

**Sermon Preached By Canon Jim Holbeck at the 6pm Healing Service on Wed 22nd
March 2006**

Reading: (Mat 6:25-34). Topic: "Why Worry When You Can Pray?"

A good question to ask ourselves is this. *Will my God help me when I'm in need?* The answer depends on who or what your god is.

False gods cannot satisfy. Idolatry is worshipping a false god, an idol. In fact Paul writes that covetousness is idolatry. Col 3:5, *Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.* "Covetousness" means that we are looking to the things of this world for meaning and purpose and fulfilment. We should rather be looking to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who alone can bring purpose and meaning to our lives.

It's idolatry because it's pushing Jesus off the throne of our lives and replacing Him with some thing or somebody that we think will bring us fulfilment. Paul warned his readers in Rom 1:17ff that this is what the unbelieving world does in its rejection of God and failing to give Jesus His rightful place. 25 ... *they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.* Their focus was on the things God created rather than on the God who created them.

This is what materialism is all about. It's the concept that matter is the measure of all things. It is the substitution of the Creator God by things, the focus on possessions rather than the focus on God Himself. It's what Jesus referred to in this passage from Mat 6:24, "*No one can serve two masters, for 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 God and money.*"

God is meant to be our Master whom we love and serve. However Mammon (or money or possessions) is the master many people serve. Mammon never brings fulfilment or satisfaction. Only the Lord can do that.

Our God is concerned for us

For the believer God is not only the Creator the source of all things. He is also our Heavenly Father to whom Jesus taught us to pray, *Our Father in heaven* and to ask Him for our needs, *Give us this day our daily bread*

We can trust in things, in what we have, in our status, in who we are. Or we can trust in the Lord, in Who He is, and in what He has done for us, and learn to trust Him for the provision He makes for our needs.

Because of that the following things are true

1. ANXIETY IS NEEDLESS. vv25-26
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Jesus' simple message in Mat 6:25-26 was simple. If God provides for His creatures such as birds then how much more will He provide for His children. Birds are creatures. Humans are made in God's likeness and as they trust in Jesus Christ as saviour, they become His children.

How often have we gotten things out of perspective, and chosen the good rather than the best. Have often have our priorities been wrong, and we spent our energy and time on the acquisition of things for us or for our family and missed out on a deeper relationship with God. Many parents looking back on their family lives, admit that they were so concerned with building up security for their family, that too much time was spent in the pursuit of material things. Not enough time was spent in enriching their relationships with their children. Like the son who sadly told his father, "*Dad you gave me everything but you never gave me you. I didn't want things, I wanted you.*"

What do we do with the concerns we have? St Paul tells us in Phil 4:6 *do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.* It means handing over all our legitimate concerns and needs to the Lord in our prayers. It means thanking Him for the answers He will bring in His way and in His time.

2. ANXIETY DOESN'T HELP THE SITUATION. v.27.

(Mat 6:27) *27 And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?*

Worrying about the things of this world won't lengthen our lives. In fact the stress coming from the anxiety about our future may shorten our lives, not extend them. People can be stressed through anxiety and fear.

There are many studies on what they call *Stress reactions to World events*. Eg., many people who watched on TV the devastation of the collapse of the Twin Towers in New York became so anxious that they were unable to go to work for several days. The way of the Christian is meant to be the way of humble trust in the Lord, as Peter wrote, *Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you. 1 Pet 5:6-7*. He cares for us. He wants to take our anxieties from us. Why not humbly hand them over to Him for Him to work it all out?

3. ANXIETY IS REALLY A LACK OF FAITH. v.28-30.

(Mat 6:28) *And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, 29 yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 30 But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?* God cares for His creation. He clothes plants with beautiful foliage and blossoms. They don't have to get out knitting needles or spinning machines to make clothes for themselves. God provides them. If He clothes the flowers as part of His creation, then how much more will He provide for His children.

Why did He say to His disciples, "O you of little faith?" Because he saw that they did have little faith. They should have trusted His more. Jesus used the term you of little faith to describe some things we would not have seen as little faith.

Mat 8:26, The disciples were naturally afraid in a storm. It looked as though they would soon drown and Jesus was asleep in the boat. And he said to them, "*Why are you afraid, you of little faith?*" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a dead calm.

On another occasion, when Jesus invited him to, Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water towards Jesus. Then he began to sink, (Mat 14:31). Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, "*You of little faith, why did you doubt?*" For Peter to walk on the water was a gigantic step of faith for humankind. No human had ever done it except Jesus. But Jesus saw Peter as having "*little faith*". What might a greater faith accomplish?

In Mat 16, the disciples were concerned they had forgotten bread. Jesus rebuked them, (Mat 16:8) "*You of little faith, why are you talking about having no bread?* He had previously miraculously fed crowds of 5,000 and 4,000 and now they were worried that they might go hungry. They hadn't yet learned to trust Him for their needs.

In Mat 17 we read of the disciples' inability to cast out an evil spirit from a boy. Jesus explained the reason for their failure. (Mat 17:20) He said to them, "*Because of your little faith. For truly I tell you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.*"

Faith is not a static thing so that we either have it or we don't have it. Faith can grow. We can all learn to trust the Lord in more and more areas of our lives.

How can faith grow?

We may have little faith for a couple of reasons.

i). We are ignorant of the promises of God. Paul wrote, "*faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*" We may not yet know many of the promises of His word or acted upon them if we did know them.

ii). It may be that His word has not really penetrated into our hearts and minds.

We may have been caught up with a materialistic attitude to life and we focussed on our worries and not on His word. His word has not been allowed to transform our thinking, to heighten our expectancy, to increase our faith. That's what Jesus spoke about in the parable of the sower and the seed. The sower sowed the seed, but it did not fall on receptive ground. (Mat 13:22) *As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing.*

Where there is an open-ness to God's word, faith can grow. We can become more expectant that God will hear our prayers and supply our needs.

4. REPLACING ANXIETY WITH A CONFIDENT TRUST. vv.31-34.

How do we get out of the anxiety mode? How can we break the pattern of thinking that focuses on the problems and leads to anxiety? Jesus gives us the answer in our passage for tonight in *Mt 6:31-33* *But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.* 34 *"Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.*

We are to actively "seek first His kingdom and His righteousness." How do we do that?

i. "Seek first His kingdom." By making Him the King of our lives.

Allowing Him to enter every area of our lives. Becoming open, to receive His kingdom wisdom to make the right decisions in life. To receive His kingdom love so that we can love one another as we are meant to do. To receive His kingdom power to bring about the physical, emotional and spiritual changes we need.

ii. By seeking "His righteousness." A simple definition for righteousness, is "what God wants."

It means conformity to the law of God, to the will of God, to the purpose of God. Becoming the person God wants me to be, and doing the things He wants me to do. It means becoming the people He wants us to be, and doing what He wants us to do, His will for us throughout our lives. As we make that our goal, our ambition, our goal in life, He gives us what we need in every area of life.

All our anxieties about the past can go, because we can be forgiven of the mistakes we have made, and He can heal the physical, emotional and relationship damage that has been done, if we ask Him to do so.

All our anxieties about the present can go, because there is One Who understands our present situation perfectly, and Who can work it all out for our benefit and to His glory.

All our anxieties about the future can go, because there is One in Whose hands we can place our future, and the futures of our loved ones, and Who can *"work all things together for good, for those who love Him."*