

January 17, 2016

DO NOT WORRY

Matthew 6:25-34

Just before the Israelites entered the Promised Land, Moses gave a sort of farewell discourse. We know it as *the Book of Deuteronomy*. In his last words to the people, he reiterates what they had been through, and he reminds them of the Ten Commandments, the statutes, and the ordinances that will identify them as a unique community, or, nation of people in the world. In this discourse, Moses emphasizes that God has been a faithful provider.

You shall remember all the way which the Lord your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that He might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. And He humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know; that He might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but that man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord. Your clothing did not wear out upon you, and your foot did not swell these forty years. Know then in your heart that, as a man disciplines his son, the Lord your God disciplines you. So you shall keep the Commandments of the Lord your God, by walking in His ways and by fearing Him. For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing forth in valleys and hills, a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity in which you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron and out of whose hills you can dig copper. And you shall eat and be full, and you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land He has given you! (8:2-10)

God provides! Do you believe it? Don't worry!

During a long drought and famine, Elijah came to the home of a poor young widow who was running out of food, and who had a young son. All she had left to eat consisted of a handful of meal in a jar and a little oil in a flask. She was going to make a last few cakes knowing that slow starvation would come afterwards. Elijah, however, asked her to feed him first, and God would then bless her in such a way that *"the jar of meal will not be emptied, and the jug of oil will not fail until the day that the Lord makes it rain on the earth."* (1 Kings 17:14) And so it happened!

God provides! Do you believe it? Don't worry!

Hear these words of Psalm 111:1-6 – Praise the Lord! I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart, in the company of the upright, in the congregation. Great are the works of the Lord, studied by all who have pleasure in them. Full of honor and majesty is His work, and His righteousness endures forever. He has caused His wonderful works to be remembered; the Lord is gracious and merciful. He provides food for those who fear Him; He is ever mindful of His covenant. He has shown His people the power of His works, in giving them the heritage of the nations. The works of His hands are faithful and just; all His precepts are trustworthy, they are established for ever and ever...

God provides!

As for the rich in this world, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on uncertain riches but on God who richly furnishes us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good,

to be rich in good deeds, liberal and generous, thus laying up for themselves a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life which is Life indeed! (1 Timothy 6:17-19)

Philippians 4:19 – *My God will supply every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus!*

God Provides!

If God provides, why should we ever worry? I think the main reason we worry is because we are insecure. We fall short in our trust. And we lose sight of how much is enough. We forget that we do not live by bread alone, and we neglect to turn to the Word of God. Our focus is all too often in the wrong direction: Rather than setting our sites on God's Kingdom, we tend to have a worldly focus. And we worry.

We should never worry about the things that unbelievers worry about. Unbelievers don't think God provides. We, who believe, should think that not only does God provide, but that when we work for, or, strive for the Kingdom, God provides not only eternal blessings, but *enough* of the earthly blessings to keep us from worrying.

Look at one of the earliest examples of striving for God's Kingdom in the New Testament. It was not long after the Day of Pentecost....

"Fear came upon every soul; and many wonders and signs were done through the Apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common; and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the Temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day, those who were being saved!" (Acts 2:43-47)

Then, not long after that:

"Now the company of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common. And with great power the Apostles gave their testimony to the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were possessors of lands or houses, sold them, and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the Apostles' feet; and distribution was made to each as any had need!" (4:32-35)

Two important ideas stand out in these passages: 1) They were together, and 2) they shared – they had all things in common. The reality of worry is that when we try to go it alone, or, when we forget that we can count on the grace of God, we become anxious. We lose our proper focus. Part of the problem is that though we may trust in God, we do not entirely trust ourselves, or, our world. Though God is entirely dependable, we are not, and the world is not. When we are narrowly focused – on self – we will worry. When our focus is on the larger picture, we will feel more confident about God's plan, God's purposes, God's provision. God's Kingdom!

We live in a world of screwed up priorities. But Jesus is telling us that when we put the Kingdom of God first, everything else will fall into place. Do you believe it?

God provides! Don't worry!