

What Not to Worry About, Part 2

Luke 12:22-28

September 27, 2020

Let's look at the second reason not to worry, something else you do not need to worry about, and something you need to think deeper about. Second reason: God preserves your life. God doesn't just sustain your life with his Word, but he preserves your life. Look at what Jesus says in verses 25 and 26, "And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? If you, then, are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest?" Literally, it's which of you worrying is able to add to his span of life a cubit? A cubit is roughly 18 inches, used here not to measure physical length, but to measure time, which is why, single hour, is a good way to translate this word, cubit.

Discovering the fabled Fountain of Youth has always been something man has pursued. We've been always trying in vain to discover the fountain of youth, to extend physical life. And

listen, this produces so much anxiety among humanity, especially in our modern world, because the promises of science are so intoxicating, aren't they? So powerful! We believe in our culture around us, anyway, we believe and bow to the god of progress. It's always, science will figure that out. There will be some development, some achievement by which cancer will be eliminated, AIDS will be taken away, take whatever fear and worry, science will take care of it. We have advancements in medicine. We've made such progress in understanding nutrition, all by the grace of God. But in a sinful attempt to escape the curse, the unbelieving world uses the gifts of science to try to circumvent the grave itself. Look, it's all in vain. Health food industry, dieting schemes, fitness craze, all this has infected our culture like a madness. Living a long life is something many people are worrying about, seeking, and even paying big, big money for it. You heard about this thing called cryogenics. Seems at least once a month I see some, at least, at least once a month, maybe more, I see a headline about the super-rich paying \$100,000 and up to have their brains frozen.

Look, with all of our progress in medicine and nutrition, and make no mistake, I mean I'm not diminishing the fact that

those are evidences of common grace. But we haven't moved the meter at all on the span of life, have we? Has that, has that escaped anybody's notice? I mean, Moses said, Psalm 90 verse 10, Moses lived a long time ago, okay? He said this, "The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength, eighty. And yet their span is but toil and trouble. They are soon gone, and we fly away." Just a footnote to that, according to Deuteronomy 34:7, Moses was 120 years old when he died. He says in that Psalm, Psalm 90, "The years of our life are seventy or even eighty." He knows that his life is supernaturally extended by God. He's 120 years old when he died, "his eye was undimmed, his vigor unabated."

No one, no one can add a single hour to his span of life, not by being anxious about it or any other way, not with a \$100,000 brain freeze, not by preserving DNA in a test tube, not by dieting, exercise, health food, staying current on your vaccinations and health check-ups and all the rest. The day of our birth and the day of our death those are things decreed by God. They're determined by his perfect, sovereign will. And as the rich fool learned, our days are numbered, and our souls are

on loan from God, and one day he's going to call that loan due. Don't be foolish. Don't get caught up in all this.

There was one man, who in finding out his impending death, appealed to God. God added some length to his life. Go go back to Isaiah, chapter 38, Isaiah 38, and consider this situation with Hezekiah. You remember? Have you ever wondered whether it's a good idea to extend your life? Let this help you decide and cure you of any desire of wanting more than your allotted time on earth. Isaiah (Hezekiah) has been a stalwart. He has been faithful to God. He's been a good king of Judah. He's lived a good life. He's lived a godly life. All that there is to say about Hezekiah commends him. We read this in Isaiah 38:1, "In those days Hezekiah became sick and was at the point of death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came to him, and said to him, 'Thus says the Lord: "Set your house in order, for you shall die, you shall not recover.'" Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the Lord, and said, 'Please, O Lord, remember how I have walked before you in faithfulness and with a whole heart, and have done what is good in your sight.' And Hezekiah wept bitterly."

You know, it's precisely because Hezekiah had walked before God in faithfulness, with a whole heart. He'd done what is good in God's sight. His life was adorned with good works. That's why God sent Isaiah to him, to inform him of his departure so he could put his house in order. A great kindness was shown here to Hezekiah, a great honor. Foolishly, Hezekiah wanted to stick around. "He wept bitterly." Then verse 4, "The word of the Lord came to Isaiah: 'Go and say to Hezekiah, "Thus says the Lord, the God of David your father: 'I have heard your prayer; I have seen your tears. Behold, I will add fifteen years to your life. I will deliver you and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria, and will defend this city.'"""

Just like that, with a word! God gave Hezekiah not just an hour, but a span of fifteen more years of life on earth. When you read ahead in chapter 39, you'll see that Hezekiah commits a major blunder during this little extra time he's been given even though it happens according to the sovereign will of God, according to his plan. Foolishly, he took the Babylonian emissaries on a tour through the treasury. There was nothing he didn't show them. You know what it's doing to covetous Babylonians? It's stoking the flames of their covetousness. It's

like a, it's like you looking at a catalog. I gotta buy that. I gotta get that. Right? That's what it did, and it was a major gaffe on his otherwise spotless reign.

Stay here in Isaiah, but the question in Jesus, in Luke 12:26, he says, "If you, then, you're not able to do such a small thing as that," that is what? "adding a single hour to your life." If you can do such a small thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest?" And here's God, in contrast to "a small thing as that," he's adding fifteen years to Hezekiah's life, and it was effortless. Effortless is the promise he made, and just to put an exclamation point on the power of God in contrast with our own weakness. Look at verses 7 and 8, Isaiah 38, God said, we find out later that this is the sign that Hezekiah asked for. He says, "This shall be the sign to you from the Lord, that the Lord will do this thing that he's promised, 'Behold, I will make the shadow cast by the declining sun on the dial of Ahaz turn back ten steps.' So the sun turned back on the dial the ten steps," by which it had been, "by which it had declined."

I don't know how to comprehend the geophysical implications, what happens when you stop the earth's orbit, back it up so the sun's shadow goes back ten steps. I know the rotation of the earth, and all the stuff had something to do with winds and tides and such and water moving. He kept the oceans in place, he kept the tides moving, he kept the earth's gravity in place. I mean, I think the spinning actually keeps us firmly fixed on the earth. We don't spin too fast and fly away. We don't spin too slow and suck into the earth's gravity and get crushed. We know all this for a sign to Hezekiah! God's power is evident in this fact, that the one act is as effortless as the other. Adding time to his life and backing up the rotation of the earth, nothing to an all-powerful God.

Now go ahead and turn back to Luke 12. Consider again what Jesus says in verse 26, "If then you are not able to do such a small thing as that," again, superlative language here, comparative language, this time applying the language in a diminutive sense, that is, you're unable to do such a small thing, this tiny little thing like adding an hour to your life span, why, then, are you anxious about the rest of the things you can't control? Listen, your powerlessness ought to settle in

on you, and rather than making you afraid when you trust in an all-powerful God, it should cause you to realize that God is the one who has your days marked out. God is the one who holds your life in the palm of your hands, so why worry.

Once again, remember what Jesus said back in the statement, verses 22 to 23, "Do not be anxious about your life," Why, "because life is more than food, the body more than clothing." God does not merely preserve our lives, i.e., extending more time on this earth. Listen, living a longer life in this sinful flesh on this fallen planet in this sin-cursed, sin-saturated world, that is not a gift it's a sentence. How does God go beyond the mere preservation of our lives in giving us an even greater gift of life? You know the answer, because you have this gift by faith in Christ. God gives eternal life in Christ, not so much eternal in the sense of quantity, that is, an infinite succession of moments. Who wants more time if the quality of life that we're experiencing now in this sinful flesh goes on forever and ever and ever? I don't know about you, but the older I get, the less I want to live with myself. It's more like hell than heaven. No. God gives an eternal quality of life, an eternal kind of life. Put this simply, he gives us the life of

God himself. And that's the gift of eternal life, the very life that he possesses as an essential attribute of his being. That's what he gives.

Jesus loves talking about this. If you doubt that, go read the Gospel of John. You're going to find it over and over again. Eternal life, eternal life, eternal life. It's in our, one of our favorite verses, right? John 3:16, "God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." John 4:14, "Whoever drinks the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." John 6:27, "Do not work for the food that perishes, but work for the food that endures to eternal life." God is the one who sustains and preserves our life, and in Christ we will live forever in an eternal God-like quality of life, fullness of joy, reaping forever the pleasures of God. That's what eternal life is. That's the gift of God to us who are of more value than the creatures.

Since we know all of that to be true, this next question is all the more piercing. He says, "If you are not able to do such a small thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest?" What's he doing here? Provoking a little bit of self-examination. Well, yeah, why am I anxious about the rest? Hmm. Hold that thought because the question will be answered in the next point.

Number three: So God sustains your life, God preserves your life, and then one more, third point: God adorns your life. God adorns your life. We're already prepared, here, to see that God adorns our life in such a way to surpass the flowers. Nevertheless, verse 27, "Consider the lilies, how they grow." Consider them. The word, Lilies, it can refer specifically to a lily, but it can also be a general term for all kinds of beautiful, colorful wildflowers. Jesus wants us not to just consider the flowers, but to consider and reflect upon not just the fact that they are well-adorned, but how they grow, how they get to be such. So continuing, he says, "Consider the lilies, how they grow." How do they grow, how do they adorn themselves, how do they look so good? Well, "They neither toil nor spin." That's taken off the table, not working hard to get it, not spending two hours in the bathroom in the morning. Even Solomon,

“Yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.”

To answer the question how do the lilies grow, Jesus paints a contrast between King Solomon and, a notice, it's a single flower, not a meadow, a single flower, “one of these” verse 27. Amazing statement, isn't it, considering the variety of Solomon's wardrobe? 2 Chronicles 9:22-24, here's what we read, “King Solomon excelled all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom. And all the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom, which God had put into his mind. Every one of them brought his present, articles of silver and of gold, garments, myrrh, spices, horses, and mules, so much year by year.”

The lily has no wealth, no reach around the world, no resources, exerts no effort, spins no thread, enlists no designer, employs no dressmaker. The lily just sits there. God dresses the lily, and all the other flowers of the earth as well, season after season, year after year. God's design, God's knowledge, God's creativity, God's joy in the colors and the

textures and the look and the intricate design, all of his power, not to mention his faithfulness and attentiveness to keep the flowers clothed, not just here but all over the world in places we'll never see! Incomprehensible to us! When God clothes the lily, its covering is appropriate, its beauty is unparalleled, its perfection is complete, it extends out from the hidden root through the stalk through the branches and the leaves to the outermost edge of its most delicate petal. And when viewed through a microscope, the detail is intricate, the design is astounding.

And then look at verse 28, "If God so clothes the grasses of the field, which are alive today in the field, and tomorrow are thrown into the oven." Wow! It seems almost like a crime, right, to throw those flowers into the oven? Why would you do that? Well, in a land where wood for cooking fuel was not plentiful, wild grasses were gathered up, and they heated small, portable, domestic ovens that were owned by individual families. Obviously, they didn't mourn the burning of flowers of the field. Wildflowers going into the oven, so insignificant in comparison to the daily demands of feeding children their daily food and bread. Burning grass and wildflowers just passed without notice.

They could, in fact, only be noticed by someone with the insight and observation skills of our Lord. I, I love this about Christ, when you think about him and his humanity walking the earth, and what does he think about? He observes the daily routines of women in the village. He watches them getting their family taken care of, sending the children out to gather grasses so they can keep, bring them back and feed the flames of their ovens. And he thinks about those individual flowers going into the ovens. Of course, he cares about families being fed, but he's thinking also about his fathers' pleasure in adorning all those individual flowers, giving each flower, each kind its individual, unique beauty, individual characteristics, all of them that we can identify and characterize and specify, genus, species, and all the rest. How easily that beauty is missed, isn't it? Intricate detail, the father's work often goes unnoticed.

So verse 28 again, what Jesus observes. He says, "If God so clothes the grass, which is live in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith!" It's not lost on Jesus, certainly not lost on God, the relative importance of enjoying aesthetic beauties, the delight of wildflowers, and then contrasting that

with the need to cook food, to feed one's family. Obviously, the preservation of human life is more important than preserving intricate, aesthetic beauty and all of that. But the point is this: If God has so adorned transient grasses of the field season after season and year after year, and he's done so with such magnificence and such beauty, how much more will he clothe you? Just like the grass of the field, we, too, need God to dress us well. We need God to cover us in garments of beauty that he made for us. If we try to adorn ourselves, well, we come to his feast dressed in our personal best, and that is not going to go over well.

Jesus presented that scene in a parable about a wedding feast, Matthew 22, a guest that was not properly dressed for the occasion. Verse 11 says, "When the king came into take a look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment." Just came in in his own best. He didn't have a wedding garment. "He said, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment,'" and he was, and the man was speechless. "The king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'" Whoa! Why is that? Because entering the

king's banquet without one of his wedding garments, without a garment approved by him, that's a metaphor, isn't it, for being dressed in the spotless robes of righteousness. Entering his presence with our own righteousness is not going to count.

Dressed in our own personal best, dressed in our own righteousness, we'll be cast out! Isaiah 64:6 says, "We have all become like one who is unclean, all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade away like a leaf; our iniquities like the wind take us away." Don't try coming to God with your own righteousness. Don't try coming to him with your own good works and say, Here, take this. I've done this. I've done that. I've been pretty good in these areas. I've been pretty good in those areas.

God doesn't require your, pretty good. He requires Christ's perfection. Like the grasses of the field, we, too, need God to adorn us with the beauty of his righteousness, and God adorns us with a beauty that goes way beyond the glory of Solomon, way beyond the beauty of wildflowers. God makes sure that his people are clothed, yes, physically, that's a given, but God shows his superlative concern for what we wear by adorning us with spiritual garments, spiritual raiment, clothing that is fit not

just for a wedding feast, but fit for the King's banquet. And the bride and groom; the groom being his Son, the bride being the church.

So back to the question that Jesus asked in verse 26, "Why are you anxious about the rest?" "God made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him." In the language of adornment, if we put this in metaphor form, God dressed Christ, he covered, covered Christ's righteousness with the dirty rags of our iniquity. He covered him with our sinful deeds, and then he punished him for what he was wearing. For us, though, having taken away our sin, God dressed us in Christ's perfect righteousness, and we're ready to come to the feast. And that adorning of righteousness is a spiritual reality. But that doesn't mean it's an invisible reality only. The more we grow as Christians, the more that invisible adornment is made visible, and what's spiritual shows up on the outside.

It's why Jesus died and rose again, giving himself up for us. Titus 2:14, "to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify

for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.” Look, as Christians we are adorned in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. We’re continuously being adorned with good works. We’re bringing glory to the invisible God in our visible lives. So why do we worry about lesser things? Jesus says in verse 28, he answers the question, because we’re weak in faith, it’s because our faith is small, it’s because our faith is not mature enough, it’s not strong enough, it’s not informed enough. Our faith needs to grow up. He says, “How much more,” verse 28, “will God clothe you, O you of little faith.” Weakness in faith is what causes Christians to be anxious and worry and doubt and fear. But beloved, when we remember that it is God who sustains and preserves and adorns our lives, when he does so in such a profoundly significant way, in a way that lasts for all of eternity, when he shines through our lives such beauty and brilliance, the life of Christ shining out through us to a watching world, this is a beauty that can never fade away. This is why worry and anxiety and fear are so unfitting for Christians.

Our valuation in the father’s sight was set before the foundation of the world. Our father decided to count us

valuable, and so he chose to sacrifice his own son for our
sakes; his one and only beloved, his perfect, spotless Lamb of
God. So beloved, what do we have to worry about? "He who did not
spare his own son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not
also with him graciously give us all things?"