



A Spiritual Encouragement Message January 14, 2021

9 Reasons to Live in Peace

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What do you worry about? What is it that makes you anxious? Journalist Eric Sevareid (1912–1992) said, “The biggest business in America is not steel, automobiles, or television. It is the manufacture, refinement, and distribution of anxiety.” One anxiety inducing event happens every four years in our country, the election of the US President. At this very moment, we have people anxious about what Donald Trump will do in his remaining days in office. We have people anxious about what Joseph Biden will do once inaugurated. On every side of the aisle, we have worry, fear, and skepticism. Never mind the daily anxiety of our bank balance, job security, retirement, bills, etc. Of course, we know these are not from God or of God...

The real answer to anxiety, although easier to say than practice, is to replace it with trust. Jesus told us not to worry about tomorrow (**Matt. 6:24-34**). Here are nine reasons from the Sermon on the Mount for us to put our trust where it truly belongs, in the Kingdom of Heaven, rather than the kingdoms of men.

1. **“You cannot serve both God and money” (Matt. 6:24).** The Greek word used in the text is often translated as “slave”. There’s no question in our world we must work more often than most anything else we do. Yet, if our retirement, health insurance, vacations, bills, etc. are getting more attention than our spiritual growth and peace, we need to recalibrate.
2. **“Is not life more than food?” (Matt. 6:25).** Surely! Although, as much time is focused on guilt, diets, and food prep, it can be easy to see how we get confused. Remember the words of the Apostle, **“for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way” (1 Tim. 4:8, emphasis mine, DV)**
3. **“Look at the birds of the air” (Matt. 6:26).** God has created a world of abounding resources. I am constantly amazed at how much the world produces for us to live and thrive! So much so that we live in a time of exceeding prosperity and waste. In this bountiful world, God provides for even the smallest creatures. Surely, He is watching over those created in His image.
4. **“Which of you can add a single hour to his life?” (Matt. 6:27).** Quite the contrary, it has been shown that stress and anxiety put people at a 20% increase of loss of life by nearly ten years! Jesus was using rhetorical speech to answer the question we already understand without 5,000-person study samples.
5. **“Consider the lilies of the field” (Matt. 6:28-30).** Like the birds of the air, God cares for the lilies. Yet, there is no comparison of life between lilies, birds, and human beings. God in His wisdom still cares for them!

6. **“The Gentiles seek after these things” (Matt. 6:32).** Is this the earliest reference to what has now been coined the “rat race”? Or perhaps, “keeping up with the Jones’?” It is so easy to worry and stress about the same things our neighbors are worrying and stressing over. After all, we often communicate and enjoy their company. We must remind ourselves that we are meant to be different (holy, set apart). Our peace is a reflection of where our treasure is... no peace, equals earthly treasure. Where is your treasure?
7. **“Your heavenly Father knows that you need them” (Matt. 6:32).** My wife and I have fed our kids three meals a day for as long as they have been eating regular food. Yet, somehow, they will often say things like, “I’m starving” or “When is dinner?” or worse yet, “Are we going to eat dinner?” Just as I know that my kids need to eat to grow and thrive, our heavenly Father knows every aspect of what we need. Chances are, if we’re not getting something we desire, He knows we don’t need it either.
8. **“All these things will be added to you” (Matt. 6:33).** I won’t do what scholars do and debate this point. If Jesus said it, it is true. Focus on the word and the kingdom first, and the things you need will find their way into your life. Release the worries of this life and focus on that which matters. The rest will fall into place.
9. **“Tomorrow will be anxious for itself” (Matt. 6:34).** After an entire night of sleepless worry, do you know what you get? Exhausted the following day with no progress toward changing that which kept you awake. Some might even call it a fool’s errand. Focus on right now, today. What can we do today to change our opportunities for tomorrow? If nothing else, focusing on today will at least allow us to enjoy the moment we are in, rather than drifting through life completely unaware of the experiences we are missing. Live in your moment, every moment.

Now, as I stated in the beginning of this article, these things are much easier said, than done. Especially knowing they come from the mouth of our Lord. Yet, God does not give us tasks that are impossible. Hard? Sure... impossible? Not even close. Put your trust in the Lord and He will see you through!