which you tread beneath your feet; and a king in all his robes of state is not arrayed like one of these.

“Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?”

The emphatic words are, **“much more,”** and it is important that we grasp their true meaning.

The lily cannot toil, it cannot spin. You can do both; and if God takes care of the flowers which He has not gifted with this power of reason to toil and work for self-preservation, how much more the creatures to whom He has given this super abounding gift, and to whom He perpetually gives Himself in immediate and living presence.

Let us now look at the other two arguments briefly.

He passes from this first statement, which shows how unnecessary care is if we are the children of such a Father, and He says **“Therefore”** once again. **“Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.”**

Do not be anxious about these lower things, but there is something you ought to be anxious about. Do not always be planning and scheming even to the point of anxiety about food and raiment; **“but seek.”**

No life is complete that does not feel upon it some great compulsion, driving it. We want to learn to be loving and patient with all sorts of people, but it is difficult to have patience with some men! Their eye never gleams, they have no passion, no power; they drift. A man that is a real man has something that drives, something that creates enthusiasm.

Now, says the Master, I have told you not to be anxious about these things. But there is something you are to be anxious about, something to seek, something to consume you. There is something that ought to drive you, making every nerve tingle and throb, and every artery flow with force. What is it?

“The Kingdom of God.”

So the Master would save us from the anxiety of a lower level, which makes force impossible on a higher, in order that He may develop force on the higher. Do not be anxious about the lower things, **“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.”** Seek it in essence. Let it be the underlying passion. Seek it in enterprise. Seek it everywhere.

But is there not an immediate application?

Food, drink, raiment. Do not be anxious about them, but seek the Kingdom in them. Dress for the Kingdom of God. Eat for the Kingdom of God. Let the great underlying passion, which is the great principle of the life, find its throbbing way into the extremities of the life. Things about which you are not to be anxious in themselves, and for themselves; you are to be anxious about, in order that through them also the Kingdom of God may come. Seek that in essence, in enterprise, and in individual application.

With a touch of fine and beautiful disdain, which is not contempt if we may make so fine a distinction the Lord says, **“All these things shall be added unto you.”**

“Added unto you.”

Mark the conception food, drink, raiment, added. That is, the necessary luggage with which you travel, the added things which are nevertheless impedimenta. Some people are always worrying, when travelling, about their luggage, and that is just what a great many are doing about food and raiment. **“These things shall be added.”**

Trust them to your Father. Trust them after your toil is over, after your planning is done. After you have sown and reaped and gathered, leave the rest. And if you do not think by your calculation that your doing, and reaping, and gathering is enough for all, then let there be no anxiety. Your Father knows, and here is your blank check for necessities **“These things shall be added unto you.”**

Once again, anxiety is always care about the future. To-morrow, that is it. It is always to-morrow, and so Jesus sums the whole thing up finally, and says:

“Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself.”

By which we do not understand the Lord to mean that it is a proper function of to-morrow to be anxious about to-morrow, but by which we do understand Him to mean, Do what you will, there will be something in to-morrow to be anxious about.

You cannot kill to-morrow’s anxiety by being anxious about it to-day. And so He says, **“Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”**

Evil does not mean sin. It means adversity.

Every day that comes will have in it evil - adversity - things calculated to make us anxious. To-morrow will be anxious. The evil will come whatever you do. All of which may be stated thus: Live, oh child of thy Father, subject of thy King, live to-day.

“Lord, for to-morrow and its needs I do not pray.
Keep me, O Lord, from stain of sin just for to-day.”

There is no suspicion of asceticism in this section. Our Father knows that His people will be here in the world, and will have to do with earthly things. He does not even say it is wrong to lay up treasure. He only advises us as to how we shall make our investment of treasure. Do not lay it up on earth. Lay it up in heaven.

There is nothing ascetic here. There is no warrant for improvidence here. The man who will go out and say, Very well, I will be like the sparrow, I will not sow, or reap, or gather - well, we know the issue, and neither we nor anyone else will pity him. If a man shall say, I will go and be as the flower of the field, I will not toil or spin - well, we see at once the unutterable folly of such an argument.

Do not imagine that the King commands us not to think for the future. Do not say, that because God cares, you are not to provide for your wife, and your bairns, in the case of your dying. Let us have no nonsense talked about the evil of insurance. **“If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel** (unbeliever),” says the apostle; and the whole teaching of Jesus is, not that we are not to reap, sow, gather, toil, spin; but that through our toil and planning we are not to be anxious; through reaping we are to trust; in our gathering we are to sing; as we toil we are to rejoice; as we spin we are to be quiet. It is a call to the life that is frictionless, because by the principle of faith man takes hold upon God, and, submitting, knows what it is to have His power operating through his work, and His life providing for his need.

~ end of chapter 15 ~

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