

+We're probably all familiar with the story of Howard Hughes. Hughes was a big-time businessman who dabbled in oil, entertainment, and the aviation industry. These pursuits made him billions of dollars. You would think that anyone with this type of money would be the picture of ease and tranquility. Not so with Howard Hughes!

The last twenty-five or so years of his life, Howard Hughes was the poster child for worry and anxiety. Overwhelmed by an unsubstantiated fear that people were out to get him, he spent his last decades living in hotels, where he would rent out whole floors. He was exceptionally fearful of germs. His worry led to severe stomach problems, causing him to sit in the bathroom for hours at a time.

For a man who seemingly had it all, worry and anxiety dominated his life! The overwhelming paradox of Hughes was that the more successful he got—the more money he accumulated—the more worry and anxiety festered in his soul.

The paradox Hughes faced is the same paradox we face: things do not eliminate worry and anxiety; they heighten worry and anxiety.

The biggest lies we can think begin with If I could just get this, If I just had that car, if I could obtain this position, then I could be happy. That is the lie, because there is no lasting happiness in earthly treasures.

Notice the context of our passage: Jesus tells us not to worry right on the heels of telling us not to seek earthly treasure. Why does he follow up a lesson on materialism with a lesson on not worrying? Because Jesus understood the more one has, the more there is a tendency to worry. Materialism breeds worry.

When reflecting on his life before all the money and fame rolled in, automobile tycoon Henry Ford concluded, "I was happier when doing a mechanic's job." Multimillionaire W. H. Vanderbilt once said, "The care of 200 million is enough to kill anyone."

Most of us are not going to have those type of issues, but the gospel asks us to examine what it is that divides our attention from heavenly things to earthly things

Jesus understands that worry is a universal human struggle, he is insistent when he tells us not to worry. Our text points out a couple of reasons.

First, we are told not to worry because worry can lead to selfish decisions in life. In [verses 25-26](#), Jesus specifically says you shouldn't be anxious about your life. He is hinting at one of the major problems with worry: at the end of the day, a lot of my worries, my anxieties, are often all about me—my world, my desires, my longings.

One such example is in aging. +There is a story about a lady who was struggling with a decision as to whether or not to have cosmetic surgery. She was thinking about having a facelift. But it was very expensive. Hence, she was totally confused.

While she was discussing its high cost with her husband she said, "But what if I drop dead three months after I have this surgery? Then what would you do?" He thought for a moment and said, "Well, I guess we'd have an open casket for your funeral."

The worry that Jesus speaks of in our text knows nothing of self-sacrifice, nothing of laying down one's life for

the good of others, nothing of humility.

A good worry might be for those we love, but with this, we have to give them, our worries to God and trust God.

But there's a second, greater problem with worry that Jesus alludes to: worry is useless and pagan. Jesus brings this point home when he says that worry doesn't add a single hour to a person's life.

I will admit, that I do worry about many things, but I understand that to be my lack of faith in God. Our worry will not make the loan go through. Your worry will not get rid of the cancer. Your worry will not pay the bills. Nor will it help with exams or papers that are due. That is not to say we do nothing and not worry – no, we do the best we can and give up our worries. Jesus is telling you in this passage that your worry is useless as it adds nothing in the end.

But how can we overcome worry in our lives? Jesus begins with the lesser when he says that our heavenly Father takes care of birds and grass. Then he moves to the greater when he says our heavenly Father takes care of us.

His point is clear: do not worry because if God takes care of lesser creatures like birds or smaller parts of creation like flower, how much more is he going to take care of the ones made in his image. He knows our needs, trust in that.

Notice how Jesus refers to God throughout the text—as our heavenly Father. The image casts us as God's children. Children aren't prone to worry, because they assume their parents will take care of them.

No child thinks, “How is the mortgage going to get paid today?” They give no thought to whether or not they are going to eat or how their athletic fees are going to be paid. Jesus says: Your heavenly Father knows your needs.

How do you not worry? How do you trust God to see you through the hard times? Think of a time in your past when you didn't think you were going to make it and you did. Use that story to see you through your present.

Think of the time when you didn't know how things were going to get paid, but you and God got it done.

Think of the time when you didn't think you'd live to see another day, but here you are, alive and kicking today.

Think of the time when the stress was so great that you'd thought you'd lose your mind or your marriage, yet God saw you through.

I would like to close with an illustration that I think God my desire of all of us. The late Bishop Ernest Fitzgerald used to tell about a man he knew years ago, who lived a very hard life. Every day his little hillside farm was at the mercy of drought, wind, or cold.

Yet he was about the most serene and deeply contented man the Bishop had ever known.

So, he asked the old mountaineer one day if he had ever had any troubles and if he had ever spent sleepless nights. "Sure, I've had my troubles," he said, "but no sleepless nights.

When I go to bed I say, 'Lord, you have to sit up all night anyway. There's no point in both of us losing sleep.

You look after things tonight and when tomorrow comes, I'll do the best I can to help you."