

Taste and See

Sermon Text: Psalm 34

Study Texts: Matthew 6:24-34

Sermon Recap: The main idea of today's sermon is this: Having tasted that the LORD is good, the redeemed magnify the LORD. Take time before your growth group to review the key points you noted from today's sermon.

Sermon Connection: Psalm 34 calls the Church to trust God in all things. The Psalmist notes that God invites us to "Taste and see that the Lord is good." The point of the Psalm is to instill a deep trust in God within the people of God. Such is the message of Jesus' teaching in Matthew 6:24-34. In this portion of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is instructing people of God on to think about life, need, worry and anxiety, and how to honor God in the midst of it all. We can be so easily distracted by the struggles and frustrations of everyday life, and these things can create a deep sense of worry in our hearts and minds. Jesus, a good and kind Shepherd, meets us in these moments of worry with a word of hope. "Look at the birds," He says, "*they neither sow nor reap...yet your heavenly Father feeds them.*" Jesus' point is profoundly comforting: God cares for and sustains His people.

Lesson Plan

Lesson Goal: To taste and see that the Lord is good to His people.

Lesson Points:

Point 1: The Source of Worry and Anxiety (vv. 24-25)

Point 2: The Testimony of Creation (vv. 26-30)

Point 3: The Answer to Anxiety (vv. 31-34)

The Context: Jesus' Sermon on the Mount is, perhaps, one of the most well-known of His teachings. It is comprehensive and broad-sweeping as Jesus takes up the Old Testament Law and applies in a radically new way. His intent is to show that God is not interested in the mere outward performance of religious people—which is what the Jews had been attempting to do. Rather, as Jesus shows throughout the sermon, God is concerned with the radical heart transformation of His people, and this can only come through the gospel work of Jesus

Himself. As we consider the portion on worry and anxiety, we are met with the realities of loyalty to Christ alone and holiness before the Lord.

Opening Question: What is your biggest cause of worry and anxiety? Do you find that such sorrow and angst are positive things in your life? Why or why not?

Transition Statement: Worry is a real and present issue in most of our lives. Let's look now at what Jesus says about this issue...

Point 1: The Source of Worry and Anxiety (vv. 24-25)

What reality about life is Jesus driving us to see in v. 24? Why does this create worry and anxiety in us?

Our lives are filled with so much: people, material possessions, commitments, hobbies, work, family, etc., and the list goes on. In the midst of it all, despite all the many elements that make up the tapestry of our lives, we remain loyal to a single motivating factor. And Jesus' point here is that we can only be loyal to one master...we are loyal either to God or to money. While we might not say outright, "I love money more than God," our lives reflect our true loyalty. If we are loyal to God, our lives will reflect a God-centered way of living. If, on the other hand, we are devoted more to money and possessions—to having our worldly comforts and desires met—our lives will show devotion to money, for money is the means to obtaining worldly things.

When God is not our highest loyalty, we find that our commitment to our own success in the world is. We want what we want, and we find ways in which to achieve it. The only problem is that this leads to deep-seated worry and angst because we are trusting in ourselves to achieve our own desires, rather than seeking to honor and glorify God through our lives, and seeking to have His desires become our own.

Why is it dangerous for the Christian to neglect the reality of v. 24?

Jesus is quite clear that we cannot serve both God and our worldly desires. This is not a punishment, nor is it somehow a command to be absent from the world in which we live. On the contrary, Jesus is teaching us how to live in the world in a God-honoring way. When we forget this reality, neglecting the teachings of our Lord, we neglect God Himself. Furthermore, we put ourselves in harm's way as sin will always take a deadly hold in our lives when left unchecked.

What is the result of neglecting this truth or of choosing the wrong master?

We live in a culture where so many are burdened and weighed down by worry and anxiety. For some, their worry literally controls them and takes a physical toll on their health and well-being. While there are genuine and uncontrollable health issues, the heart of the matter here is that we bring so much unnecessary sin and suffering into our lives because we

choose the wrong master. We neglect the Psalmist's invitation to "...*taste and see that the Lord is good!*" We choose to trust in ourselves over trusting in God. But, to taste and see God's goodness is to heed His counsel from 6:25, "...*do not be anxious about your life...*" Experiencing God's goodness is found in trusting Him completely.

Transition Statement: Wrongly placed trust leads to worry, but Jesus calls us to consider something simple in order to reorient our view of life...

Point 2 - The Testimony of Creation (vv. 26-30)

Why does Jesus reference the birds and the flowers? See also Romans 1:20.

God is not unconcerned with our lives, nor is He unconcerned with His world. He is not a distant deity unaware of things going on. The Bible teaches that God is intimately involved in the world and in our lives. This is why Jesus speaks into our worries by pointing to the created realm. We often take things such as birds and flowers for granted, rarely recognizing them, or when we do, failing to worship God in those moments. As Paul reminds us in Rm. 1:20, God is clearly perceived in the created realm, and Jesus calls our attention to that fact. When our focus is on the world, we neglect God, and we find ourselves burdened with worry and anxiety. Calmly, and with the patient love of a good Father, Jesus calls us to remember how God cares for the birds and the flowers. More than this, He even makes them beautiful. And are we not of more value to Him than birds and flowers?

What do the actions and specific worries Jesus highlights in these verses reveal about our worries and anxieties? What do we tend to worry about?

Jesus notes, "...*do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on.*" These constitute the basic necessities of life. Food, drink, clothing, and shelter...these are all good things, good gifts from God for our benefit. And yet, how often do we find ourselves worried over such things? Instead of being content with what God provides, we idolize possessions and give ourselves to the pursuit of having bigger and better things. The heart of the issue is idolatry. The Lord Jesus is calling our loyalty into view. Are we loyal to Christ, and thus content with whatever He provides or withholds materially? Or, are we finding ourselves consumed with worry because our loyalties lie with our things?

The doctrine of God's providence means that He supplies, sustains, and perfectly governs everything. How is this doctrine a sweet gift to the Church in moments of worry?

If God were not providential, there would be no real hope for the Church. But, the Bible is clear in how it reveals God's attribute of providence. He is the Creator and Sustainer of all things, including our lives. So, we have the choice of trusting in Him through faithful living, which is the path to peaceful, content living. Or we can live in opposition to His providence, attempting to arrange and order our own lives and find ourselves with the millstone of worry around our necks. Our neglect of God's providence does not thwart His will, it only harms us.

How is Psalm 34:8-9 related here?

The Psalmist's invitation is to know God, to recognize His providential rule over the world, and to see that in His providence, He is entirely good. The verbs "taste and see" beckon us to an actual life to be lived. This is not merely hyperbolic language; the Psalmist actually wants us to experience God's goodness for he writes, "*...those who fear Him have no lack!*" Those who find contentment with God's goodness find that all their needs are met, and they have no true lack.

Point 3 - The Answer to Anxiety (vv. 31-34)

How can Jesus command His people not to worry and be anxious?

It is important to note that Jesus is not commanding us not to be human. There is a specific form of worry in view here, and that is the worry of idolatry. When we elevate something over God, something that is not designed to content our hearts, we naturally worry and have anxiety. Therefore, in commanding us not to worry, Jesus is teaching us to always maintain a right view of God.

What is the answer to anxiety according to Jesus? Why can we often be dissatisfied with His answer? See also Ps. 34:10

God knows we need food, shelter, and clothing. God knows that we need money, jobs, etc. And not only is He entirely concerned with these things, Jesus also reminds us that He is providential over them, which is why we can lay down our worries. We can taste and see His goodness. Therefore, the answer to worry and anxiety is to hold a right view of God. It is to embrace the Psalmist's words in 34:3, "*Oh, magnify the Lord with me...*"

Such an answer can seem frustrating on the surface. After all, our worries about money, food, clothing, and shelter could be easily solved with more money, a better job, less debt, etc., right? Jesus' point is that the answer to worry is not found in the world. The answer to worry is found in loving God above all things, which is a learned attitude and lifestyle (sanctification). So while it may not seem overly satisfying in the moment, such a view of life will set us on a path for a content, joy-filled life.

When we give ourselves to loving the world and the things of the world, we become like the young lions of Ps. 34:10 who have separated themselves from the pack and go hungry. When we choose to love the world over loving God, we separate ourselves from Him and from His people. We end up broken and distraught, consumed by worry and anxiety. Therefore, Jesus' answer to worry is not trite, it is a call to come to Him.

Thinking back to v. 25, why does Jesus' answer to worry and anxiety demand that our loyalty be to Him alone?

There is no other way to know contentment and peace in this life than to honor and love God above all else. The heart of the matter is worship; what do we worship? If we love and honor God, recognizing that He is providential over all things, our lives will look radically different from someone who is trying to order and arrange things all on their own in their limited power.

The Big Picture - Contentment with Holiness

Psalm 34 is an expression of praise and thanksgiving to a God Who is faithfully there for His people. The Psalmist writes, "*Oh, magnify the Lord with me, let us exalt His Name together!*" Such is the attitude we are invited to experience in Psalm 34, for as he goes on to say, "*...taste and see that the Lord is good!*" The goodness of God toward His people is seen most readily through the gospel of salvation, through which God has saved us from our sin, eternal death in hell, and given us life eternal with Him. But lest we miss the immediate blessings of the gospel, Jesus reminds us in Matthew 6 that this very gospel delivers us here and now from sin and suffering.

We are so often bound by the sin of worry and angst. Our hearts long for peace and pleasure. We seek after it in so many ways, and yet in our seeking, we find that we are ultimately trying to be God. We try to arrange our lives by our own power; we attempt to meet our needs in our own power, and we worry because we know we cannot actually meet all of our needs. We end up slaves to the very things that God has given us for our good. But Jesus meets us in our worries, our anxieties, and our sin...and He invites us to know Him, to trust Him, and to embrace holiness as the path to peace. We will face many struggles in this life: hurt, pain, fear, loss, worry, sorrow, the list goes on. But Jesus reminds us that we need to look no further than the birds and the flowers to be reminded of God's goodness toward us; He cares. He genuinely cares, and He is actively providing for all we need. The answer to worry, then, lies in clinging to Christ and His church. Trusting in His goodness and embracing His sovereign control over our lives. The Psalmist thus writes, "*Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all.*" Blessed be His Name.

Application Questions

- How are you personally magnifying God in your life?
- In what areas are you worrying, and thus, not trusting God?
- How are you teaching your family to trust God over and above all else?
- How is your growth group teaching one another to "*taste and see that the Lord is good*"?
- How might you teach each other to seek first the Kingdom of God as a pattern of holy living?