

Freedom from Worry

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 30 August 2026

Preacher: Graeme Shanks

[0:00] Okay, well good morning everyone. It is lovely to see you. I'd love you to grab a Bible and turn to Matthew chapter 6. We are going to take in verses 25 to 34 today. So if you have your own Bible, grab it. That's where you need to go, Matthew chapter 6 in at verse 25.

If you don't own a Bible, then you can grab one in the pews round about. Or if you don't even own a Bible, we've got plenty of them at the back that you can grab on your way out or you can scroll on your phone as well. So you've got to see what Jesus is saying today because it really is wonderful. But we're going to read it in about 10 minutes time and hopefully the reason for doing that is just so that we can get into the topic today. So just to begin with, friends, you know Donkey from Shrek? I want you to imagine for a moment that you have a talking dog. And one night both you and your dog are sitting quietly by the fire. And you notice that your dog is uncharacteristically quiet. And so you ask, dog, what seems to be on your mind? And dog replies, you've no idea the load I'm carrying. I've no idea where my breakfast tomorrow is going to come from.

[1:22] I mean, I cannot operate a tin opener. Tesco don't deliver to my kennel. No idea where my breakfast tomorrow is coming from. And do you know what else? I've not got a clue who's going to take me for walkies.

What if I injure my leg chasing a stick at the park that you love to throw? I have no idea how to find the vet. I'm really worried about tomorrow.

Friends, what would you say back to your talking dog? Think about it. What would you say? I'd imagine that you would say something like, listen, you don't need to worry about any of that stuff. Do you know why? Because that's my job. Now, can I put my hands up at this point and do a little bit of self-confession?

Friends, I am a worrier. And I wonder if you are too. Worry about things. I don't sleep at night. Burdens sit on me.

[2:29] And do you know what I've realized? If you think about that illustration, you just carry it all the way through. That there is wonderful freedom in embracing the fact that I am dog.

And this sermon really is all about, this passage really is all about Jesus introducing us to the one whose job it is to have us covered. If you're here today, this morning, and you're worried about tomorrow, if worry is just sitting on you like a sumo wrestler, it seems to have just taken the wind out your lungs.

Friends, here's the invitation. Come and listen to what Jesus has to say about worry. Because it is so freeing. Now, if you were here last week, we heard Jesus.

Remember, this was in the context of him helping us think about the things that might throw us off course as disciples. We thought about that kind of theme that we're in in Matthew's gospel.

These kind of do-nots. This was the idea. These are the things that are going to come your way that might throw you off course. And we felt last week, Jesus bring us that challenge. Remember that challenge? You cannot serve both God and money.

[3:46] So he was underscoring that impossibility. And we thought, again, like a dog last week. We thought about two owners at the other sides of the park shouting at their dog, come here, come here. And the fact that you cannot run to both.

You're going to have to choose. And Jesus was saying you cannot love both God and money. Because he anticipates that the love of money. Remember, Jesus isn't having a go at money. He's having a go at the love of money. About how that can smother the fire of our spiritual lives. And so if that was a warning from Jesus about the danger, if you like, of having too much, this week, he's going to deal with the worry that comes perhaps from us thinking that as we follow him, we might not have enough.

You can imagine the disciples thinking to themselves. And remember, a lot of these guys are fishermen. They get the whole idea that if we don't go out and catch, we've got nothing to eat. And okay, we might have one night off, but we cannot do that for a couple of nights because if we don't catch, we don't eat. So these guys get that context. And they're thinking to themselves, Jesus, we've left behind jobs.

[4:58] We've left behind families to follow you. So who's going to provide for our daily needs as we follow you? Friends, here's the promise. If we take to heart what Jesus is teaching us here in these verses, and as he just unpacks the privilege that is ours, the minute that we trust in Jesus, we trust in his death and resurrection, and we're united to him, and we have God as our father, as we take that in, this will provide the Christian with oodles of liberating comfort.

So if last week was a challenge, this week is a comfort. And do you know where it's to be found? It's to be found in knowing the father who loves us.

And here's the thing. Since we step into the world of anxiety, we really couldn't be talking about a more timely topic. You know, according to a 2026 poll, 33% of adults in Great Britain report not just occasional worries.

They report high levels of anxiety. So that's one in three adults in our country report that this is a live and a pressing issue.

And we will know, and so many of us will know this with tears in our eyes, that this is not just a, if you like, a middle-aged problem. You know, I recently finished that book by Canadian social psychologist Jonathan Hyde.

[6:29] I don't know if you've read it, the title of which is Enough to Make You Weep, as he thinks about Gen Z. You know the title of that book? He just calls it The Anxious Generation. And that's my question for you, if you're here today and you wouldn't call yourself a follower of Jesus.

Love that you're here. Here's perhaps where you can engage with what he's saying here. Question, where do you run with your worries? You know, when I used to live in town, I used to walk up Dundas Street to Charlotte Square every day before I did this to walk to my work.

Sometimes I would go into Rose Street at lunchtimes and kind of detour around. And every day I used to hear on Rose Street, The Busker. And The Busker only ever had one song.

I don't know if you know what that song was. His song was that one by Bobby McFerrin. Do you know the one, Don't Worry, Be Happy? The guy had one song and he played it all day. And he made a fortune as business people walked past and they thought, oh, he's right.

But it's not as simple as it is that. As having a positive mental attitude. You know, because I'm into my comedians and I like the last one laughing. I read Jimmy Carr's book recently and he talks about how he's using comedy to help people cope with worry.

[7:49] And here's his quote. I thought he'd quite like it. He says this. This is what his whole stand-up routine is based around. He says, my point is life can be hard, harsh and depressing. But if you've got a light, funny disposition, you're better able to deal with every setback life will inevitably throw at you.

And get this. I'd like to take the filthy pond water of life and filter it through the charcoal of humour so we can all drink it.

Isn't that interesting? But how long does the relief that comes from a good laugh last? Friends, can I tell you why Jesus is worth a hearing?

We thought last week about how he is the ultimate financial advisor. Do you remember that? He's telling us, store up your treasures in heaven. This week we're going to see that he is the perfect psychologist. And that's not being clever.

See when Jesus says, do you have it there? Do not worry about life. That word life that he's using there is the Greek word psyche. That's how they've translated it. So in other words, Jesus is saying, when it comes to anthropology, the study of human beings, what makes us tick, how we think.

[9:06] Jesus possesses something way better than a PhD. Do you know what he possesses? He possesses an IEP. Do you know what an IEP is? In eternity past.

As the one with his father there in the beginning when God breathed life into Adam, he understands human beings way better than we know ourselves.

And it turns out in this passage, and we're going to read it in just a moment. It turns out that Jesus' perfect prescription for anxiety is a really healthy dose of theology.

So why don't we read this together? In it, verse 25. And see if you can pick up on a lot of these threads. 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 than food and the body more than clothes?

[10:10] Look at the birds of the air. They do not sow or reap or stow away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?

Can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow? They do not labor or spin, yet I tell you that not even Solomon, in all his splendor, was dressed like one of these.

If that is how God clothes the grass of the field which is here today and tomorrow it's thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you? You of little faith?

So do not worry saying, what shall we eat? Or what shall we drink? Or what shall we wear? For the pagans run after all these things. And your heavenly Father knows you need them.

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself.

[11:21] Each day has enough trouble of its own. And God will bless the reading of his words to us today. Friends, really quickly, here's two things that Jesus says to comfort worried disciples that are kind of intertwined together in this passage.

Here's number one. Really simply, let nature be your teacher. Do you see it? Do you see verse 25? Beginning there, let nature be your teacher.

So when Jesus says, verse 25, is not life more than food and the body more than clothes? Do you know what struck me this week? Jesus could have finished there. Yeah? Don't worry. Could have finished there.

But he doesn't, because he knows us. Right? It's almost as if, when he talks about worry, he wants us to see it as well as hear it. How do you know?

How do we know that we have a Father who cares? According to Jesus, friends, get this.

Sometimes the best thing that you and I can do when we're worried is go for a long walk and take it in.

[12:25] You ever do that? That's why I got really into running. Right? It just helps me. Look up. Take it in. Get some air in my lungs. Sometimes Jesus says the best thing you can do when you're worried is go for a long walk.

Friends, I love what this tells us about God. Keep the passage open there. What is Jesus countering here? You might not have even thought about this. He's countering the idea of deism. Right? Deism, the idea that God created the world. And like kind of one of those toy walking Santas that you get in Christmas crackers. Right? He just wound it up.

He wound it up and he let it run and step back. That's deism. Right? But friends, that is not the God of the Bible. It's not what we learn about him.

No, Jesus is introducing us here to a God. Do you see it? Who is intricately and intimately involved in caring for his creation. Because Jesus is saying, See if you're worried about your father's commitment to provide for your daily needs.

[13:27] Go and look. And that word look there, it means more than just take a fleeting glance. That word look there. As my American pals would say, Get a load of this.

Right? Take it in. Think about it. It's why some of your translations will use that word. Consider. Have a look at the birds. Where was the last time you looked at a bird?

Did you know, fun fact, that there are roughly, I looked this up this week, 11,000 different species of living birds on planet Earth. And here's what you will not ever see.

Never see. You will never see a pigeon at a plow. And you will never see a toucan in Tesco. Right? Birds might gather their food, but they don't create it.

And yet, there's never, ever coming a day when we will not see birds in the sky. Do you know why?

[14:31] Because God provides for his creation. He's not stepped back and letting it run its course. He is intimately involved. Everyone that goes into that bird's beak, it is God who allowed that to happen.

God is caring for his creation. And look at verse 28. It goes further than that. And if you're a botanist, if you're into your garden, here's the excuse that you need to keep doing it.

Verse 28. Jesus says what? Look at the flowers of the field. I mean, do you not just love the variety and the diversity and the beauty of flowers?

There's a reason that if you want to tell someone that you love them and you care, what do you get them? Even if it is on the way home from work from the garage, right?

You get them flowers because we get the beauty and the smell and the diversity of flowers. And do you see how Jesus makes that point?

[15:36] Verse 29 is he compares them to Solomon, one of Israel's richest kings who was dressed to impress. And he says even the flowers, their beauty, makes Solomon's fade in comparison.

And Jesus uses that same logic. Again, it's God's care for his creation. You'll never see a sunflower at a sewing machine. You will never see a poppy trying on an outfitted top man.

Yeah? Because God gives creation everything that it needs. His fingerprints are all over the colors of the flowers. They're all over the beauty of the birds in the air.

It's God that gives the flowers their color and design. God is the brains behind photosynthesis. God is the God who says to the rose, you be red. He's the God who says to the lavender, you be lilac.

Again, God provides for his creation. And you ever listen to the football phone-in on Clyde 1, right? That phrase, what's your point, caller? Yeah?

[16:44] Jesus, what are you trying to say? That's great, right? But what's the point? Do you see how he goes from a lesser to a greater argument? With that phrase, how much more? Friends, you've got to see it.

If God goes to that much effort with the flowers, which are here today and gone tomorrow. It's why when you buy them from the shop, what do they say?

They are good for five days, ten days. If God so delights to clothe and design flowers and grass that's here today and gone tomorrow, how much more then will he care for you?

Do you see it? How much more then? That's the logic. End of verse 26. Are you? Are you? Not much more valuable than they?

Oh, friends, there is wonderful delight in just sitting in that question. Flip it around.

[17:50] You are more valuable than them. And that takes us to lesson number two. Let nature be your teacher. Secondly, get familiar with your father.

Right? Because what is the difference then between the flowers and the birds and you, disciple following Jesus? What's the difference between the two?

Answer. Answer. The birds and the flowers, as wonderful as they are, they relate to God as creator. You, however, disciple, relate to God because of your faith in me as father.

So the birds and the bees and the flowers, they do not relate to God as father. And yet you, disciple, you do. Will he not much more provide you then with the things that you need?

Do you see the lesser to the greater argument? Friends, last few weeks as we thought about praying and giving and fasting, what did Jesus say about the father? He said he sees.

[18:56] Do you remember that? This is why you do it in secret because you're living for the audience of one. He sees. But no one else sees. Complement that with what you see at verse 32. He sees.

What else? He knows. And when Jesus says, end of verse 31, you of little faith, that is, friends, a wonderful concoction of rebuke blended with invitation.

Come and see, oh worried disciple, that you have a father like this. You know, I've got a friend called Pete who I see every day in the school run.

Two things that are worth knowing about Pete. Number one is that he's a Christian. Number two is that he's really into cycling. So every day when I see him, he's on his bike.

He's dropping the kids and he's on his bike going into work or going home. Got a roof rack as well in the car where this puts his bike. But here Pete's got this weird trait. I don't know if you have this, if you're into your cycling.

[20:03] But what he does before he gets onto the bike is that he rolls up the trouser leg of his. Some of you are nodding. Is this a thing? Yeah?

I had no idea. This is why he does rolls it up. So he's doing this a couple of months ago. And I'm looking at him thinking, that boy's got a tattoo on the inner right thigh. What a strange place. Or inner right calf rather.

What a strange place to get a tattoo. And I asked him, I said, buddy, what's the tattoo of? And do you know what he said? It's of a sparrow. And he said, every time I roll up my right trouser leg, it

reminds me.

Because I do this every day and I do it first thing every day. It reminds me of my father's ability and desire to provide for me. And friends, I love that intentionality.

How can we remember that in our day-to-day lives? And the thing is, is that God in the Bible has a pretty good track record when it comes to coming through for his people.

[21:03] You know, because Jesus hasn't picked here food and clothing at random. I haven't really seen this before this week, right? He's not picked it at random. If you know the Bible story, and if you don't, then come and see it.

What did God provide for his people as he led them towards the promised land, having saved them from Egypt? And he's leading them through the desert, remember. Right?

No Sainsbury's local. No Pizza Hut delivery. No Hello Fresh. What did he provide for his people in the wilderness? He provided for them manna.

God chooses to do this in his wisdom one day at a time.

And you think to yourself as you read that in Exodus, surely that's an inconvenience for God. Yeah? Could he not have just changed the settings on the account to auto-renew and saved himself a lot of bother?

[22:09] Why does he get his people to come back day after day after day to look to him? Friends, here's the thing. He's weaning his people off of self-reliance.

And he's teaching them as they look to him day after day after day after day that he is absolutely able to provide everything that they need.

All they need to do is love him and walk in faith. And when the people finally get to the promised land, I love this little detail in Joshua 5.

That God provided manna for them every day until the day after the day that they finally got to the place where God has taken them. Love it.

Till the day after the day that they finally got to the place where he was taking them. And do you know that during that entire time, what else didn't wear out? Their clothing.

[23:11] So what is Jesus saying here is he brings these things together to us who worry about what tomorrow holds. Your Father, when it comes to providing for your daily needs, has got you covered.

Friends, that is incredibly freeing. And how different to how our world relates to the things that we think will stop us worrying.

And that's what Jesus is meaning there when he talks about Gentiles. Some of you, my translations might have pagans. It's just a term for talking about people who don't have God as their father.

Just running around in the hamster wheel trying to get enough stuff to try and cover our lives in as much cotton wool as possible. Because sometimes we think that's going to end the stress and the worry of life.

And we know, friends, that that isn't true. In fact, we know, don't we, that sometimes having more things is actually the opposite. It causes you more worry, not less.

[24:11] I wonder if you remember this in 2013. 2013, there was that woman in our city in Edinburgh called Jane who won the Euro Millions. She was the youngest ever winner at 17.

And here's what she said in a newspaper interview in the years after. People look at me and think, I wish I had her lifestyle. I wish I had her money.

But they don't realize the extent of my stress. And your heart breaks for the girl because in actual fact, she ended up suing the lottery for ruining her life.

My friends, how different than the disciple. Here is an invitation to embrace a life of radical dependence on a loving father. And here's the thing. The sign of Christian maturity is not realizing that you need your father less.

It's realizing that you need your father more. And so Jesus says, let nature be your teacher. And get familiar with your father.

[25:17] And knowing both of those things, you know what that frees us up to do? Have a look at verse 33. It frees us up to seek first his kingdom. Right?

If God has got the future, if he's got tomorrow sorted, then what does that do? It frees us up to live for him today. Right? Right? Seek first the kingdom.

So often, I think we complicate it. I think if you read it in the context, what is Jesus talking about here? I think he's just talking about us living like he's encouraged us to live.

Right? So if you just track back, seek reconciliation with people. Let your yes be yes and your no be no. Do you remember these from the last number of weeks? Love your enemies.

Pray for those who persecute you. Hunger and thirst for righteousness. Live for him as the audience of one. Seek him in prayer as the one who sees. Store up your treasure in heaven. Make seeking him your number one priority.

[26 : 17] So just living like he's told us to live. And if we think, well, I'm worried about the things that might get in the way of me doing that. Jesus says, you can do it because I've got it covered. Make seeking him your number one priority.

And so friends, two applicatory questions as we begin to wrap this up. Here's number one. What do we need to turn over to our Father in prayer?

Because you've got to understand that Jesus isn't belittling worry here. If you've got things on your mind, this is not Jesus getting at you. He gets that there's all sorts of things in the world to worry about.

But he's helping us see that because we have a Father like this, who is way more committed to us than we will ever fully get our heads around, then what we can do with our worries is run to him with them in prayer.

You know, I've always found it helpful over the years to write down the things that I'm worrying about. I've just got a little A5 journal that I got from Poundland a few years ago.

[27 : 30] I just write my prayers every day, the things that I'm worrying about. You know why it's so good? It's good because it helps me over the months to track the ways that God has come through for my prayers. But what it also does is when I lay it down next to the Lord's Prayer, which we've just covered there, and think about the priorities that Jesus asked me to pray about, see so often the little things that I'm worried about.

They kind of just get realigned. So often God has said, as I've written down my worries and prayed the Lord's Prayer, why are you worried about that? He's not some kind of genie in a bottle who's there to make sure that our wishes come true.

He's a good Father who loves to give us what we need. But friends, this isn't easy. But the wonderful thing about our church family when it comes to our worries is it is not just us taking our prayers to God.

We can pray for each other and with each other through our worries. And so if you're here this morning and you think there's something massive that I'm carrying, this is not an invitation just to swallow it and bear it.

This is, if you want to pray with the elders, that is our job, friends, to pray with you, to pray with the people that you came with, to pray about the things that really worry us.

[28 : 50] Father-dependent prayer. And here's number two. How can we put his kingdom first in our decision making? Yeah? So when Jesus says, and maybe you were wondering this as we read it just at the end there, tomorrow will have enough worries of its own.

You see that? Right? I guess this is how I've come to think of it. This is like that old riddle. Do you remember the one, which day never arrives? And the answer is tomorrow.

Right? Tomorrow never arrives. I think this is what Jesus is saying. See if you take your worries to your father and chuck them on tomorrow, knowing that he's got them. They're never going to make their way into today.

Right? It frees you up, knowing that the father has tomorrow sorted, frees us up to make kingdom-shaped decisions today. How can I honor God today?

What can I do to serve him today? You know, a great bit of advice that I once heard from a woman called Jen Wilkin, who's a women's ministry leader in the States, about decisions, and it's transformed it for me.

[29 : 58] She said, don't start with the question, what shall we do? Start with the question, who should we be? Yeah? Don't start with the question, what should we do?

Start with the question, who should we be? So God is concerned, yes, absolutely, about the decisions that we make. But it seems to me that he's way more concerned about why and how we make those decisions.

In other words, he's caring, I think, primarily about our character and how we come to think about the things we think about when we make decisions. And I wonder what big decision you're facing just now.

Right? Decision about a graduate job. A decision about a relationship choice. Decision about friendship circles.

A decision about a career move. A decision about a business strategy. A decision about office conduct. Maybe even a big decision about retirement plans.

[31:00] Friends, those things that we think about, and so often they're the source of our worry. Jesus says, and here the command followed by the promise. Seek first the kingdom of God's command.

Promise, all else will be added unto you. So whatever we're facing today, how can we make decisions that honor Christ? And it reminded me just as we close of an interview that the late John Stott once did.

An interviewer was asking him about his retirement plans. John Stott, the longtime vicar of all souls, Langham Place in central London.

He said, he's a great job. He's a great writer. He's a great writer. He's a great writer. He's a great writer. He's a great writer. And this is what the reporter asked him.

John, you've had a brilliant academic career. First at Cambridge, rector at 29, chaplain to the queen. What is your ambition now? To which he replied, to be more like Jesus.

[32:11] To be more like Jesus. And the thing is that that quote that came from him was not just a spur of the moment thing. That quote from him came after years and years and years of walking closely with Jesus.

And you have to say there's a wonderful and freeing simplicity about his answer, isn't there? To be more like Jesus. So friends, seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all else will be added unto you.

Isn't that an amazing promise? Seek first the kingdom of God. Why don't we pray? And so folks, maybe just in the silence, whatever it is that you are carrying, in a room this size, there'll be all sorts of things on our minds.

And so here's an invitation just in the silence before we close. Just to bring that issue, that burden, perhaps that person, to your father in prayer.

Just bring it to him. Just name it before him and ask, Lord, would I know your fatherly comfort and love for me just now? What a friend we have in Jesus.

[33:41] All our sins and griefs to bear. What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer. Father, thank you that the Lord Jesus is one who knows, who cares.

Thank you that we read about him here in Matthew 6, having come to the earth to call people to come to himself, to repent of their sin, to trust in him as savior, and to enjoy life with the father.

And so, Father, I pray that, Lord, trusting that your spirit is a way better pastor than I can ever, ever hope to be. That you, with your perfect fatherly knowledge of us, would be bringing that sense of comfort and that sense of challenge.

Lord, that you would be lifting us up. Lord, that you would be just pushing us down as well. Lord, that you would humble us and lift us. And so, Father, we thank you for your precious word today.

And we ask, Lord, that you would be glorified in our lives. Thank you for that wonderful invitation to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all else will be added unto us.

[34:58] Father, thank you for your love for us. And we just give you this morning. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen.