



**SERMON Week 3 of
Fear Not Series**

Focused On Today

**Scripture: Matthew
6:25-34**

What's the big idea for today's Sermon? It is that our concern and energy needs to be focused on the day in front of us.

Wouldn't that be freeing to only be concerned with one day at a time, rather than feeling the pressure to manage your entire future all at once?

Well be encouraged - even Christ prayed for daily bread (sustenance) and told His followers not to spend time worrying about tomorrow (the future). This morning we will learn to be released from future fear, worry, and anxiety and focus our energy just on today.

Today is our 3rd week in our *Fear Not* series. So far we've talked about the difference between healthy and unhealthy fear. We know that God does not give us a spirit of fear but rather a spirit of power, of love, and of self-control. We also learned that fear has a proper place.

Today we're going to look at one of the most important lessons Jesus taught His original followers. This is a teaching that we cannot miss and its

lifelong importance cannot be understated. As followers of Christ we are called to be *focused on today*.

Let's be honest about something; The opportunities for fear, anxiety, worry, or doubt, are at historically high levels. It is well documented that people are struggling in these areas as much right now as they ever have. The current climate only makes Jesus' words more wonderful to hear when He says,

"...do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own." (Matthew 6:34)

We all know the side effects that worry can cause:

- damage to our health
- disruption to our productivity
- negative affect on the way we treat others and the way we treat ourselves
- reduction in our ability to trust in God.

How many ill effects of worry are you experiencing?

There is a difference between worry and genuine concern – worry immobilizes, but concern moves you to action.

So what is Jesus telling us to do. He says – take one day at a time. It allows us to be focused on today, to be present and to deal appropriately with every circumstance and situation that comes up. I don't know about you, but I find this reality to be incredibly freeing.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9qxYPE3xm8Q>

One Day at a

Time

Let's take a moment to read together more of what Jesus said about worry in Matthew chapter 6:25-34

“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? 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? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life^[a]?”

“And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labour or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these. 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?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”

Let's remember that life is more important than the food we eat, the clothes we wear, the holidays we take, the size of our bank balance, our postcode or most anything else we might currently be concerned with. In fact, God believes we are of so much value that He sent His one and only Son to die and suffer in our place so that we might spend eternity with Him. The Father doesn't want us wasting one second of this precious life paralyzed

by unhealthy fear, worry, anxiety or doubt. He's willing to take it all on, and if you remember back to last week's sermon, that's the secret that Paul learned. The secret about fear, anxiety, and worry is that they belong in the hands of God - not ours. Paul said,

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:6-7

And Jesus says in Matthew that we don't need to worry. It's a waste of our eternally valuable time and energy.

You may remember that the command **fear not** appears in one form or another 365 times from Genesis to Revelation. Many commentators marvel that God gave us this specific exhortation for every single day of the year. Len is in the process of preparing a booklet, a calendar with these 365 verses written on, for those interested. Here are a couple examples;

*“Fear not, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name, you are mine.”* - Isaiah 43:1

*“Fear not, for I am with you;
be not dismayed, for I am your God;
I will strengthen you, I will help you,
I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”* - Isaiah 41:10

I want to turn to something Jesus says in the Lord's Prayer also found in Matthew chapter 6. In regards to prayer He says,

"This then, is how you should pray:

'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread." - Matthew 6:9-11

Jesus reminds us of a couple key things here. First, our God in heaven is holy and worthy of our reverence. His will on earth is what we need. And secondly, we need Him to give us our daily "bread," our daily nourishment and sustenance.

Many of us consume a daily portion of fear. Add to that anxiety, worry, doubt and we're filling ourselves with "junk food" instead of the divine sustenance we really need. And we all know where a steady diet of junk food leaves us.

So before we move on, catch hold of what Jesus is saying in Matthew 6. He's telling us not to worry about tomorrow, it has enough trouble of its own. He's also telling us to pray and specifically ask God for the daily food and nourishment that we need. Even His advice on prayer is focused on our practical everyday needs.

You see, God is not only the eternally divine creator of the entire cosmos, He's also our heavenly Father and He cares for our well-being. He knows that every single day brings along with it an ample amount of trouble. This

includes things to be scared of, worried about, and anxious over. I believe this is why He's given us a daily reminder to *fear not*. I believe that this is why He's reminded us to ask specifically for our daily bread, and I believe this is why we're told to stay focused on today. God in heaven knows that a single day at a time is enough of a challenge for you and I.

I said earlier how incredibly freeing this is and I want to elaborate on that. I hope you can recall that our First Sunday in this series we talked about the difference between healthy and unhealthy fear. Last Sunday we talked about putting fear in its proper place. When you add that to what we're learning from Jesus today we can begin to see how fear can be overcome. With some self-discipline and confidence in the process we can take fear, worry, anxiety, doubt, and put them in their proper place knowing that our responsibility is to be focused on today.

We are to seek the Kingdom of God above all else – this means to put God first in our lives, to fill our thoughts with His desires, to take His character for our pattern and to serve and obey Him in everything.

What is really important to you? People, objects, goals and other desires? These can, all too quickly become the most important things to you if you don't actively choose to give God first place in every area of your life.

We don't have to be consumed with what might happen tomorrow, or next month, or when this pandemic is over. We are too valuable and our time on earth is too precious to be lost to future fear that truly, we don't have control of anyhow.

Now I am not saying that planning for tomorrow is a waste of time – it isn't. It is time well spent. But worrying about tomorrow is time wasted. Sometimes it is difficult to tell the difference. Careful planning is thinking ahead about goals, steps and schedules and trusting in God's guidance. When done well, planning can help alleviate worry.

Worriers, by contrast are consumed by fear and find it difficult to trust God. They let their plans interfere with their relationship with God. Don't let worries about tomorrow affect your relationship with God today.

As people of God we live and walk by faith. We trust God even in the face of fear and as we are learning through this series - we can play an active role in identifying fear and giving it back to God. This is our daily responsibility.

I am reminded of the story in Numbers 13 & 14 where the twelve spies went to explore the promised land. They returned with a fear-filled report about the giants who lived in fortified cities throughout the land. Caleb and Joshua were the only spies who trusted that God would deliver His people into the land as he had promised. The rest of the spies and all the people rebelled against God and Moses and decided it would be better to return to slavery in Egypt. In this instance, it cost God's people 40 additional years of wandering in the desert.

The people of God allowed fear to rob them of the promise of God and steal their precious time. For most, it meant the rest of their lives.

This is an intense and painful story in the history of Gods people being set free from slavery and entering the promised land. Some of the main points of the story however, are still applicable in our lives today.

Is fear robbing you of the promises of God in your life?

Is fear stealing your precious time?

Are you feeling paralyzed by the potential trouble that the future may or may not bring?

I could go on and on here as there are a multitude of ways fear affects and redirects our lives. At the conclusion of the first sermon in our series I said, “It speaks to just how destructive unhealthy fear can be in our lives that we need *power, love, and self discipline* to help us overcome it.

We desperately need the discipline to check ourselves throughout the day. We need discipline to form new habits in identifying healthy fear from unhealthy fear and we need abundant power and love in our responses.”

And today I want to add an important addendum to that statement. We only need to exercise that spirit filled self-discipline one day at a time. In harmony with our Matthew 6 passages from earlier, we just need to be *focused on today*. Tomorrow has enough trouble of its own.

The past 2 weeks I’ve given you a specific challenge and this coming week I want you to continue them. Everyday I want you to identify areas of unhealthy fear in your life. Then I want you to place that fear back in the hands of God through gratitude laced prayer. As you continue to make this a habit I believe you will begin to experience a divine peace in your life that

transcends human understanding. And more importantly, I believe you will begin to put a distance between yourself and fear while also living more of the life God has for you.

Before we pray together I want you to imagine for a moment how different the history of the Israelite people could've been if they'd been practicing what you are in regards to fear. What if the twelve spies returned from the promised land and led a communal prayer that sounded something like this;

“Father in heaven, thank you for freeing us from slavery in Egypt. Thank you for providing for us these past 40 days in the desert and thank you for bringing us here to the very edge of the land you’ve promised. Lord we see giants living in the land. They have impenetrable cities and we’re scared. It’s hard to see how we might be successful in battle against enemies like them. But God, we know that you can do anything. You spoke to Moses from a burning bush, you parted the red sea, and you destroyed the armies of Pharaoh. We trust that you can do this as well. Lead us, calm our hearts, and deliver us into the promised land. Amen.”

How different would your life look, could my life look, if we were truly focused on today?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MvpjxfWrjzY>

On Eagles Wings

Prayer:

Father you know that sometimes life and the circumstances we face are just hard. But You are our source of peace.

I pray for all those listening to our service this morning that whatever they are facing right now, that they would pause, take a deep breath and inhale more of You and Your peace while exhaling any of the worries that weigh them down.

I pray that they would be anxious for nothing, but would come to You in prayer with all their needs, thanking You even now that You know how you are going to take care of every last detail.

I thank You that You care about the things that we care about and that You are our source of peace in the midst of the storms.

In Jesus's name, Amen.