

Time of Grace Ministry  
**I Want To Grow; More Confident, Less Worried**  
Matthew 6:25-34  
January 15, 2017

***Pastor Jon Enter***

Hi, I'm Pastor Jon Enter with Time of Grace Ministries. When I was in high school, my mom took me to the doctor. She was convinced I was sick; convinced I was probably going to die. And so, we went in for a battery of tests and if you've ever been to the doctor, they make you fill out that form about why you're here, what your symptoms are, and there's a little blank on the bottom to write a little bit more. And I wrote down: "I have an acute case of WMS" and handed it in. Eventually when the doctor came into the room, he said, "You know, I've been out in the hallway for a little bit trying to figure out – flipping through my medical books – what WMS might stand for?" And he looked at me and I said, "Worried Mom Syndrome. That's what I got; an acute case of it. Do you have a pill, an ointment, a rub or something that I can give my mom? She's worried when she just doesn't need to."

Do you fall into worry a lot? Is that a stress and a struggle with you in your life? For a lot of us, it is because there's so much unknown within this world and then that worry sets in that maybe this is bigger than what I can deal with and maybe God's plan isn't the right plan. When you don't feel God in your life and you don't understand what's going on, it's simply that God's plan is bigger than your plan; that God is working a far greater goal and blessing for you and God says, "Just wait in me."

In Pastor Mark's message for you this week, he's going to dig into God's word and unearth for you truths of how you can have confidence in the midst of a world trying to press you to worry. May God's message today, spoken to you, give you encouragements and give you peace.

***Pastor Jeske***

Jesus had something to say to those of us who struggle with fear. And he gave two examples – looking probably right around him as his hearers were listening – for the words I want to read to you this morning come from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. And I'd like to invite you to take your Bible and open it up to Matthew 6 and our reading today will begin at verse twenty-five.

And Jesus said: "Therefore, I tell you." Now, the word "therefore" is a concluding statement of something that he had just said previously and I think he's referring to two paragraphs earlier when he had said, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy, where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven. Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." He reminded people that your main assets are not in an earthly bank; they're in a heavenly bank. He reminded people that you're just camping here. Since this is a temporary place to live and our real existence is coming in heaven, "do not worry about your life." The only thing to fear is fear itself. "What you will eat or drink or about your body, what you will wear. Isn't life more important than food and the body more important than clothes?" And he gave a great example and maybe he could even see it; maybe it

came to mind because they're outdoors. Maybe he saw some birds and he says, "Look! Look at the birds of the air. They don't sow or reap," – sowing means planting – birds don't farm. Did you ever ponder that? Ever see any farmer birds? I don't think so. They don't build barns. Squirrels maybe can hide a few nuts but the birds don't and yet, "Your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren't you much more valuable than they?" When you feel the grip of fear, have a look at the birds.

What is fear? Why is fear bad? He's not talking about planning; planning is good. He's not talking about assessing your situation or being realistic about the threats you face. He's not making it seem as though being bankrupt or being broke or being laid off is just nothing. It's not nothing. That's big news. But fear is more than all of those things. Worry is fear; fear that God has left his throne. Fear that you're just going down and will not have enough. Fear that God's love has stopped and you are now on your own in life. Fear that there is now no breaks on the power of hell and Satan and his demons who are now going to chew you up. Worry is fear that you don't have any significance in your life anymore and that you're just cut loose and you're adrift with no ability to affect your environment.

Jesus said, "Be careful of where you set your level of "enough" because your heavenly Father is going to make sure you have enough for what you really need. Don't let your definition of enough always be the moving target of what you might want. If you're not careful, that baseline will keep rising faster and you'll be going like this all the time; like I've got to have this. I can't be happy unless I have got a car that isn't a clunker. Or maybe first you just want a car. Then it has to be one that isn't a clunker. Now I want – I don't want to live in such a dump; I want a better apartment. No, apartment, shmartment! I want to own a house. Not a dumpy old house; I want a nice house. This is the suburb I want to live in. I've got to – then my sister lives in this kind of place and she's going to look down on me. I've got to be in a place at least as good as her. And you keep going like this and "enough" keeps dancing out of your reach. That's one of the reasons people fret.

People fret because Satan is looking for an edge and he gets his wedge in there to manipulate the way we perceive reality. When you look backwards, you look at the worse possible explanations. Here's how normal paying attention to your life turns into worry and fear. You look at what happened today and your mind goes to the worst possible explanation: Why did she say that? Does she think I'm fat? Does she think I'm stupid? Does she really hate me? I thought she was my friend? Why would she say that? What a jerk.

So then you start stewing over that: I just lost a friend. And your mind's running, running, running, running, running, running. Why would she say that? Because we have looked for the worst possible explanation. Or flip that around as you're pointing forward – when something – you assume the worst is going to happen. That's what fear does to you; you start anticipating the worst. The gospel makes optimists of us all and drives out that kind of fear. When Jesus reminds us, "Aren't you more valuable than the birds?" look at those birds.

One of our summer treats this summer is Carol went to the thrift store a couple of blocks from here and bought a bird feeder for \$1.50, gave it a little new coat of paint on its little cone top and loads it up with sunflower and safflower seeds. I'm giving you a little bird feeding tip: If you'd

like to have some really enjoyable birds, get safflower seeds. You can get a big 'ol bag of them for a few bucks. And you put the seed in there and the swallows like to come but so do the finches, you know, those yellow finches; they're real beautiful birds. And we have a momma and a papa cardinal that live in our backyard, which we're very proud of and kind of on a first name basis. And they like the seeds so much, they will let you sit nearby and watch them and enjoy them. But as I mentioned before, those birds do not farm and there are no bird grocery stores where they go to buy groceries. If you're a bird, every day of your life you are praying the Lord's Prayer in bird language. You are saying, "Dear Lord," tweet, tweet, "give us this day our daily bread" because we've got no pantry. We've got no fridge. So it's get up and go do it! And when Jesus says, "Look at how your heavenly Father's taken care of them," that doesn't mean they just wait around in their nests like they're little chicks going, "Feed me!" They don't wait around. Birds are the hardest working animals ever and they know it's going to be getting cold and they start flying south and birds will fly 1,000 to 2,000 miles sometimes; insanely far to obey God's instructions of how to work hard so that I can feed you. And he will.

In fact, in Psalm 50, the Bible study that we had last week, Asaph's psalm says God says he knows the name of every bird in the forest. He knows them all individually, even though their lifespan is like this. He cares about each one. Now Jesus says, by comparison, are you not worth much more than the birds? If God fusses over the birds to that degree, that though they have no capacity for storing of food, he still keeps them alive, that's a lesson in the daily bread that he wants you to ask for and that he pledges to give to you. Think how much more valuable you are! Jesus did not become a bird to save the birds. He didn't save the birds from everlasting damnation. He saved you from damnation by taking on your flesh, your blood; accepting on his back the responsibility for your sins. Obeying the rules that you and I flounder at and are terrible at and fail at every day, he obeyed God's laws and once again, you might say, brought balance to the force. He provided the obedience that we had forfeited and through faith, we may claim it. So we are restored to God's family to look and smell and appear as holy and pure as Christ himself. If God would do all of that – if he did not hold back his own son – how shall he not freely give us all the other things that we need, as well?

And I invite you, every time you see a bird from now until the day you die, just say, "You're giving them their daily seeds. Way to go, God! You're keeping them alive though there are no bird food stores. You are keeping them alive," and that should be encouragement to me not to panic and to keep my "enough" defined in such a way as it's a floor; not a ceiling that I can never grasp. I'm happy now. I'm eating and clothed now. In fact, most of us struggle – there's only two kinds of people in the room today: Those of us who really need to ditch at least 10 or 20 pounds or more and those of you who are thin are thin because you're working out all the time and if you stop doing that, God has pampered you so much you would get fat like the rest of us. See? That's how generous he is. Let that dial down your inner anxiety that he's taken care of your minimums and making sure that you eat and are clothed.

Speaking of clothes, he says, how about the flowers? "Look at these lilies of the field. They don't labor or spin and yet, they're beautiful; more beautiful even than Solomon in all his splendor. If this is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, tomorrow is thrown in the fire, will he not much more clothe you?" And he spanks them a little! "Hey, you little faith people!" They're all going, "Huh, got me. You too, huh? Hmm." Jesus got right in

their grill and called them baby-faith people. “Why are you whining? Have I not given you clothes to wear?” I don’t see any naked people in front of him at the Sermon on the Mount. So where does that leave us? Being careful of being in the grasping for an “enough” that we keep pushing so far upward we make ourselves miserable because we don’t have all we want, even though we’ve been given all that we need.

Out in our backyard, we’ve got a couple hibiscus plants. Any hibiscus raisers here? Where are my fellow hibiscus raisers? Two, three, four of you – okay. I know why most of you don’t – because they’re not native to the tundra where we live here. They are tropical plants; you’ve got to be willing to take them in in the winter time but boy, they are spectacular. When they decide to bloom, one day you know it’s coming because there will be a bud as big as my thumb. All of a sudden this big red wad is hanging off a leaf and the next day, you’ve got to be ready because it goes poof! And there is a gigantic, great, big, red flower, gorgeous and rippling! The deepest, deepest red you could imagine.

So God’s saying, “I’m squandering all that energy to make a one-day old blossom look good for you to brighten your day. Don’t you think I love you more than the flowers? I will provide you something to cover your back with and you will have a place to sleep. What’s really important,” he says, “Pagans run after all the stuff. What do you set your heart on? Wealth accumulation? Relax. Your heavenly Father knows what you need. But rather put your energy into this: Instead of grinding your stomach over what you don’t have and all your big wish list, instead seek first God’s kingdom and God’s righteousness and all that other stuff will be given to you, as well.” Once you’ve got that straight, then he will start sending you more stuff. But he needs to be put first.

What does it mean to seek God’s kingdom? It means who is the king of your life? Whom do you worship? Are you on the throne or is God on the throne? Are you dialed into your agenda; whatever that agenda might be – probably involving some variation of the word more? Or is God on the throne? Is his agenda a driver for you and his righteousness? Is his greatest asset on your personal balance sheet, the righteousness of Jesus Christ; is that what you most claim as your self-identifier? Is that your number one possession? The thing that you would give anything up except for that? The righteousness of Christ was purchased at the cost of his blood and given to you through faith. Claim it and wear it. The robes of the holiness of Christ not only guarantee your entry into heaven but they also mean if you are wearing those that God will send you normal clothes, fabric clothes, to wear to cover yourself and they will be good enough and you can be content with that. St. Paul wrote to Timothy: “If we have food and clothing, we will be content.” And if you content yourself and celebrate your relationship with your King, who is now your daddy through Jesus, all the other stuff that you need will be sent to you, as well, and you just don’t have to stress over it.

My Aunt Betty was an occupational therapist in a big Fort Wayne hospital for many years and she dealt with a lot of people over the years – mostly men; because they were men who had been injured in industrial accidents working in factories. Some of them were military veterans. And she would help them learn how to use their arms and legs again when they suffered some kind of traumatic injury. And so the work that she did – at least 50 percent – was not with their limbs but with their heads; of encouraging them to still keep trying. For with a therapy program, with

various exercises, you could regain often partial use of what had been broken – a badly broken leg or feet or some kind of injury done to your hands – and you could regain some finger mobility and dexterity again. And one of the important things she would tell her OT patients was, “Is this something over which you have some degree of control? Then it’s your problem. If it’s something over which you have no control,” can you guess how she finished her sentence? “If it’s something over which you have no control, then it’s not your problem.” Give it to God and walk away from it.

And I put that to you for the things that you’re maybe grinding your stomach over right now. Are they really your problem? Really? Or is this beyond your ability to do anything about? If it’s beyond your ability, let go of it. Do my Aunt Betty thing and just cut her loose; send it over to God or put it over to somebody else who’s got it within his or her authority area and simply content yourself with dialing into God’s kingdom and his righteousness. And all the stuff you really need is going to be sent to you, as well.

“Therefore, don’t worry about tomorrow. Tomorrow will worry about itself.” That doesn’t mean don’t plan; of course God wants you to plan. It doesn’t mean don’t work hard; of course he wants you to work hard. It doesn’t mean don’t develop your own talents. God wants his birds of the air to develop their ability to fly and fly well and fly long. He’s got some thousand mile trips coming for them and he wants their muscles, their flight muscles, to be bulked up and ready to go. He wants them getting up every day to go hustling for their seeds and all the other stuff they eat and robins terrorizing all the worms and night crawlers in the area. He’s not just going to drop it in their mouths as he just isn’t going to drop food in your mouth. But ultimately, he’s behind it all and guarantees that you will have enough.

And if you and I define “enough” as a floor, not a ceiling that’s always dancing out of reach, we’re going to look around and see the providing of God everywhere we look. And as we look around, we’re not going to define the past in terms of the worst; we will be inclined charitably to ascribe the best motives to other people. We’ll be more fun to be with because as we look to the future, that anxious talk isn’t going to creep into our talk. If you’re thinking of going on a trip with your family, don’t start saying, “Oh, we’re going to probably start arguing and fighting when we’re about 15 miles out,” and, “Oh, we’re probably going to have a lousy time; probably going to be a crummy motel.” And, “Oh, I don’t know if we’re going to have that much fun.” You start worrying yourself into being no fun at all. But if you redefine your “enough,” you will start noticing all the treats that God is sending to you to make your life better; surrounding you with people who love and care about you.

God did take care of our country and we did emerge from the Great Depression. And God did provide an answer for the rise of the Nazi dictatorship and Franklin Roosevelt was right: By not being afraid, our country faced down these challenges one by one. You and I can, as well, knowing that our righteousness is like in the cloud; it’s untouchable by Satan. He cannot steal your righteousness. He can’t steal your new identity. That means we are on our way. We’re on our way after our camping trip is done, after our mission, our work here has been done; God is going to invite us to join him in his heavenly mansion.

And so I invite you now, as you look at your life, decide that you like it as is. So let's practice. Let me hear you say, "I love my life." Let me hear you say, as you take a look, as you kind of evaluate where things are going, "Today's going to be a good day." "I love the people around me." "Lord, I'm eager to do your will today." And that sounds like a happy day, Amen.

***Pastor Jon Enter***

Worry is something that anyone could fall into, whether you're older or younger. For my daughters – I have four daughters – they worry a lot about bad dreams. When they have that bad dream and they're worried to fall back asleep and so, there's something my wife and I started to do and if you have young children in the house, this would be an encouragement that you might be able to use, as well. When we go into their bedroom then, after they've had that horrible bad dream, we hold them, just super tight, inside their bed, and we pray. We pray to Jesus but we pray very slowly: "Dear Jesus," and we exhale. "Protect my daughter." And they feel our calm and it changes them; I can feel it just – the worry, the stress – drift away from them and we're connecting that to Jesus and his power and his transforming love for us and then when that's all done, we finish that prayer, then we always ask our daughters: "Tell me your favorite things. What's your favorite color?" "Yellow," they might say. "Favorite animal?" "Giraffe." "What's your favorite food?" "Ice cream." "Okay, perfect. I want you to think of a yellow giraffe eating ice cream," and then they always laugh and we redirect them into happy joy and it changes them and they sleep so well.

You know, that same thing that we use for our daughters is something that you and I can use as well when we fall into worry, and that's for us to realize and to know that our Father in heaven embraces us, holds us, protects us. Go to him in prayer and as you pray, it shouldn't be that worried prayer, it shouldn't be a rushed prayer, but a prayer that as you pray you exhale. And as you exhale, to let that worry dissipate and leave you and when you finish that prayer, then think of the joy. Maybe not a yellow giraffe eating ice cream but whatever the joy is, whatever the blessings are that God continually pours upon you in your life – because God does not fail you. He's always there giving you what you need, when you need it.

Worry can be such a poison that pours throughout our entire lives and wrecks it. But yet, when we rely on God and we trust in him, he can remove all of that contamination from our lives and we can feel like we can breathe again in God's peace and in God's love.

Let us pray.

Christ Jesus, thank you for that grace and thank you for that peace. Thank you for washing the worry away from us in our lives. As we trust in you and we realize that no matter what is going on in our families, in our finances, you are there and that you are Lord of all and that you reign supreme in our lives. Lord, help us to trust in you, to exhale our worry to you. As you crucified at the cross and you take away that sin and you make us whole once again. Lord Jesus, then help us to live in that joy; to live in the grace of peace that is found in you alone. Transform us, change us. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

For Time of Grace Ministries, I'm Pastor Jon Enter. Have a blessed week.



TIME OF GRACE®

# Gracenotes

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## *I Want to Grow: More Confident; Less Worried*

**Matthew 6:25-34:** “<sup>25</sup> 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? <sup>26</sup> 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? <sup>27</sup> Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? <sup>28</sup> And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. <sup>29</sup> Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. <sup>30</sup> 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? <sup>31</sup> So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ <sup>32</sup> For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. <sup>33</sup> But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. <sup>34</sup> Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”

### *Points to Ponder*

1. Do you consider yourself to be a worrier? What would those who know you best say about that?
2. Read **Matthew 6:32**. What does this verse say about want and need? How can wants cause us to worry?
3. If “tomorrow will worry about itself,” does that mean that planning for the future is bad?

4. How can normal planning turn into worry, fret, and fear if we aren't careful to keep wants and needs separate?
  
5. Read **Matthew 6:33**. What does it mean to seek God's kingdom?

When we fall into worrying, we can realize and know that our Father in heaven holds us and protects us. He promises to give us all that we need because he loves us.

### *What else does God say?*

**Psalm 145:15,16:** The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food at the proper time. You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing.

**Philippians 4:19:** my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.