

Living the Expectant Present with Jesus

Thomas Robinson, January 3, 2016

Matthew 6:25-34 (Cf. Luke 12:22-34)

²⁵ Therefore I tell you, **do not be anxious about your life** (*psyche*, soul), what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body (*soma*), what you will put on. Is not your **life something more** than food, and your **body** than clothing?

²⁶ **Look at the birds** of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are'tn't you of more value than they? ²⁷ And which of you by being anxious can add a single foot to his span of life?

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 is clothing the grass of the field in this way, something that exists today and tomorrow is thrown into an oven, does he not much more clothe you? O you of **little faith!**

³¹ Therefore **do not be anxious**, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³² For the nations seek after all these things, and **your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.**

³³ But seek first **God's kingdom** and his **righteousness** (justice), and **all these things** will be added for you.

³⁴ Therefore **do not be anxious about tomorrow**, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. **Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.**"

Mark 1:14-15

¹⁴ Now after John was handed over, Jesus went into the region of Galilee proclaiming God's good news, ¹⁵ and saying, "The right time has arrived in full, God's kingdom has come right here! Change your ways of thinking and trust in this good news!"

Matthew 6:9-13

⁹ Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. ¹⁰ Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread, ¹² and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

Isaiah 9:6-7

⁶ For to us a child is born, | to us a son is given; | and the government shall be upon his shoulder, | and his name shall be called | Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, | Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. | ⁷ Of the increase of his government and of peace | there will be no end, | on the throne of David and over his kingdom, | to establish it and to uphold it | with justice and with righteousness | from this time forth and forevermore. | The zeal of THE LORD (*Yahweh*) of hosts will do this.

Isaiah 52:7-8

⁷ How beautiful upon the mountains | are the feet of him who brings good news, | who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness..., | who says to Zion, "Your God reigns!" | ⁸ The voice of your watchmen ... | together they sing for joy; | for with their own eyes they see | the return of THE LORD (*Yahweh*) to Zion.

Philippians 4:5-7

⁵ Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is right here. ⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving make your requests known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your thoughts in Messiah Jesus.

Living in the Present with the Past and Future

We begin 2016 with Jesus' call: *"Seek first God's kingdom..."* Most of us consider ourselves either committed followers of Jesus or seekers, interested in his teaching. He is clearly giving a challenge, but what does it mean? How do I seek that kingdom? What if I can't find it? Why does he talk about not being anxious? Isn't he asking the impossible? I'm worried!

A striking thing about Jesus is how focused he is on the present moment, the person in front of him, the present need/opportunity, living now! He lived in a nation with a long, difficult past. The future holds conflict, persecution, death for himself and many of his followers. We haven't done well in the past, we face a fearful tomorrow. No anxiety? How can I seek?

We studied the unfolding vision of Isaiah (7, 9, 11, 40, 52-53): The birth of a child, a branch on a destroyed stump, a small sign, a world-filling glory, the LORD'S return, his arm: a suffering servant. Jesus lives that vision. Trusting the God who works in past and future frees the present for creative participation in that work. Ahaz couldn't trust. Jesus calls us to seek.

God's Kingdom on the Scale of My Life

Think about the scene of Jesus' sermon. Very ordinary working farmers, fishermen, spinning women, people with someone sick, coming to Jesus in time of trouble. To listen, to be helped. Jesus calls them to seek God's kingdom, justice. Something grand, cosmic. Too big? Not at all! From the start Jesus proclaimed the news of God's rule breaking in. "Change your thinking!" God challenges on every scale, world-wide (nations, structures of oppression); also one blind beggar, one Pharisee, one woman at a well. The big paralyzes us. The small: does God care?

Jesus focuses on the small to see the big. Only a God of unimaginable power can make one lily, feed one bird, give the spin to an up quark, use a supernova to make gold. He loves all levels.

Jesus is talking to people of small power. You matter! Your life is something more! Can you see it?

Seeing the Gift, Trusting the Giver

Well of course our lives matter to us! That's why we're anxious, worried. Everything is in our hands; if we drop it...who knows? We've messed up in the past. Every new day, new trouble! Our only security is the wall of stuff we can build. From basic food/clothes, to power, wealth. Jesus says look! Birds. Lilies. What do you see? Do you see God giving gifts? Food, beauty, life! The stuff you serve and trust – Mammon – every bit is a gift from God, including your life. From God's kingdom to daily bread, it's gift! Only a vast God loves your body enough to make it. God cares for things that last only a day. In you, he has made something more!

We live in a world that confirms our natural tendency to see only stuff, even ourselves as stuff, and nothing beyond. We compete to get stuff, control life, on every level. We blind ourselves to anything more. We prefer not to see more. Stuff demands only selfishness and success.

We're not at all sure we want a loving Giver who creates us for self-giving love, who calls us to seek his kingdom, real righteousness. Better a human-size Mammon we can worry about.

Jesus calls us to open eyes. Our life and world on every scale is God's gift, created beauty. It is not just in my hands. All real, lasting security comes from the Giver. I learn to trust Him!

One Day, Each Day

Don't worry about tomorrow. Live this day aware of who you are. You are the beloved creature of that great physicist, artist, savior, lover, Giver of grace. Be like that yourself. Give grace and justice at every opportunity. That's God's kingdom on the scale of my life. Seek for it!

Tomorrow will have enough trouble for you to make an impact for good. Don't worry about it!