

Well now a couple hours passed,
And I was sitting in my house,
The day was winding down and coming to an end,
And so I turned on the TV,
And flipped it over to the news,
And what I saw I almost couldn't comprehend,
I saw a preacher man in cuffs
He'd taken money from the church,
He'd stuffed his bank account with righteous dollar bills
But even still I can't say much
Because I know we're all the same,
Oh yes we all seek out to satisfy those thrills.

You know there ain't no rest for the wicked,
Money don't grow on trees,
We got bills to pay
We got mouths to feed
There ain't nothing in this world for free.
You know we can't slow down,
We can't hold back
Though you know we wish we could.
You know there ain't no rest for the wicked,
Until we close our eyes for good.

What do you worry about? It may differ; money, relationships, retirement, children, terrorism, politics, the direction of our church; whether people like us, think us intelligent, marriage, attractiveness, a future spouse, a home, mortgage payments, if we're wasting our lives, etc. We worry, and it drives us to many destructive things. As Cage the Elephant put it, but even still I can't say much, because I know we're all the same. Oh yes we all seek out to satisfy those thrills.

I'm prone to worry. When I came home from Indonesia I was worried. No job, no home, cash going out, 4 children, and a wife in tow. For a man, that's a big deal. People told me not to worry, it'll work out. What was a washed up missionary artist with no college degree going to do on the Main Line to support a family. I had vivid visions of driving a truck full of Scott paper, living in a one room apartment in Upper Darby with my wife

screaming, “Get off the couch, find some work! The kids hafta eat!” My kids skinny, runny noses, distended bellies, coughing and hacking, due to lack of nutrition. Aidan would be like Tiny Tim at Christmas, “Oh look, a piece of coal, thank you ever so much father. It’s bigger than the one last year! Not that that is important, you know.” “Don’t worry. God will take care of you”. Well, let God come down and drive the truck and feed my kids, where is he? There were a lot of long sleepless nights and twilight walks in the park during that time. I was worried.

There are many things we worry about, the largest is money, or our personal well being; self preservation, safety.

Question: What’s your treasure?

Proposition: Whatever your treasure is will dictate whether you worry.

¹⁹“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.¹

Think of the time, mental energy, and thought we put into what we’ll get, where we’ll work, who we’ll marry, social life, or retirement. We must admit, most of what we think about is ‘us’. Life is one long pursuit of comfort and self preservation. Some say to think about such things is wise. You must prepare, and make sure you’re not a burden on society, you must be educated. Is it wrong to prepare, be educated, and save for retirement? No, that’s not what Jesus meant, we need to prepare. Yet, in Christ we are called into a new community which is less about self, and more about the community where rewards are bountiful, yet maybe not what we initially desire (Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels, IVP p708). “Our possessions become evil when they exhaust our resources. Resources which belong to God. If we value what Jesus values, we give until basic needs of others are met before we accumulate beyond our own needs” (Craig Keener’s Luke Commentary p148).

¹ *The New International Version*. 2011 (Mt 6:19–21). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Proverbs 22:9 says, ⁹Whoever has a bountiful eye will be blessed, for he shares his bread with the poor. ² The bountiful/good eye here is one who has “vision to see the needs of others and share until those needs are met. In Matthew, the healthy/good eye belongs to the one who has a single-minded devotion to God that is unencumbered by any devotion to wealth” (Craig Keener’s Luke Commentary pg 149). Some view this part of Matthew as a commentary on the Lord’s Prayer. And we notice that in that prayer, “we pray for our need - ‘our daily bread’ - after we have prayed ‘your kingdom come’ (Craig Keener’s Luke Commentary pg 155).

Have you ever taken a spiritual inventory? Ask yourself, where is God growing my heart? Who am I influencing for the Gospel? How many of my neighbors know me, and have been impacted by my faith? How many people would say their lives have been positively changed by mine? Are we allowing ourselves to be made disciples and to make disciples? Where do my finances flow? Or, are we merely converts living unchanged lives, packing the sin of self preservation around us like a tattered blanket? Spending on self; hoarding resources to gain safety like a bunker which will not withstand the bombs of life. Many of us don’t take that spiritual inventory, we blindly follow our desires, and therefore, not only hurt ourselves, but negatively affect others...maybe we’re like this girl with no thought of anyone else but herself.

VIDEO HERE

There is a story about a yogi in India, a young boy who left his home at 11 and walked 8000 miles for 7 years across the Himalayas, on a spiritual journey. He took nothing but his prayer beads. One day he was meditating in a village square. The head religious man warned him to move into the temple and lock himself in since there was a lion that had been tormenting the village. The boy asked, “Can your doors and walls keep out death?” The man said no. The boy replied, “Then if I cannot escape death, why should I be afraid of it?” He remained outdoors meditating through the night. The lion came, and they say that due to the boys’ lack of fear, the lion lay down at his feet, slept, and left in the morning, not harming the boy.

² *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. 2001 (Pr 22:9). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

We don't know if stories like this are true, but it illustrates a point. Sometimes faith seems unwise, illogical, and even foolish. We live a life of fear and worry which will not sustain or add to life.

One's affections are inherently drawn to one's treasure. It's not bad to save, to put away for the future. However, when it clouds out the kingdom it becomes sin; self before Jesus. When it's put away, not only for future need, but to be used for the Kingdom, then it's proper. However, most who save are tempted to overestimate our needs to secure a future against all harm; safety. Meanwhile others around us grow more destitute as needs grow. Wisdom morphs into greed.

Eph 5:5/Col 3:5 Greed is idolatry.

Luke 12:15 your possessions do not define who you are.

Mark 7:22 Greed makes you dirty.

Exodus 20:17 do not covet, is the 10th commandment.

1 Tim 6:9 desire to get rich is a temptation and snare.

Our desire for self preservation devalues life, creates a loss of testimony, and robs us of joy.

²² "The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. ²³ But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

²⁴ "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.³

What are your eyes focused upon? The eye in Scripture is a reflection of the mind/heart. What do our thoughts revolve around? What do we place our concern on? The opposite sex? Money? Safety? What is our first concern, Jesus or Self? Who's our master? A master demands total allegiance. Scripture says we are saved from slavery to sin, and brought into a slavery of righteousness. Love and Hate in Semitic are closely

³ *The New International Version*. 2011 (Mt 6:22–24). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

related to 'choose' and 'not choose'; in other words our love of money (*self preservation*) can cause us to choose not to follow God even if it's only out of mere neglect, or indifference.

Many think our biggest threats in America are terrorism, Islamic ideologies, Atheism, Global Warming, Humanism, or the relativism of Post-Modernism, and maybe years ago, Marxism. However, it's funny how what we've worried about years ago never came to fruition. Our greatest threat could possibly be the Self; our affluence. Our desire to create a self-made heaven on earth, drives our hearts farther from God. Our faith becomes a thing of convenience, not something which governs life. It becomes a feel good thing to add to our sense of security, instead of something that we're willing to suffer for. Suffering actually ends up becoming '*wrong*' instead of expected, bringing about greater Godly character and Kingdom.

Someone once said, "*Worry is practical atheism, and an affront to God.*" Pagan religions of the time were governed by anxiety; you must appease an angry god. Gods of the Old Testament religions, like Molech, required child sacrifice in order to ensure progression. Ashtoreth demanded sexual perversion to produce crops. Material wealth, life, and immorality, the degrading of a person were the norm; what a life of fear. Our modern culture which denounces religion in many ways, or at the least says, there is no one right religion, pushes us to appease the god of self. Reality shows on TV reveal the preoccupation with self. The focus is overtly on the external, the spiritual health of a person is denied. Nutrition of the body becomes important, nutrition of the soul is neglected (it's the reason I don't work out...I'm too spiritual!). I won't get anywhere as an ugly person. I won't get anywhere if I am not wealthy. I have no self worth if I am not successful, or good looking in the world's eyes. Yet, Christianity is characterized by a loving father who gives good gifts to his children and provides for the needs even of those who despise him. A father who wants what's best for his children and the world. We have a father who doesn't look through shallow glasses of physical beauty and dominance, and gives no accolades based on wealth; He assigns worth and dignity, despite social or economic status.

Over 50% of Christians live below the poverty line in this world. What ever happened to Acts 2 with the focus on Kingdom life in community marked by

the sharing of possessions? Did we become so afraid of Marxist philosophy that we've abandoned compassion? How many times does the Scripture talk about care for the poor; the widow, and the fatherless? Maybe we need a drastic realignment of our giving? Giving in America (everyone) ranges between 1.7 and 1.9% of personal income. In 2001 members of evangelical churches, the biggest givers of all denominations, gave away on average 4.2 percent of their income, a number which has declined over the years, although annual household income has been steadily rising since 1968 even when adjusted for inflation. Only 3 out of 10 twenty-somethings donated to a church in the past year, which is half the proportion of older adults. In general, the more money a person makes the less likely he/she is to tithe. The biggest givers are the super poor and the super rich, although the percentages are still way below the traditional 10% level. Middle-class Americans give away from 1.2% - 1.4% of their annual incomes. If historically Christians had given 10 percent of their income to the Church in 2004, it would have added up to an additional \$164 billion (<http://library.generousgiving.org/page.asp?sec=4&page=161>).

It is said that people who categorize themselves as 'strong Christians' who go to church at least 2X's/mth made collectively 2 trillion dollars in 2005 - more than the GDP of all but 6 countries! If they had given a full 10% of that it would've translated to 133 billion more dollars for the kingdom. At least 20% of self-identified Christians give \$0. The median dollars given by US Christians as a whole is .62% of the median income or \$200/yr for \$32,500 earned; that's below what Americans give as a whole. Giving has declined as salaries have gone up - we gave more in the Depression era! (Passing the Plate, Why American Christians do not give more money - powerpoint presentation)

Where's the cheerful heart of giving? Do you tithe...joyfully? Money isn't bad, it's a spiritual issue - and it can be a great tool if released into God's hands. If we are truly seeking the Kingdom first then we will naturally be taking care of people around us, poverty in the Christian community should not be an issue. We should be offering an alternative community; a counter cultural model of life based on the grace of God. We should be released from our worry and give generously!

²⁵ “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? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? ²⁷ Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?

²⁸ “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. ²⁹ Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ³⁰ If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? ³¹ So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ⁴

Solomon was a character. Let’s consider what he had *1Kings 10:14-15* remembering that a talent was worth 60-100 million days wages, ¹⁴ Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was 666 talents of gold, ¹⁵ besides that which came from the explorers and from the business of the merchants, and from all the kings of the west and from the governors of the land.⁵ And in *10:23*, ²³ Thus King Solomon excelled all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom.⁶

His assets are outlined in minute detail in 1 Kings, too much to read here.

Solomon was the modern equivalent of Bill Gates and all other billionaires combined, and in power to a 3rd world dictator. His downfall were his wives and their compromise on the message of God they brought to the empire, despite his wisdom; how could he be so smart, but so stupid at the same time? Solomon died after a 40 year rule. His kingdom was taken over by his son, Rehoboam. Under his rule the empire was lost and split in

⁴ *The New International Version*. 2011 (Mt 6:25–31). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

⁵ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. 2001 (1 Ki 10:14–15). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

⁶ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. 2001 (1 Ki 10:23). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

two. All that wealth gone, power dissipated. And Solomon's former splendor is compared to a flower. The question is what's important? All you can get in life? Or the Kingdom of God? Will we mix our worry with the Kingdom and pollute the power like Solomon's wives, becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy?

There's a problem with Jesus' words here. How can he say to us in one breath, don't worry? Then we hear in Philippians 1:29 *"For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him but also to suffer for him,"* or, *"for anyone that wants to save his life will lose it,"* in Mark 8:35. In other passages he promises suffering to the point of death.

In our recent history there was a Korean team of short term missionaries who went to Afghanistan. They were kidnapped and held hostage. The pastor was executed, ten bullets to the head on his 42nd birthday. Another team member was also murdered before the team was released. The outcries from the Christian community went up that we should not put our people in such danger. But, what's worth dying for? If not the Gospel, then what? An article was written about this in Relevant magazine, 'Reckless Abandon, How Much Risk is too Much?' by Mike Barrett. The author writes: *"You might wonder how that kind of logic sits with Christ followers like the original Apostles, or Dietrich Bonhoeffer, or Jim Elliot. Each of them, and many more, allowed their faith in God to lead them directly into harm's way, and nearly all of them paid for it with their lives. So, it seems that something fundamental to our message, and its delivery, has changed. Has our over-developed world of liability insurance and denominational actuaries and class-action lawsuits watered down ancient Scriptures warning that this was all supposed to be dangerous in the first place? When Jesus said, 'in this world, you will have trouble,' He wasn't talking about losing the right to pray in school or losing our 501C3 IRS tax advantages."*

Jesus ever promised ease, but danger. In danger, he says, don't worry. He has every right to say that given who he is. But our priorities don't align with his.

- **Worry is sin of self glorification.**

- I become the center of what is important, instead of God's Kingdom and community. It harms the community of faith because it debilitates you and weighs others down. Release from worry allows us to be a blessing to others. *I am an old man and have known a great many troubles, but most of them never happened ~ Mark Twain.* 85% of worry doesn't happen, but that means 15% does, so are we trusting that God is working through that as well? Is there purpose in our suffering? *He who fears he shall suffer, already suffers what he fears.*
- **Worry is diminished in community**
 - Others reaffirm that we're okay - "You're doing a good job, God is pleased with you."). Community meets our needs. Which is undermined by our pride; we don't want others to see our need. Yet, you are not an island unto yourself, we need the sobering voice of others.
- **Worry is diminished by Truth**
 - The Lord's Prayer
 - The Apostles Creed - *I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord:*
 - Memorizing Scripture, Philippians 4:6-7, ⁶do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. ⁷
 - Remember/Thanksgiving - Take an inventory of what God has done. Philippians 4:6-7 reveals a direct correlation of thanksgiving which moves us from worry to peace.

Do you know what I worry about these days? I worry about you. I worry about your lives, families, relationships, whether I am leading well, teaching well, or my vision and direction is what God wants. Whether I am a good father and husband. Whether my life is a life of obedience, and reflects Jesus in my relationships. So, I hope it's comforting to know that if your pastor is going to sin, it will be in worry for you. But just because I am being honest and transparent, it's not right. Worry is an idolatrous sin of self glorification; it's distrust of God. God's teaching me not to, leading me

⁷ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version.* 2001 (Php 4:6–7). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

into faith and trust, by showing me that he cares. He allows me to live in the tension so that he can show me he will answer it.

Do you want to know what happened when I came home from Indonesia? (Explain my situation - got my eyes focused on Kingdom) Where your treasure is your heart will be also, and that treasure will define whether you worry or not. 1 Corinthians 13:13 ¹³ And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.⁸ Am I rooted & planted in Jesus? Are faith, hope & love growing in me, crowding out the destructive sin of worry in life? Am I participating with all my resources in the kingdom of God? Constantly God is reminding me of the present value of the blood of Christ by bringing me back to the cross. I want to be used; I want to be freed from worry so the King can have an obedient servant to work through. I want every resource I have to be at Jesus' disposal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. We don't want to live under the slavery of worry, but under the slavery of righteousness, governed by faith, hope, and love.

Next week you're going to hear our financial report. That report will have good news and challenges we face. Right now Six:Eight is living in positive financial tension; a tension God wants to answer through us. It's a positive tension since we spent our money for set up of this place 3.5 years into our life, whereas most church plants would get a loan and do that in the beginning. We have the positive tension of good growth, which brings higher costs. Our costs are minimal to other churches, but we have a younger crowd. Now that we're set up, what we want to do is not only cover costs, but have a healthy bank account for blessing each other and our neighbors in this community. What would happen if we gave generously this year? What would happen if we were the one church that actually gave the 10% or greater, rather than not at all, or at less than one percent? I think we would blow the doors of the kingdom here and beyond!

The Christian life is revolutionary and transformational in all aspects of our life. We can't think only of ourselves anymore, we have a role to play in community. That's what the cross teaches. So we're learning over these few weeks to let God reach into all areas of our life - our emotions,

⁸ *The New International Version*. 2011 (1 Co 13:12–13). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

thoughts, reactions towards others, purity, sex lives, and even finances - transforming them to match God's heart for holiness & for love of others. This is an opportunity, to engage more closely with the heart of Jesus. Every choice we make is a Kingdom choice (explain). What you do matters to this church, and to those around you. You either promote the growth of knowing and following God, or get in the way, and I don't want something as silly as money getting in the way of our church showing others the amazing love of God. Every cent builds into the Kingdom of God. It's an amazing thing to participate in, and shows obedience and submission as we submit every aspect of our life to Jesus. You see, this revolutionizes the way we see, view, plan and use finances, just like our Revolutionary Transformational understanding of Jesus affecting our sex lives, our emotional approach to each other, and how we use our time. The Kingdom of God permeates everything we are.